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Paddy Statistics And The Future

IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW whether there are any important people in the Establishment who realise that the Budget presented at the end of last year is now a piece of fiction. It was based on wrong estimates of rice production for the year 1974; and all the wishful estimates of production in 1975 have now disappeared into thin air.

The Budget was drawn up on the footing that in 1974, the Maha crop was at least 52.8 million bushels

of paddy and that the Yala was not less than 26 million bushels making a total of nearly 79 million bushels. Tribune has at all times contested these estimates especially the estimate from one governmental source that the Maha crop was about 62 million bushels, and we had based our estimates on the intake by the PMB and the price of off-ration rice in the paddy producing areas of the island. Time and history will show how much nearer the mark we have been than these official estimates.

A PROPER HYDROLOGICAL SURVEY

The new cry that has begun to stir governmental thinking is that the groundwater resources of the country must be tapped. But there is a danger that the whole thing may be turned into an empty gimmick—if a proper hydrological survey is not undertaken immediately. There are no doubt estimates by various persons about the groundwater resources of the island. Mr. Denis Fernando of the Planning section of the Ministry of Irrigation has undoubtedly done pioneer work in the matter of making people conscious of the need for exploiting groundwater resources. He has also made estimates of the groundwater resources and drawn a map to illustrate this. This is no doubt, something to go on. Tribune has always given Mr. Fernando a great deal of prominence for what he has done and what he thinks should be done. In fact, it was only after Tribune took up the matter that the Ceylon Daily News taken a welcome interest in the subject—nearly eighteen months ago. But, it is necessary to have a full and proper hydrological survey of the whole island by modern hydrologists—with a adequate number of drillings and test wells—as an essential step whilst measures are taken to encourage people to sink wells. An Israeli team, in collaboration of an engineer of the Irrigation Department (Mr. G. M. Anghie) had done such a survey in 1966/67 for the northwest part of Sri Lanka—which receives the lowest rainfall in this island. Such a survey has to be done for the rest of the island. Immediately. Certain officials of the Ministry—not Mr. Denis Fernando—seem to think that all information, scientific and otherwise, was already available to the Government for exploiting the groundwater resources of the island. Last Sunday's Observer published such a claim in a report based on information supplied by certain Ministry officials. This is a dangerous claim based on superficialities and superficial inferences and conclusions. There is no alternative to a proper scientific survey by competent hydrologists.

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The Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech on November 6 had stated most categorically that "despite delayed rains in the North Central Province, the Maha harvested piled on a record 52.8 million bushels. The more conservative estimate for Yala 1974 is 26 million bushels. In combination the year will present a proud record of nearly 79 million bushels of paddy. This contrasts with the performance of the previous year, 42 in Maha and 20.9 in Yala making a total of 62.9 million bushels. A number of factors contributed to this favourable outcome. Apart from the generosity of weather gods, cultivators themselves showed a commendable response to governmental propaganda and the higher subsidy offered. A more intensive effort was forthcoming to obtain the maximum yields from the plots they sowed. The new and better strains played their part, helped by a satisfactory application of fertiliser...."

This is no doubt back-patting for the UF government but it is bad economics. The original Central Bank estimate of a figure around 42 million bushels for Maha was over-generous, knowing as we do, the methods of "random sampling" on which this estimate was based. Everybody knows that the Government does not as yet have a system of getting accurate figures of paddy production, and blessed with the corrupt bureaucracy (anxious to prove its efficiency on bogus figures of exaggerated production) this country cannot hope to get accurate figures of paddy production for a long time to come. The story how the Central Bank

was dragged into accepting the higher figure of 52.8 million bushels—no doubt as a compromise against the claim made by another governmental source that the Maha production was at least well over 62 million bushels—something for the Historian. But, the people of this island will soon pay a heavy price for the fictional paddy production statistics of the last budget.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE justified his accepting the higher estimates for paddy production because of allegedly higher production in other sectors of the economy (especially in the field of export agriculture). We are not at the moment concerned with statistics in the export agriculture sector. In regard to paddy production, the Minister of Finance gave a clue to his thinking when he said: "In the light of the above consideration it is difficult to understand and appreciate the modest growth figure of about 4 percent of the GNP ascribed by the Central Bank in the mid-year projections. This is all the more peculiar when we realise that it is well known that every increase of 10 million bushels of paddy enhances the growth rate of the National Product by one percent; so substantial is the weightage attached to paddy production, in particular and production in general....."

It will be recalled that in the previous Budget "my prognosis for growth of the real GDP for the year 1974 was of the order of 7 to 8 percent. But this was before the real impact of price changes began to manifest itself. In the course of the year 1974, we have been compelled to tailor the structure of our consumption patterns (as benefits of our current political and economic policies fructify...." The Central Bank in some projections, based on what we believe are over-generous estimates of paddy production, had suggested that the rate of growth for 1974 would be less than 4 percent or nearer 3.5 percent. This no doubt incensed the Minister of Finance who, wishfully no doubt, felt that Sri Lanka's economy in 1974 was going much better than what the statisticians of the Central Bank were willing to concede. And the Minister had admonished the Central Bank experts in no uncertain terms: "...this kind of tendentious statistical gerrymandering need not

perturb us if their effects are confined to our shores; and we can leave these highly theoretical economists to their delectable pastime. Unfortunately foreigners are apt to take these statistics at their face value and measure our creditworthiness on this basis. It is a pity that those indulging in these interesting statistical exercises have become oblivious to the larger interests of the country. It is a matter for gratification that the people of this country have a healthy disrespect for this gloomy statistical analysis. They know the reality; and they feel and appreciate the steady progress that is being made notwithstanding the enormous difficulties we face due to factors beyond our control..."

This kind of rhetoric will not convince the ordinary man either in our towns or our villages who know the reality that even the statistics of the Central Bank in regard to paddy production are grossly exaggerated estimates of the truth. The people in our village areas know how unreal are the figures governmental bureaucrats prepare for their political masters. The Ministry of Finance was obviously anxious to establish (to impress the IMF) that in spite of global inflation, Sri Lanka had achieved a growth rate of least 5 percent—and this could be done only by claiming a high production of paddy.

THE RURAL VILLAGER, however, knows that up to the end of November, the Paddy Marketing Board had cumulatively from January 1974 purchased only 20,553,897 bushels of paddy. The November purchases aggregated 547,575 bushels whilst in October the purchases had been in the region of 1,726,337 being the peak of the Yala harvest. The December intake of the PMB is likely to be, at best, nothing more than the November purchases—in fact it is bound to be considerably less. With the result, the PMB purchases—with all the draconian regulations about the transport and sale of paddy—for 1974 would be just around 21 million bushels. Every villager knows, especially in the heavy paddy producing areas, that cultivators ordinarily surrendered (or sold) to the PMB anything between 50 to 60 percent of their production. If some farmers have retained more

than half to be sold privately, there were others who had surrendered over 80 percent of their crop.

On this basis the total paddy production of both Maha and Yala combined cannot be anything more than 45 million bushels for 1974. But for argument's sake it might be conceded that farmers did retain even more than what we have suggested—and in that event too the production for 1974 cannot go much beyond 50 million bushels. There is no doubt that our estimates are based on guesswork and inferential deductions, but all those who know will admit the governmental methods of estimating are also based on the guesswork of bureaucrats anxious to prove their worth; and that the methodology of the Central Bank in compiling statistics is also only guesswork with the pseudo-scientific camouflages of "random sampling".

But the truth and reality of these statistics will be known in the course of 1975. If the governmental figure of 79 million bushels of paddy is added to the rice imported in 1974 and deductions are made for the rice distributed through the rationing system then it would be seen that there will a substantial surplus to help the rice-eaters in the island to free-wheel their way through out of the year 1975 even if the Maha crop is a near-total failure. The villager already knows that a rice famine is around the corner, but the city-dweller and the UF enthusiast still befuddled by government propaganda, complacently believes that the Government was muddling through to victory whilst helping the common man to do better than people in many other countries in the crisis-struck planet of ours.

EVEN IF THOSE who have implicit faith in the Minister of Finance and the Government are willing to accept their statistics for paddy production for 1974, it will not be long before they discover that the budgetary estimates for 1975 have all gone haywire. The Minister of Finance, in working out his figures for 1975, had gone on the footing that the 1975 production

of paddy would be higher than in 1974 and said: "...The saving in imports of 100,000 tons of wheat flour will release Rs. 216 million for alternative imports. Similarly a saving of 100,000 tons in the import of rice, the costs of which I have indicated earlier in my speech, will be possible, provided the purchasing authorities are able to gather 28 million bushels of the anticipated 1975 paddy harvest from the farmer. The foreign exchange saving will amount to Rs. 288 million and the magnitude of the foreign exchange saving warrants a direct approach to the farmer at the Kamata. These options are feasible propositions in the context of the present cumbersome and often tedious procedures the farmer has to undergo to sell his produce to the purchasing authority..."

It will now be clear to the politician, the bureaucrat and the city dweller that the PMB should consider itself lucky if in 1975 it can obtain a half of the 28 million of bushels of paddy from both the Maha and the Yala—as anticipated by the Minister of Finance. The figure will be much less than half the 1974 intake by the PMB. (Incidentally, the only true and reliable guide the Government has in regard to available domestically-produced paddy is the intake achieved by the PMB, but politicians and bureaucrats only make excuses why more was not surrendered to the PMB. Some, like the theoreticians of the LSSP, feel that all paddy produced should be compulsorily acquired—no doubt for the benefit of the urban trade-unionised workers. Others who are closer to the vested interests in the paddy world want the PMB price to be increased even more than the Rs. 33 which is the prevailing PMB price.)

Any attempt to introduce a system of compulsory levying of all paddy produced will have still further adverse effects on paddy production. Doctrinaire pundits can work out on paper the amount of paddy that can be collected if the cultivator was compelled to surrender all that he produces—but in this case it will be counter-productive. Castles can be built in the air about the situation if the Government had compulsorily acquired the 79 odd million bushels the Minister of Finance says this

country has produced in 1974. Apart from everything else the pundits will feel happy that the class war has been launched against the greedy and reactionary peasant petty-bourgeois elements thus taking the great revolution one step forward. But the country will get less paddy and rice for neither the pundit nor the urban worker (for whose benefit the rural peasant must be curbed) will be able to produce the paddy.

The prospects for 1975 are bleak. We have to import more rice this year than in 1974. If in 1974 we imported 300,000 tons (the actual figure has not yet been disclosed) we have to import at least 900,000 tons in 1975 to maintain the same rationing system. The country is not geared to increasing its production of paddy or alternative cereals—except of course on paper.

Have the VIPs in our government and the bureaucracy realised how difficult the situation really is? Tall talk about agricultural production will not help. FEEDCs, the high price for agricultural inputs and bureaucracy will not permit agriculture to get off the ground. Higher guaranteed prices by themselves are no inducement to farmer—they can only tickle the imagination of the urban-based politicians, bureaucrats and pundits.

In this situation, there has to be serious re-thinking on the part of Government on matters of a fundamental nature in regard to agriculture if the food production campaign is to get under way. If the old order—rather the current order—continues, one can only predict tragedy of the highest magnitude, and no amount of pleading about the difficult conditions in the rest of the world will satisfy the people. Conditions in the rest of the world are admittedly bad, but the people are beginning to sense and feel that the blunders of this government are making matters worse than they need be for the common people of this island. Agriculture, for instance, is tied up in knots with FEEDCs levies tainting every aspect of productive effort.

