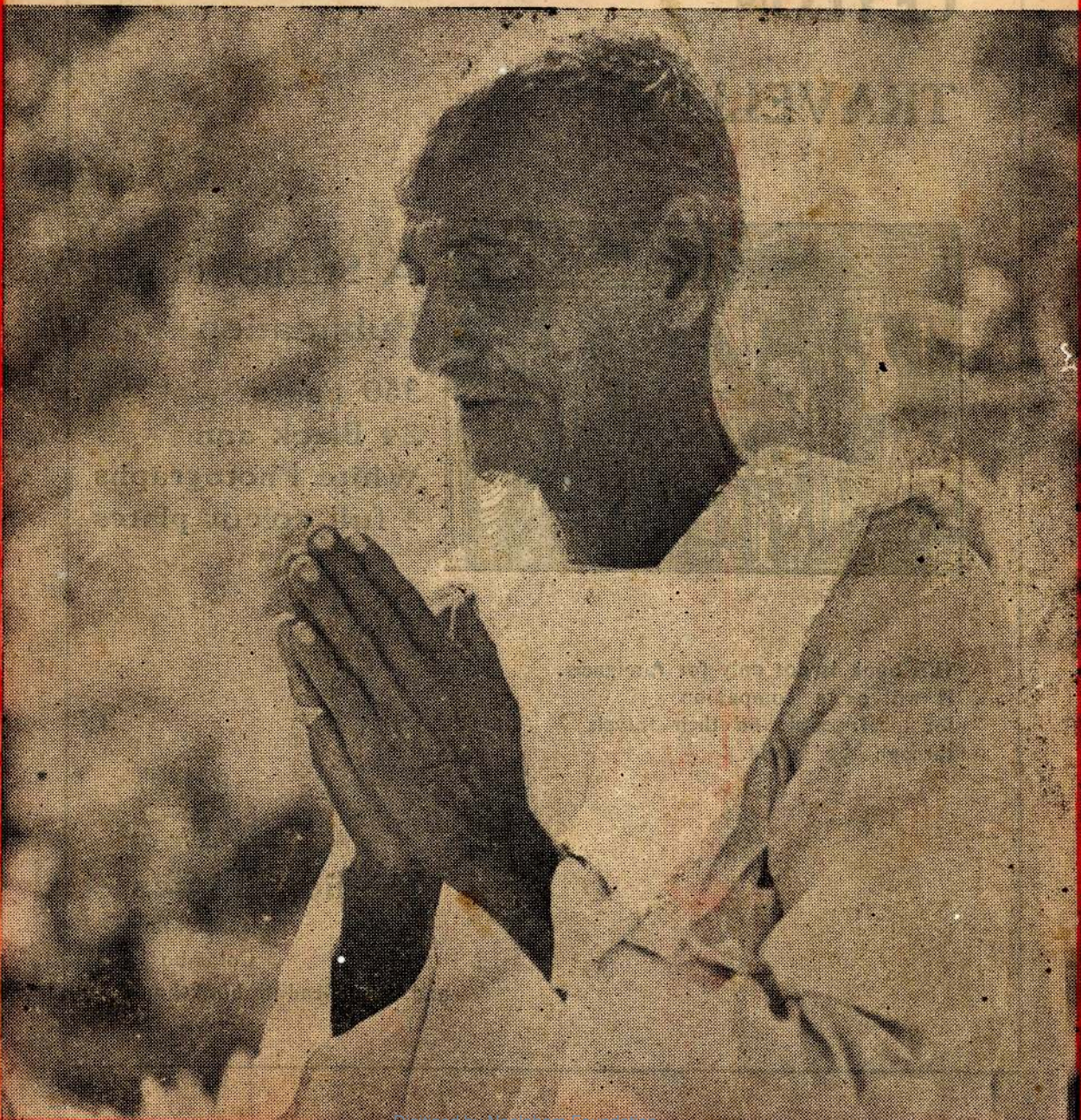


Vol. 20. No. 1 | May 24, 1975 | Cents 75

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CENTRAL



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Letter From The Editor



Founded in 1954

**A Journal of Ceylon and
World Affairs**

Editor. S. P. Amarasingam

Every Saturday

MAY 24, 1975

Vol. 20 No. 1

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

One Year Rs. 37-50; Two Years
Rs. 62-50; Three Years Rs. 87-50

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COLOMBO-2.
Telephone: 33172

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

—On Vietnam p. 2

BETWEEN THE LINES

—On Removal of Ministers p. 4

LETTER FROM MALDIVES

—Censor Commission p. 10

OPERATION MAY DAY

—By Herbert Keuneman p. 11

THE BROWN SAHIBS

—By Tissa Balasuriya OMI p. 14

CONFIDENTIALLY

—Postal Saga p. 20

WITH THIS ISSUE, *Tribune* enters the twentyfirst year of publication. The first number had appeared on May 1, 1954, and except for two six-months' periods of interruption in 1958 and 1971 it has been in continuous publication. The first break came during the Emergency of the communal riots of 1958 and the second was prelude to *Tribune's* emergence as a completely non-aligned journal mainly concerned with political comment, interpretative analysis, stimulating narrative and thoughtprovoking reportage. Twentyone years is not a long period in the history of a country or even a periodical, but it is surprisingly long for a weekly like *Tribune* in tiny little Ceylon. The story about *Tribune* and its struggle for survival and existence we hope, will be told someday by those who know, but for the moment what is important is that *Tribune* has lived to report, reflect and evaluate events in a momentous period in the island's history. The twenty years of *Tribune* is living history, contemporaneously told. *Tribune* has today become essential reading for the discerning observer of current affairs. In a country and a world where everything is labelled and classified, *Tribune* has defied definition. It has been variously branded, among others, a commie fellow traveller, a communal rag, a bundle of mischief and even an eclectic hotch-potch of misguided thought. We ourselves are not able to encompass *Tribune* within a definition in any frame of reference. It is what it is and what those write for it have made it. It is a mirror of our times, not comprehensively global like the multinational counterparts, but faithfully realistic in its chosen orbit. *Tribune*, moreover, has provided generations of young writers and thinkers in Sri Lanka with opportunities to appear in print, and many who have written for *Tribune*, generally under cover of transparent anonymity, have risen to positions of eminence in the Establishment, in the Administration and in the Judiciary. *Tribune* has so far sought and reached only a selective readership, but though the number was not large, among them were people who made and make opinion in this country. We enter upon our twentyfirst year urged by many friends to expand horizons and enlarge readership. They have prevailed upon us to revert to a cover and even seek advertisements. We have been chary about going after advertisements for sometime now because of the aggressively partisan attitude of the Government as the biggest advertiser today. We embark on new plans with the customary trepidation.

WITH THE REPUBLIC DAY AND THE WESAK this week, we have chosen a cover picture of an ordinary peasant in prayerful thought. Like so many others in Sri Lanka today, he has much to be worried about. Will the rains come? Will he be able to sell his crops at fair prices? Will his sons and daughters be gainfully employed after they finished school or university? He is thankful children have opportunities for higher education, but he is afraid that if they do not find suitable employment they will seek escape and asylum in the wilderness in the belief that power stemmed only from the barrel of a gun. The young are in a state of bewilderment tossed hither and thither by conflicting slogans: and what is worse is that the overwhelming majority of those who get employment soon sink into total and bitter frustration because of the handful among them who climb overnight to power and wealth undreamt of, not through merit or hard work but through family influence, corruption and stooging. Parents, like so many others, have become apprehensive of the philosophy of the quick-rupee which has begun to prevail among increasingly large sections of the youth. Falling standards, disappearing moral values and vicious cynicism to humanistic ethics are daily becoming dominant in the amoral logic of the young. Will prayer help to bring poise, equilibrium and sanity to the youth and the country? It is fashionable for the elite today to laugh at prayer, but is there not prayerful rethinking among the vast multitude hemmed in by blank stone walls? Why does the BBC now regularly run a series on the efficacy or otherwise of prayer? Why do so many flock to a strange phenomenon like Sai Baba? Whither oh whither Sri Lanka?

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

On Vietnam

IT WILL BE A LONG TIME before the last word on Vietnam is written. The military collapse of the United States had stunned most people, and disappointed many others; but it also brought a sense of exhilaration to millions still struggling for emancipation from exploitation by bigger and stronger powers. If there is one lesson which big and mighty powers like the United States can learn from Vietnam and Cambodia it is that the cold war logic of McCarthy and Dulles can only lead to suicidal self-denigration of power and prestige. If, instead of promoting cold war rigidities which had led Washington to support Diem and Thieu in Vietnam, to shut a blind eye to the tiger cages and other atrocities by puppet regimes (under whatever excuses) and to sustain and perpetuate petty dictatorships, the USA had backed nationalist (even left-leaning) regimes like Ho Chi Minh's in its early stages and Sihanouk's to the very end, America's standing on the Asian continent would have been different today. Parliamentary regimes with an element of liberal pluralism, as in India, may easily have been stabilised in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and even in Thailand. Instead of that these countries have moved from one extreme to another.

In South Asia too, the USA has followed a policy of upholding the vicious dictatorships of Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan instead of actively encouraging liberal parliamentary traditions based on democratic practices to grow, and the result was Bangladesh and the total lack of any kind of press or other freedoms in Pakistan. This can only lead ultimately to further disintegration of the different heterogeneous parts of Pakistan or to a total Left regimented regime as in Vietnam or elsewhere. The absence of tolerance and democratic freedoms in a country like Pakistan bodes no good either for the country or the region. On the other hand, India with all its conflicting fissiparous trends and even separatist under-currents continues to hold together—in spite of many prognostications to the country—mainly,

in our view, because of the spirit of tolerance and the realities of democratic freedoms (often unnecessarily curbed not completely eradicated) that still makes political life in the vast sub-continent zig zag along without slipping into the bizarre and extreme abnormalities which have manifested themselves in countries where tolerance has been absent and press and democratic freedoms have been completely suppressed.

THERE IS NO DOUBT that political commentators will refer to the implications of Vietnam very frequently in the coming weeks. In Sri Lanka, the defeat of the puppet Lon Nol and Thieu dictatorships by the insurgent forces, now called liberation armies, has been hailed by Governmental and left forces, whilst the right-leaning parties have expressed concern and anxiety over the establishment of Vietnam as the most powerful military government in Southeast Asia with over \$ 42 billions of the most sophisticated American military equipment which the Thieu regime had abandoned. The sense of exhilaration which leftist-minded people in Sri Lanka felt was reflected by the United Front's May Day international resolution.

This May Day rally called by the SLFP-LSSP-CP United Front, greets and expresses its solidarity with all those who, throughout the world, fight for peace national liberation, democracy and socialism. In particular, this May Day rally rejoices at, and congratulates, the national liberation forces of South Vietnam and Cambodia on their splendid victories over imperialism... Despite the defeats that neither imperialism has suffered in the past year at the hands of the people and notwithstanding the relaxation of tensions in certain regions of the world, this May Day rally warns that neither imperialism nor its aggressive policies have suffered total or irreversible defeat....

It draws attention to the attempts made by imperialist and capitalist vested interests in many countries to promote fascism and neo-fascism as a means of preventing restrictions on their political and economic power and evading the consequences of the series of crisis that now convulse capitalism....

There are no ambiguities in the policies of the UF on this matter.

The UNP, had in the past, blindly supported the policies of Dulles cold war extremism without realising that it was a sure way of inviting what the UNP usually described as Left totalitarianism. The UNP is now understandably disturbed by the far-reaching implications of the victory of the liberation forces (not so long ago called insurgent guerillas) in Vietnam.

The Daily News of April 30 published the resolutions passed by the Executive Committee of the UNP on 29.4.75 "for consideration by its Parliamentary group."

The recent events in South East Asia resulting in the formation of new government in Cambodia and South Vietnam after several years of war; The recent statements by the Indian Prime Minister fearing external aggression and alleging that foreign powers were responsible for stirring up violence on India's northern boundaries; The fears expressed by some of the Eastern littoral states of the Indian Ocean about the future security and independence and in the light of these new political and military developments and alignments make representations to the Prime Minister through the Opposition Parties to discuss with the Prime Minister of India the largest and most powerful power in the Indian Ocean the urgent necessity of summoning a conference of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean to consider proposals for the mutual security arrangements for these states and the safeguarding of their independence, if necessary guaranteed by the Super Powers.

