

# TRIBUNE

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## The Last of Shamba Notes

And The Tragedy Of Our Agriculture

THIS ISSUE of *Tribune* carries the last of the Notes on *Shamba*, the one acre farm in the Wannii, written by an unrepentant idealist who has used pseudonym Anatory Bukoba in remembrance of the days he had spent in East African villages. It is just over two years that *Shamba* came into existence. Anatory Bukoba has now handed over the land to another in the hope that the latter would be able to do something that he himself had not been able to achieve in two years. A.B. will keep in touch with the *Shamba* and readers will undoubtedly hear about its progress in other articles he will write for *Tribune*. However, this is a suitable juncture to review the

*Shamba* which has been, as we have often explained, an experiment and a challenge.

Anatory Bukoba, as our readers know, is one of the many in this country who believes that labour power plus land (by themselves) are enough to produce food and money (for bare existence) for those involved, and (with luck!) even capital for bigtime development of the land. Until the acre yielded of its plenty, A.B. was prepared to subsidise the food necessary for those who toiled on it. And this is what he has done for two years with money (capital) he was willing to expend for the purpose. But he steadfastly re-

fused to utilise capital, which he could have commanded if he so desired, to sink a well, or buy a pump to lift water from the river in the months when water was plentiful, or to purchase barbed wire to fence the *Shamba*, or even acquire axes, marmoties, knives and other implements without which the farm could not have made any real progress. A.B. believed that the *Shamba* itself should, with individual and (better still) group labour, produce all the capital necessary to sink a well, buy a pump, purchase barbed wire, tools and all the rest which he knew were essential. For two years he has struggled to make his dream come true.

### SHAMBA—AN UNFINISHED SAGA

The Notes on the *Shamba*, which we have published for the last two years, was a feature that has attracted a great deal of attention. This week we publish the last in the series and it is entitled AN UNFINISHED SAGA. We have also commented on the *Shamba* in our leading article in this issue. Many will miss the *Shamba* but a saga that can never be finished, cannot go on for ever. Like any Unfinished Symphony it must have an ending. But the versatile Anatory Bukoba will continue to write in the *Tribune*. He continually travels to various parts of the island and his notes on these travels will appear in the *Tribune* in the coming weeks. At his request, these notes will be entitled KAZI. In Swahili, it means work. And we think that it is best that continues to identify himself as Anatory Bukoba, the pseudonym he had chosen for himself in the *Shamba* series. The writer was tempted to think of another pseudonym for the Kazi, serles but since *Tribune* and its readers have learnt to live with Anatory Bukoba for two years, we think that it is best to continue this relationship into the new series. A. B. thinks that in the Sri Lanka of today it was essential to emphasise work, the need to work, the work already done and work to be done. With this on his mind he will extend his travels round the island—his style had been cramped in the two years in the *Shamba*. He will visit and re-visit places, off the beaten track, and his notes will be of interest to our readers. Like the *Shamba* writing, the Kazi notes will be a mirror of our times in the rural countryside.

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*Tribune* has always thought, and still does think, otherwise. At all times agriculture has been capital intensive, and it still is. In the old old days, when man was beginning to accumulate primitive capital, it was the surplus-value from labour power which had created the capital for accelerated investment and development, but in the world of today it is anachronistic to want to do this, even if it still can be done by modern Robinson Crusoes. And, in the Sri Lanka of today, in the present race against exploding population, such an approach to agriculture is suicidal. And those who really know are aware that agricultural development, especially the process of reclaiming land from the jungle, is the most capital-intensive of all economic undertakings.

Unfortunately, those responsible for the agricultural destinies of this island for nearly 50 years now



have been afflicted with the same kind of logic that has made Anatory Bukoba spend two years on his *Shamba* in the Wanni in the hope and belief that *Tribune* would be proved wrong. Our agricultural pundits and policymakers have also been willing to make the same concessions A.B. was willing to make—subsidise the labour a wee little bit to get things started. A.B. brought in capital to feed himself and the others who worked on the *Shamba* and also bought a v.c. *katha*, an axe, and a knife (when he found that it was not possible to always depend on borrowed implements) and a mamoty (which was soon stolen) to make *Shamba* a showpiece. In the same way, the know-alls who took upon themselves to develop and utilise land to make this country self-sufficient in food were confident that parcelling out Crown land (now State land) to allottees with minimal dozes of capital (in the form of loans, gifts and grants) would be enough to make any Revolution green ten times over.

For fifty years now, that is from the time of the first Crown Lands Ordinance (1925), through the Land Development Ordinance and its Amendments, right down to the present Land Reforms, the prevailing philosophy—(despite the lipservice to big state farms and the currently fashionable co-operative and collective group undertakings)—underlying all agricultural development (excluding the old colonialist plantation sector) was that the best way of utilising land (from unclaimed jungle to taken-over well-developed "big" landowner land) was to hand over small allotments to poor persons (many of them without any agricultural background) because it was taken for granted that the mere thoughts of possessing land would generate such spontaneous enthusiasm for productive labour in these allottees that they would make milk and honey to flow (overnight) from the lands given to them. Anatory Bukoba had also thought so when (like a paternalistic authority) he had promised to hand the *Shamba* over to those who were able to make good on it. But our governmental Santa Claus, unlike our A.B., handed over land and even loans, gifts and grants to allottees without ever wanting to find out whether they can make the grade. Even in the

case of the personally controlled (frugally and tightly) *Shamba*, much of AB's money (capital) went down the metaphorical drain without any productive results, but in the case of governmental paternalism, it is a sad story involving millions of rupees spent over the last forty years—with the country today (with its ever-growing population) no nearer food self-sufficiency than it was in 1925 (in spite of the vast acreages opened out and the consequent production).

This is the tragedy of *Shamba* and it is also the tragedy of agriculture in this country.