The United Front has to re-think, its policies, its techniques, its assumptions—if this country is to be saved from near-famine conditions in 1975 and 1976 and the complete and universal pauperisation of the entire population thereafter.



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WHAT NEXT?

AN ANNOUNCEMENT was made a few days ago that the Government had been able to purchase 60,000 tons of rice from Thailand. Press reports indicated that the first shipment would arrive by mid-January and the balance before the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year. The price at which this rice has been bought has been kept a secret so far. There have also been gentle hints that more rice would have to be bought owing to the drought which has gripped the paddy producing areas of this island.

From where? At what price?

More must be obtained from China. The Chinese team to negotiate the rice and rubber protocol for 1975 is expected to arrive in the island in a few days (if they have not already arrived). The gossip in governmental corridors is that Sri Lanka will seek to increase the quantity of rice to be obtained under the Agreement.

Will it be 300,000 tons of rice for 1975? Or, will it be 400,000 tons? Have we enough rubber to barter for so much rice? And what price will the Chinese want? Naturally, the Chinese will want a price very close to the world market price but, for reasons of "friendship" they usually grant a sizable discount. For the Chinese the barter is good commerce and even better politics, but for us the barter of our precious foreign exchange earning rubber for rice, which we can so easily grow in this island, is bad economics and even worse politics.

The first Rice and Rubber Agreement with China was concluded in 1952 and ever since that time our political leaders have sworn that Sri Lanka would be made self-sufficient in rice within a short time. There is no doubt that such self-sufficiency could have been attained within three years, but over 22 years have gone since 1952 and we seem to be worse than when we started. There is no doubt that rice production has increased, but our population has gone up even more, and the gap has become increasingly larger every year.

SINCE 1952, the UNP has been in power for 8 years (1952-1955 and 1965-70), and the SLFP has been in power, either singly or in coalition, for 14 years (1956-59, 1960-65 and 1970-). But, between them, neither rice production nor food production has been increased in a way to make us self-sufficient. The SLFP regimes have leaned to the view that radical land reforms were essential for increased food production. In the first SWRD government, Philip Gunawardene had introduced the Paddy Lands Act to go with his Ten Year Plan for Agriculture. During the present Coalition UF government a drastic Land Reform has been carried out. The UNP, however, had tended to pamper the richer classes to induce them to enter the agriculture of food crops, and had used the alienation of Crown lands to help particular communities and discriminate against other communities (the SLFP has unwittingly carried on similar UNP policies in regard to the same matter). But between the UNP and the SLFP, over the last 22 years, our agriculture has continued to be in the doldrums—In spite of the much-boasted Grow More Food Campaign of Dudley Senanayake and the Food Production War initiated by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike.

The Left Parties and even the ultra revolutionary parties and groups, do not seem to have a clue about the agricultural problems of this country. The Marxists here have not yet studied the peasant or the agricultural problem in a scientific or objective manner. There are no books or publications based on Marxist analysis on this subject. What the Left has so far been concentrating on was the increase of the industrial sector (particularly public enterprise) so that the proletariat could increase—no doubt to usher in the Revolution. So far as agriculture was concerned, they were satisfied with slogans borrowed from other countries to induce activity through the plans prepared by our bureaucrats for agriculture. The Ten Year Plan for Agriculture of the Philip Gunawardene period was an academic exercise prepared by a set of bureaucrats who did not leave their arm-chairs. The same can be said for the agricultural sector programmes in all other

plans prepared either by the UNP or the SLFP. Even the latest Five Year Plan, produced in the era of the UF and which is called the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Plan, has an agricultural section which is no more than a weak bureaucratic exercise of what should be done (translated on paper as what could be done.) Even the latest Five Year Plan has gone the way of all previous Plans, and now we are in the midst of another bureaucratic exercise called the 2 1/2 Years Crash Programme.

Why are we in this plight? Why has Sri Lanka failed to effect a breakthrough in Agriculture?

THE ANSWER is simple: our bureaucrats who prepare plans and implement them are not held responsible for failures and they see no further than the period during which they are expected to do a particular job of work. Every item of work is regarded by them as an opportunity to prove their mettle to earn further promotions—until they lapse into complete apathy in the last phase when they are ready to be retired. To prove their worth for promotions our bureaucrats are prepared to make black look white (especially through paper reports and juggled statistics).

There are classic instances of such blatant dishonesty. During the first UNP regime after Independence, a Director of Land Development had boasted in memoranda and reports about a 200 (or 600?) acre state farm where chillies were growing aplenty (in a Sinhala dry zone area where chilli cultivation had not so far been done on a large or scientific scale). A sudden and unexpected visit by a Minister (off his schedule) had shown that the whole project was a piece of fiction: that there was not a single chilli plant in the area mentioned. A few bureaucrats were transferred and scapegoats were found. The leading bureaucrat in the drama, however, did not suffer by this: he became one of the leading political lights of this country and had gone to do more damage: not only for agriculture but also other fields of productive enterprise in this country.

Whilst the field of vision of our bureaucrats is limited by the next promotion and the final retirement, our politicians cannot think beyond

the next elections (with the compelling need to pay off the debts and obligations of the last elections which had brought them to Parliament or left them in the wings waiting for the next elections). Our politicians are completely and fully dependent on the bureaucrats—either those from the permanent Service or the new Bureaucrats they have created from the political adherents and stooges. The post-1970 concentration of power (political, administrative, executive, economic, cultural and even judicial) in the hands of the MPs, with the more recent superstar class of Political Authorities, has made matters only worse. The MPs and even the Political Authorities have become more dependent on Bureaucrats.

Between the politicians as we know them and the bureaucrats as

they exist there is very little we, in Sri Lanka, can hope for in the immediate or the foreseeable future. That is why so many of our fellow citizens have left the country. That is why so many of us are seeking jobs abroad — wanting to settle down elsewhere and if possible change our nationality.

Our politicians and bureaucrats can condemn those emigrating from the island as deserters, renegades and unpatriotic declassèd self-seekers, but little do they (our politicians and bureaucrats) realise that they and they alone are responsible for the drain of Sri Lankans from this island.

Our politicians, and more especially our bureaucrats, are drugged with opium of power. The new political bureaucracy consisting of party adherents

and personal stooges (many of them had opportunistically jumped on the band wagon after 1970) are even worse than the old Civil Service or the more recent CAS cadres.

Our bureaucrats, more than even our politicians, regard themselves as some super beings—eternal omniscient and godlike in their capacity for right policies and correct decisions. Their complacency stems from the belief that they can never be punished in this birth or any other—the worst that can happen to them is a transfer either in this birth or in another.

One does not know long this this country is likely to suffer at the hands of such a bureaucracy, but there is no doubt that 1975 is likely to open the eyes of our common people to the wayward ways of our bureaucracy.

CHRONICLE—SRI LANKA

DECEMBER 1—9

A DIARY OF EVENTS IN SRI LANKA COMPILED FROM ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PUBLISHED IN COLOMBO.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1: According to the *Sunday Observer*, the third and final phase of the inquiries into incidents during the April '71 insurrections will begin early in January when the Criminal Justice Commission (Insurgency) will take up the trials of the suspected insurgents who have pleaded not guilty to charges framed against them: of a total of 18,000 who were originally detained, only 384 suspects remained to be tried by the Commission. According to the *Observer*, financial circles in Colombo forecast some possible alterations in Finance Minister, Dr. N. M. Perera's budget proposals presented to the National State Assembly on November 6. According to the *Sunday Times*, a massive island wide tree planting campaign will be launched in early January to coincide with South Asian Tourism Year: at least 13 million productive trees will be planted: the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, who is expected to inaugurate the South Asian Tourism Year will plant the first tree at the Galle Face Green on January 15. According to the *Observer*, Iraq has decided to grant Sri Lanka a loan of 20 million dollars on easy terms, following the successful talks the Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, had during his visit to Iraq for the Baghdad International Trade Fair last September. According to the *Observer*, the Bank of Ceylon has been "diddled" for nearly Rs. 350,000 during the past 12 months by a 'syndicate' of crooks: detectives investigating this have found that some of these allegedly involved are public servants.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2: According to the *Daily News*, the Auditor General's Department which carried

out a number of investigations in connection with expenditure incurred in the various provinces had posed the question whether the expenditure incurred under the decentralised budget scheme can be justified by the results achieved: the Department has pointed out that the food drive had certainly been a success in achieving results in many cases and the Government could have got better results with better co-ordination and supervision. Twenty eight persons, alleged to be pilgrims enroute to the Middle East, were fined Rs. 30,000 for attempting to smuggle Rs. 50,004 worth of foreign currency notes out of the country at the Bandaranaike International Airport: consequent to this a businessman with a travel and transport agency office in the city was yesterday questioned by the Customs. According to the *Daily Mirror*, a complete revision of the Five-Year-Plan is now in progress to ensure the development of all branches of the economy at a rapid pace: this follows the dramatic changes that took place recently due to the oil price-hike and its subsequent impact on the economy. The Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, said at a public meeting that the import of textiles will be totally banned from the start of next year. A number of senior CAS officers are due to take up appointments overseas shortly. The Chairman of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation has told the *Daily Mirror* that the exact quantity of oil deposits in the first oil well drilled at Pesalai will be known by May next year.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3: According to the *Daily News*, the Food Commissioners has decided to buy 6,000 tons of sugar immediately and for this purpose tenders will be opened today: this time instead of inviting tenders publicly, the department has followed with government approval a different procedure and invited certain well-known agencies with whom it has had dealings previously to submit quotations. Yesterday the Prime Minister's office announced that the Kankasanturai by-election will be held soon: according to a note sent to the press from the PM's office the Premier is satisfied

that the conditions which obtained earlier and prevented the holding of the Kankasanturai by-election no longer exist. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, winding up the discussions on the votes of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs in the National State Assembly yesterday said that the Government has not put the Five-Year-Plan into cold storage and is still working on the basis of the Plan: the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Sports, Mr. K. B. Ratnayake, yesterday tabled in the National State Assembly a list 133 Members of Parliament who have been supplied with cars. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the Prime Minister, it is learnt has accepted an invitation to visit Iraq: no date has been fixed for her visit yet. According to the *Daily Mirror*, a team of Government valuers are now busy assessing the actual worth of the 560,000 acres of lands taken over by the Land Reform Commission. According to the *Daily News*, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party Nomination Board chaired by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, has unanimously picked Mr. D. J. Fernandopulle as the party candidate for the Katana by-election.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4: According to the *Daily News*, the Tea Control Department is now examining the progress of tea producers to develop and maintain their estates in order to find out whether these plantations are fulfilling the obligations envisaged under the 'package deal' introduced by the Minister of Plantations Industry for the years 1974 to 1978. According to the *Daily News*, the UNP's annual conference will hereafter elect only a President and no other office bearers: this major change in the party constitution was unanimously agreed on by the UNP's Working Committee when it met on Monday evening: the party conference is scheduled to be held on December 21 and 22 in Colombo. According to the *Daily Mirror* the Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs has launched a survey to assess the capital structure of private sector manufacturing industries in Sri Lanka: the survey will also assess investments by industrialists, their spouses, children, brothers and sisters in the various industrial, agricultural and commercial establishments. A Bill to provide for the establishment of a Foundation called the S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike National Memorial Foundation was gazetted last night. According to the *Daily News*, income tax officers have visited a number of firms in the Pettah during the last fortnight in connection with Business Turnover Tax matters: in a number of cases the officers have detected the avoidance of Business Turnover Tax by several business men. A Pakistani who boarded a Swiss DC 8 airliner in Colombo armed only with a toy pistol tried to hijack the aircraft to the Middle East yesterday but was overpowered by police during a stop-over at Karachi airport.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5: According to the *Daily News*, at the time of the paper going to press a plane that was scheduled to touch down at the Katunayake airport is reported to have caught fire and crashed into the jungles of the Maskeliya areas. According to the evening *Times* all 191 persons including a nine member Dutch crew are presumed to have perished when the DC 8 aircraft belonging to Martin Airways in which they were travelling, crashed on the heavily wooded Laxapana hill in thick mist about 10.30 last