Another resolution reads:

"The Executive Committee of the United National Party deplore the use of violence to further political objectives. It sees in the violence used to disrupt UNP political meetings an attempt to destroy the system of Parliamentary democracy. Some of these acts may be a part of a campaign directed against members of the Government who believe in the Parliamentary system and if so will sow the seeds of another violent insurrection to overthrow a democratically elected government and to abolish elections permanently. This Committee therefore, author-

Vietnam

ises the Parliamentary Group to arrange for the whole Opposition to express the above views most strongly to the Prime Minister and to request her to take meaningful steps to curb violence and also to investigate whether any foreign powers are instigating these activities once again. The Executive Committee of the United National Party hereby resolves that the Party now and when in power (a) Adopt a foreign policy that is truly non-aligned; (b) Seek avenues that foster and consolidate mutual understanding and friendship with countries not only of the West but also of the Socialist blocs throughout the World, (c) Participate in all activities domestic and foreign which seek to wipe out colonialism and neo-colonialism where it may be. (d) Join other Asian nations and work together to evolve an Asian identity both economic and political."

THE RESOLUTION, or more correctly new guidelines for the Parliamentary group, betrays a further shift of the UNP to centrist positions. There is a slow realisation that the Dulles cold war policies were bankrupt and the UNP which had clung to them long and persistently was now seeking to shed them as quickly as possible. It will be a long time before the UNP can persuade the people that it has turned over a new leaf on foreign policy attitudes and that it now firmly believes on "true non-alignment." Under the masthead of nonalignment, the UNP, had leaned very heavily on policies which the people of America have now rejected most decisively.

The UNP is now perturbed that the victory of the insurgent-liberation forces in Vietnam would be a fillip to insurgent forces not only in Sri Lanka but also throughout the whole of Asia. The UNP is now willing to hold a dialogue even with India which it had so far regarded as anti-American pro-Soviet country which had to be kept at arm's length. The UNP which was willing to tilt to the tyrannical dictatorships (where press freedoms did not exist) of Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan have now begun to see some virtues in the non-alignment of India though it still seems unwilling to appreciate

the non-alignment inherent in the Bandaranaike policies.

It is also clear that the UNP is worried about the geopolitical implications of the defeat of the USA in Vietnam. Obviously, the UNP seems to have developed nightmarish apprehensions about the prestige and power that has accrued to China by the victory of the liberation forces in Vietnam and Cambodia.

These fears were much more frankly and honestly expressed in an editorial in the Catholic Messenger even before the total collapse of US-backed Vietnam and Cambodia. And the Catholic Messenger had no inhibitions about pointing out the possible impact of this change on power politics in the Indian Ocean. The editorial is cited below. It will also be seen that the Catholic Messenger has no further illusions about the cold war policies of the USA.

The events that are taking place in the Asian political scene are very significant for us as citizens of a non-aligned nation. In Cambodia, the Communist backed liberation forces almost overran the country victoriously routing the rightist Lon Nol forces. In Vietnam, President Van Thieu has resigned and the debacle of the corrupt rightist regime is imminent. Steps are being taken in the Indian State Assembly to table the laws annexing Sikkim, her protectorate, to the Indian Republic. In Vietnam and Cambodia the US government undertook the massive, foolhardy and bloody task of safeguarding "democracy" after the French colonial masters left these countries. The Vietnam war is the costliest and the longest war that the United States has ever fought. The 6.8 million tons of devastating conventional bombs

which were dropped turned once fertile and arable lands into a vast barren shambles. Americans sacrificed more than 56,000 US servicemen in Vietnam. More than 180,000 South Vietnamese and 950,000 communist soldiers were killed in the process. The US alone lost 4,800 helicopters 3,600 jets and other air planes. India is going to end the 344 year old monarchy of Sikkim. The Indian troops disarmed the palace guards of Chogyal, the Sikkim monarch and reduced him to another nominal Indian Maharajah. India will annex this Himalayan regime. The fundamental issue for India is not whether the Chogyal would remain or go. India has been distressed by the fact China had claimed a part of Sikkim. Some official Chinese maps show approximately 300 square miles of Eastern Sikkim as part of China. This annexation is of immense strategic importance to India in safeguarding her sovereignty. She does not want another Tibet in the hands of the Chinese in her north, eastern frontier. What concerns us is the strategic position of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean especially in relation to the Indian sub-continent. If a leftist foreign power were to have too much influence in Sri Lanka will the US or any other big power interfere to safeguard our "democracy" as they did in Vietnam? If China or any other nation inimical to India tries to interfere too much in our political affairs will India intervene to safeguard her sovereignty? Will Sri Lanka then become another Vietnam, Cambodia or a Sikkim?

Many may think that the Catholic Messenger is indulging in far-fetched fantasies, but political observers will realise that the questions that the

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editorial es posed are grim realities that cannot be ignored.

THIS NOTE will not be complete without referring to the revolution in thought and logic which has overtaken the United States. Every recent issue of *Time*, *Newsweek* and other US papers reflect the deep changes which have taken place in the US already. The *New Yorker*, April 7, 1975, in its editorial *Talk of the Town* column set out the position in regard to the Vietnam issue in its own inimitable style.

With the military collapse in South Vietnam and the diplomatic collapse in the Middle East—two areas where American commitments have been heavy in recent years—the question of exactly what a “commitment” is when it is undertaken by a democratic country is suddenly being raised on all sides. A commitment consists of words; ie is a promise. A commitment consists also of the wherewithal to take action in support of the words. And for a democracy, a commitment consists, finally, of a determination among the people to use the wherewithal in support of the words. In Vietnam, the United States has never made more than two-thirds of a commitment. The government spoke the words and supplied the wherewithal, but it never fully obtained the support of the people. The people were, at best, tolerant of the government’s adventure for a while. Later, they came to actively oppose it, and now, according to a recent poll, some seventy-five per cent of the public opposes further aid to South Vietnam. Nevertheless, spokesmen for the executive branch of our government continue to refer to a commitment to provide such aid. Dr. Kissinger, asked a his press conference the other day to describe its nature, asserted that although it was not legally binding, it was morally binding. The question remains, on whom was it binding? The public had not made it, and the Congress had not made it. According to Dr. Kissinger himself, only he and former President Nixon had made it. Earlier, on the basis of a “commitment” made by the executive branch alone, the United States had spent one hundred and fifty billion dollars and more than fifty-thousand lives. Then, over the years, the Congress and the

people removed the money and the troops from the exclusive control of the executive, in assertion of their Constitutional prerogatives. In fact, so lacking in substance is the commitment that not even the Administration has dared to so much as suggest that practical steps be taken to make the commitment real. Dr. Kissinger has described the possible fall of Saigon as an event of potentially “cataclysmic” significance for the United States, but not even he is willing to recommend the dispatch of a single American soldier to Vietnam. All that remains is the word “commitment”—spoken by American officials. Never has the gap between word and deed in American foreign policy been greater that it is at this moment. Policy now seems to be a matter of talismanic phrases and pure theory. Meanwhile history takes its course in Vietnam, this time without any supervision from us.

No comment need be added.



BETWEEN THE LINES

By SERENDIB

- JR
- Central Bank
- PL 480
- Constitutional

UNP LEADER J. R. JAYAWARDENE had advanced the date for his submitting the resignation from the National State Assembly by about a week in view of the efforts made by the Deputy Minister (Foreign and Internal Trade) Ratnayake to stampede the Assembly to pass a resolution that MPs who resigned their seats voluntarily should not be allowed to contest any by-election in the lifetime of the same Assembly. This suggestion had been first mooted by Minister T. B. Ilangaratne who had also threatened that the Assembly, with the two-thirds majority of the United Front, could extend its life for 5 years or more even after 1977. He had also suggested that MPs should not be allowed to repeat what Chelvanayakam had done by

resigning their seats to stage political gimmicks. His deputy Minister had later taken up the matter and tabled a resolution before the UF parliamentary group demanding that MPs who resigned voluntarily should be disbarred from contesting the seat during the lifetime of the same Assembly. Thereafter he had set about collecting signatures in support of his resolution and it was whispered that he had collected as many as 85 signatures. Certain circles in the UF spoke about this resolution as an accomplished fact, but like everything else it was laid by until the return of Prime Minister. The *Aththa*, however, had editorially pointed out that such a resolution would be self-defeating in that it would make a martyr of J. R. Jayawardene. The *Aththa* did not think that such an amendment of the Constitution should be undertaken by the Government. The *Janavegaya* also seemed to think along similar lines.

However, JR seems to have taken the resolution seriously—as he had the right to—and advanced the date of his resignation. As a result of this, the resolution to be effective has to be retrospective: and such retrospective legislation is usually regarded as one of the hallmarks of regressive and undemocratic legislation. It is yet to be seen—unclear at the time of writing these notes—what view the PM will take in regard to this legislation. Most observers seem to think that she will not support such a blatantly anti-democratic piece of legislation. Looked at from any angle, a two-thirds majority should not be used for undermining the basic principles of democratic practice. If a politician or even a party chooses to use the weapon of resignation to compel a by-election, the gimmickry, if any, should be met otherwise than by enacting legislation which runs counter to the basic principles of the democratic parliamentary system. There are always ways of dealing with political gimmickry, and a party in power has a hundred ways of nipping such gimmicks in the bud without making a mockery of the Constitution.

After the stirring speeches JR had made in regard to a General Elections in 1975 and his much-publicised threat to resign if the

general elections were not held—for moral and not legal considerations—he had no alternative but to tender his resignation. This is the least he could have done to maintain his self-respect and to save his political face. Either way, his resignation gives him a chance of acquiring a halo of martyrdom. If a by-election is held he will be returned with such a thumping majority that it will be a propaganda victory for him. If a by-election is not held either because of an amendment to the Constitution as envisaged by Deputy Minister Ratnayake or because the by-election is postponed Kankesanurail-style until the General Elections of 1977, JR is likely to become a hero and a martyr.

Some observers have wondered whether this resignation will be the beginning of the end of JR's political career. In the light of the political complexities in the country today, it is not likely that JR's resignation will bring about his political demise. The inner squabbles within the UNP are serious enough (sleeping-partner type MP E. L. Senanayake got more votes to succeed JR as UNP's parliamentary leader than active and dynamic Premadasa), but these differences are not likely to bring about a collapse of JR's political image. On the other hand, the political hullabaloo, which the JR section of the UNP may stage over his resignation, may help him to acquire a new charisma. It can be said that those who are hoping that JR would fade away from politics as a result of his resignation are indulging in wishful thinking.

THE ATTACKS ON THE CENTRAL BANK by Minister Kobbekaduwa (vide *Daily News*, 19/5/75) at a public meeting at Polgolla during last weekend has brought to the surface a serious situation that seems to exist within the Government in regard to financial, monetary and fiscal policies, as well as some of the activities of the Central Bank.

"The Central Bank established by an American during the UNP regime has become the greatest enemy of the socialist march forward of this country and the reactionary officials of this institution which does not come under

the control of any ministry are trying their best to thwart the progressive works of the UF government. Recently a deputation from Sweden was in the island to discuss with me the feasibility of giving aid to our country. But on the very same day newspapers carried a statement by Central Bank officials criticising our land reform work" said Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa, Minister of Agriculture, and Land.