A DISCERNING VISITOR has only to go round the state farms and colonisation schemes that have been set up in this country since the thirties to know what it all means. Vast acreages have been opened up, more food has been produced and though there has been increased total production, productivity has been low and in view of the over-riding increase of population the country has still to import food in quantities that imposes a crippling strain on our foreign exchange resources. But more than all this, anyone will be appalled by the quantity of money that has been invested in this vast undertaking and the economic return that been obtained. Millions upon millions, over the years totalling billions, directly and indirectly, visibly and invisibly, have been sunk into state farms, middle class schemes and peasant colonisation schemes. Nobody has yet worked out totals including the money spent on the infrastructures, suprastructures and other institutional outfits that were set up. To this must also be added all the subsidies, unrecovered agricultural loans and in fact, everything that was spent to develop agriculture in this island. Even in the best of schemes, and the most successful, the return on the monies expended in direct and visible expenditure will reveal that the return is less than .01 per cent of the investment. In many cases, the total investment had to be written-off as a dead loss. In others, even the best of accountants can never hope to discover all the losses.

Many apologists and otherwise interested parties argue that this agricultural policy was not inten-

ded to be an economically viable exercise and that the financial losses have been hugely counter-balanced by the socio-political advantages that have accrued. There is no doubt that this is the underlying motivation of all agricultural policies evolved by the British colonialists and the Brown Sahibs in the mid-twenties and the early thirties: that is to create a class of small land owners who would not only be a bulwark against the danger of creeping communism but also establish a series of parliamentary pocketboroughs for the Brown Sahibs in order to keep this island within the orbit of Capitalism. The White Colonialists and the Brown Sahibs have gone, but their land policies remain—although many ardent present-day policy makers claim that we are marching towards socialism. Even if slogans about co-operative farms, collective farms and vast state farms are very much in the air, it is not difficult to discern that the motivation for agricultural activity and agricultural reforms even today continues to be political and not economic.

As long as this motivation remains and as long as land reforms and agricultural policies are subservient to political and not economic considerations agriculture in Sri Lanka will continue to be a tragedy. In the best of socialist countries, experience has taught governments and peoples that until economic considerations (infused no doubt with socialist economic logic) takes precedence over narrow sectarian political considerations, agriculture was never able to get off the country. In Sri Lanka agricultural policies (in the non-plantation sector) have been predominantly determined by narrow (sectarian, communal or jingoistic) political considerations. All economic arguments, however loudly proclaimed, can easily be shown to be a shaky and everchanging smokescreen to hide the real intent behind these policies. In the *Shamba*, Anatory Bukoba had set out to prove an ideological belief which was really a romantic protest against capital, which is again, in the ultimate analysis, a political or ideological consideration. And the brilliant and sensitive writing of Anatory Bukoba



could not hide the tragedy of Shamba even if it is still an *Unfinished Saga*. In the broader agricultural arena, in Sri Lanka, though the political and ideological considerations were different, the strategies adopted were the same. Within the limitations of the purse, Shamba was undercapitalised and no amount of labour power could save the situation. It was the same in government middle class and peasant colonisation schemes (in the state farms the maladies were different). The peasants who have survived in the tank-irrigated holdings and the middle class allottees who had made good in their waterless highlands were people who were able to invest extra capital—more than what the government provided them. This capital had to come from income derived from other sources. It was only when the allotments were adequately capitalised that they became viable and economically profitable. Such farms are few and far between. And it will also be discovered that it is the successful farmer (with capital) who really cultivates the bulk of the peasant allotments; and, the actual permit holders get no more than a fee for letting those who can to cultivate the land. The number of peasant allottees who have become agricultural labourers and parasites on government relief schemes is legion and this is one further tragedy in the agricultural world of Sri Lanka. The political objective which had motivated the land policies, namely to create small peasant owners of land, has been defeated, and today a new (invisible) class of petty *land-operators* (with a kulak-type mentality) dominate our countryside (They are also, at the moment, the most successful election agents and hence they enjoy many immunities).

**THE TRAGEDY OF ALL GOVERNMENT—SPONSORED AGRICULTURAL SCHEMES** is, therefore, twofold: *firstly*, political considerations have vitiated policies and until this lopsided approach is corrected, agriculture will continue to stagnate in the doldrums; and *secondly*, every peasant and middle class scheme has been undermined by a wrong concepts and ideas about the amount of capital that had to be sunk in each acre to make the farm viable. This quantum will vary from area to

area and from one kind of farming to another, but until the correct level of capitalisation has been attained, there will *not only* be no breakthrough, *but* the majority of the middle class allottees and the peasant colonists *will also* fall so heavily by the wayside that only few of them can raise their heads again.

*Tribune* does not know how many more years it will be before those responsible for agriculture in Sri Lanka will realise that adequate dozes of capital was necessary to make every inch of land, which we are now told must be cultivated if we are to stave off a famine, profitably productive. Inadequate dozes of capital are a suicidal evil, because not only is the money a total loss that must be written off but it is also a source of corruption—the allottees who discover the money insufficient to attain the minimum agricultural target divert the money to consumption expenditure (and are even willing to share the money with the bureaucrats who sanction the loans and who know that it will not be used for the purpose they are granted). Paddy loans are given to persons who do not cultivate their fields, fertilisers are issued to people who sell them in the blackmarket and money for wells that are never sunk. All these are part of the tragedy of agriculture in Sri Lanka. Everybody who matters claim that they are aware of these *shortcomings* (an euphemism from a new socialist vocabulary), but being only *shortcomings* it is presumed that time and governmental sermonising will remedy them. But what is not realised is that these are not mere shortcomings. They are cancerous roots that have already undermined the foundations of productive agriculture in this country. **IN ADDITION TO THE TWO CAUSES MENTIONED ABOVE**, there is a third which should make people re-think policy fundamentals which have been so far regarded as infallible, unquestionable and irrevocable.