night: the plane was scheduled to touch down at the Bandaranaike International Airport, Katunayake, carrying 182 Indonesian pilgrims bound for Mecca from Jakarta: the Katunayake air control tower which helps guide all aircraft to and from Sri Lanka, was in contact with the plane 15 minutes before it was scheduled to touch down. According to the *Daily News*, both Government and Opposition, will soon debate a constitutional amendment which will change the population basis of the delimitation of electorates by raising to 90,000 persons per electorate the present figure of 75,000: if this amendment is introduced in the NSA and passed by a two-thirds majority, it will take effect, according to lobby sources, from August 1974, that is, before the appointment of the present Delimitation Commission. According to the *Daily News*, a gem exhibition and sale aimed at earning at least Rs. 50 million exchange will be held at Galle Face Hotel Colombo from January 6 to 11 next year. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the Cabinet decided yesterday to exempt certain categories of companies from registration under the Company Law passed by the National State Assembly this year.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6: According to the *Daily Mirror*, Sri Lanka Air Force helicopters and the Armed Services were yesterday busy combing the Seven Virgins Mountain Range at Maskeliya for any trace of the 191 passengers—all Haj pilgrims from Indonesia who were on board the 'Martinair' DC 8 aircraft which crashed at Maskeliya on Wednesday night. According to the *Daily News* mystery surrounds the crash of the Dutch DC 8: no emergency messages had been received by Air Control and Colombo had cleared the aircraft down to land at Katunayake: the *Daily News* has posed the question whether the pilot has made a miscalculation about his position: latest reports said that the plane was still smouldering: last night 20 members of an investigation team from Holland and nine from Indonesia arrived in Sri Lanka: the team from Holland includes the President of the 'Martinair' Mr. John Martin Schorder, four police investigators and officers from the Dutch Department of Civil Aviation: the Director of Civil Aviation in accordance with international regulations has imposed the record of the conversation between the pilot and the Control Tower at the Bandaranaike International Airport. The plane is said to have crashed on top of a mountain and four helicopters are conducting reconnaissance flights to enable climbers to reach the site of the crash. Condolence messages were sent to the families of the crash victims by the President Mr. William Gopallawa and the Prime Minister Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike. The scheme of standardisation for admissions to the University, drew sharp comments from many MPs when the votes of the Ministry of Education were taken up for discussion in the National State Assembly yesterday. The MP for Vaddukoddai, Mr. A. Thiagarajah in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister has suggested several proposals to build up national unity.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7: According to the *Daily News*, several search parties, including 300 men from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Police, using mountaineering equipment to scale the hazardous Seven Virgins rock face where the DC 8 crashed on Wednesday night were able to recover seven bodies from the foot of the cliff: According to the *Daily Mirror*,

the Director of Civil Aviation, Mr. Milton Aponso, is expected to appoint an official inquirer today to probe the circumstances that led to the crash of the Dutch Martinair DC 8 aircraft killing 191 passengers abroad. The team of investigators from Holland led by the President of Martinair Airways, Mr. S. J. Martin, visited the site of the DC 8 crash. According to the *Daily News* the Dutch team left Sri Lanka last night after a visit to the site of the air crash: the Indonesian Embassy yesterday had a special recital of Koran prayers in memory of the dead in the air disaster: a search has been launched by the police and service personnel for the ill-fated DC 8's Flight Recorder known as the 'Black Box' and once this box is traced it is said that much valuable evidence could be obtained and the actual reason for the crash may be known. The Sri Lanka Ambassador in Bonn, Mr. A. R. Rathnavale, died on Thursday in Bonn: arrangements are being made to fly the body to Sri Lanka. Mr. Lakshman Jayakody, Deputy Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs said yesterday that the Government has already decided to release three out of the 40 youths of Jaffna now in Police custody. According to the *Daily News*, the first organisational step in preparing for the non-aligned conference in 1976 was taken yesterday at a top level meeting presided by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8: According to the *Sunday Observer*, the Government is shortly expected to name either a panel of inquiry or a special inquirer to piece together the unanswered mysteries of Wednesday night's jet crash: according to the *Sunday Times*, the sight at the crash site is sickening, chunks of human flesh hanging from branches of trees, limbs and parts of bodies scattered all over the jungle terrain, charred and roasted parts resting in nooks and corners: the stench of burned and purrifying flesh is unbearable: search parties scouring the Seven Virgins mountain range had recovered over 30 bodies yesterday but none of the bodies was intact and only a few of the faces were identifiable: the 'Black Box' the all-proof gadget that will unravel the mystery surrounding the cause of the crash has not been found yet. According to the *Sunday Observer*, a decision is likely soon about the size of the National State Assembly following the SLFP Parliamentary Group to demarcate electorates on the basis of one for 90,000 of the population and with the other UF parties—LSSP and CP discussing the issue. According to the *Observer*, the University of Sri Lanka has decided to confer an honorary Doctorate in Literature (D Lit) on the Prime Minister Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike: this is the first time that the Prime Minister of the country is being honoured in this manner. According to the *Sunday Times* Sri Lanka will receive 6,000 tons of fertiliser worth three million dollars during the next three months: this will be the first consignment of fertiliser supplied under the International Fertiliser Supply Scheme and this will be an outright grant to Sri Lanka. The body of the late Mr. Arthur Rathnavale, Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, will reach Bandaranaike International Airport tomorrow.

MONDAY DECEMBER 9: According to the *Daily Mirror*, the vital 'Black Box'—the box containing the flight recorder of the ill-fated Martinair aircraft—which could perhaps leads to clues how the aircraft came to a disaster is a rectangular box: Mr. A. W. M. Fournier,

the chief of the Investigating team of the Dutch Civil Aviation Department, who is here along with officials of the 'Martinair' of Holland spoke at a press conference yesterday and described their position as regards the air crash. According to the *Daily News*, half a million candidates will sit the GCE O Level examination which begins tomorrow and ends on December 20: this number is believed to be the largest for any examination conducted in this country so far. Nominations for the Katana by-election will be received today at the Colombo Kachcheri. According to the *Daily News*, the United National Party Constitution will be amended at the annual sessions of the party at the Sugathadasa Stadium on December 21 and 22. According to the *Daily Mirror*, Mr. Gough Whitlam, the Australian Prime Minister, will arrive in Sri Lanka on December 14. According to the *Daily News*, a decision is expected to be taken this week on the licensing of motor vehicles for 1975. According to the *Daily News*, the University has picked around 3,500 students for next year: the selections were made from about 15,000 students who qualified for entry to the University on the results of the last Advance Level Examinations.

CHRONICLE—THE WORLD

DECEMBER 1—9

A DIARY OF WORLD EVENTS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1: World's leading grain exporters at the United Nations Food and Agriculture meeting at Rome agreed that they had enough available to ship 7.5 million tons to 32 countries in urgent need of food and the question of payment will be discussed at another meeting in New York on December 4. India and German Democratic Republic yesterday set up a Joint Commission aimed at strengthening co-operation over the entire range of economic relations between the two countries. Sudan has accepted India's stand on the need to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and for promoting rapid economic development in all countries.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2: Archbishop Makarios and Greek Premier Karamanlis headed delegations at talks on the future of Cyprus: acting Cyprus President Glafkos Clerides was a member of the Greek Cypriot delegation. Tunis refused to hand over the four Palestinian commandos who hijacked a British airliner to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. A group of 21 ruling Congress Party members have accused the CIA of helping their friends to upset the democratic process in India: the members however did not name their friends. India and Pakistan have signed a protocol ending the 10-year ban on trade between the two countries. On the eve of Yasser Arafat's departure from Moscow, the Soviet Government has said that Russia expects the Middle East problem to be solved within the framework of Geneva peace conference.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3: Agreement has been reached on proposals for the future of Cyprus after the meeting between Archbishop Makarios and Greek Premier Constantine Karamanlis. PLO leader Yasser

Arafat and Yugoslav Premier Dzemal Bijedic have agreed that a war may break out in the Middle East. According to authoritative sources in New Delhi the allocation of 3,00,000 tonnes of wheat to India by the U.S. is only the first instalment of the American food assistance that is being resumed under concessional terms. The Liberal Democratic Party, the ruling Party of Japan, yesterday decided to elect the former Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Takeo Miki, Chairman of the party: the party will nominate him to the post of Prime Minister.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4: The Military Government in Ethiopia has denied that it has plans to execute deposed Emperor Haile Selassie. Archbishop Makarios is expected to return to Cyprus next Friday. Iraq has agreed to give France \$ 1,000 million to tide over the recessioning economy. Ugandan Foreign Minister Bagaya has been placed under house arrest following removal from office by President Idi Amin. Britain is likely to introduce sugar rationing from next year. The United States will offer two million ounces of gold from official stocks for sale at auction on January 6, the Treasury Secretary William Simon, announced: the sale offer coincides with a law enabling American citizens to buy and sell gold freely as from the end of the year.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5: General Idi Amin, President of Uganda, has cracked down on the Moslem Supreme Council, accusing its members of preferring girl friends and expensive cars to religion. The White House has blasted Congress for its criticism of President Ford's trip abroad, instead of tackling the economic recession in the country. According to U.S. political observers the agreement reached between President Ford and Soviet Communist Party Leader, Leonid Brezhnev, at Vladivostok virtually eliminates the possibility of surprise nuclear attack by the United States or the Soviet Union for the next ten years. The British Government has decided to share military and naval facilities at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean with the United States. Britain is to terminate its Simons-town agreement with South Africa because of its apartheid policies.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6: Ethiopia's military rulers have assured United Nations that fair trials would be given to some 170 former government officials and military leaders now held in the cellars of the Grand Palace in Addis Ababa. Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev has arrived in Paris for a three-day summit during which French officials said he would receive solid reassurances that France wanted to maintain a close understanding with Moscow. The leader of Pakistan Opposition Istiqlal party, retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan, accused the Government of ruling by representative and called on the Police to revolt. The snow-laden roof of the main terminal building at Teheran's Mehrabad International Airport yesterday collapsed suddenly, killing or trapping up to 60 persons.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7: The body of the late UN Secretary General U Thant lay within the Rangoon University convocation hall after students seized it just before the planned funeral: the students wanted a fitting funeral and mausoleum for the Burmese statesman. Israeli Premier Yitbhak Rabin said yesterday that Israel was prepared to make extensive territorial

concessions to achieve a peace agreement, but will not return to the 1967 frontiers. Sheik Abdullah will visit Delhi by the end of December to continue his discussions on the Kashmir issue with the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. A Trans World Airlines jet crashed west of Washington killing all its 92 occupants. India has conveyed to UK, its concern over the British decision to agree to the US proposal for the expansion of base facilities on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8: Deposed President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, returned to Nicosia yesterday by air from Greece. The United States came very close to telling the United Nations yesterday that if its third world members continue to initiate actions and pass resolutions, over the objections and against the interests of the Western Powers who are in a minority, the world organisation might forfeit the backing and financial support of its most powerful member. The nine-year old embargo on trade between India and Pakistan ended yesterday under the agreement signed in New Delhi last Saturday: commodities of trade have been identified in the agreement but resumption of full scale trade has to await an agreement proposed to be hammered out at official level talks between the two countries at Islamabad some time next month.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9: Six million Greeks polled yesterday to decide on whether exiled King Constantine will return to the Throne or whether the country will be a republic. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation will try the hijackers of the British VC 10 jet airliner last month in Tunis: the hijackers after release by the Tunisian Government left for unknown destination undertaking to join the PLO. Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger warned critics of the Vladivostok strategic arms agreement that a divisive debate on the accords could raise doubts in the Soviet Union about East-West detente. India's External Affairs Minister, Chavan, has appealed to Pakistan to share the wealth of the former undivided Pakistan with Bangladesh. South African Prime Minister John Vorster said yesterday that agreement on the Rhodesian issue should be reached because the alternative is too ghastly to contemplate.