Mr. Kobbekaduwa said, that Central Bank officials who held reactionary and outdated views had been very critical of various progressive steps taken by the ministers of the UF government. His Land Reform regulations and their smooth implementation within a short period of two years had been subjected to their criticism. When he was abroad recently people like Fidel Castro of Cuba were surprised to hear that the land reform regulations had been implemented in two years. But the Central Bank officials had stated that the country's economy had suffered as a result. Those were the people who obstructed Sri Lanka from getting foreign aid for development works. He would like to tell them that he had to take over lands and estates that belonged to some Central Bank officials. When they took over these estates most of the valuable trees had been cut and removed. No wonder those officials were obstructing the progressive works of the UF government, he said. Taking over 530,000 acres of land owned by about 5,000 persons in two years was not an easy task. But they had done that in the name of socialism. They knew the sufferings the people of these areas had to undergo under imperialist rule. The people were deprived of their lands, wealth, houses, and even their lives. They would not allow any force to deny the freedom they had won for the people. They would sacrifice their lives to protect it. But they still had to win economic independence. They were doing everything possible to achieve that. He exhorted the people to make the country self sufficient in food by using their own resources to the maximum. If the current laws were not sufficient he was prepared to introduce and imple-

ment further laws to solve the land problem of the people and provide them the basic needs to develop agriculture.

There had been hints in the daily papers and some of the party journal that there were differences of opinion between the Treasury and the Central Bank over many matters—just as it was known that there were equally serious differences between the Treasury and the Planning Ministry. The *Daily News*, on 17/5/75, had reported in regard to MONETARY POLICIES there would be NO CHANGES WITHOUT CONSULTING MINISTER. The report read as follows:

The Monetary Board of the Central Bank will in future consult the Finance Minister before introducing any drastic changes in the monetary policies affecting banks in this country. This was decided at a top level conference held at the Ministry of Finance yesterday presided over by Dr. N. M. Perera Minister of Finance. The Deputy Governor of the Central Bank and representatives of the two state-owned banks, the People's Bank and the Bank of Ceylon, were among those who attended the conference. Conference sources told the *'Daily News'* yesterday that the discussion centred round the situation that had arisen following the issue of two circulars by the Central Bank in regard to the relaxation of the credit squeeze. The action taken by the Central Bank, it was stated, had adversely affected the state-owned banks while it had benefited certain foreign-owned banks. It was generally accepted that there was no intention on the part of the Central Bank to discriminate against the state-owned banks. It was agreed that the Central Bank would apply a flexible interpretation of the two circulars in order to meet the needs of the state-owned banks so as not to affect the legitimate credit requirements of State corporations. It was the imported inflation from the West that had made it necessary for the corporations to seek more and more credit from the banks to import their requirements. The state-owned banks denied that they had adopted an indiscriminate credit policy towards the State corporations. The conference also agreed that the Central Bank

should consult the commercial banks as well before implementing any drastic changes in the monetary policy concerning banks.

This looked very much like an inspired leak to show that the Treasury was asserting itself over the Central Bank.

The cold war between the Central Bank and the Treasury also has been going on for sometime. In the latest report of the Central Bank, which was released on May 1, the statistical impact of some of the radical policies of the Government were spotlighted with comments which in many cases were not called for, and this had no doubt incensed Ministers like Mr. Kobbekaduwa. Earlier the Daily News, had focussed attention on another aspect of the same cold war. One of the ticklish subjects centred round a Central Bank demand for a ceiling on loans to Corporations. The Daily News of May 12 had reported:

Unrealistic import policies inefficient management and consumer resistance to higher prices have been mainly responsible for the financial plight of many public corporations. The Central Bank which makes this statement in its report for 1974 has urged a ceiling on loans to corporations. The Central Bank has stated that the management of money and credit would be increasingly difficult if corporations continue to finance their business out of bank credit on the scale they have done in 1974. The total volume of credit could have been maintained at a much lower level with realistic import programs, and better coordination among institutions dealing with production and sales. The Central Bank states that the credit requirements of state corporations went up sharply with the increase in the price of imported raw materials and the need to finance the operating losses of a number of these enterprises. Bank credit to government corporations reached an all-time high and amounted to Rs. 1060.1 million at the end of 1974 which represents an increase of Rs. 641.5 million over the level in 1973.

The largest borrowers were those which were mostly entirely dependent on imports. In some cases even though the physical volume of

imported raw materials and other products fell, increased credit requirements rose as a result of the sharp increase in import prices. Out of total commercial bank credit, advances to state corporations at the end of 1974 amounted to more than 30 per cent. Although most of the corporations are engaged in the manufacture of basic goods and the provision of essential services, and their products are saleable, yet they seem to have made liberal use of credit because they have had access to such facilities with relative ease. To some extent the liberal extension of credit to corporations has had the effect of restricting the supply of credit to other essential activities in the private sector and has considerably reduced the liquidity of the banking system.

On May 15, the Daily News reverted to the same matter under the heading CREDIT SQUEEZE HITS CORPORATIONS. It was clear that the credit spree which the Corporations had enjoyed in the last four years had begun to boomerang on the monetary system of the country.

Public corporations facing a major credit squeeze by commercial banks have requested the Government to intervene on their behalf. The threat of a cut-back on credit facilities extended to corporations by the banks has in recent times been made real by Central Bank measures regarding availability of credit to the commercial banks themselves. The measures have been followed by limitations on credit to the corporations already imposed by their banks. The Central Bank believes that some commercial banks have reached the point of a liquidity crisis following excessive loans, overdrafts, advances and other credit facilities to corporations by drawing on Central Bank credit facilities instead of mobilising deposits.

One corporation alone is reported to have drawn credit to the extent of Rs. 230 million and is seeking further facilities for Rs. 50 million. Stocks held by this corporation have not been moving because of high prices. Other corporations too are faced with similar problems and are seeking further credit facilities. However, some banks have informed corporations that

not only will there be no additional credit facilities for them but even the overdraft facilities enjoyed by them earlier would be reduced. One corporation has been informed that its overdraft facility of Rs. 35 million has been reduced to Rs. 20 million. This corporation which is a trading organisation and requires overdraft facilities for its indenting business, now finds that it will have to restrict foreign purchases in future. This would mean a possible shortage of the commodities distributed by it. Manufacturing corporations too, which have had to meet higher costs fear they will be adversely affected if credit facilities were restricted.

In its report for 1974, the Central Bank said that the management of money and credit would be increasingly difficult if corporations continued to finance their business out of bank credit on the scale they reached in 1974. The report said that unrealistic import policies, inefficient management and consumer resistance to higher prices were responsible for the financial plight of many public corporations. The report urged a ceiling on loans to corporations.

While a full and careful review of the latest Report of the Central Bank is called for, there is no doubt that this Report has departed from some of the very high standards which these Reports had maintained in the past. Some of the comments, based on inferences of a partisan nature, reveal immaturity and lopsidedness. For instance, there are many valid criticisms against the manner in which Land Reform was carried out, but the matters spotlighted in the Central Bank Report are such that knowledgeable persons cannot agree with them. There are so many other lapses in the Central Bank's latest report that one cannot blame Minister Kobbekaduwa for his outburst which should really have been against the Report. And, in many places, instead of the cautious language of the economist evaluating developments, the Report lapses into semi-agitational language of a soap box precariously perched on rightwing logic.

BUT THESE UNFORTUNATE SHORTCOMINGS of the Central Bank's report cannot hide the fact that the cold war over the Revenue or Finance Bill still remains unresolved. Reference was made in the last issue of *Tribune* to the fact that nearly seven months after the last Budget the revenue proposals have not been given legislative sanction. This will be one of the most important matters the PM will have to solve after her return.

She will have an equally difficult task in answering the protest letter lodged by the US Embassy in regard to the charges and allegations made by the Minister of Finance in regard to the PL 480 funds withdrawn by the US Embassy and deposited in two or more commercial banks at interest rates very much higher than what was paid by the Central Bank or the Treasury. Dr. Perera had alleged that the US had withdrawn these large sums into order to finance reactionary political movements and thereby interfere in the internal affairs of the country. In a press note the US Embassy had denied these allegations and had asserted that the money had been deposited in wellknown commercial banks.

In spite of these denials, the LSSP paper *Janadina* and the SLFP-based weekly *Janavegaya* have insisted that the charges were well-founded and that it was for the US Embassy to say what they had done with the funds they had withdrawn. Obviously, these two papers did not seem to believe the story that the funds had been only transferred to commercial banks. The *Janadina* argument was that the USA's hands were soiled with CIA activities in many parts of the world and that, therefore, the local US Embassy should be presumed to be guilty (on the *prima facie* evidence that the money was withdrawn from governmental custody) until the contrary was proved by the suspect. The *Aththa* had followed the same line and logic.

The Acting Prime Minister, Mr. Maithripala Sonanayake, had left the matter alone although he had an opportunity of intervening when the matter was raised in the Assembly by J. R. Jayawardene. He no doubt believed that this was a matter the Prime Minister should handle personally. How she will

deal with it is anybody's guess. But there is no doubt that the entire Western world is watching this matter with great care and attention. If she tilted to the Minister of Finance too heavily and refused to accept the explanation offered by the US Embassy, it will mean a major break with all the western capitalist countries especially those who are members of the Consortium group. If, on the other hand, she fell heavily on the side of the US Embassy and readily accepted their explanations, the Leftwing forces in the UF will attempt to start a campaign that she was deserting the Revolution. But she cannot overlook known facts in order to appease the Left which has made these charges, unless the charges can be brought home by those who have made them. The Minister of Finance has certainly confronted the Prime Minister with a ticklish problem from which he hopes to derive political benefit whatever be the decision she takes.

A CONSTITUTIONAL PUZZLE of the highest magnitude as to how a Minister can be removed from office under the Republic Constitution of Sri Lanka has been agitating political circles for a long time. This is also a matter which has been under discussion among constitutional law experts for sometime. Each time there is a demand from one quarter or another for the sacking of this Minister or that, this question has propped up in the highest legal circles in the country.

The present Constitution of the Republic of Sri Lanka, mainly devised by LSSP's Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, has many unique features and one of them is that the Prime Minister cannot remove any Minister or even compel the Minister to resign. In fact, it was argued that a Minister cannot be removed unless the Assembly is dissolved for a general election. This provision is contrary to and different from what is found in all other Constitutions of countries which have adopted a parliamentary system—because it is a universal rule that a Prime Minister can change her Ministers as often as thought fit—as long as the PM commanded a majority. In Sri Lanka, this is not the case, and there have been heated arguments in responsible quarters about this matter.

However, many jurists seem to be of the view that though the Prime Minister cannot directly remove a Minister, the President of the Republic was empowered under the Constitution to do so. If the Assembly was dissatisfied with such Presidential action, the only remedy was to move a no-confidence motion against the President which must receive a two-thirds majority to be effective. This view now seems to be accepted by many who had previously thought that Ministers were unremovable—their security of tenure in office was guaranteed from one election until the next unless removed through an election petition, or death or some other similar cause. Though this security of tenure for Ministers may be a good thing in some ways, there is no doubt that this provision does not seem to help a Prime Minister to run a government in the way desired.

Though the present Constitution vests the Prime Minister with enormous powers in regard to a large number of matters, but in regard to having a team that can pull together, the PM's hands are tied—once the PM has made the original choice of Ministers there was no question of changing them except, perhaps, via the President. Under our present Constitution, Ministers can cling to the PM like a clot of original sin, unless the President was inclined to intervene. This is an unsatisfactory situation and there is doubt that this is one of the matters in our Constitution which needs amendment at an early date. There are also many other provisions in the Constitution which are crying aloud for amendment.

However, it is not likely that there will be occasion to remove any Minister until the next General Election. At present the discussions about the removal of Ministers from office is purely an academic exercise among legal pundits.