*Is the manpower on which we rely today for political considerations, and which we pamper and spoil also for political considerations, capable of contributing effectively to breakthrough to self-sufficiency in food through indigenous agricultural effort?*

We admit that education, the wrong kind of education which had stemmed from colonialism, has infected this manpower with a virus that makes it both unwilling and incapable or participating in agricultural activity. We are now therefore reorganising our educational system through drastic reforms on a vocational basis, and even if this succeeds (many think that we are only jumping from the frying pan into the fire) two generations must pass before a new youth comes into



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being. But, the problem is about today. Food has to be produced now, right now. And manpower with the correct political alignments is needed, according to the pundits, to make the urgent schemes of today operative and successful.

Manpower can do a great deal. Even today, manpower in China is used in the multitude to create vast surplus value to create new capital so that country could be self-reliant without having to get capital from outside sources to develop agriculture. This, in theory, can be done in Sri Lanka too. But can we in practice? The pundits argue that once the land reforms are implemented and once the virtues of co-operative farms are known, even the existing manpower (of the correct caste, race and religion and speaking the correct language) will perform miracles through labour power. But, experience has shown and will continue to show that the pundits are wrong, terribly wrong.

*This is the greatest tragedy of our agriculture. Our political imperatives compel us to rely on manpower that cannot deliver the goods. This manpower is at the moment so spoilt that unless there is a qualitative change of a revolutionary nature all our agricultural ventures will stumble, falter and fail.*

Anatory Bukoba was the supreme essence of paternalism in his attitude to those whom he invited to participate in his work on the *Shamba*, but in the two years, readers will remember that he has been disappointed in the very large numbers who have tried and failed to make *Shamba* operative. The story is no different in a large number of youth camps and farms from the beginning of the sixties to this day. Those who are now singing eulogies about co-operative and collective farms, under socialist slogans, (only the slogans are socialist), assert that a new youth is being fashioned which would transform the whole manpower of this country through example. But candid reports which have reached us show that these new co-operative youth farms are no different from the youth farms started by the UNP which have disappeared a long time ago. This will, no doubt, come as a shock and disappointment to many enthusiasts, but realities have to be faced.

As we have often said the politically-privileged manpower in this country has been spoilt. The politically-under-privileged manpower (either declassed as stateless or second class citizens or discarded as being tainted with minority separatist logic) do not have adequate opportunities to show their mettle—and if they are segregated in this fashion for much longer they will not hereafter be able to participate wholeheartedly and voluntarily in mainstream activity for the economic development of the whole country. Unfortunately, owing to the welfarism practised by all political parties in this age of adult franchise, parliamentary government and the rule of the numerical majority, manpower in Sri Lanka, especially the politically-privileged do not seem inclined to work in a manner that will ensure surplus-value and profit and thereby generate new capital to make the country self-reliant. What is worse is that manpower is not even willing to do a minimum amount of work needed to effect a breakthrough to self-sufficiency in food. They have, among other things, become inhibited by the opiate of an eight-hour work logic intended for factories under conditions very different from those which obtain in farms, and what is even more tragic they have become obsessed with the strategy of increasing their take-home pay by slowing down normal work so that they increase their overtime earnings.

Furthermore, our manpower through the inculcation of values and standards of a developed capitalist welfare state want remuneration, leisure, work hours, overtime rates, fringe benefits, bonus, pensions, gratuities and even other welfare benefits which even the most highly economically developed societies can ill afford at the best of times.

It must be also mentioned that socialist countries with far greater resources than this island cannot hope to provide this quantum of welfare benefits even after fifty years of socialism—and, above all it is true that free medicine, free

education and free education do not make socialism. The tragedy is that our manpower has been misled, through agitational political slogans, into the belief that the mere legislation proclaiming a socialist pattern of life will automatically and spontaneously bring all the benefits which accrue to workers and peasants in a socialist countries after decades of hard work in addition to the capitalist welfare benefits which have become a way of life in this country. The illusions which have infused into our manpower have produced inhibitions with regard to work, but they are no different from the illusions which taint the thinking of leaders who believe, quite sincerely no doubt, that "radical measures" like land reforms, an increased public sector, nationalisation, income ceilings, taxation to eliminate rich landowners and capitalists, will bring about a major qualitative change in the manpower to make them work harder, make them increase production and productivity—to make new men and women of them, because they have been told that they are no longer exploited by landowners and capitalists. Even now, many of the political leaders still believe that increased doses of what think is "socialism" will generate in this manpower, spontaneously and automatically, an enthusiastic and unparalleled outburst of productive activity that would make an El Dorado of Sri Lanka and attain the Kalugallan target of making this country "the richest country in Asia" (because of tourism, oil and UF policies)

It is good to day dream. It is good to build castles in the air. It is exhilarating to count the chickens before the eggs are hatched (or even before the eggs are laid.)

It is easy enough to fall back on these cliches. But such cliches and even stouter slogans cannot ensure a breakthrough into economic self-sufficiency in food. The programmes for agricultural development, crash or otherwise, do not seem take into adequate consideration the three factors we have pointed as being obstacles in the way of agricultural development: the political motivation relegating the economic aspects to the background, the perpetual



under-capitalisation of all agricultural schemes sponsored by the government, and thirdly and finally the myopically inadequate labour productivity of our welfare-loving manpower.

We are still a long way off from an agricultural breakthrough—the term *breakthrough* is a hackneyed cliché of today, but this a term which will convey some meaning to our elite. This is a dismal thought. But there is no help. Countless numbers of the elite believe that we are already on the verge of a major breakthrough. They have held this view for the last thirty years and more. They talk now gushingly about overflowing tubewells in Mannar and groundwater elsewhere—such sunshine stories have kept our morale up all these years while we continued to be dependent on imports.

Has anybody a solution?