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

BY ARIEL

UPHEAVALS:

BURMA: CIA

THE OUTGOING YEAR was one of many upheavals, both caused by natural disasters and also by unexpected and bizarre zig zags in human affairs, and the New Year has been ushered in on a similar note connoting great change in every aspect of life on this planet—political, economic, social, cultural, and even in matters of climate and environment. Newspaper headlines and columns and the radio wavelengths are full of these events in breezy spot news followed by interpretative analysis, but what many miss in this country is a view setting out the philosophy that may underlie these events looked at from the prevailing angle of the national self-interest of this country. From magazines like the *Time* and the *Newsweek*, on the one hand, and *The Economist*, on the other, it is possible to get an idea of various trends of opinion on these matters from the angle of the leading capitalist countries of the West. India too has a wide range of magazines reflecting various trends of opinion, but none of the periodicals have as yet attained the eminence of the *Time*, *Newsweek* or *The Economist*, but there is no doubt that India is one of the emerging countries which can easily produce a magazine of world standing. On Asian affairs, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* is the only magazine which has set out to provide its readers with informative articles of interpretative value, but the analysis is uneven in respect of different regions and the magazine suffers from the laboured and eclectic cosmopolitanism which appears to be an inevitable feature in the ephemeral twentieth-century miracle islands like Hong-kong and Singapore—these two island cities have temporary affluence of great magnitude but have no stamp of intellectual individuality that can endow even their most lavishly produced magazines with character or integrity.

The less said about the state of affairs in Sri Lanka the better. With the brain drain which has taken place from this country and the nature of the education now being imparted in our schools by indifferent teachers and in our universities by mediocre academics, it is not possible to hope for such a magazine in the foreseeable future. Apart from the economic handicaps about producing such a magazine, the talent for such a venture has emigrated to the far corners of the globe. Even if a interpretative news magazine from Sri Lanka could not have the lavish opulence stemming from domestic advertising reaching out to the world, it could easily have acquired world standing on the basis of objectivity and intellectual integrity so sadly lacking in many magazines today.

ON EVERY CONTINENT there are upheavals. Natural disasters have struck in many parts of the world but the two most unnerving have been in the subcontinent in the Northeast corner of Pakistan and on the northern tip of the continent of Australia when a devastating 175 mph cyclone had caused untold damage in the city of Darwin. In Pakistan an earthquake in the Patan region, where the road built by the Chinese from China into the subcontinent winds its way through the Karakoram range, is estimated to have killed over 6000 people and injured over 15,000; the count of the dead keeps mounting as rescue parties penetrate deeper and deeper into the mountainous areas. Air disasters seem to be the order of the day, and hijacking of commercial planes by political guerillas and commandos have become commonplace.

The change of government in Portugal with a near-socialist left-centrist government with communist participation has had its most profound impact in Africa. With majority rule by blacks emerging in the Portuguese territories of Angola and Mozambique, there has been an agonising re-appraisal of its apartheid policies in South Africa and white Rhodesia has released the detained black political leaders to start a dialogue in neighbouring Lusaka to bring about constitutional changes in Rhodesia itself in the near future. This is one silver lining visible

through the dark clouds overhanging most of Africa whilst war clouds darken the atmosphere in West Asia with the aggressive Israelis determined to snuff out the Palestinian commando movement in order to pave the way for a new Palestinian State under Israeli auspices. Brezhnev has postponed his Middle East trip; and suggestions have been made in the USA that American troops should be stationed in Israel to safeguard its boundaries. Kissinger does not think that this will be of any value (Vietnam had shown, he said, that it was easier to get into a war than get out of it) and he has also thrown cold water on demands that the USA should militarily take over the oil fields in Arab countries (Wall Street is in jitters because Saudi Arabia was taking over the Aramco installations in that oil rich country). The Common Market countries are in deep travail and the numerous summits between the leaders of the leading countries have not been of much help. The economic crisis in capitalist Europe and America has become more serious as the days go by and all panaceas suggested by the leading economists in the different countries have not been of much help.

NEARER HOME IN ASIA, there is ferment in every country. Japan has a new Prime Minister, Takeo Miki, who is making a determined effort to reconcile political factionalism within the ruling LDP by tight-rope walking offering concessions to the three leading groups. Economically, Japan is one of the few capitalist countries still booming, but the inflation and recession in the rest of the capitalist world has brought inhibitive factors into play in the economic development of Japan—but Tokyo is seeking to establish fruitful economic relations with the socialist countries, the USSR and as well as China, in order to stabilise her economy.

In China Mao Tse-tung has called for a new unity between the Party, Army and the People, and observers are inclined to think that there are still unresolved points of conflict between the Party and the Army which the Cultural Revolution, the liquidation of Lin Biao, and the more recent campaign against Confucius have not succeeded

in ending. In Vietnam, Thieu's government is now in distress: the forces of the Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, backed by Hanoi, has been taking over more and more of the country; and without US arms, troops and cash, Thieu's regime is obviously withering away on its stalk. Serious fighting has developed in the area around Saigon and there is little the US can do to save the situation for Thieu. In Cambodia, Khmer troops of the Liberation Movement are pressing hard on Lol Non's troops close to the capital. Serious trouble has broken out in Bangladesh and a state of emergency has been declared. News has been scarce from Dacca but it is clear that economic difficulties have added to political maladministration to bring about a state of near chaos. India too seems to have more than its fair share of troubles and a bomb outrage in Bihar, which caused the death of Central Government Minister Mishra, has introduced the element of terrorist assassination into the politics of the country.

EVENTS IN BURMA AND MALAYSIA, however, have a great deal of significance in the Asian context although very little attention has been paid to them in Sri Lanka.

Burma after many years of a special kind of Burmese "socialism" has developed chronic economic ailments—chiefly stemming from a breakdown of the old productive machine without constructing anything new to take its place to boost the economy. Press freedom and a free press no longer exist in Burma and no news is available from domestic newspapers. Even the governmental news, which filters through, is scant and inadequate. One has therefore to rely on foreign newspapers and periodicals. Even visiting journalists are few and far between.

The malaise in Burma was brought into the open when the students of Rangoon university and in High Schools had seized the body of U Thant when it was brought from New York for burial and had taken it to the University campus for burial in a specially (and hastily) constructed mausoleum. The reasons given by the students for this action was that the Government had not made it possible for the family to give U Thant

the kind of burial he deserved—in keeping with the world eminence he had attained. The background to all this makes it one of the most fascinating episodes in contemporary Asian history.

The Economist, 14/7/74, set out the background and the event from a British point of view: "... Before going to the UN he had been a close adviser to U Nu, and he was never reconciled with the military regime of General Ne Win installed in Burma after ousting U Nu in the coup of 1962. It was during Thant's years in New York, where he personified the international community of nations and became the best known Burmese of his time, the Ne Win regime was imposing on Burma an isolation so strict as to make it almost a hermit kingdom. So it was really not very surprising that the students of Rangoon university should have seen in the arrival of Thant's body for burial in a public cemetery an opportunity to voice their frustrations in a way that would capture international attention. They seized the body on December 5th and interred it three days later at a site in the university grounds where they began to build a mausoleum intended to be more worthy of him than the tomb sanctioned by the government. The government responded by closing every school and college in the country, announcing that special transport arrangements were being made to disperse all students to homes, and claiming that large numbers of peace-breaking 'young hooligans' were being arrested by the army. But on Wednesday troops and police went to the university in force and seized the body. By the end of the day the Government had proclaimed martial law in Rangoon after rioters had attacked and burnt official buildings."

The Newsweek, 23/12/74, viewed the matter from the US angle. "He was Burma's most distinguished son, the only Asian ever to serve as Secretary-General of the U.N. But for all the honour he brought his native land, U Thant spent the final years of his life as a man without a country. He was never welcome in Burma after his political foe Gen. Ne Win seized power in 1962—and when Thant died of cancer at 65 last month in New

York, the Rangoon government made it clear that his body wasn't welcome either. No honor guard or Burmese official met the casket at the airport. Ne Win, who hated Thant, ruled that his body could not be interred in the Shwedagon Pagoda, Burma's most sacred shrine but must be buried in a seedy public cemetery. That proved to be a bad miscalculation. Monks and students seized Thant's body as the funeral procession was about to start, vowing to give it a fitting burial. In the grisly tug of war that followed last week, Burma broke out in bloody rioting.

"The battle started at dawn when Burmese troops and policeman firing tear gas stormed onto the campus of Rangoon University, where a crowd of students and monks was keeping vigil at a makeshift mausoleum they had built for Thant. Police herded hundreds of the mourners off to jail, while troops grabbed the coffin and destroyed the tomb. As word spread that the government had recaptured Thant's remains, angry crowds began roaming through the streets, burning buses and attacking public buildings. The army struck back, firing into the mobs. Tanks and armoured cars moved in and, for the first time since Burma became independent in 1948, martial law was declared. Ne Win's regime announced that nine persons had

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been killed, but others termed the figure low. 'The military,' said Edward Franco, an official at the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, 'has been heavy-handed.'

"While the government's shabby treatment of Thant's body ignited last week's violent disturbances, the rioting was fueled by public anger over the way Ne Win's twelve-year-old socialist regime has brought Burma's once-prosperous economy to the brink of ruin. To make it clear that pocketbook issues lay behind the protests, the demonstrators burned the Ministry of Co-operatives—regarded as the center of economic mismanagement. At the end of the week, Thant was quietly reburied in a garden near the Shwedagon Pagoda and Ne Win still seemed firmly in control. But he had been sent the clearest message yet that his autocratic rule and economic blunders were stretching Burmese patience to the breaking point."

The right-leaning Indian weekly *Himmat* set out the events in Burma a little more exhaustively, and it must be recalled that the Burma of U Nu as well as Ne Win has taken a strong anti-Indian line against Indian merchants, landowners and labourers who had been taken to Burma by the British to help in the commercial and imperialist development of the country. "U Thant was a mild-mannered but able Burmese leader who as UN Secretary-General became a world figure. He died of cancer in New York on November 25. His body was brought to Rangoon on December 1. On December 5 the funeral procession took place. Thousands of students and monks gathered for it. They felt that the Burmese regime's respect for U Thant was insincere and inadequate. The burial site chosen by the regime was not, in their view, important enough. They seized the coffin, took it to the university campus and built a tomb for it on the site of the former students' union building which had been razed in 1962 by the military regime."