CHRONICLE

MAY 10—16

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

SATURDAY, MAY 10: Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, presently in Guyana said that Sri Lanka was chosen as the site for next year's non-aligned summit meeting because it conforms strictly to the principles of non-alignment: Mrs. Bandaranaike noting that Sri Lanka earned 60 per cent of its foreign exchange from tea exports, said that world tea prices were not in line with prices for the goods this country imported: she stressed that like Guyana Sri Lanka was not asking for charity from the developed countries but for better prices for the commodities—CDN. According to diplomatic sources Algeria, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Morocco and Cuba were among leading non-aligned nations which have expressed a desire to make the non-aligned nations Summit in Sri Lanka next year a success—CDN. The Government Parliamentary Group will meet shortly to discuss a proposal that any member of the NSA who resigns a seat voluntarily should be disqualified from re-contesting the seat at a by-election during the life of the current Parliament—CDN. The Parliamentary Group of the UNP met and decided that none of its members would accept the post of Leader of the Opposition after the President of the party and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, resigned the seat—CDN. The annual report of the Central Bank for 1974 said that 60 per cent of the total capacity in the industrial sector remained unutilised: the high unutilised capacity may have been partly due to the shortage of raw materials and partly due to the high cost of production—CDM. Following Police investigations into recent incidents of sabotage in the oil well site at Pesalai strict vigilance was being kept on anti-national forces in the country—VK. Judging by incidents in Chile, Indo China and India the explanation given by the American Embassy in Colombo regarding the withdrawals it has made from the PL 480 funds could not be accepted—JD. Seven sterling company estates in Sri Lanka have been sold by British firms owning these to a Malaysian firm without the knowledge of the Sri Lanka authorities—ATH. Governments of the 33 Commonwealth nations have delivered a strong warning to beleaguered white-ruled Rhodesia to negotiate a peaceful transfer of power to the black majority or face economic strangulation and a renewed guerilla war. In India a committee of inquiry has recommended the immediate takeover of multi-national drug companies in a report put before the Parliament. China is to establish official relations with the European Common Market and will give positive consideration to a trade agreement according to EEC Commissioner, Sir Christopher Soames.

SUNDAY, MAY 11: In view of the proposals to amend the Constitution prohibiting a member of Parliament from recontesting the seat which he has vacated there are now indications that Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, President of the UNP and Leader of the

Opposition, may not resign his seat in the NSA—ST. As a result of the Kalu Ganga floods 5,000 people were rendered homeless in the Ratnapura district: the Department of Social Services has estimated the damage in the region of Rs. 1 million—ST. Mr. Maithripala Senanayake speaking at a meeting in Jaffna said that politicians had created a "communal palmyrah curtain" to separate the Sinhala and Tamil communities in the country: he said that those responsible for this were found on both sides of the fence and communal harmony was important for national prosperity—CO. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, had formal talks with Guyana Prime Minister, Mr. Forbes Burnham: the discussion lasted more than three hours and the non-aligned summit to be held in Colombo figured prominently in the discussion—CO. Owing to the occurrence of two eclipses in the month of May there will be a terrible impact on the weather: the first eclipse, a partial one, occurred today and the other one a fortnight later on Vesak full moon day: both eclipses will not be visible to Sri Lanka: heavy showers accompanied by thunder and lightning will result in floods in several parts of the country—CO. The committee appointed to probe and recommend ways to increase the funds to administrate local government institutions has recommended that a charge of 50 cents must be levied as tax from persons attending weddings in hotels and other public places—LD. The Government has decided to seek the help of the Army to fight the malaria epidemic that is gaining ground in recent months—CO. Speaking to a delegation of Korean officials and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, American President Ford said that set backs in Indo China had not weakened commitments to friends and allies around the world. UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim said that if North Vietnam made an application it will be considered for observer status in the UN.

MONDAY, MAY 12: According to the World Bank's latest report on Sri Lanka's economy the country can easily overcome the current problems—severe recession and economic atagnation—and a pessimistic view of the situation was not warranted: the report further says that the country's resource base, human as well as material, is unquestionably capable of supporting a much higher standard of living than what prevails now—CDN. The Government is negotiating the purchase of three sterling estates which cover a total extent of 3399 acres owned by a subsidiary of Messrs Brooke Bonds Ltd—CDN. At a discussion that lasted over three hours between the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, and Guyanese Prime Minister, Mr. Forbes Burnham, it was decided that Guyana would buy tea from Sri Lanka while Sri Lanka would buy Guyanese timber, rice and sugar—CO. Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, will shortly pay an official visit to China at the invitation of the Government of the People's Republic of China—CO. Implementation of Worker's Council decisions enabled the C.T.B. to earn over Rs. 2 million last year—TOC. Selected school cadet officers will be trained by the Police to prevent students from being lured into secret societies formed by subversive elements: already 17 such officers from various schools were trained—CO. The Action Committee of the TUF has confirmed its earlier decision to launch a civil disobedience procession and rally on May 22,

Republic Day—VK. Addressing a meeting at the Navarangahala Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and Construction, said that it will be impossible to achieve socialism if the private sector is allowed to thrive and this should not be confined only to slogans—ATH. The Foreign Office decided that, in future the country's missions abroad should be manned only by Ceylonese—LD. The Soviet Union, called on all peoples of the world, Parliaments and governments of all countries, to put an end for good to the dangerous policy of the cold war, to stop interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.

TUESDAY, MAY 13: Mr. Edward Ennals, Minister of State of the British Foreign Office, attended a luncheon in honour of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, Prime Minister, who arrived in London yesterday from Guyana on a private visit—CDN. Last year 50,000 persons were found employment in Government institutions—CDN. According to Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Minister of Public Administration, Local Government and Home Affairs, Kachcheries will soon undergo a functional change by which food production will be their sole area of operation: collecting revenues which was hitherto done by kachcheries will be handed over to state run banking institutions—CDN. Following Customs finding that people sent spices as gifts to India mainly to buy Indian currency, the Government has imposed severe restrictions on the sending of spices as gifts to persons in India—CDM. Customs took into custody eight exporters of textile garments following a detection of an alleged large scale smuggling and foreign exchange racket between the Maldives and Sri Lanka—CDM. The Ministry of Information announced that Sri Lanka had entered into a tieup with 'Tanjug', Yugoslavian National News Agency, to disseminate news of Sri Lanka through its network now serving 22 countries—CDN. Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, along with Queen Juliana of Netherlands has been invited to address the annual conference of the International Labour Organisation to be held in Geneva from June 1 to 25: this invitation has been made in view of Women's International Year, which is being celebrated this year—CO. The Presidents of all Campuses of the University of Sri Lanka will meet shortly to discuss the plan of admitting more students on the results of last year's GCE (A Level) Examination—TOC. The Government has accepted a recommendation of a Ministerial Sub Committee that wider powers must be given to Worker's Advisory Committees: this proposal will soon become law—DM. A Cambodian war ship seized a US merchant vessel and its American crew in an incident branded by President Ford as an "act of piracy": the White House said the 70,000 ton container vessel "Mayaguez" was fired on, boarded and seized 60 miles off the Cambodian coast in the Gulf of Thailand and later forced to sail to Kompong Som: President Ford demanded the immediate release of the ship and warned that "failure to do so would have the most serious consequences." The Pathet Lao were in effective control of Laos yesterday after the crumbling of the rightist faction of the coalition government.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14: Mr. J. R. Jayawardene Leader of the Opposition and President of the UNP resigned his seat in the NSA: Mr. Jayawardene's letter

of resignation of his Colombo South seat was handed over to the Clerk of the NSA yesterday evening: Mr Jayawardene issued a statement to the press this morning explaining the reasons for his resignation—TOC & CO. A National Committee on Food and Nutrition, the highest official body in this sphere, will be set up: the Committee will consist of secretaries of six ministries and will monitor all aspects of food nutrition and agricultural policy such as production, processing, pricing, marketing, purchasing capacities and the interaction of other development projects: the FAO, the biggest UN Agency will send a distinguished task force on a preliminary mission—CDN. Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Minister of Public Administration, Local Government and Justice said that he will seek Government permission to increase the strength of the anti-bribery squad to five times its present cadre of 15—CDN. The Christian Peace Conference composed of representatives of twenty countries has decided at its last meeting held in the GDR to donate a day's pay for the World Fertilizer Fund and the first assistance under the project to be given to Sri Lanka as it was Mrs. Bandaranaike who first mooted the plan to set up this Fund—CDM. In its latest report the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has stated that Sri Lanka is one of those countries worst hit by the recent adverse developments in the world economy—CDM. Dr. Premadasa Udagama, Secretary to the Ministry of Education and Director General of Education, giving evidence at the Commission inquiring into recent incidents of alleged indecent ragging at the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka, said that selections to the maths teachers course were based entirely on merit and no political influence was used—CO. The Government will soon appoint Special Commission to resolve the anomalies of the recommendations of the L. B. de Silva Salaries Commission—DM. Following the increase in gold smuggling in airports the Customs decided to make use the services of trained Police dogs to nab smugglers—VK. The US began airlifting more than 1000 marines to Thailand for a possible mission to rescue the US merchant ship "Mayaguez" seized by Cambodia. UK Government said that it will not supply arms or money for guerillas in Rhodesia.

THURSDAY, MAY 15: Mr. P. R. Ratnayake, Deputy Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, who heads a group of UF MPs in their resolution that the Constitution should be amended to prevent an MP resigning his seat in the NSA to contest for a period of time said that the resignation of Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, Leader of the Opposition, did not concern him at all—CDM. In the inaugural issue of a new Sinhala journal *Mudal* which means money, published by the Ministry of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera, Minister of Finance, says that it is the government's duty to act boldly when taking unpopular measures for the welfare of the country—CDM. Commercial Banks credit squeeze has forced several problems for public corporations and corporations hit by these squeeze requested the Government to intervene—CDN. Despite the decrease in the volume of purchase by 3 per cent the total value of paddy purchased by the Paddy Marketing Board increased by 59 per cent from Rs. 458 million in 1973 to Rs. 728 million in 1974—CDM. Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, President of the UNP, submitted his resignation of the Colombo South seat in the NSA following a decision taken by the

Executive Committee of the UNP—VK. US aircraft attacked and destroyed three Cambodian patrol ships in the gulf of Thailand: Government sources declined to say whether the action was the beginning of an American operation to free the US merchant ship 'Mayaguez' captured two days ago by Cambodian gun boats in the Gulf of Thailand. France recognised the new Government of South Vietnam and will soon exchange ambassadors. Rightist forces in Laos looked like loosing their last stronghold as the coalition Cabinet prepared for a meeting which is likely to strengthen the pro-Communist Patet Lao's control in the country. The *Washington Post* reported that Syria has promised to send its air force into Jordan to provide air cover Jordanian troops in return for King Hussein's commitment to join any new war between the Arabs and Israel. Chinese Vice Premier said that when an American ship invaded Cambodia's territorial waters Cambodia took legitimate measures against to safeguard her state sovereignty. Lebanon warned that it would have to call for action by the Security Council if Israel continued to violate Lebanese sovereignty.

FRIDAY, MAY 16: The World Bank has said that despite substantial action taken by the Government to reduce subsidy on food items the present magnitude of subsidy still clearly overtakes the limited financial resources of the country: the Bank suggested further action on food rationing and greater selectivity in relation to needy groups in order to reduce the massive commitment—CDN. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, is due to return from her current visit abroad on Tuesday, May 20—CDN. Since 1966, thirty

five tourist hotels had been built in various parts of the country at a cost of Rs. 141.69 million: of this sum the foreign exchange component was Rs. 40.51 million—CDN. The Committee appointed by Local Government Minister for the consolidation of the main ordinance governing local government into a Local Authority Law had recommended wider general powers for local bodies which would enable them to go into new ventures such as the establishment of experimental farms, cinemas, tourist promotion and set up schools for pre-school children—CDN & CDM. Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa, Minister Agriculture and Lands, speaking at a meeting said that certain reactionary officials in the Central Bank were trying to balk the progress of the UF Government and warned that such reactionary officials will be driven out—CDM. The Sri Lanka Medical Association warned Colombo's residents about the condition of the drinking water which it claimed is polluted—CDN. According to a report by a group of British Members of Parliament published in London, workers on Sri Lanka tea estates suffer malnutrition, poor living conditions and rising infant mortality—CDN. A Labour Tribunal ordered payment of Rs. 164,000 as compensation to eight employees dismissed from the Lake House after the broadhasing of this newspaper establishment—ATH. An American task force, spear-headed by assault marines who stormed into Cambodian soil recovered the merchant ship Mayaguez and its 40 crew: China accused the US of committing an 'outright act of piracy by bombing Cambodian territory and shipping': explaining the Mayaguez incident.