# Tribunania

## MERVYN de SILVA

IN THE LAST ISSUE we had, after an interval of time, referred to some aspects of the local press, but even before the ink was dry on what we had written and long before the issue of the paper was out, there occurred an event which will be a talking point about Sri Lanka's fourth estate for a long time to come. On Wednesday, March 5, the Board of Directors of the Associated Newspapers Ltd. (Lake House) were summoned to an emergency meeting (reportedly at very short notice) and it was resolved to remove the editor-in-chief of the *Daily News*, Mervyn de Silva, forthwith. Fred de Silva was appointed the successor editor and was asked to take over immediately.

No doubt to bypass certain consequences of a summary dismissal in terms of industrial law, it was made to appear that Mervyn de Silva's services had not been terminated but that he was transferred to discharge other duties as "one of the Special Advisors to the Chairman of the Board." In short,

Mervyn de Silva had been kicked upstairs, and would probably be left to cool his heels whilst the currently ruling elite in Lake House went on to make the *Daily News* a copybook replica of the *Dinamina* and the *Thinakaran*—two papers for which the ordinary readers have now lost all respect and which are bought in diminishing numbers only because there are no other papers to be had after the demise of the *Dawasa* (*Lankadipa* is in no condition to satisfy Sri Lanka readers.)

It will be interesting to watch what the *Daily News* will be like in this new phase (when it is likely to go down the hill much faster than after the takeover—journalistically and in every other way). Already some of signs and symptoms of the new era have manifested themselves in its columns. Pekingwinger Shanmugathanan, who has been very much out of politics for sometime, is once again front-page news with admonitions to JR and the UNP. Minister Ilangaratne has begun to receive coverage far more than any other Minister (he seems to have a panacea to rid Sri Lanka politics of the menace of JR and also at the same time a sermon of infallibility to tell people that the co-op movement was theirs and that if it was corrupt it was because of their default—forgetting that under the latest dispensation all co-op officials are not elected as before but are appointed by MPs and others to whom the Minister had delegated authority). But more astoundingly, a vice-principal (mark you, a vice-principal at that!) of Carey College is projected onto the first page in a lengthy spread to speak of the virtues of district quotas selection—at a time when it had been made clear that all responsible opinion in the country, from University Dons to all others whose views are of value, have no use for the kind of media standardisation and district quota selection as devised by the Department of Education. The time has now come for people to probe the power motivations and ideological mumbo-jumbo that has reduced education in Sri Lanka to shambles from which it will take years to recover after the present perpetrators of newfangled schemes have been swept aside by an angry and indignant people

(that this will happen sooner or later there is no doubt.)

To come back to Mervyn de Silva, it is necessary to mention that *Tribune* has disagreed with much of what he has written and done from time to time in journalism. And we have often said so in print. We have criticised some of his writings and his views in these columns and had on occasions said even unkind things about him. Moreover, Mervyn de Silva does not endear himself to everybody and he is not as popular as he might be. He is often brash where he should be otherwise. He is offhand and sharp where he could be amiable and softspoken. But it is wrong to expect everybody to follow the tenets of Dale Carnegie to make friends and influence people. But Mervyn is Mervyn, and in his go-getting he has often trod on many toes. *Tribune*, as we have said, has had many differences with him, but this is no reason for not approaching this particular episode in an objective manner devoid of sentiment, for or against.

Whatever Mervyn's shortcomings—and every human being has his quota—he is one of the very few left behind in Sri Lanka who can be said to be a competent journalist. He has the capacity for analysis in depth and also has the flair for an excellent turn of phrase. In our view, he is the only journalist worth his salt left in the field of English-language newspapers in Lake House and with his removal will disappear the last of the Mohicans. (We shall refer to the rotten state of Denmark in the crumbling edifice of Lake House in Sinhala and Tamil journalism in the near future). Complaints have been frequently heard in the rarefield atmosphere of the ruling elite in Lake House that Mervyn did not conform to office hours routines, but if the management was not able to cope with some Mervyn's waywardness (earlier and by other means) it was the management's mistake, or incapacity. But, what we feel now, and strongly at that, is that the manner of his removal does no credit to the Board of Directors of Lake House and has cast a gloom over the entire field of journalism in this country. (Of course, there are some who will gloat and revel in the downfall of those they do



not like for a variety of reasons—many of which cannot stand examination). But the crux of the matter is to distinguish the points at issue.

We are not even taking up the point that the removal was not done with that graceful decorum with which such affairs are often managed. In the era of crude jingoism which seems to have overtaken (temporarily, we hope) many institutions and personalities in this country, it is probably difficult to expect more graceful or more gracious methods on the part of the present Directors of Lake House in removing the Editor-in-Chief of its most prestigious newspaper. Mervyn de Silva was also one of the Directors of the setup until recently. His removal was summary and abrupt. It was the kind of punishment meted out to someone guilty of grave misdemeanour. There are ways of easing a person out of top position in a way that will not undermine the morale of other employees or set precedents that will boomerang. But it was not done that way in this case.

If there were good reasons for removing Mervyn so summarily, nobody has been given the reasons for the same—not even Mervyn de Silva as we understand it. If his misdemeanours and shortcomings were of such a nature as to compel the kind of crude action taken, then he should not have been kicked upstairs to a sinecure but he should have been kicked right outside Lake House, and the world told about the reasons why it was done. But the manner Mervyn has been treated has shocked nearly all journalists—though in the state of Denmark (Hamlet is very popular in Sri Lanka today), we have nobody who wants to open his mouth and say what he has to say. The journalists in Lake House and elsewhere feel that if a person like Mervyn de Silva can be kicked out so summarily—Mervyn is also known to have a "pull" in several influential quarters in the United Front establishment—then, others did not stand a chance of fairplay if some passing Genghis Khan did not like the smile on their faces.