"U Thant dead had done what U Thant alive did not and could not do: his body had sparked a popular uprising. Hundreds of thousands of Burmese citizens visited the campus to pay homage to U Thant. They donated, to the students and the monks, more

than 100,000 dollars for a permanent mausoleum. General Ne Win's military government realised that public support was with the students and the monks, and announced a concession. It said that there would be a hero's funeral for U Thant near the Shwedagon Pagoda, Burma's holiest shrine. But the students and the monks would not let go of the body; it continued, under their watch, to lie in a small brick tomb in the university.

"The authorities waited for five days. Then they struck. Troops arrived at the university campus at 2 am on December 11 and forced open the campus gate with a crane. They were met by a large crowd of students (at 2 am, mark it) who appealed, on a public address system, to be allowed to continue building the mausoleum. Ignoring the appeal, the troops fired tear-gas rounds, forced students and monks to make way, broke into the tomb and removed the coffin, presumably to the site by the Shwedagon Pagoda.

"Reactions, followed all over Rangoon. Lootings, firings and arrests were reported. Martial law was imposed. The regime said that police stations were attacked and that the premises of a ministry and two cinemas in the heart of Rangoon were completely destroyed.

"The papers of December 14 speak of tanks and troops carrying machineguns moving about in Rangoon and of deserted streets. The government radio has said that nine have been killed and 74 wounded but a US embassy official in Rangoon has called these figures "too low". The Japanese newspaper "Asahi Shimbun" says that 1800 have been arrested. It would seem that General Ne Win has been able to suppress what perhaps was the strongest challenge to him since he captured power in 1962. He has, predictably, spoken of "mob rule". But no government spokesman has denied the fact that the students were entirely peaceful during the pre-dawn hours of December 11.

"Were the students right and wise in what they did? Lives have been lost, much property has been destroyed and the regime is as stern as ever, possibly sterner. Many of those arrested will be rigorously punished. Nonetheless

it is possible to understand the students' action. Theirs did not appear to be a premeditated move. Unorganised and leaderless, they probably acted spontaneously and impulsively. They did not have the time to weigh the consequences. Their long-suppressed feelings had to find release and the funeral procession provided the occasion. But perhaps they erred in not returning the body after the regime had been compelled into offering a more appropriate burial site. The military regime undoubtedly, had a difficult decision to make. For it to accept the students' union site as U Thant's burial place would have been too great a humiliation. But by sending troops to the campus it showed that it preferred an assertion of its will to an honourable compromise. There had been reports recently that General Ne Win was thinking in terms of liberalising his rule. He and some of his official had exchanged military designations for civilian ones. It is clear now that any relaxations that were to come would have been formal rather than substantial."

GENERAL NE WIN'S GOVERNMENTAL propaganda machine however, seemed to suggest that the recent disturbances in Burma including the student action in regard to U Thant's body were inspired by outside sources. Whatever is left of the press in Rangoon is completely under governmental control and it adopts a very cautious attitude in these matters, but those who read between the lines seem to think that the Burmese authorities would like its friends and sympathisers to believe that the trouble had been caused by the CIA. After the disclosures of CIA activities in Chile it is now easy to attribute such disturbances to the CIA—that it made use of existing discontent to stir up trouble. It is said that anti-Ne Win elements had resorted in recent weeks to acts of sabotage and terror in Chile style, and that the student disturbances were only part of the preparations for even more widespread disturbances. It is stressed that the methods adopted were similar to CIA methods in other countries. In Thailand, too, similar charges have been made against the CIA in regard to the disturbances in Bangkok in July (3rd-6th) last year. The Thai

papers Nation, 8/7/74 and the Bangkok Post, 10/7/74, made a point about the role of the CIA in the disturbances especially in the Chinese sector of the city.

The CIA is so much in the news today that it is not difficult to persuade people that the CIA was responsible for much that cannot be explained. In the USA itself the CIA has been thrust into the focus of attention. According to an AFP despatch from Washington on December 28: "Congressman Lucien Nedzi, Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Sub-committee on Intelligence, has confirmed that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did engage in domestic spying. Mr. Nedzi in an interview yesterday said that the current CIA Director William Colby informed him last year on CIA activities inside the United States. Mr. Nedzi refused to give details of the activities.

"Mr. Nedzi said the CIA had always believed that such activities within the U.S. were necessary to protect its agents and sources of information. He said that in his opinion the CIA's domestic activities were not as significant as press reports indicated. Meanwhile a member of the House of Representatives, Mr. Michael Harrington, has filed a suit in the Federal District Court here to force the CIA to halt covert intervention in foreign countries and domestic surveillance activities.

"Mr. Harrington, a bitter critic of CIA, says he could think of no other way of forcing CIA to obey its charter. He says the Congress has failed to provide adequate legal safeguards to prevent CIA from overstepping its charter."

With the articles in the New York Times exposing domestic spying on 10,000 Americans inside the USA by the CIA (contrary to its Charter), there has been a furore in the USA, and President Ford has been compelled to set up a Citizens Committee headed by Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller to investigate charges that the CIA had spied illegally on American citizens. The eight member panel includes former Governor Ronald Reagan of California and General Lyman Lemnitzer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It is alleged that the CIA had kept files on 10,000 Americans and conduc-

ted widespread surveillance in the United States in contravention of its charter which prohibited domestic operations. The panel is expected to report its findings within three months. Its conclusions and recommendations will be sent to Congress where

a number of Committees are already planning their own investigations.

Next Week: THE TROUBLE IN MALAYSIA: AND THE IMPACT OF KISSINGER DIPLOMACY ON ASIAN POLITICS.

ON GROUNDWATER

Drought and Water For Food Crops

BY A. DENIS N. FERNANDO

THIS TALK WAS BROADCAST OVER THE SRI LANKA BROADCASTING CORPORATION ON 6TH OF JANUARY 1975. WE REPRODUCE THIS TALK BY COURTESY OF THE S.L.B.C.

The tank that supplied water to the fields is almost empty. The fields below it are parched, the green lustre is no more, the fields are brown and bone dry. This is the typical scene in the Dry Zone of our country today. However the Gods in their mercy so to say have spared us a little rain in parts of the Wet Zone and in districts of the DRY ZONE like Matara, Hambantota and Batticaloa.

The Chena crops in most parts of the country have failed and so have the rice fields that depend directly on rainfall except in a very few areas. The rice fields that depend on surface irrigated water, except in the fields under tanks that are reasonably full, have to undergo the same fate.

THE MINISTER OF IRRIGATION POWER AND HIGHWAYS, Hon. Maithripala Senanayake has already brought to the notice of the Government the severe drought conditions prevailing in the country and discussions are taking place to make the best use of the little water that is available for cultivation. We are on a crisis situation as far as food is concerned. The Hon. Minister has quite rightly appraised everybody of the situation, so that every body is warned, so that timely action could be taken at least partly to cushion the crisis by taking alternative measures.

The Prime Minister, the Hon. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, has very forcefully stated in her recent address that the world food situation is also getting worse resulting from inflation and food shortages on a global scale. In this context we cannot hope for much assistance from abroad even if we have the money which in fact we also don't have. She has also warned the people of our country of the impending famine facing us. It is therefore very clear that if we do not produce food we would have to face the consequences.

For the purpose of understanding drought patterns scientists can adopt the method of studying the river flows in large rivers in a country. This would reflect the pattern of rainfall over a very large area. For my own study I selected the river flow of the Kelani Ganga which covers a large area of 885 sq. miles on the basis of statistics for the last 70 years.

There are certain trends observed and we could reasonably extend this to be an indicator for the whole of the country. In this study I find that there is a periodicity of wet and dry cycles of about 24 years each, within a total cycle of about 48 years. This cycle weather pattern has nearly 7 years of extreme drought, 7 years of extreme rain and about 17 years of satisfactory rainfall in between. According to this trend we are now going through the worst period of drought, and this drought period would last for another 4 years after which we would have satisfactory rainfall and move over to the wet cycle in the mid-1980's.

Even if this theory is not correct, the fact remains that we have been facing droughts in the past few years including this year which is

Something Must Be Done

one of the severest and we will have to face up to them in the future too.

IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS we no doubt would have to consider how we could fully utilise whatever water that is available. Let us now consider how we get the water for our food crops. As you know the primary source is rainfall.

Man has throughout the ages by artificial means by the construction of reservoirs learnt to conserve part of this rain water and use it when he wants. Nature too conserves part of that rainwater underground in reservoirs that we do not see with our naked eyes, they are observed when we dig wells the water in wells is ground water.

Since it is human nature to believe what we see, we tend to believe that there is water only in man-made reservoirs and tend to disbelieve that nature too has provided underground reservoirs that are only waiting to be tapped for use by man.

Now when there is little rainfall, drought prevails and man-made reservoirs seldom fill and therefore crops dependent of both on these sources fail. The first to fail are the Chena crops that depend directly on rainfall, then crops under minor irrigation schemes and then under major irrigation schemes. In fact if you would have listened to me in the earliest part of my talk you would know that we are going through a very severe drought and even the crops under the major irrigation schemes are failing except in a few areas.

For some reason or another little or no effort has been made to utilise the ground water that nature stores. If we use it, the water is replenished in these underground reservoirs. The ground water that nature conserves under the ground is like a basin of water. If you do not use it, it is like, pouring water to an already filled basin the water would just overflow and go to waste. If you however use it, then when it rains part of the rain water percolates through the ground and fills up what has been taken away.

I have computed that in our country we have about 5.8 million acre

feet of water, that is to say an area of 5.8 million acres of land covered to a height of 1 foot with water. This is below the ground, and could be extracted for use annually. There is a further 400,000 acre feet of water below the ground that percolates from surface water irrigation schemes annually. This too has so far not been extracted for use.

In a situation like what we are facing today we could harness this ground water by digging wells or installing tube wells. This has the added advantage that even in normal years of rainfall we would have an alternative source of water for the crops to be used when the rain does not come down at the proper time.

AT THIS STAGE I would wish to quote from the well known Indian Authority on Ground Water Mr. A. K. Roy, President of the Indian Geohydrological Association, from his address early this year. He said: "However experience has shown that in such canal command areas if about 15% of the total water requirement could be supplemented from ground water sources, the agricultural produce is increased TWOFOLD."

He further says, to quote again, "It is common knowledge that in areas covered by surface water irrigation e.g. in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, large scale salination of soils and attended water logging conditions in irrigated tracts have resulted in considerable damage. Experience has shown that development of ground water in such regions has improved the situation considerably and has provided the much needed remedial measures."

It is thus very clear that in extracting ground water for the irrigation of crops, we could increase yields of crops in already irrigated areas, and sustain crops in other areas, and in certain instances the extraction of ground water could solve water logging problems in already irrigated areas.

There is therefore no doubt about the fact that we in Sri Lanka could increase the productivity of our lands by supplementing water from open dug wells and tube wells to irrigate the crops. It would also be apposite to the listener to know that the private and public Banks of India give loans up to

20,000 Rupees for wells that discharge 10 acre feet of water per annum.

In the speech of the Hon. Prime Minister which I have already quoted earlier in this talk I would wish to further quote:

"Every endeavour should be made extract the available underground water as done by other countries without waiting for rains or the tanks to fill. There is plenty of water underground that has not been tapped as yet in this country."