LETTER FROM MALDIVES

The "Censor Commission"

"Tribune",
43, Dawson Street,
Colombo-2.

Dear Mr. Editor,

I am surely surprised to the very foundation to hear of that you have spent so much of time and so much of valuable space on mere speculations in your poor "Tribune" when ink and paper are so precious in Lanka. It is indeed under the prevailing circumstances in Lanka Island a grave crime to import press materials while the entire population is being fed by foodstuffs gifted from various friendly countries: Therefore, it is wondered why the importation of press material does not come under the notorious emergency regulations.

In a place where anything and everything is contraband and considered luxury item, more specifically at a time when Lanka Island authorities are so strongly averse to press to suppress the real inside stories and what-ever bits of news that appears in Lanka Island press are strictly censored, one wonders why Mr. Editor you are permitted to use so much of space on mere speculations.

THE MANY LANKANS who continue to flow into the Republic of Maldives in search of better prospects voluntarily come forward to fill the pages of the intelligent reports. Many fantastic stories of maladministration and malpractices and commitments of shameful acts by the higher-ups are authoritatively described by the

Lankans. Of late Mr. Editor they talk of trouble brewing in the higher-up circles and also particularly in the big family circle too. They describe that these incidents are due to one trying to gain more power and money than the other, while the hungry big watch dogs are patiently awaiting for an opportunity.

'Male'
Republic of Maldives

13th April, 1975.

These are of course just a mere fragment of revealable information. There are hosts of other stories that would indeed be news to you and food for foreign journalists. But we feel unlike you, we must have patience in with-holding these stories. But Mr. Editor, be assured if you wish us to come out with the information unknown to you, but definitely which has connection with what is really happening in the island of Lanka, we would not hesitate to do so. But the big question is will it cover the pages of "Tribune"? Would you Mr. Editor wish to forego your bread and butter? What you are doing today is just what you are being asked to do by the Censor commission. If you happen to cross over the border line just this side or the other we are sure the big lock and key will wash off the poor TRIBUNE with no one to lament but you Mr. Editor.

So Mr. Editor, the world knows that you are not devoting so much of precious and hard to get materials on speculations and guess work for nothing, but a mighty purpose behind it. Obviously you and your masters are getting nervous about and would wish to get some facts

Letter

about the happenings in the countries around you.

Your revelation of Mr. Bandaranaike's theory of claiming Maldives on the basis of supposed language affinity has been laughed off. One wonders why Mr. Bandaranaike's idea of expansion had not gone a bit further. Well, the world knows, I believe Mr. Bandaranaike had known it too, geologically, geographically and linguistically big Lanka Island has a greater affinity with tiny India and therefore why didn't Mr. Bandaranaike had thought of claiming tiny India on the foregoing basis? He should have despatched the rusty old un-seaworthy vessel "Gajabahu" there. I would advise you Mr. Editor, to keep these Bandaranaike's theories and policies under your hat lest you will fall into greater trouble. This time it may be a "Jaffnadesh". I am sure of one thing and that is one dash will sweep through the entire Lanka Island:

Do you Mr. Editor think that God has given brains to the Lankans only. If not, I would advise you not to make a fool of yourself. But on the other hand if you do believe that others have no brains, well, go ahead with your nonsense. You can surely for the time being dance to the songs of the press commission with no one to laud over, but many to laugh at.

Here is a little problem of algebra for you to solve.

A is trying to boss over B. C and D are travelling opposite direction away from B.

How would you Mr. Editor effect a reconciliation of AB and CD?

Wishing you and your fair Lanka over-flowing of Milk and Honey, and the long outstanding cordial relationship between the two countries continued un-impaired progress.

Yours sincerely,

A WELLWISHER.

NOTE BY EDITOR

WE WERE NOT able to publish this unauthenticated letter from Male earlier owing to the exigencies of space. Our readers can judge for themselves the attitudes betrayed by the writer. The burden of his song is that Tribune must lay off any comments about happenings and developments in the Maldives because the affairs of Sri Lanka were in a mess and also

because this country went round the world with a begging owl. With the foreign exchange shortage the country is afflicted with, the Maldivian letter-writer thinks that the import of all paper and printing materials into Sri Lanka should be banned "under the notorious emergency regulations" so that papers like the Tribune will be compelled to fold up.

The juiciest tidbit in the letter is the suggestion: that everything in the Tribune about the Maldives was written at the instance (no doubt at bayonet-point) of what the letter-writer calls the "CENSOR COMMISSION": that if the Tribune did not scrupulously follow the diktat of this Censor Commission, those responsible for the Tribune would lose their "bread and butter" and also find themselves behind bars. The stories retailed by some Sri Lankans, especially those whose seek high remuneration jobs in the (Maldives, about the corruption and terrible conditions in this island, according to the Maldivian commentator are not reflected in the newspapers published in Colombo—also no doubt because of the Censor Commission."

This is not the first time, (nor will it probably be the last), that Tribune will receive intimidatory threats that we should shut up. Threats regardless Tribune will continue to publish interpretative analysis on all matters of interest to our readers including the Maldives. We will complete the series on the Maldivian Mystery, as space becomes available and, we also hope to devote a little space to the one and only newspaper published in the Maldives.

FOR NEWS

BEHIND THE NEWS

read

TRIBUNE

regularly

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—33

Operation May Day

By Herbert Keuneman

IT IS AN interesting, though perhaps tactless reflexion that 'Mayday' (m' aidez) constitutes a code signal 'of extreme distress.'

Distress is the emotion the organizers of this year's tamasha are least likely to be feeling: in fact, there was little actual distress this May Day, save amongst members of the general public who counted (for normal transport) on the buses of which they own a putative share, if they wanted however legitimately to get elsewhere than Colombo; and for radio listeners who counted on the SLBC, in which they also have a putative share, to feed them a more varied diet than 14 hours or more of painfully repetitive verbiage which turned out to consist more of exhortation than commentary and propaganda than exhortation. But maybe it should be suggested to the producers of that undeniably well-organized celebration that all was not precisely as their euphoric judgement may have led them to conclude.

For instance: there seems to have been a massive disproportion between the number of persons conveyed to Colombo by Rally-bespoke transport and the number who actually attended the Rally or had the least political interest in it. The following conversation, with a girl I shall call Ratna (19) who lives in one of the 'Ehetuwewa' villages, is a true report and, I judge, a not unrepresentative one. (I do not charge it was a representative one either: certainly there were tarunayo and taruniyo of the kind the radio was at such pains to suggest were the only kind flooding the streets of Colombo that day.) But, if the villages of which Ehetuwewa is the centre are anything to go by, the radio picture was out of proportion; as far as a considerable rural part of the Island was concerned, rather grotesquely so. From Ehetuwewa, certainly there was whom I may name the 'Lalita' type to keep the account

in the feminine gender, though gender had nothing at all to do with it—who made the pilgrimage out of political motivation though with barely a thought, if any, of 'working-class solidarity.' But the 'Ratna' type constituted a considerable majority.

RATNA: 'Will you lend me five rupees?'

MYSELF: 'I probably will. Would you tell me what for?'

I want makc, that May Day trip to Colombo.

Won't your father cough up, then?'

'Well, *malli* wants to go, too, and Father, says he isn't going to send two children to *natanna* (disport themselves) in a *pelapaliya* (procession).

'Are you going to join the procession Ratna? I'm happy to hear that.

'I don't know if anybody's going to join it, not especially...I suppose we shall..Actually (In a sudden burst of candour) I want to see Colombo. *Malli* has seen it; but I never have; and I'm quite old now.'

'It'll hardly be the best day for seeing Colombo! It isn't likely there'll even be buses to take you where you want. You could collect a few friends and make a special trip and see Colombo any time.'

'Yes. But this is the only time I'd get to see it for four rupees!'

Now, that raises an interesting side-issue. Why four rupees? Those on the buses from Galgamuwa, in the same electorate, paid only Rs. 2/50. Yet Ehetuwewa by the shortest bus route and Galgamuwa are equidistant from Colombo. And even the longer route through Galgamuwa, is only eight miles longer. Did the local agent make something off this? The matter is of, so to speak, national interest, for every citizen whether pro-May Day or not has subsidized those May Day buses.

MYSELF, I am pro-May Day (though the mere protestation could convince nobody) and I can even find some justification for subsidizing the political education of a people even willynilly, as the May Day, Rally was intended to do. But I am

rather strongly anti-subsidizing private pockets.

There are always questions to these political picnics, and not always only financial ones. Some months ago several lorryloads of girl-victims were transported to Srimapura in the Walawe valley: it was said, to attract settlers to a girls' agricultural colony the Government was setting up. I call them victims from the experience of two lorryloads of girls which left from a single centre I know about. A fare was demanded of Rs. 15 each, but for some reasons all but Rs. 4/50 was handed back. None of this, of course, was for meals *en route* which were not supplied: the girls were advised to provide their own. Two packed lorries left about 2.0 p.m. and reached Srimapura after midnight (and if you have ever travelled in the back of a lorry, with no view out save over the tailgate, you will realize how educative and even comfortable the trip must have been! The girls slept what remained of the night in a schoolroom and the next morning performed *shramadana* in aid of the 'food drive': half hoed some chili beds, and the rest helped plant some *tambili*, in the War Against Hunger! About 4.0 that afternoon they climbed into their lorries again and got home at dawn. Still wondering why I describe them as victims? Well, the punch line of the story is still to come.

Despite their bad journey and footing contribution on the food front, several of the girls remained sufficiently un-disillusioned to wish to take Government up on its offer of a quarter-acre of homestead land in the valley, and waited on their Member of Parliament for the necessary recommendation. But the MP had gone as far as he ever meant: he had shown himself a Good Boy by his massive contribution to the official advertising effort—these I speak of were but two of the lorry loads he had loyally despatched—and now it was time to look to realities. High time: it was a moment when there were rumours of early elections in the air. 'What?' he roared, 'send all of you girls to settle 200 miles away and lose all your votes when the time comes?' And the girls were too cowed to make the obvious answer.

True? Gospel true!

But let us get back to our May Day buses; the one, in particular, that Ratna and her brother travelled in.

PACKED TO STANDING, the bus left at dawn. They rendezvoused with others from the same (Yapahuwa) electorate at Maho, and then with others yet at Kurunegala. This was about 9.0. They did not, however reach Colombo until around 2.0 p.m. When they did get there there was no one to tell them where next to go or what to do: perhaps, since they were an un-uniformed and not very impressive group, there was no place for them? All the instruction they got was from the bus crew, who plainly announced that they were pulling out and for home by 6.0 o' clock.

Nobody seems to have been greatly disappointed at playing no part in the Rally: in small unattended uninformed lots into which the busload split they wandered about the Fort and the Galle Face areas and formed, doubtless, part of the 'sea of heads' about which the radio commentators kept bursting into such frequent ecstasies. No doubt there was a sea of heads. And no doubt this was the most impressive local May Day Rally yet. I am, only, angry that—but for the purely self-seeking of too many indolent and cynical 'leaders' hypocritical for power's sake if not downright dishonest for money's sake—the dissipated tides of that 'sea' might have been harnessed. At least a beginning might have been made; for the circumstances could not have been more auspicious. But no.

Judge what the Ehetuwewa busload gained from or contributed to the occasion. One small group had a good look at the outside of the Harbour and what they could see of the inside from the outside. Another told me they saw the House of Parliament (but they had had no idea they were anywhere near Galle Face.) A third group knew enough to enquire for Galle Face and they went and looked at the platform for the speakers at the Rally and claim they saw my cousin Pieter ensconced there, an experience they apparently found rapturously rewarding..though they can look at me, with no trouble at all, three

In A Colonization Scheme

times a day! A fourth—these were the sophisticated ones—went to the pictures and missed the bus home; but they wangled their way aboard a bus from Dodangaslanda and so got back free as far as Kurunegala in the end. Nobody *natuva* in the the *pelapaliya* or missed their bus for the sake of a single speaker at the Rally.