Mervyn de Silva has had a chequered career in Lake House where he has worked for nearly twenty five years. We remember the time when he had been put

on the shelf for five years during the UNP regime from 1965-70. The Wijewardenas had then pulled him out from their Siberia into top responsibility in order to sell Lake House to the United Front. Mervyn knew the trumps and he was right on top when Lake House was taken over, but in this period when crowned heads are tumbling from Ethiopia to Timbuctoo, Mervyn has received treatment that is likely to make him a *cause celebre* in this country as well as abroad. For one thing the manner in which the management has dealt with him violates every known principle of industrial relations and law—unless the reasons are made public. At any rate, the victim himself should have been informed of the reasons for his removal—otherwise, it is a colourable device to avoid this by kicking him upstairs. If Lake House and the Government does not make public the reasons for the action taken against Mervyn de Silva, the brain drain out of the island (which the government wants to arrest) will proliferate in a marked manner.

We have not heard the last of the Mervyn de Silva affair. As far as we can see he was the victim of a cold war inside the UF. The *Janavegaya* has been gunning for him for a long time—and often for the wrong reasons. Minister Illangaratne has been gunning for him even from the floor of the House. The LSSP has been sharply critical of him (and a number of other journalists in *Lake House*) for not making Lake House newspapers into United Front propaganda newsheets.

But Mervyn de Silva is known to have powerful support on the other side of the cold war. The *Ada*, a paper associated with Anura Bandaranaike, has already come out strongly for Mervyn and has written scathingly about the members of the Board of Directors of Lake House. There are other forces in the United Front which are likely to take up the case of Mervyn de Silva. The *Aththa* has already made it clear in a cleverly worded news report that its sympathies are with Mervyn de Silva.

But it is not the cold war that matters.

It is the principle involved.

Can a person be removed in the way Mervyn was kicked upstairs

without a cause being shown or a charge-sheet? Managements have the right to hire and fire. Journalists have been hired and fired before.

But not in this way.

Something is rotten somewhere.

## INTERNATIONAL - AFFAIRS BY ARIEL

### Indochina, Middle East, Africa, USA

WORLD ATTENTION was chiefly focussed last week on four trouble spots, the most important being in the Indochina peninsula, followed by the new upsurge of tension in Rhodesia with the arrest of the Rev. Sithole. Kissinger's mission in the Middle East is being watched with the greatest interest, while the growing confrontation between Left and Centre—Right in Portugal has caused anxiety in many quarters.

In Cambodia, Lon Nol's government, beleaguered in the capital Phnom Penh, is on its last legs. At these notes are being written, several foreign governments, including Britain and the USA, have decided to evacuate its citizens from the city. The US airlift of food and ammunition has kept the city and the Lon Nol government going for the last three or four weeks, but nothing except a massive invasion by US troops can now save the Lon Nol regime. President Ford has pledged that he will not send troops into Cambodia or even South Vietnam, but he has been urging Congress to vote funds to enable the Lon Nol government (and the Thieu government) to be able to carry on till the rains came and then bargain from position of vantage.

A US helicopter carrier is standing by in the seas off Cambodia to evacuate US citizens, but suspicions have been aroused that the vessel has been moved into this position with more sinister intentions. In the meantime, President Ford has been trying to focus American public opinion to bring pressure upon the Congress to provide some aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam.



He has said that there was no hope of ending the killing and negotiating a settlement in Cambodia "unless the Congress quickly provides the necessary means for Cambodia to survive." He told a nationally televised news conference in an opening statement recently that "if we abandon our allies, we will be saying to all the world that war pays." Mr. Ford also declared that the reliability of the US was at issue in providing aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam. "If we cease to help our friends in Indo-China", the President said, "we will have violated their trust that we would help them with arms food and supplies so long as they remain determined to fight for their own freedom. We will have been false to ourselves, to our word, and to our friends."

Mr. Ford in making the latest in a series of pleas to Congress for fast action stated that his request for an additional \$ 222 millions for Cambodia and \$ 170 millions for South Vietnam was to help them in their continuing efforts to fight their enemies. Mr. Ford at the same time pledged that he would not send American troops back into Indo-China despite the critical military situation facing the Cambodian Government of President Lon Nol. The US, Mr. Ford said, had backed negotiations for a peace settlement for years but its efforts had been rebuffed by the Khmer Rouge forces. Mr. Ford said he wanted more military aid so that he could help the effort to bring about peace negotiations.

But the Congress and Senate, dominated by Democrats, have continued to remain sceptical about the usefulness of voting funds for military aid. The latest issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, in its editorial stated "...there is something about Indochina which infects the Americans with a death wish. Washington has had ample opportunities to open negotiations with Prince Sihanouk, but Dr. Kissinger has always refused. His excuse, apart from basic unwillingness to deal with—and thus to recognise—the Prince, appears to be the Micawberish belief that "something will turn up"—waiting in the vain hope that the resolve of Khmer Rouge will weaken or that President Lon Nol's position will improve. How far he can square

this with the vaunted realism of his policies, or even the basic diplomatic principle of negotiating from maximum strength, defies explanation."

The US Ambassador in Phnom Penh, said the editorial, wanted Congress to vote funds to rush supplies and ammunition to enable Lon Nol to hold until the rainy season flooded the Mekong and opened the river once again for supply conveyers. But all this is speculative because "...why should the Khmer Rouge negotiate? They have complete victory almost within their grasp. And negotiations on whose behalf? Both Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge state they will have no truck with Lon Nol or any other of the seven top 'traitors'... Over the past few weeks, Sihanouk has made several signals—that if the Americans will cease their doomed interference in Cambodia he would let bygones... He is also desperately trying to get the message through that, unless the Americans deal with him, all hope of a compromise solution will disappear. But Sihanouk's position is delicate. It is no secret that he hardly sees eye-to-eye with the communist hardliners who run the Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia or with the dogmatic Ieng Sary, their representative in Peking ..."