According to my estimates which could be taken as a first approximation it would be necessary to dig over 6 lakhs of wells. In a programme like this, it would be unrealistic to expect the government to construct all these wells, these would have to be done by the farmers themselves with the government anything to provide any inputs like pumps required to use these wells. As I said earlier the remedy to the drought and its attendant problems are in the hands of the farmers themselves, the Government can only assist—**DIG WELLS IN YOUR FIELDS.**

Sherlock Holmes Still There

You can call on the Great Detective at 221B Baker Street, London, where you will see him lolling in a wingchair by a round table on which stands a cup of tea and a half-finished slice of toast. Every other detail Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has so often described is in its place, down to the June 23, 1892, issue of the "Graphic" atop a military chest. The figure is made of wax and the room, a memorial museum, was started by the Sherlock Holmes Society, whose membership numbers some 500 fans of the Great Detective. To the many letters that come, some asking for help, others reporting mysterious crimes and secrets that need to be unravelled, Sherlock Holmes' "secretary", Miss Lesley Whiston, replies that Mr. Holmes is either regrettably absent, or occupied with other important affairs.

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—15

Getting Nowhere With The Baas

By Herbert Keuneman

I BROUGHT YOU last week as far as the middle of June—I had arrived in Ehetuwewa in the middle of April all set (as I thought) to begin building my house—the October rains that marked my deadline, which Jayawardana Baas had sworn from the beginning we should well be able to keep, had crept from six to only four months away; and all we had was the foundations partly finished. It was mid-July by the time we had laid the D.P.C. that mystical juncture which Jayawardana insisted on regarding not as the end of an exordium but the beginning of our architectural denouement. *dan pata-pata gala bichchi nagyi*: so, onomatopoeically, he swore the walls would rise; still insisting that we should beat the rains, although half our time was gone and the rains now but three months off.

'The Rains' had become by this time an obsession with me; and if you, my reader live in a reasonably weatherproof house which you can lock up and leave when you can or when you must, no doubt it will seem to you a foolish or at least exaggerated obsession. But if they came in anything like the gross fury—or even with the alternative sullen malice—I had sometimes seen them do, they threatened (by however sane a judgement) a formidable prospect. I had seen them come in burst of black cyclonic violence that blew up the cadjans from one hip or another and struck with steely spears of water straight into the house, as though the roof were simply not there; and I had seen them come in a grey 'depression'—a term that turned out as applicable affectively as it was meteorologically—which might last a week, then cheatingly lift a couple of days, but only to return and last a week or more again, which hung everything inside with darkness and outside with perpetually dripping or cozing moisture...and I wanted neither kind until I had erected my fortification against them.

THE RAINS OF APRIL had visited me an attack of bronchitis such as I had never experienced before: I wheezed like a seraphina: each inhalation burnt like a breath of over-heated air; I was even scared into reducing my cigarette intake, and nothing less than a heart attack had ever achieved that previously! No, even on a practical, physical level the Rains were a legitimate fear.

But, for me psychological factors were also involved. My moving into my new house would certainly encourage me emotionally: as symbolic that out of the ruin of all that had seemed lost I had rebuilt 'with worn-out tools' some part of my former sense of security, so irreparably shattered though it had seemed. (How did I come to persuade myself that anything so essentially fragile could ever be so easily put, however partially, back together?) Yet this was not, at the time, my conscious psychological motive; the conscious one was far more naive: the day I had my own house, spacious (comparatively) and weatherproof...and lockable-up...would mark my release from the exiguous castrament I now occupied and which because of my determination to guard within it, despite its inadequacies, my idiotically cherished possessions had become a virtual prison. It was a pleasant little tabernacle in fact, though an inconvenient one; but I hated it. So, I was worse than unhappy; I was corroding from within.

I have no doubt that Jayawardana knew from the beginning (or would have known, had it ever seemed to him relevant to weigh the matter at all) that I could never have my house before the rains broke. Not at the rate at which I suppose he had counted working on it; that is to say; at the customary rate for a village baas: working when convenient or begged or a little coerced, and employing as few assistants as he could so as to split as little as possible of his fee. Meanwhile what was to be gained—least of all by his impatient client—by revealing the truth and exciting me to no purpose? The course of events would make such revelation as was necessary, and I would surely adjust to gradual deferment as would any reasonable man. The trouble was, Jaya-

wardana was thinking of a reasonable villager, if indeed he was thinking altruistically at any time; and I, anyway as I classed myself, was a reasonable townsman accustomed to (at worst approximate) deadlines and (at worst nominal) contracts. Neither of these formalities, even at their least binding levels, entered at all into my baas' agreements with me. Promises were made, to be sure; but not be quixotically considered binding; just to keep relationships pleasant.

(I afterwards learnt there was a way to reduce such pleasanties to pledges with a better chance of standing up. If one put things in writing and had them endorsed over a postage—actually, I suppose, a revenue stamp,—that was considered a kind of contractual half-nelson! Much virtue in a spot of establishmentarian ceremony! But few would be willing to so commit themselves.)

My baas Jayawardana, the model of a village wheeler-dealer, had far too many irons in the fire to pre-occupy himself with any one of them. When he achieved 'dipisi', that critical stage after which (he had promised) the walls should rise *pata-pata*, he and all his helpers 'turned up missing'. Not until four days later did I discover he was only a few miles away working for spot cash on one of his subsidiary projects, and it was a week before any further work on my house was done. Three months to the rains, and a week of them already wasted! But my house was not even his main project: it was merely his main hedge against whatever else of his might go wrong.

JAYAWARDANA'S REAL INTEREST was his plan for his *bidi* factory. I have related earlier how he—or, rather, his wife Karuna—enlisted my support in this; and how, believing that, as she had emphasized, the factory would offer immediate employment to a dozen, and later to increasing numbers, of girls from local families, I had given it gladly; the more so because I had been genuinely impressed by a sort of 'shadow' factory she had set up, in which industrious would-be *bidi*-rollers practised their skills on worthless leaves—not the expensive actual species—to be ready for the great day when the contract from the Small In-

dustries Department came through. It came through. And come through it did.

Whatever help my support had been—but I MUST reiterate that I had engaged it before my final decision to build in Ehetuwewa—I could not but look upon now as a good investment: not only in the prosperity of my adopted home, but also (I could hardly but hope) in the securement of Jayawardana's reciprocal interest in my personal project: my house.

Alas! I had been but picking a rod for my own backbone. I had not reckoned that Jayawardana (properly enough) would be the real agent of the enterprise; that every now and again—after he had been with me till 9.0 and 10.0 of a night, arranging precisely what work should be begun or completed the following morning while knowing full well that he intended no such thing, he would take the dawn bus for Colombo on *bidi* business, reconciled—as I could not possibly bring myself to be—to any delay that might cost him (and me!) Almost as bitter to swallow was the fact that very soon, for one reason or another, the Ehetuwewa girls from the *bidi* factory had been laid off or had sacked themselves and were replaced by others from Karuna's village, near Kegalle, where *bidi* workers were redundant. Mercifully I was not yet aware of being dealt the unkindest cut of all in that my *baas*, beneficiary and (I had thought) friend had intended and planned from early on that what profit he could by any means contrive from the house he was building for me should pay for the franchise I had helped build for him!

I HAD OFTEN THOUGHT it peculiar that Jayawardana, who (I knew beyond delusion) was hardly the person to neglect an opportunity to collect cash, would not take from me the money I owed him for work done but preferred to let it accrue. At first I interpreted the uncharacteristic reluctance as a would-be kindly gesture; for—more of this in my next article—keeping on hand cash with which to pay bills had been something of a problem ever since my second arrival in Ehetuwewa; so, we arranged that we should clear accounts at given stages, D.P.C. level, sill level, lintel level...

when I would obtain the amount required and disburse it immediately. But when my ordinarily voracious *baas* 'achieved *dipisi*' and still refused payment and would not explain, I wondered why. When it was four days after this critical stage—following which, you will remember, he had promised that the walls should rise '*pata-pata*'—and Jayawardana and his helpers had never once approached the site and were claimed to have vanished from village ken, I was rather more than just puzzled. When I finally discovered that he was working for *spot cash* on a site in Gallewa only a mile or two away, I was seriously disturbed. But not yet as seriously as I should have been had I realized all the implications of his behaviour.

That realization came much later: after I had moved into the new house half-complete and had been forced to discontinue Jayawardana's services and we came to our final show-down (of which all I shall now say is that in it I was shall ignominiously routed). But I shall explain some of his rationale.

Although I had been quoted—and Jayawardana had confirmed—the rate of Rs. 35 'per 100 feet' of wall no one had thought to warn me that it was a village understanding that $1\frac{1}{2}$ rates applied to work 'below ground level'. Neither, though I had asked many times, had anyone seen fit to elucidate how anything but a cubic measure, or a per-brick measure, could apply to such a thing as a wall: as many times as I asked I had been answered that 'everything will work out'. And since much of my plan incorporated half-brick walls, as well as one-and-a-half-brick ones I, in my simplicity, had taken this to mean that a flat rate would (to a *baas*' satisfaction) average out.

No such thing! What it did mean was that Rs. 35 was the single-brick rate—75 cubic feet, in fact—and I must expect to pay *pro rata* for other walls. Saving half-brick walls, however, for which there was a special rate: naturally slightly higher than the *pro rata* one! This could hardly be described as a village understanding (because the village built nothing but single-brick walls) but it was logical and fair enough had I only known it beforehand.

But stop! Had I known it beforehand I might have modified my plans. I assuredly would have. Built a smaller house or a house which called for lighter walls than those I had unthinkingly gone on with. I had 27" spread footings (insurance for the heavy core of my house against the now-dry now-waterlogged clay on which it stood) buried beneath the ground. And Jayawardana, by simply keeping his counsel close until I was hopelessly committed, had a nice reserve of capital—almost exactly twice as much as I had calculated—buried in the same place!

I had been bamboozled similarly not once but half-a-dozen times before my eyes were eventually opened. The situation might have been less intolerable to look back upon if only the work had gone steadily and swiftly forward. But it did not. Every few days Jayawardana withdrew from it either to prosecute his efforts on behalf of the *bidi* factory or to work a stint on somebody else's site raising cash for making token payments to his assistants when they pressed him. His excuse to them? I had not paid him. Which was true!

For he was determined I should not pay until I paid through the nose.

LETTER

• Rice Production

Sir,

I write this with a view that you will please give due prominence to the serious situation that has arisen with regard to our Rice Production Programme.

The continued drought we are experiencing in some of the major rice producing areas, which mainly depend on rainfall and irrigation has slumped the Yala Rice Production scheme very seriously. It is presumed that hardly any rainfall has been experienced in any rice producing areas in any reasonable quantity during the past eight months.

It seems that this condition, has not only effected the Yala Season; but it is also going to effect the Maha Season of 1974-75

In a very serious way and in a very large extent in the Dry Zone.

The Dry Zone which is responsible for 2/3rds of our Rice production is now experiencing further difficulties by the out-break of certain pests which attack the young plants and although this is now said to be under control, these pests have already spread to the Wet Zone where certain areas have already been affected and if this continues to spread to all areas, these pests could be very damaging to the entire production.

The most alarming situation which has now cropped up is the pile-up of Fertilisers stocks due to the decrease of movement on Fertilisers from the Corporation to the District Stores which recorded a decrease of 56% for the Quarter ended September, 1974, and from the District Stores to the various Co-operative Stores a decrease of 76% is recorded. This is most probably due to the price of Fertilisers having been increased by 373%.

Looking into the whole situation, it is quite obvious that:— 1. The severe drought; 2. The pests attacks and 3. The increase in the price of Fertilisers, it is very difficult to surmise as to what the actual position of the Yala production for 1974 and the Maha production for 1974/75 and also the future Rice Production Programme is going to be.