THE LAST EHETUWEWA stragglers that did make it reached their bus before nightfall; but it was nearly 9.0 by the time enough buses (all of them now homeward bound after a quite pointless expedition) had pulled out of the parking area to release theirs.

Naturally, no hint of all this wastage of human and financial—and transport—resources came over on 'the media', least of all the radio. In the circumstances, it was not to be expected that it should. But (while the 'commentators' can only be commended for their marathon effort itself I think the radio, which reaches a far greater public than the press, of course, could have handled its assignment better. I mean more convincingly.

I have remarked already on the proclivity it displayed—indeed, habitually displays—toward propaganda rather than reportage: I cannot help feeling that the latter, skilfully done, would even prove more effective than suddenly trotting out for the Day and a couple of ~~days~~ before it the long-quiesscent and now again stagnated bruit, of OIL, as though it were already not only a *fait accompli* but *accompli*, unaided, by the 'workers' alone! than a sudden popular identification with the Viet Cong victory only after—*dinum-pita-ta hoiya* had proved itself unequivocally victorious! than carefully-rehearsed 'spontaneous' ejaculations of '*aiyo!* what enthusiasm!—you will note it was the Sinhala broadcast I listened to—'*aiyo!* what pageantry!' '*aiyo!* what multitudes!' '*aiyo!* what power!' (It was not merely that '*aiyo!*' was not the *mot juste*: certainly theatrical, almost tragic. It was that hardly anybody was sold on the emotion meant to be engendered, after the third or fourth invocation. Most of us ended up a bit sggly about it. *aiyo!* what artificiality! *aiyo!* what exaggeration!) And oh! those recurrent 'rivers', of red and blue!

The fact is, though the villager may not know his way about Colombo, he does know his way about propagandist wiles; he can recognize manufactured emotion, for he so often resorts to the ploy himself.

Not that I suggest for a moment that the eloquent broadcasters were insincere in their private loyalties (to their parties, if not to 'solidarity!'). Indeed, early on, what commentary there was resolved itself time and again and clearly into competitive advertisement of the size and power of the red 'river' or the blue. That was a dead giveaway!

K A Z I — 8

In The Rajangana Area — iii

By ANATORY BUKOBA

March 20,

P. G. Wodehouse's *Pigs Have Wings* kept me from doing this last night. It was 10.30 p.m. when I started reading, and 11.30 p.m. when I stopped, and I thought I had better not burn someone else's, my host's, electricity writing. A tonic is that book. My farmer-friend in Rajangana, told me that he would like to die lauhjng. His friend told me that one of his own activities, back in his village, this friend's own village, is laughing with the other friends there: it kept them in good health. I came to the farm one day to find work was going on apace. Several kinds of cowpea had been planted. These have germinated. The ones sown too thickly will be planted out, transplanted, when the rains come. Maize has sprung up in places. The chillies planted in shady area have yet to bear. The capsicum has sprouted in its seed bed, but not the carrot. Some of the lettuce has appeared. Several other kinds of vegetable have been sown, but they have not all appeared yet. Clearing for sowing goes on, and some more gingelly has been got in, ready for sowing during the rains. *Watakka* seed has been planted. There was some rain, hence all this activity. As regards

the sowing that was done a star was made with a contour drain, when the ground was still soft. The clearing going on now is towards getting some of the declivities ready for turning into paddy fields, small ones along each *alla*, natural ones that they are.

My friend is now on his own again. He is not the only one so, others have told me. Some of these young farmers, who are all on their own, have been there, in the area, quite some time. Others moved in recently. Not all, and this is the case of the new arrivals, have been given formal possession of their land. The recognized practice is for the new ones to pay for the land, and they pay, in effect, for the work that the previous occupier has put in, and for what growing crops there are. There is always a house of sorts, too, quite good ones of the rough country type that one sees in the newer colonies, whenever these houses have not been government-built.

One of my friend's neighbours has a nicely planted field of vegetables. He has neither the services of a well or the river, and so it was all done with what rains there were. The other neighbour, two brothers, have been getting some of their land ready for sowing. These are all patches of the total area that was got ready for sowing some months ago, if you take the whole neighbourhood in, all that can be taken in with the eye. Apart from these patches, all the rest is a sea of grass, but there is no cattle, to speak of, to graze it. There is not much evidence, in the immediate neighbourhood, of people taking advantage of the government's relief construction work; you always hear of people doing it elsewhere. Mentioning this, reminds me, *Tribune* in its current issue, at the date of writing this, has touched upon about every aspect of agricultural policy, as followed in the last several years. It was done well, but it was, mainly, a historical document. I hope the University thinks about this when it starts casting about its honorary D.Ph's, or some good names may be left out.

The benefactor of this farmer-friend, of mine, has given him a present of all the tools, agricultural tools, on the farm. He has been encouraged to develop side,

lines to help bring in, expedite his own income. If this is successful, the benefactor will be able to help him in more meaningful ways, instead of the money just going in consumer expenditure. It will be interesting to know how the other single farmers manage. I must try to look into this, but I feel sure they all combine their farming with some efforts at business.

Independence Day, this year, brought four inches of rain at Kala Oya, more than three inches in about two hours during the day, and the rest at night. This was recorded accurately by a local farmer who keeps a daily check on what rainfall there is.

Time is drawing on, and I must try to get this finished by daylight. I have noticed, in these colonization schemes, that the colonists are often grouped together by the village or areas these families originally hail from. It helps, I think, to make them stable. It brings out the qualities of fortitude they have. They would be ashamed, I think, to give up to prove themselves less able to stick it out than their neighbours. There would be a kind of shame in going back to their villages; all would get to know about it, the extinction of all those brave hopes that they set out with. There would also be the question, of course, of a certain amount of mutual help, but I do not think this would play such a large part, since they would all be, fairly equally in the same boat, sinking, but, again, they would all know their neighbours and so there would be less chance of these neighbours taking advantage of any lack of vigilance on their part. This, I think, is important. This grouping together of people with similar backgrounds, from the same villages, would mean, too, that they would all receive more visitors, since a visitor for one family would surely bring news from home for the families in other houses. People would feel less cut off from their roots. They will be less lonely.

There are cases where children of families leave home without a word to their parents, and they stay away for months, sometimes, it would seem, for years. If this can happen in families, it is more likely to happen outside families, and it makes it difficult for a single

man, on his own, to take anyone on, either as friend, partner or employee. Yet people do take this risk, or many of them would not be able to manage at all. When a child or man leaves home in these circumstances, he does not even bother to write. Parents have to learn to live with this, those would have rather kept their children with them, and it happens too, in the best regulated families, else where.

Where I am writing this, there is a lot of noise going on, all child-

ren. They are all one big family, and yet none are related. I feel I should be out there with them, but this writing must be done. I usually write these notes away from the place which I write about. I feel that this way, I get more of a complete picture, or, at least, am able to present one. People, where I am now, were in Rajangana some time ago, or, at least passed through, and they saw some of the places I have been writing about.

AN EXPOSE

Local Collaborators Of Foreign Exploitation Of The Estates

TISSA BALASURIYA, O.M.I.

Director, Centre For Society and Religion

THE TERMINATION of the political rule by Britain over Sri Lanka in 1948 was not the end of the British colonial hold over our economy. They continued to dominate its commanding heights for many years: viz over tea and rubber plantations, over trade and certain industries. They still exercise a considerable influence over the economy, directly through their investments and trade and indirectly through the class of local collaborators whom they generated within our country. These allies of the foreign powers fought for political independence but were happy to continue to profit from the economic advantage which the colonial system gave them. This has been a quasi universal feature among modern colonial powers specially the British.

The British colonial rulers did not destroy the old aristocracy but gave them a subordinate status so that they would collaborate with them controlling the natives. In British India (including also the present Bangladesh and Pakistan) they built up a class of land tax collectors known as Zamindars. In time these Zamindaris came to be regarded as land owners who could extract rent from the farmers, and had to pay a part of it to the Central Government. The aim of the British, as expressed by Macaulay in 1833, was to develop through English education a class of people who would be British in mind and manners and Indian only in blood. This class was loyal to Britain and helped in the continued exploitation of the Indian Empire, while they obtained in return a share of its spoils. Post Independence land reforms in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan have not yet eliminated the impact of this class.

IN SRI LANKA a similar policy was followed specially after the Colebrooke reforms in the 1830s. English education gradually brought up a generation of Sinhalese and Tamils who were able to carry on the administration of the land in English for the ultimate advantage of the British. The first to benefit from this policy were the Burghers i.e. descendants of the Portuguese and especially of the Dutch. They were quite active in the work of government in the period after 1870. They were the first to desire a measure of participation in the governmental processes including the Legislative Council. By about

the end of the 19th century there were Sinhalese and Tamil families who were also coming up in the service of the British. Some of them were of the traditional upper classes of the Low Country and Kandyan regions, others rose up from the professions. Both got their share of reward from the government. We see then the rise of groups of families among the Sinhalese and the Tamils with a certain educational background and property ownership. To this category belonged the Bandaranaiques and the the Senanayakes as well as others such as C.H. de Soysa, Henry de Mels, James Peiris, Obey-

Brown Sahibs Still

sekera's, Abdul Caffoors, Macan Markars, F. R. S. Schrader, Vander Poortens, Rockwoods, A. E. de Silva, Leo de Croos, Perera-Abe-wardene, Namasivayams, N. Ratnasabapathy etc.

This group of first generation English educated Ceylonese were able to buy up properties, specially in the coconut areas and somewhat in rubber. These were a sort of enclosure movement in coconut in the Low Country districts. They were able to do so from their salaries and other earnings, particularly in relation to Tea and Rubber, which were the main sources of our country's income and Government's revenue and trade.

The study of the growth of the economic importance of the richer families in Sri Lanka will be very rewarding for an understanding of the class structure of our country.

The British were able to develop the tea industry and exploit the Kandyan peasantry and the imported labour because they obtained the support of the powerful Sinhalese, Tamils and later Muslim families for this process. In return these families of the upper classes and the lower middle class were given a share of the benefits of their exploitation. The labourers of Indian origin were kept at subsistence level physically and culturally, whereas the Sinhalese and Tamil urban middleclass got the main advantages of education, health service, transportation, commerce etc.

Thus our middleclass became the collaborators of the exploiting agencies and they continue to be so. They extracted the surplus from tea and rubber for the benefit of the big companies. In return they were given favourable conditions, specially among the higher echelons of this exploitative pyramid. The company directors or estate superintendents may get a salary of Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 5,000/- with a rent free bungalow, entertainment allowance, travelling allowance and sometimes even "home leave" in the "mother country." This continues even today so that the foreign companies can still buy up competent Ceylonese to their service.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM was developed in order to provide an

administrative cadre and a loyal service for the Imperial Government. Ceylonese who were employed in the plantations needed skills for controlling the Indian labour under inhuman conditions. Therefore their conscience had to be dulled concerning the exploitation and the semi-slave condition on the estates. The children of the affluent classes were well suited for this role. The school system provided the ethos for it. The mentality communicated in the schools was that of good British gentlemen who could get along with the foreigners, keeping the Indians in their low positions.

Christian schools too fitted into this pattern. Thus for instance in the teaching of religion there would be great concern of the teacher if a child stole a pencil. But neither the entire educational system nor the religious authorities reacted unfavourably against the stealing of half a million acres of land by the British and later the affluent Ceylonese from the poor people. For this was done "legally". Churches also thus fitted into the exploiting system; more so because the British trusted the Christians and the Tamils more than the Sinhala Buddhists. This favouritism towards minority communities is another tradition of imperial policy.

The schools provided the whole army of "clerical servants" that this system of exporting raw materials and importing finished goods required. This English educated lower middle class did not need any productive skills. It was sufficient if they were faithful clerks, typists, salesmen, storekeepers. The schools were so geared to this pattern of education that helped destroy the earlier productive

skills. The salary scale was such that the English educated westernized "clerical servant" received a bigger income than the farmer, carpenter or mason.