The *FEER* editorial gives the Americans good advice as to what the US could do in Cambodia for the sake "American interests", but Kissinger seems intent "on playing a dangerous game" which will not take the Americans anywhere. While Phnom Penh was on its last death rattle, the situation in South Vietnam was daily getting worse. The Central Highlands have been overrun by the Vietcong. Very soon, Saigon and its environs would be under direct threat. Thieu's present hope seems to be that the fact-finding mission from the US Congress and Senate would persuade Congress to vote funds for military aid until Kissinger was able to start another round of talks for further negotiations. The fact-finding mission was also hopelessly divided and some of its members are totally opposed to any money being voted at all.

While Indochina awaits the soothing touch of Kissinger's personal diplomacy to re-start negotiations,

Kissinger himself has been tied up in knots by his attempts to achieve a step-by-step peace in the Middle East by first ensuring a greater separation of the troops in the Sinai. An Egyptian-Israeli mini-detente on the basis of Israeli withdrawal from two mountain passes and the oilfields in return for a promise of non-belligerency and the opening of the Suez Canal, according to Kissinger will pave the way for resolving the confrontation on the West Bank and the Golan Heights. His step-by-step strategy for the Middle East peace, starting with Egypt, is not favoured by Syria and the Palestinians and the majority of the other Arab States. Only Sadat seems to favour it. And as a prelude to Kissinger's diplomatic round a group of Palestinian commandos broke into a Tel Aviv hotel and this led to bloody fighting where several people were killed and injured. In spite of this inauspicious harbinger, Kissinger had declared that he will stay in the Middle East until he got somewhere. At the time of writing, he has conferred with Sadat and was on his way to Damascus. Then he was going to Jerusalem, and thereafter he was flying to meet Gromyko somewhere in Europe. It is yet too early to say whether he will make any progress in his step-by-step diplomacy.

In Rhodesia the White Government of Ian Smith arrested the Rev. Sithole, the leader of the most determined of the three groups that makes the African National Council of the black Rhodesians, in a bid to divide the ANC. But the repercussions seem to be the opposite of what the white rulers of Rhodesia had hoped for. Guerilla fighting may break out once again in Rhodesia, and this time it will get more active support from neighbouring African countries. Several moderate African leaders and the South African Prime Minister Vorster are continuing to find a solution to the impasse created by the arrest of Rev. Sithole—a Methodist Christian minister who has a great deal of sympathy and support in Britain.

In Portugal, the situation seems to get more and more difficult and tense as election day approaches—on April 12. Clashes continue and the armed forces seem to be intervening more and more



to keep antagonists under control. Whilst Portugal is in the throes of a growing confrontation, ECM countries seem to be determined to compose their differences and make it possible to keep Britain within the community. The British Government has made the announcement about the referendum in a White Paper and it will be interesting to see now Britain votes in the first ever referendum in a country that has been the home of parliamentary government and Cabinet responsibility.

Cyprus continues to be a tough nut to crack, and even after two weeks of behind-the-scenes negotiations a compromise resolution has not been found to bring the Greeks and Turks in the island to meet around a table for a fresh dialogue. In the USA, one of the worst recessions in its history has created serious problems for the Ford Administration, and the continuing revelations about CIA activities not only in the USA but in many countries of the world, from Guatemala in 1954 to Chile in 1974, have made sensational reading. But what is significant and important is that these revelations, including the allegation that the assassination of President John Kennedy was a CIA job, has arisen from the operation of the democratic freedoms within the USA itself. It is heartening to see staid conservative magazines like *Time* and solidly "reactionary" newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* take the lead in exposing the misdeeds of the Administration—from the Pentagon Papers on the Vietnam War, through Watergate, to the current exposures about the CIA. There is much to be said for a free press.

FOR NEWS  
BEHIND THE NEWS

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## INDIA

- People's March
- Kashmir
- Sino-Indian Relations

from a Tribune Special Correspondent

New Delhi, March 7,

THE MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION, 12-kilometre long "Peoples March" to Parliament led by Mr. Jaya Prakash Narayan on New Delhi on March 6, in spite of attempts by the Congress and the Communist Party to discourage people from participating in it, has made many people in the Capital to sit up and think. Accompanied by leaders of the non-CPI Opposition, JPN presented his "charter of demands" to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha before addressing the mammoth rally which had marched from Red Fort to the Parliament House. The main theme of his speech was to warn the people against the dangers of a Congress dictatorship and he wanted the people to be vigilant to see that the Prime Minister did not incite violence in various states for scraping democracy and imposing dictatorship to perpetuate her rule. The seven-point charter insisted on the following: fresh elections in Bihar and Gujerat, eradication of corruption, withdrawal of Emergency along with other draconian measures like MISA that militated against civil liberties, electoral and educational reforms, decentralisation of political power and protection of the socio-economic rights of the people.

Admittedly, this was the biggest-ever demonstrations in the capital and JPN appealed to Mrs. Gandhi for a "cleaner government" before "this vast humanity present here." Though no party flag or emblem was carried by the participants, it was evident that the real organisational effort for this mammoth march had been provided by Jan Sangh cadres in Delhi. JPN now wants to take his agitation to a wider national front all over the country. He had begun in Bihar and now he has brought it to Delhi. JPN now wants to organise a nation-

wide protest to compel Mrs. Gandhi to accept his demands which really meant that she should abdicate power. In the meantime, the Prime Minister will have informal discussions this weekend with some of the Congress Chief Ministers on the present situation in the light of the Opposition attempts to build an atmosphere of confrontation in the country before the next elections. The Congress Parliamentary Board also meets next week and this matter is likely to be discussed at the meeting. According to informed circles in the Capital the "real problem is not bring about changes that will present a better image in the States" but as to how to eliminate the inner-party fighting and quarrels, the personal feuds between Chief Ministers and PCC Chiefs and also the factional fights within Legislature Parties. How the accumulated mess in the States is to be cleared up is the real problem before the PM and the Congress Party.