M. Ashroff Hussain

100, Braybrooke Place,
Colombo 2.
5.12.74

KATANA BY-ELECTION

Wijeyapala Mendis	
(UNP)	20,747
D. J. Fernando pulle	
(SLFP)	19,697

The UNP won the seat by a majority of 1050 Votes.

Tribune's analysis and comments on the by-election will appear in our next issue.

SHAMBA

Buckling Down To Work

by ANATORY BUKOBA

November 20,

The hour is 10 P.M., and I have my day's notes that I have just started to do before I get to bed. I am writing this in bed, and my bed is a mat on the earth floor, with the open-flame oil lamp resting on a large tin beside me, and so my getting to bed is just a conventional phrase I could not very well avoid. I could have said; before I go to sleep.

Major and I were busy till 8 p.m. setting fire to heaps of vegetation. He counted eight lots. I counted two not done, the two I could see in my line of vision. Then we came straight to bed, and, later, he got up to make some tea for us all. I put some water out tonight for the puppy. He has been at it, drinking it, several times. This is better than having him fussing round the cooking pots. Everything has been stowed away tonight, but it is not easy to get the Kalla-geddies or water vessels off the floor, and so they remain on the floor, and one or two other things besides. As Thomas More said of his family, if he did not converse with it, he would lose all contact and friendship with it, so, I felt myself obliged to chat with the occupants of this house—these two hours since we came in. Truly I am sleepy.

We had a Dutch woman round today. She was one of a group, a small one, that were out on the road above us. I left her chatting to the housewife and her baby, while Major and I crossed the river to bring back a coconut branch, to use its leaves for tying on the cadjans we fetched here last night. This saves using string or rope. There goes the puppy again at the water, drinking it, and finished it too, as I have just seen.

The cadjans we bought last night are very short. We finished the roof, and one wall, the short, or low one, on the side opposite the massa bed, and we found ourselves with still not enough cadjans to

finish the house. So we gave what was left to my colleague to redo a part of the roof of his house. This task done was in the afternoon. Really tired am I and wondering how I can finish these notes. The acre should be a sight to see tomorrow with so many heaps of vegetation burnt up. I am much too tired to write, and I want to bandage Major's foot, too, as before, as I said, going to bed.
November 21,

This night is a sad one, and a great strain on me. The cause is, no food for my colleague and his wife. He was offered work these last three days, but he has been a late riser, and he seems to have dished his chances each time. Yet, he has been very mobile, going to the kadday quite often. Major seems a determined character, much tougher than me in this respect. He seems quite prepared to abide by St. Paul's Dictum, As for the man who will not work, let him starve. I would have caved in long ago, but the truth is; we cannot afford to do so. At least, Major and I do some work. With the work on the Shamba, he works fast. I take a long time to catch up on what he does. I may seem to work longer hours than he, but he does the cooking, a task I dread. He seems to make tea every hour; I find this a god-send. As I said to him, if we cannot eat we may as well have tea. I think I have said before, an English farm-worker, on a good place, eats seven times a day; when he gets up, after milking, at tenses, dinner or lunch, tea, supper, and when he comes in again for the night. On a poor, place, he will be fed at least five times, missing out the first and the last. It is a miracle to me how the family eats at all. My colleague is obviously a good provider, but this time he has failed to deliver the goods, work or no work. All I know is that whenever I have been here, he has looked partly to me. This time I cannot or will not help. Having Major here is like having me here, and I cannot have him made use of, when he is on a pretty thin string himself about food. What annoyed or upset me was that my colleague lost his job opportunities for work. The roadside below the verge, where I had a job unravelling knots of thorny vines months ago, at several attempts, has at last been

cleared today. Major did it. We also used the mammoty. Major prefers to use the *katha*; I prefer the knife, a long-handled one, and my preference now is for both knife and mammoty, using the one or the other as the situation requires. I also clear up as I go. Major abhors clearing up; he has the old chena instincts, set fire to it where it lies. I prefer making heaps. We set fire to four today. Working as I have done this last week, I have no time to give attention to by-elections. One thing that struck me is that the candidates are more affluent than the voters. They live in better houses. The people of this country are very astute about elections. I have only seen one newspaper in a week. There is a chance that the housewife may be back at her old patty-making. This time someone else will manage the business for her; she will only have to make the patties. Today is celebrated what is called the Presentation of Mary. Writing this reminded me that we must give my colleague something to eat before he goes to work tomorrow, if he goes. He cannot work on an empty stomach. Yet I think they are some Sinhalese households which do not have this morning meal; but they will at least have had a meal the night before. Not far from here, people passing in lorries smash coconuts to a deity. The smashed coconuts are anybody's for the asking whoever get to it first. I am glad my colleague has elected to sleep against his wife's promptings to go coconut-hunting.

November 22,

None of us were astir betimes; there was no breakfast for my colleague, and he went out just as he usually does. Major will stay with the family while I am away a few days, and he will do his own cooking. He has asked to be left just the *katha* and the heavier of the two long handled knives. The mammoty and the lighted knife I left at a friend's; it will make his task of keeping an eye on the tools easier. I stacked a little more of the cut vegetation, just below the road, and I caught an early bus, earlier than I had intended.

November 26,

Back a day early was I so as to keep within the limit of the days I said I would be away. Our main

staple food item has gone up by nearly half in five days, so that the cost of that alone has gone from Rs. 3/- to Rs. 5/- for both of us. There were about fifty cadjans on the new house, plainly visible from the old house, after all the clearing done, and in the moonlit nights we have now. They are said to have been stolen on the night it rained. I must not question it, for even stranger things happened in the days when I was here alone. Major is here, and nothing else was lost. He has done some clearing with the *katha* in the corner near the path leading to the place where we bathe in the river. The puppy was on the alert; he growled as I went by the house to see how things were with the new house, and to see what work had been done. The money I left has been spent; there is enough food for the morning: breakfast. A fine *massa* bed has been made where the first *massa* bed stood after this house was first put up; and the half of the bed nearest the door, and it is by the doorway, has its underneath shut off from the public gaze by a fairly solid screen of cadjans. I arrived by night and so I have not been able to see much. Herbert Keuneman has had his problems and I have mine. I wonder how it is all going to work out. Major has helped our neighbour with some of his work, and I have been told the help will be reciprocated tomorrow.

November 27,

What I wrote last night was done hastily. Our basic food item has not gone up that much, but only by about fifty cents, more or less. The news I gave last night was hearsay and it was about a place some miles away. I have been given Rs. 15/- for the fifty cadjans removed from our new house. I was on my way to our nearest peace-keeping force, when I was called back, and the full facts were put before me. There were about seventy-five cadjans involved, and they may not all have been ours. Forty were being used to protect newly-made bricks, not yet dry, and what with their situation, I recognised them as mine. Very short they were. One of our people was involved, not Major, and this other one had the idea, or made the suggestions of parting with these cadjans, and received

Rs. 5/-. The outsider, one man who removed the cadjans, and who took them down, for they were part of the roof and a wall, got the full amount of money. There were a little knot of people; two in the clear, or in the dark, it would be more true to say, two in the know, and thanks to whom I was able to get at the truth, two of the guilty party, and there were only two. One of those in the dark was the big shot or *baas*, and he said, would I have the cadjans back, or would I elect for money? As his need of the cadjans was more urgent than mine, I opted for the money, and I said it would have to be Rs. 15/-. To my surprise, one of the guilty party was able to produce the money. The other guilty party owes him five chips. It has been a troublesome day, and, perhaps, I might have avoided all this by not coming back a day early.

Many friends have I met today, and Major and I kept bumping into them all the time. Some of them were from quite far away. All were glad to see me. The three year-old is as interesting as ever. Her talk is right up to the mark. She was making rice today. My colleague is in bed, I write, and the other two are just outside the door, and talking; and by the noise he is making with what sounds like a betel, or I should rather say, a *puwak* or an arecanut cutter, only we have not one, I would have said major was chewing betel, but he was not, he says. He has just put the water on the fire again for another cup of tea, and he has gone outside again. He is all *ogog* for a by-election result. What with all our nonsense, there was not much work done today, but it was done.

November 28,

My colleague would not get up this morning as usual, and for about the first time I was in a position *vis-a-vis* him, to tell him what I thought about that because of what I had learnt yesterday, caused it was said by hunger. Clearing was the order of the day, as it will continue to be for some time yet. I have still not straightened out, put into piles, what Major and Minor, or rather Major alone, for Minor had left, cut one morning while I was away. I have made four piles of the stuff, and I

have started my fifth pile. Major helped for a while, and then, starting on some new clearing, demonstrated how much easier it is to clear up as you cut, if there are two people. He looks as if he has put on weight since he came here. My colleague came back saying he had found some work some miles away. The *shamba* has a new look, not unlike a park, there are so many trees standing, but the rubbish has been cleared between these trees. Yet the mammoth work has to be done still because what looks cleared is a carpet of thorns or tiny stumps. I conceived the idea of going away on a short trip as tomorrow is an enforced holiday, and I do not want to hurt anybody's susceptibilities or feeling by working. So I am writing this elsewhere. There has been rain where I am now, and the frogs are having a grand time, such a noise.

November 29,

The results of our first by-election, for some time, were out yesterday. Adding the figure of the majority in 1970 to that of the majority this year, both of opposing parties, you get 6,690, by which the winner increased his votes, and the loser, 1970's winner, decreased his. Adding the figure of those who voted last time to that of those who voted this time, and dividing that by two, and using this figure with that given above, you find that there was a swing in the votes of a substantial nature. Usually two per cent is regarded as enough to cause a change of government, but a change of this nature is more than a landslide. It may cause a few to think again who wanted to hand in nomination papers for the next by-election. They may not wish to test the strength of their popularity, and they may let lesser men go forward now. There was not a newspaper from *Lake House* or *Times* to be had this evening, English or Sinhalese, and the only newspaper still on sale with the results was the *LSSP Janadina*. People would have it that proctor Herath would beat the United Front Candidate, and might even topple, if I may use that word, the United National Party candidate. They expected the Government candidate to be third, virtually last, for the other two independent candidates were not reckoned to count at all as the results proved. The Government

is to be congratulated that its candidate came second, quite a good second, too.

November 30,

Two nights and no sign of my colleague. His wife was worried yesterday, but she is more resigned to it today. The puppy has been tied up again the last two days as it has been chasing people. We would not have worried except that the housewife thought the puppy was bitten by a mad dog twenty-two days ago. Tied up, she is fierce when disturbed, even by one of us, and quiet when she is left alone. We set fire to six heaps of vegetation today; Major reckons the flames of one of them reached a height of fifteen feet. We saw the eclipse yesterday and I myself only the second half, as the moon reappeared. There was a mouse running round on the pantry table yesterday. It was in our plates and in some of the pots, too; today they have been stowed away properly so that there is nothing for the mouse to eat, and no pots and plates for the mouse to run around in. I am so sleepy, I am considering putting away this writing for an hour. Slept, have I half an hour, and I resume.