Statuswise too the difference was very much greater. The English educated person was a gentleman "Mahatmaya". The rural worker who produced the goods was one without much status as far as the socially influential groups were concerned. This system of serving the plantations and related agencies contributed much to the migration from the villages to the towns. The villages were neglected. Absentee landlords profited from the plantations in the countryside. The elite lived in the city; their ambition was to have a life style similar to that of their rulers and pay masters in Colombo and London.

THE EXPLOITATION of the plantations, especially tea, takes place both here in Sri Lanka and in foreign countries, particularly Britain. Exploitation takes place when the workers are deprived of the due share of the product of their labour, and some others take to themselves an undue proportion of it. The estate labourers are the main contributors to the value of the tea produced. Yet they get only about 80-85 cts per pound of Tea when the tea is sold in Sri Lanka for about Rs. 2/75 per lb. The distribution of earnings from Tea are estimated as follows for the better tea estates.

"Assuming a gross export sale price of Rs. 2/75 per lb. (market average of Rs. 2/25 plus -/50 cents for export duty and cesses) the distribution would be somewhat as follows:-

| | | | |
|---|-----------|----------------|------------|
| | | (cts. per lb.) | |
| Estate cosst—Labour | | 80 | 29% |
| Subordinate Staff | | 10 | " |
| Executive Staff | | 10 | " |
| Materials & outside services | | 50 | 25% |
| | | <hr/> 150 | |
| Depreciation, Agency Charges, Directors, Audit etc. | | 15 | 6% |
| Government Levies etc. | | 165 | 60% |
| Ad Valorem Sales Tax | 20 cts/lb | | |
| Export Duty & Cesses | 50 cts/lb | | |
| Income Tax | | | |
| (50% of profit) | 20 cts/lb | | |
| Dividend Tax 1/3 | 6 cts/lb | 96 | 35% |
| Shareholders Dividend, say, | | 14 | 5% |
| | | <hr/> 275 | <hr/> 100% |

Extract from "The Tea Plantation Industry" by C. Mm. Abeysekera in *Management Accountant—Ceylon*, July-Sept. 1972.

It will be seen that the workers are given a minimum—their wage being at present about Rs. 5/- for man and Rs. 3/75 for a woman. The Estate Executive Staff (Superintendent and Asst. Superintendents) get 10 cts. per lb.—with salaries ranging from Rs. 1000 to about Rs. 3000 plus other allowance and facilities. The Agency Houses get about 5 cts. per lb. Director of Agency Houses obtain anything between Rs. 3000 to Rs. 15,000 per month as salary, fees and bonus. But the story is much worse when we consider the price paid for the by the consumer in foreign countries. Ceylon tea—sometimes blended with other even inferior teas, fetch anything between Rs. 8 to Rs. 16/- per lb. in different markets in Britain, Western Europe, North America, Pakistan, the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand. Here the difference in value of Rs. 5 to Rs. 12 or more goes principally to the shipping, insurance, packaging, wholesale and retail distributors. These lines are also inter related with the local Agency Houses and the shareholders of big holding companies like Brooke Bonds and Liptons. Hence the share obtained by the foreign owners and dealers is several times more than what the labourers obtain. (Concerning the interlocking directorates cf. Nalini Jeyapalan and A. S. Jayawardene report on "Some Aspects of the Tea Industry"—a Central Bank publication.)

The operation of this system which benefits mainly the absentee owners, and monopolistic distributors requires the services of several categories of persons here both on the estates and in the City of Colombo. On the estates; subordinate staff on estates, such as estate clerks, tea makers, supervisors, medical personnel, teachers, Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents. In the city of Colombo these include: visiting agents, company secretaries, accountants, lawyers, brokers, tea tasters, shippers, insurance agents, bankers, clerks etc. All these have to collaborate with the Agency Houses in Colombo and London to run the system for the benefit of the share holders and Company directors. They

maintain the hierarchical system of relationships with the ultimate pressure being on the labour force. They get their share of the spoils of exploitation—with a higher proportion of it as they got up the chain of power, authority and financial control.

THE SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT obtains a large share of the local value of the tea produced—about cts. 96 per lb. But the government also subsidizes the replanting of estates, provides the transportation net work of roads and railways, the system of police, the defence and judicial services to maintain law and order, the research facilities, the medical services etc. for the estate sector too. In a sense the government exploits the estate labour in that what it gives to them is much less than they contribute to Government in terms of revenue and foreign exchange.

(To Be Concluded)

VIETNAM STORY

Many Dien Bien Phus

by Spartacus

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE adopted by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on 2nd September 1945 stated: "A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilise all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty." This act of faith of the Vietnamese people in themselves is about to be realised.

The cover story in the *Time* magazine of 21st April 1975 titled "Seeking the Last Exit from Vietnam" stated: "The most frustrating and tragic chapter in the history of US foreign policy was, one way or another, ending. And a new American President, unelected at home and untested abroad, was about to shake off the shackles of past US failures in South-east Asia."

This was a remarkable statement for the *Time* magazine to make it was not always in this strain that it had spoken while the dirty war in Vietnam lasted. Ten years ago, for example, on the tenth anniversary of the French route at Dien Bien Phu, *Time* (15th May 1964) boasted: "Charles de Gaulle holds that the US will inevitably meet its own Dienbienphu in Vietnam. US military planners virtually rule out any such prospect. For all their difficulties, South Vietnamese troops and US advisers command enormous fire power and mobility. French air power was puny compared to the swarms of rocket-firing helicopters, transport craft and fighter-bombers that the US has in South Vietnam. The US has repeatedly pledged full support for Vietnam's defenders until the Viet Cong are finally routed."

But the US failed to rout the national liberation forces of South Vietnam. So, manufacturing the Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964, they escalated the hostilities to the DRV (and later to Cambodia and Laos), brought up the strength of the US forces in the South to over 540,000 and stepped up action against the freedom fighters. Describing the Vietnam war as "The Right War at the Right Time", the *Time* Essay on 14 May 1965 was definite that Lyndon Johnson will not allow the US to be pushed out of Vietnam."

Five months later *Time* announced that the "Turning Point in Vietnam had come, and even named General Westmoeland, the US Commander in Vietnam, as the "Man of the Year" for 1965. Vain hopes with the Tet offensive launched by the NLF of South Vietnam early in 1968, Johnson announced his intention to push himself out of the Presidency, halt the air raids over the DRV and initiate peace talks with all parties including the PRG of South Vietnam.

Time was not only the only American magazine to go wide off the mark regarding Vietnam. Even after the peace talks had started in Paris, the *Readers' Digest* (March 1969) carried an interview with Admiral John S. McCain, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, regarding the military situation in Vietnam. Stated this estimable Admiral: "We have the enemy

licked now. He is beaten. We have the initiative in all areas. The enemy cannot achieve a military victory: he cannot even mount another major offensive. We are in the process of eliminating his remaining capability to threaten the security of South Vietnam. I am convinced that that is why he has come to the conference table in Paris—to try to win there what he failed to win on the battlefields."

IN REPLY to a follow-up question that military leaders have been making this kind of optimistic statements for the last so many years with no end to the war in sight and asked the reason for the new optimism, the Admiral was categorical: "My optimism is based on hard military realities," he said: "The enemy has suffered staggering losses." Hanson W. Baldwin, Military Editor of the *New York Times*, wrote: "It is ironic that at the very time the enemy was hurting the most he succeeded in one of his primary aims—halting the bombing of the North. And now his next and fundamental objective is to establish in Saigon a coalition government with communist participation—the kiss of death to all we have fought for."

Enough of US pulp magazines and bogus military 'experts'. It is pleasant to recall that even in America there were others who saw differently. It is their predictions that have come true. Thus Walter Lippmann wrote in 1970: "Here we are, some 200 million of us, with the greatest armaments that any country has ever possessed and there are the North Vietnamese some 20 million of them, with a primitive industrial system. Yet we have been unable to make them do what we want them to do. Why not? Because armed peasants who are willing to die are a match for the mightiest power. Elephants cannot clear the mosquitoes from a swamp. The United States has been unable to conquer the armed guerillas of the vast Asian continent....."

"Our failure in Vietnam sprang from a great mistake. We asked the armed forces to do what it was not possible for them to do. Our senior military leaders, the men who

were the commanders before and during the second world war, knew better. They had always believed that the United States' military power was on the ocean and that Asian land wars were to be studiously avoided. The men who did commit the United States to a land war in South Vietnam had to ignore the precedents and override the advice of men like Dwight D. Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur and Matthew B. Ridgeway."

Lippmann was obviously referring to MacArthur's statement that "anybody who commits the land power of the United States on the continent of Asia ought to have his head examined," and Ridgeway's confession that "in Korea we learned that air and naval power alone cannot win a war."

WHY THEN THEY DID the US rulers disregard the views of their senior military leaders in favour of those of *Time* and *Reader's Digest*? The reason lies in the fact that the USA alone of the all great powers came out of the second world war unscathed and with its military and economic capacity greatly strengthened, giving rise to the illusion of American omnipotence. They thought that they could act as the world gendarme, that the *Pax Britannica* and *Pax Francais* had given place to a *Pax Americana*. The US nuclear monopoly further fed this illusion. From all this arose the Dulles threats to take the world to the 'brink of war' is furtherance of their aims, 'roll back Communism' and even if necessary to indulge in 'massive retaliation' against the Soviet Union until it was collocated from the face of the earth. These illusions persisted even after their atomic monopoly was broken and the other premises on which US policies were based were no more. Even John Kennedy in his first inaugural address threatened to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty." But before his term was through he had come to the sober realisation that there cannot be an American solution to every world problem.

Lyndon Johnson succeeded him promising to end the Vietnam

war quickly. But when, contrary to his pledge, he actually escalated it, there set in the national revulsion against him which made it impossible for him to continue as President, Richard Nixon, after two years in power, came to the further realisation of the limitations of American power. Said he: "America cannot—and will not—conceive all the plans, design all the programs, execute all the decisions and undertake all the defence of the free nations of the world." It fell to his lot therefore, to conceive at least one plan and partly execute it—namely, to wind up the dirty war in Vietnam and make preparations for their long-overdue withdrawal. All these developments had been foreseen by at least one man in Vietnam. "The enemy," he wrote "will pass slowly from the offensive to the defensive and be caught in a dilemma; he has to drag the war in order to win and does not possess, on the other hand, the psychological and political means to fight a long-drawn-out war." The writer was the Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap, the legendary hero of Dienbienphu. What the Vietnamese have now inflicted on the US is not one Dienbienphu, but a series of small frustrating Dienbienphus, with the same end result as for the French—their total, ignominious withdrawal from all Vietnam.

DWIGHT EISENHOWER, as President of the USA, once stated: "I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indo Chinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of fighting (i.e. in 1954), 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader." Subsequent events in Vietnam leading to the utter debacle of US policies in Vietnam maybe traced to new efforts to negate the will of this 80 per cent of the Vietnamese people.

At the Geneva Conference in 1954, following the French rout at Dien Bien Phu, Western diplomatic strategy was inspired by the idea that if elections took place soon after the conference, while the repercussions of Dien Bien Phu were reverberating throughout the land, they would result in even a more than 80 per cent success for Ho Chi Minh. Hence

the Final Declaration adopted at Geneva provided for elections only by July 1956 the latest, with the representatives of the two temporarily divided zones of Vietnam making contact to organise them before July 1955. The USA, which refused to sign the Geneva agreement, was quick to act to prevent elections even in 1956. With this end in view, they shipped Ngo Dinh Diem to S. Vietnam to become first the Prime Minister and then replace Bao Dai as "President". Diem made it clear at once that he had no intention at all of participating in any talks for holding elections as contemplated by the Geneva Agreement. He even organised an attack on the hotel in which members of the International Commission were staying! One of the tasks of this Commission was to organise and supervise these elections.

In February 1955 the DRV Government proposed the restoration of normal relations between the two zones of divided Vietnam. In July 1955 it proposed the immediate implementation of the Geneva decisions relating to pre-electoral consultations and general elections. These were the first shots in a diplomatic volley that the DRV was to fire without success for the next several years. But all these proposals met with a blank refusal from the South Vietnamese authorities.