A great many significant events have taken place in India in recent weeks. Here in Delhi, the Budget which was presented last week, generally accepted as "not too bad under the circumstances" has evoked widespread grumbles from all classes and categories of consumers. Stiff excise duties and other levies have been imposed on a whole range of items, and this is likely to cause hardship in many quarters. But much more than the Budget, people in Delhi especially political circles, (who expected a harsh budget anyway), have been interested in a number of significant events which have followed one after another in recent weeks. The recent raids on the Jaipur palaces have brought to light crores upon crores of hidden gold, hidden jewels, hidden cash, hidden foreign exchange hoards and what not, and this has provided the backdrop of sensation for a number of other events.

THE SETTLEMENT IN KASHMIR had not come has a surprise. Negotiations between the PM and the Sheik (and his Plebiscite Front) had gone on for over two years through the PM's emissary G. Parthasarathy, and nearly everybody was prepared for it. All parties, except the Jan Sangh, have welcomed it. The Jan Sangh feel that too much "autonomy" has been given away,



and fear that parties like the DMK in the South may develop fresh ideas about wanting more autonomy which may weaken the Centre through invisible separatist tendencies. It is not, however, the internal reactions to the Kashmir settlement which have stirred the public imagination, but the Pakistani reactions as voiced by Prime Minister Bhutto, who has denounced the settlement and has accused India of annexing Kashmir with the connivance of Sheik Abdullah. Bhutto wants a plebiscite and cites old UN resolutions which had suggested a plebiscite in 1948 as a way of resolving the dispute then. Since that time many changes have taken place which make those resolutions unrealistic. Pakistan has wrought many changes in Kashmiri territory it has occupied: it has signed a border treaty with China giving away territory which India had, always claimed was its own; and, it has allowed China to build military roads through these areas (Aksai Chin) right down to Gilgit and other strategic centres. These are only a few of the reasons why the UN resolutions on Kashmir have lost all meaning today. China too had quickly followed Pakistan in condemning the settlement with Sheik Abdullah and had asserted that India had unlawfully "annexed" Kashmir in contravention of UN resolutions.

Peking's reactions to various matters in the region, the lifting of the US ban on arms sales to Pakistan (and India) and the recent events in the Himalayan Kingdoms of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan have focussed attention on Sino-Indian relations. It will be recalled that China had recently unleashed in India ping-pong diplomacy coupled with its diplomacy of smiles when a Chinese table tennis team had come to Calcutta for the World Championships last month. A group of top ranking officials had accompanied the team which had swept the championships. A smaller team with the Vice Minister and other officials had later spent some time in Delhi and other towns playing exhibition matches. The Vice-Minister accompanying the table tennis team dropped heavy-handed hints that China was willing to normalise relations with India, that he was prepared to meet the Indian PM if his hosts thought it fit

to arrange a meeting, and so on and so forth.

Additionally, China's Vice-Premier Chen Hsi-lien, on his return from Nepal's coronation ceremony, told newsmen at Calcutta airport, while in transit, that China "is ready for talks—if desired by the Government of India—for normalisation of relations between the two countries". It was his view he said that "it is for the Government of India to consider easing the diplomatic relations with China". When a correspondent asked him whether China thought that India's close relations with the Soviet Union stood in the way of improving Sino-Indian ties, he replied "not necessarily." The Vice-Premier was asked whether China was ready for talks with India if the latter wanted it for normalisation of relations. He replied, "Yes, we are ready for talks." When a correspondent observed that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had written to Chairman Mao Tse-tung but no reply had been received, he said, "One day India and China will have friendly relations."

West Bengal Finance Minister Shankar Ghosh, who received the Chinese Vice-Premier at the airport, intervened and said "we hope your visit to Calcutta this time will mark the beginning of friendly relations between the two countries."

"I hope so," the Vice-Premier reciprocated. Mr. Chen Hsi-lien's made the 20-minute stopover here despite his plane having enough fuel to fly direct from Kathmandu to Kunming in China. The plane took no fuel here. When a newsman pressed to know how soon friendly relations between India and China would be re-established, Mr. Chen replied he had already spoken about it and "cannot predict" anything.

ALTHOUGH INDIA had extended every courtesy to the table tennis team and the Vice-Premier who passed through Calcutta on his way from Kathmandu to Kunming, New Delhi has made it amply clear that the Government of India does not want to engage itself in any ping pong diplomacy at this juncture as it is still not very certain whether China is really interested in an early thaw in Sino-Indian relations on a government-to-government basis or whether the

smiles accompanying the ping-pong team is just another smokescreen gimmick. It was also not clear as to the exact status of the leader of the Chinese table tennis delegation, Mr. Chao Chen-hung, who is Vice-Chairman of the Commission for Physical Education, Culture and Sports. He is a Vice-Minister only in the sense that the Chairman of this commission is a full-fledged Minister of the Chinese Government. Whatever his personal status in the Chinese Communist Party organisation, he is not considered senior enough to be entrusted with the delicate diplomatic task of setting the ball rolling for a political dialogue. "Hence the Chinese team's visit is seen here as no more than a scouting expedition to gauge the general reaction of the Indian people and Government to their friendly noises."

One of the main difficulties in the way of India taking any initiative in normalisation of relations with China is New Delhi's inability to evaluate current Chinese motivations. It is admitted that for the last two or three years Peking has sought to disassociate itself from the extremist policies pursued in the years of the Cultural Revolution and leading figures in the political scene in Peking have been at pains to show that China wants to be friends with the whole world—and that the outrages of the Red Guards were an aberration that must be forgotten. India has also taken note of the fact that China no longer stresses what had been implicit in the notorious map that was published sometime ago and still not withdrawn) showing the entire continental shelf and some of the islands in Southeast Asia as part of Chinese territory.