The housewife may go to her mother's tomorrow. I have had to resume feeding her, but this time Major handles the shopping and the cooking. He told me that what we buy will last half as long now. The *Shamba* has certainly taken on a new look. There is much more ground cleared now, and at a short distance it looks nice; when you get close to it you see that there is much work with the mammoth to be done yet. Two of the heaps I set fire to today were by the road; the other four were at the far end of the *shamba*. I am getting quite a lot of pricks from thorns, especially on my hands. The pricks on my hands do not turn septic, as do the leg ones. I am wondering how we were going to make ends meet. My capital is Rs. 350/- a month, and I cannot see it being enough. I have already disbursed Rs. 100/- of next month's the result of spending too much this month. I am wondering if this *shamba* is ever going to give us an income. Fully occupied as we are with clearing, there is no time to do anything

else. We are short of hands, but more hands means more food, more money, and how are we going to do it? That is the challenge. We were rather glum yesterday after I got back, but this afternoon we were all more cheerful. The three year old was in good form this evening, as dusk fell: she was making a lot of noise and jumping about, to the distraction of her mother, but I find that when the little girl gets going, there is nothing more musical. Today she was singing the call of the fisherman drawing in their nets; goodness knows where she learnt it.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

On Stone Inscriptions

by Jepharis

AN INTERESTING DUTCH STONE INSCRIPTION embedded over the western doorway of Globe Hotel in Baillie Street, Colombo Fort, is spotlighted and the story there of described by CDN correspondent E. B. Wright of Dehiwela. The inscription DOOR GEWELT GEVELT, REGT HERSTELT "By might destroyed, by right restored" has not been obliterated by white-washing, as I discovered on a recent visit to the site.

It is still boldly decipherable, in spite of repeated coatings of lime over the past three centuries; assuming that this building dates from the early years of the Dutch occupation, as it might well do; for the few Portuguese families allowed to remain in Ceylon would have become extinct, losing their identity by inter-marriage with the Dutch and the local Ceylonese, as the Dutch regime progressed in time. The governor who confiscated all Peglotee's properties and wealth and had him imprisoned was very probably Lourens Pyl, Commander and President of Ceylon from 3 December 1679 to 28 January 1692 (source of my information: *Times of Ceylon GREEN BOOK 1939*), who was a tyrant, later executed for his atrocities by the Dutch East Indian Government at Batavia.

An important insignia of the Hollander's occupation of Ceylon are the initials V.O.C. found on almost all old Dutch Ceylon coins

Dutch History

and certain m.d.s. This stands for Vederlische Oostindische Compagnie (in its anglicised form, Netherlands Overseas Company). The Dutch East India Company, with its headquarters at Batavia, which gradually brought the East Indies (now the Republic of Indonesia) under Dutch occupation; was its far eastern agency. The Portuguese too had their 'East India Company' whose primary function was to trade in spices and gems, but was also responsible in extending the frontiers of colonialism in these parts.

THE 'PORTUGUESE BURGHERS', i.e. those Portuguese settlers who intermarried with the Dutch, as well as those Portuguese who intermarried with and bequeathed their names to Sinhalese families, e.g. Perera, Peiris, de Silva, de Soysa, de Mel, Fernando, Ferdinando, etc., still perpetuate traces of the Portuguese occupation of Ceylon (1505-1653) in modern Sri Lanka, just as the Dutch burghers keep alive the memory of the Dutch regime with a whole host of Dutch names, too numerous to mention, the German burghers are represented by Dornhorst, the French burghers by La Brooy, and the Italian burghers by Del Tufo. The Stewarts claim Scottish ancestry and the Irish O'Brien.

Only the De Sarams are of rather doubtful ancestry, which is why their genealogy does not qualify for inclusion in the DBU Journal. They call themselves "Singhalese", an adaption of the Sinhala "Sarum" with the Portuguese prefix "de". However, Mudaliyar Abraham de Saram, in early British times, married an aristocratic English lady, a Miss Treherne (whose name is also perpetuated among the Dickmans), which explains how their fair complexion and general 'burgher' appearance has come down to the present day. For more information, vide, Sir Paulus E. Pieris' "The De Saram family" and R. O. de Saram's genealogical records of the De Saram family, available with his son, Mr. Ivor de Saram.

It is regrettable that many burgher families, whether of English, or Dutch, or Portuguese, or any other European ancestry, perhaps for the sake of their children's education and future prospects in life, are showing a lack of patriotism and "flight" by emigrating, or

planning to emigrate "down under".

MANY VESTIGES OF COLONIALISM do exist as a part of our recent heritage, interwoven into the fabric of our island story, whether they be welcome or not, and cannot be altogether erased by the efforts of ultra-nationalism: just as a man's past sins cannot be hidden or covered up or eradicated by whatever he may do in the future—they WILL keep cropping up most disconcertingly to block one's endeavours to progress in the right direction.

We ought to have a **NATIONAL TRUST**, may the Department of Cultural Affairs *nota bene*, on the lines of the National Trust of Great Britain, to look after our antiquarian monuments and landmarks, and to prevent the desecration and demolition that now goes on in the name of "progress". There are a few old buildings and "stately homes" remaining which remind us of a bygone era of feudalism, opulence and plenty. About this time last year I spotlighted in the *CDN* Maduwanwala, Walauwa, Kolonne, suggesting that it be rehabilitated for posterity's sake.

This was the home of the notorious feudal warlord of the nineteenth century, Maduwanwala Dissawe of the Sabaragamuwa Province. I hinted that it ought to be converted into a tourist inn which could be used as a base for the exploration of the nearby Wawulpance caves. Its lawns could be cleared and made a site for outdoor campers. Wawalpane is one of Lanka's most delectable attractions, with its network of underground pools and stalactites, inhabited by flying foxes and other denizens of the underworld, but surprisingly little known to tourists (being off the beaten track), and even our own people, apart from the surrounding villagers, and a few intrepid scientists, explorers and hikers.

BESIDES MADUWANWALA WALAUWA, the Old Park, Chundikul (the Jaffna residency), Closenburgh, Count-de-Maun's Islet, Weligama, the Whist Bungalow, Fincastle, the Guhawa and the Maligawa, to mention just a few of our "stately homes" still in existence, are well worth preserving. It is a shame the wanton destruction of these not-so-ancient,

and still serviceable monuments, which steadily goes on in the cause of more modern housing, with no one raising a cry of protest. En passe, it is encouraging to note that the "Maligawa" is intended to be used as a museum tracing the development of the automobile in Sri Lanka from 1902, on the lines of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu's famous collection of veteran and vintage cars in Britain.

There are also such relics of colonialism as the Dutch Reformed Church (1749), Wolfendhal the Dutch Fort and ramparts, Galle, the Dutch Fort, Calpentyn, the Star Fort, Matara, and the old Dutch cemetery in Keyser Street, Pettah, all historic landmarks.

There is a need for an authorised history of the Dutch occupation of Ceylon, which as far as one is aware, has not been attempted on the lines of Sir Paulus E. Pieris' *History of the Portuguese in Ceylon*, or Tikiri Abeyasinghe's *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon (1594-1612)* and Chandra Richard de Silva's *The Portuguese in Ceylon (1617-1638)* for instance. The latter two works are highly specialised, painstakingly annotated, detailed studies of two particular short periods during the Portuguese rule; and nothing of the kind has been attempted with reference to the Dutch, which is a pity, for the latter have certainly made a fascinating impression on the island story to compare favourably if not surpass their predecessor.

Dr. R. L. Brohier is fond of pointing out that there is sufficient wealth of material in the pages of the D. B. U. Journal itself (founded 1908) to provide all the information needed for a comprehensive history of the Dutch occupation in all its aspects, political, economical, commercial, social, and so on; but this material has never been utilised by some scholar to produce an authenticated work.

**FOR NEWS
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IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

• C.G.R. AND SECURITY

IS IT NOT TRUE that there is welcome attempt to make the service provided by the CGR to cater to the needs of the commuters rather than concentrate on feather-bedding the trade union chieftains of one persuasion who had made a vested interest of the Railways under the cover of "fighting the reactionaries?" That at the SLFP trade union meeting on December 17, where the PM had come out sharply against the aggressive and discriminatory policies (to the non-LSSPers) by the railway administration, has marked the beginning of some visible changes in the Railway Service? That for a short time before this event long distance trains had begun to run a little more on time than before? That this was attributed to the availability of spares to repair the locomotives which had been laid up? That whilst trains ran to time the other discomforts suffered by train travellers remained? That at this SLFP trade union meeting, the General Manager, who had been made a back number pushed aside by union activists in high places in the Ministry, was brought to the forefront by the Prime Minister and was taken to task for permitting the victimisation of non-LSSP workers and employees in CGR? That in the meantime, more power sets had arrived and the services which had been cut down (with the excuse of the fuel crisis but really because of the high breakdown rate of power sets and locomotives) have been restored?

IS IT NOT A FACT that at a press conference on Friday January 3, the General Manager of the CGR, Mr. V. T. Navaratne, had stated (according to the Daily News, 4/1/75) that "the CGR will ask the Government to deploy the Armed Forces to prevent sabotage of rail tracks which has been on the increase in past few months"? That the first derailment for 1975 had

occurred on New Year's Day at Thambalakamam? That the Trinco mail train had been derailed and he suspected it was an act of sabotage? That the loss as a result of this derailment has not been estimated? That most of these incidents had occurred beyond Maho? Since May 1974 there had been 12 attempts of sabotage and that most of them had been successful? That in October 1974 a derailment in Velelchenal had cost the government several lakhs of rupees? That there had been threats directed at railway officers between Vavuniya and Jaffna? That the Daily News drew attention to these statements of the CGR on its front page? That whilst the GMR referred to the acts of sabotage on the rail tracks obviously committed by outside elements (presumably ex-insurgents), he did not refer to the damage done to the railways from within? That he did not speak of the unclean and unwashed carriages? That he did not speak of the dirt permanently entrusted to railway compartments? That he did not speak of the miserable and filthy state of the toilets in the compartments? (That many foreign tourists have been outspoken about the filthy state of the toilets even in the airconditioned carriages even at the time when compartments were brought in from the yard—even before single person has had a chance to use them)? That the GMR did not refer to the unlit carriages or make a virtue of the poorly lit carriages (lit, as the boast goes, by the ingenuity of the "workers" because valuable parts of the carriage to ensure proper lighting had been stolen)? That he did not refer to the hooliganism to which innocent passengers (especially female) suffer at the hands of "mod" cowboys who seem to haunt the trains and railway stations? That he did not refer to the manner in which

passengers are robbed? That most of the thefts and robberies are not reported because commuters know the futility about making such complaints? That the GMR did not mention that it was unsafe to send anything by freight on the CGR? That if a sackload of brinjals are sent by rail a sizable portion disappears in transit? That the list of complaints about the CGR can fill a volume?

IS IT NOT TRUE that much of the trouble in the CGR is due to the total lack of security arrangements to safeguard persons and property? That if there was one thing which was praiseworthy in the CGR earlier was its Security Service? That from 1947 right up to 1970—during UNP as well as SLFP regimes—the Railway Security Service had functioned efficiently and had provided passengers with protection that enabled them to travel with a sense of comfort? That losses and theft in the Railways were then at a minimum? That sabotage on the rail tracks was almost unheard of? That hooligans and others did not torment passengers? That women passengers could travel in the trains without fear of being molested? That this Security Service was disbanded after 1970 because certain trade union activists did not like the face of the person who was in charge of the Security Service? That no charges of either political partisanship or anything else could be brought against him? That devious methods were adopted to ease him out of the position? That it was even decided to disband the Security Service in order to get rid of him? That after he was sent away an attempt was made to start a new Security Service under the auspices of one trade union? That this Security Service was at first placed under station masters? That this was abandoned shortly after? That now they are a floating population (like the floating currencies of the world) seen at some stations en masse and then they are not seen for long stretches of time? That in many instances these new security men seem to have more in common with the mod-style hooligans rather than the commuters who are harassed? That the GMR should do something about the Security Service if he wants the Railway to function as it should?