HO CHI MINH told a delegation of British Labour Party MPs in 1957, one year after the deadline for elections had passed, that his Government still gave top priority to "the reunification of Vietnam through free elections in accordance with the Geneva Declaration." He said: "The north and south cannot live properly without each other. We are one people, with a common language, customs and outlook. From the human and economic point of view unity is vital." And referring to the repeated refusal of the South Vietnamese authorities to even consider the DRV proposals, he commended: "We shall not use force. We can afford to be patient. Time is on our side. The ordinary people in the south are with us. In the meantime we shall consolidate our economy in the North."

Leland Burrows, Head of the US Operations Missions in Saigon, ad-

mitted that "when President Diem took over in 1955 his authority did not extend beyond the Presidential Palace." During the next nine years of his bloody rule he did not succeed in extending his authority beyond a few towns and cities of the central coastal area and of the old colony of Cochín-China including Saigon, and that too only for a short period between two 'pacification' campaigns. His "Republic of Vietnam" in the south was only an American fiction invented to enable them to bring it under the provisions of SEATO, another US outfit made to sabotage Geneva agreement. It was the USA that paid one-third of Diem's civil expenditure and more than four-fifths of his military expenditures.

Diem began a real of terror against all his opponents in the south. These included not only his political opponents but also leaders of various religious sects. He was particularly brutal towards those in the south who had fought the French on the side of the Viet Minh and the Lien Viet, and those who called for the fulfilment of the Geneva agreements. Hundreds of thousands were killed or thrown into prisons. His reign of terror reached its peak in 1959 when he enacted Law 10/59 according to which anyone suspected of 'subversive activities could be sentenced to death or hard labour. And at Diem's request, more than 2000 US officers acting as the US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) built up an army of 150,000 regulars to begin a real war against the 80 per cent referred to by President Eisenhower.

By 1960 the US had followed up its political support and military aid to Diem with direct military intervention in the South. US arms shipments were doubled and the first US combat units were formed and began to take part in military operations against those opposed to the Diem dictatorship—all in violation of the Geneva Agreements. The next year the "Stanley-Taylor Plan" was put into operation whereby the US hoped to wipe out opposition to Diem in the south within 18 months. This they hoped to do by setting up a network of 'strategic hamlets'

in rural areas—a nice name for what were nothing more than concentration camps.

BUT NOTHING could save the Diem regime. In November 1963 the CIA itself removed him from the scene. Then followed a game of musical chairs with one US puppet after another succeeding each other as the 'strong man' in S. Vietnam but utterly unable to stop their descent down the Gadarene slope.

Meanwhile, there had been uprising against the Diem dictatorship in 1957-58 and the first centre of armed resistance to the regime formed in the Tay Nguyen mountainous plateau. By 1959 centres of resistance had also emerged in the plains. But the DRV Government was still counselling patience and trying to restrain the southerners from resorting to rash action. This Government had been commended by the International Commission for their strict observance of the Geneva Agreements which Diem had systematically violated in collusion with the Americans.

But over three years after the deadline for elections had passed, with Vietnamese families still separated by the 17th parallel and the Diem regime becoming more repressive and increasingly subservient to US imperialism, their patience came to an end. They decided to throw in their lot fully with their South Vietnamese compatriots. Early in 1960 an armed uprising began in the Ben Tre rural areas in the Mekong Delta. This served as a signal for a general uprising throughout S. Vietnam led by underground organisations opposed to the Saigon regime. By the end of 1960 the patriots, gaining massive support from the peasant masses for whose benefit they had organised land reforms and local government organs, were in full control of about one-third of the territory of S. Vietnam.

In December 1960 a Constituent Congress held in one of the liberated areas established the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, adopted its manifesto and programme and elected a provisional Central Committee. The main aims of the NLF were the overthrow of the US puppets in Saigon and the establishment of a truly national and democratic government that would

bring about the reunification of their divided motherland, follow a policy of peace and neutrality in foreign affairs.

By 1961 the armed forces opposed to Diem merged to form a Liberation Army and a Supreme Command of the NLF armed forces was set up. Next year the NLF held their first congress and elected their leading bodies. The well-known Saigon lawyer and political leader Nguyen Huu Tho was elected President of the NLF, a post he has held ever since. By the end of 1964 the NLF was in control of over two-thirds of the territory of S. Vietnam. Their armed forces had hundreds of thousands of regular soldiers, apart from their home guards, guerillas and sabotage units operating behind the enemy's line. In the liberated areas they expelled the puppet rulers and set up new elected governing bodies of popular democracy. The 80 per cent of the people referred to by President Eisenhower were on the march even in S. Vietnam. The battle for the future of all Vietnam was on.

Romano, Vocations Congress, August 8, 1974, p.4.col. 3).

I was not surprised that, in a region like this provincial town in which I found myself, young men were sacredly and secretly beguiled by the church into thinking in terms of *People*. They spoke fearlessly of working for the people and with the people; of the era of the Common Man ushered in by the late Prime Minister whose sincerity and desire to help the down-and-out were still vivid in their minds. Here were young men—just six or seven in all—speaking of mass-poverty being removed, of indebtedness because of unemployment, underemployment and poverty, of malnutrition (their refectory or meal-room has two "tablets", one expressing the inequality of world distribution of food, the other expressing inequality of world consumption of food and right, plonk, in the middle is the gesture of Christ sharing Himself in the Eucharist).

This led me to seeing that their worlds like Education, Housing, Urbanization, Income distribution, absentee landlordism, land-ownership, marginalization of rural areas—were not empty words to them or slogans in the minds and hearts of this new breed of youth.

They have high hopes and all the goodwill and wishes for their colleagues in Sri Lanka and far-afield who still work out the former system and the new updated system of seminary training. They want it to go on and continue until it spends itself out, but they insist that they like to see the outcome of this idea too, of a contextual theology. They are in no haste, not impatient. One of them said: "True, Pope Paul says in his Development of Peoples: 'URGENT reforms are necessary; they must be undertaken without delay' (n. 32), 'the question is URGENT' (n. 44), but the same Pope Paul says: a hasty reform can spell disaster and that is why they are sure that 'slow and steady would win the race.'"

They have a "bhavana kutiya" a reflexion room for prayer and reflexion on the vital issues harassing the world today. The lectures and discussions on Theology and in

theology and the Scriptures of Christianity lead them back and forth to and from real life.

They call themselves Sevakas, people dedicated to service and serving of the people; they spoke of Sevaka Johann Devananda another christian open-hearted worker who gives deep witness to the truth somewhere in the Kurunegala area.

I saw the results of their Islam-Christian dialogue and the celebration of the Milad-un-Nabi, Birthday of Prophet Muhammad (organised for the 12th April); heard of their plans for celebrating the great festival of Light and enlightenment, for our People—Lord Buddha's Vesak day.

Little by little, as they work with the rural people, one must say that the springtime of youth, the springtime of the churches and temples and mosques and the Ingathering is here, in Uva, the one-time land of a thousand a hundred-thousand fields (Wellassa).

Inania of this, that and the other

Little By Little

BY INNA

I had a most interesting conversation with a Sevaka recently. He is from a new type of training school for the Catholic ministry. I owe him very much for his insights. On the doorstep of their home-like Sevaka house my eyes met a board with these words:

"The new situation in which the Church finds itself in some countries, seems to call for new kinds of ministry and consecrated life. Care should be taken however, to safeguard both the specific character of the mission of the laity in the church as well as to affirm the absolute necessity of the priestly ministry" (Osservatore

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Confidentially Postal Saga

IS IT NOT TRUE that a recent blowup in the Postal world has not only stirred up a hornets' nest above but had also awakened the demons hibernating below? That mighty efforts have been undertaken to defuse the explosion inevitable when hornets and demons get busy? That newspapers originally enthusiastic about reporting a mighty battle that was due now seem to have lost all interest in the matter? That editorial pundits have been persuaded to talk about the matter being *sub judice* when there was nothing of the sort? That even mightier efforts are being made to stop the matter being made really *sub judice* by a whitewash inquiry to end the whole rumpus with a reprimand on a watered down charge sheet? That a departmental inquiry does not make any matter *sub judice* in the real sense of the term? That what has made this matter the talking point in high places as well as low is the marked difference in approach in regard to two sets of people who had been placed on compulsory leave in the Postal setup? That though there may be a gap of three years or more between the first set of events and the second, it is more than likely that ordinary people will notice the totally different kinds of approach the postal moghuls had adopted in the two cases? That whilst the time has come to turn the searchlight on the first set of compulsory-leave victims, it is essential that some salient facts about the second should be presented first? That the laboured and devious tactics adopted in the first matter to punish those who had been exonerated by more than one tribunal will not only make fascinating reading but also demonstrate that power in some hands is a dangerous thing? That in the meantime the facts which have emerged in the second case that led to gentlemen described as senior officials being recently put on compulsory leave have become the bazaar gossip in the administrative and political world? That it is being already pointed out that officials—

senior and junior—accused of much lesser offences had been placed under interdiction whilst inquiries were pending? That the compulsory leave techniques adopted in this case has aroused many to talk about discriminatory action? That the Minister concerned, who has been praised for taking prompt action, should find out why the postal administrative hierarchy has only sent these two gentlemen on leave whilst interdiction had been used in nearly all disciplinary matters of this kind? That the Minister must show that such discrimination is not tolerated in his postal kingdom?

IS IT NOT COMMON KNOWLEDGE, that the trouble had arisen when the shooting star (such phenomenon last only a short time and always disintegrate into gaseous vapour once the meteoric impulse has been exhausted) had tried to get a top UN (IPU) job abroad, for a short spell in the first instance? That in seeking to get this job the shooting star had tried to bypass the normal procedures laid down by the Administration? That in the normal course all applications have to be routed through the top brass of the Department to the Ministry of External Affairs which is the sole conduct to forward such applications to agencies outside the country? That in this case it is alleged that this procedure was not followed? That even in regard to obtaining the approval of the top brass of the Department slick methods tantamount to sharp practice are alleged to have been adopted to get the applications across? That Colombo is buzzing with talk about a letter which an unauthorised lesser official had signed purporting to be from a higher authority and that it was on this letter the appointment had been obtained? That there is a great deal of laughter in regard to the application itself which is said to have reached the highwater mark in hyperbole? That a doctorate was claimed, it is alleged, where there was none? That teaching experience in several university campuses was claimed where there were none? That until all these matters are brought into public focus in an open fullscale inquiry it will be difficult to repeat the actual wordage in these documents? That top bureaucrats admit that

the facts already available warrant an inquiry of a stern and severe kind? That unless this is done the top bureaucrats fear that charges of discriminatory treatment would be brought against them? That the Minister should take prompt action not only to safeguard the top administrative brass but also his own reputation for non-discriminatory treatment?

IS IT NOT FUNNY that with such documents an institution like the IPU had been bamboozled into granting an appointment to the official concerned who had hoped to hop over after an international conference to his new job? That the cat had got out of the bag when the IPU had sent a cable wanting the release of this official for this job abroad? That this cable had fallen into the wrong hands, or really the correct hands so far as the administrative hierarchical position was concerned? That this cable had resulted in inquiries being made, into photostats being called for from the IPU, and the like? That as a result of these the shooting star (burning at its brightest after farewell parties and all ready for the busloads readied to cheer him off at the airport) was grounded a few hours before the plane was airborne? That immediately newspapers had hummed with this news? That action was taken to send this official and his accomplice on compulsory leave? That the *Daily Mirror* had written editorial praise about the Minister's prompt action? That the facts now being talked about in the bazaar have raised the question why it was only compulsory leave where as others similarly placed had been put on interdiction? That in these circumstances the Minister will win undying fame if he takes the necessary steps to order a full scale top grade inquiry into the whole matter without letting anyone to water down the matter to a low grade whitewash inquiry? That admirers of the Minister are certain that he will show neither favour nor mercy in a matter of this kind? That unless the public are apprised of the full facts and all the relevant documents are brought into sharp focus on a national scale it would not be possible to place our administrative services and the personal conduct of officials on a basis that would inspire public confidence?

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