The unilateral action taken by China in the Paracel Islands in January 1974 have added to India's difficulties in understanding Chinese motivations. While verbally declaring its intentions that it would settle disputes with neighbours through peaceful negotiations, in this case Peking had resorted to armed action. And it must be remembered that China has the largest army in the world. It is estimated that military and police units in China number over 20 millions and that they are in a state of permanent mobilisation



Furthermore, China has constantly come out against international detente, detente in the Indian Ocean Zone, and even against the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Under cover of its campaign against "super-power" hegemony, China had even voted in the 28th Session of the UN General Assembly against the resolution to reduce military budgets of the permanent members of the Security Council by 10% so that part of the money could be used to provide assistance to developing countries—although all Asian states had voted in favour of the resolution.

Notice has been taken here about a study by a British political commentator, J. D. Simmons, analysing the geopolitical motivations of China: that she wants not only to ensure hegemony in East Asia (this is understandable), but also the return of territories that had formed part of the Chinese Empire in the past (this sends cold shivers down many neighbouring countries). On this basis, China believes that with the overwhelmingly large population she was entitled to a pre-eminently dominant place in global politics. Chinese leaders have also asserted that China was really Asia's centre of gravity and that China alone could guarantee the protection of Asia's interest in world politics.

Political circles here do not attach any serious weight to the declarations in many Western quarters that there are serious contradictions among the Chinese leaders particularly between Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai. There may be differences of opinion about problems of domestic development,

but on policies and strategies about foreign affairs there are no differences. Chinese leaders, it is believed, are unanimous in the view that China has a special responsibility for Asia's destinies and more particularly in respect of Southeast Asia. But what perturbs India is when China projects the same desire into the South Asia region, and even the whole of Asia, and seeks to take India under its wing. India cannot also look on with equanimity when China seeks to intervene in the affairs of the Himalayan Kingdoms, (Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan), in the Northeast region of India (Nagaland) and also in Kashmir region (Ladakh and the Aksai Chin).

For these reasons, India was reluctant to respond to the overtures to engage in pingpong diplomacy. It was true that China had succeeded in bringing about a rapprochement with the USA through initial flirtations around a ping pong table, but New Delhi feels that in the context of Sino-Indian relations (where diplomatic relations had never been broken but only downgraded) there was no need to mix sports with politics. Governmental circles here are strongly of the view that in view of the steps taken by India for normalisation, the initiative, now rests with China for indicating its response to the moves already made.

It is also felt that the Chinese, seem to be approaching the problem in a different way. The Chinese are obviously using pingpong as a lever to establish a sort of people-to-people relationship at the sporting level in order to cut through

political barriers. The officials who accompanied the ping pong team talked sentimentally about the historic friendship between the two countries and by such statements Peking obviously hoped to create a step-by-step climate of opinion in India for exerting psychological pressures on the Government of India to shed its fears and suspicions. Though political circles in Delhi realise that China would take a more positive attitude to India if this country moved away from the Soviet Union, this was something that was not likely to happen.

New Delhi is in no mood to start negotiations with China through ping pong when it was possible to conduct the same through normal diplomatic channels. India wants a sound government-to-government relationship without any sentimental overtones. Nor does India want to be drawn into Chinese attempts to reverse the process by re-establishing "friendship" through Friendship Associations, or through direct appeals to the "people" through political lobbies with gushing reminders of their long historic links which were interrupted (and not broken) by the border dispute. There is a suspicion here that China is seeking to reach the Indian people over the heads of their Government. This will be strongly resisted not only by the Government but also by the overwhelming majority of the political parties.

## CHRONICLE

# FEB. 27—MARCH 5

A DIARY OF EVENTS IN SRI LANKA AND THE WORLD  
COMPILED FROM ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILIES  
PUBLISHED IN COLOMBO.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27:** For the first half of 1975, Sri Lanka will get 100,000 tons of flour from the United States under the PL 480 agreement: this decision of the United States has already been conveyed to the Government and negotiations between the Food Commissioner and U.S. authorities have already been concluded: the agreement is to be signed in Washington shortly—CDN. Staff officers in the public service have formed a United Front of Public Service Staff Officers Trade Unions: the front will agitate for a wage for public servants drawing over Rs. 800 a month—CDN

The proposed Worker's Charter to be promulgated shortly giving more security of employment to employees will not be applicable to co-operative societies, small establishments, public corporations and statutory boards: it will also not be applicable to persons-holding managerial or executive positions as well as employees who are probationers—CDM. A record number of students this year have opted to read for university degrees externally—CDM. The Directors of the Colombo Gas and Water Co. Ltd., have denied charges of crippling the functions of the Company—CDM. A five member committee has been appointed by Mr. Ratne Deshapriya Senanayake, Chairman of the Special Food Production Committee (Crash Program), to submit a feasibility report on further development of the Mahiyangana complex—CDN. The tender for the supply and installation of an International Telephone Switching Centre has been awarded to Messrs. FACE—SUD of Italy costing approximately Rs. 6.5 million of which Rs. 3.93 million is the foreign exchange cost—CDN.



U.S. Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, brushed aside published reports that he may resign at the end of the year. Indian External Affairs, Minister Mr. Chavan, has cancelled his schedule visit to Washington for the Indo-Soviet joint commission meeting on March 13 and 14. China is ready for talks with India if the Indian Government should take the initiative for talks to normalise relations.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28:** The Government has agreed to a committee being set up immediately to report on the development, exploitation and conservation of resources of timber, forest, wild life and minerals in areas coming under the control of the Mahaweli Development Board—CDN. Over 500 delegates from 74 countries will be attending the Inter-Parliamentary Union spring meetings to be held at the Bandaranaike International Conference Hall from March 31 to April 5; the meeting will be formally declared open by the President Mr. William Gopallawa on April 1—CDN. The General Secretary of the Federal Party, Mr. S. Kathiravelupillai, in a press release has told that the unpopularity of the Government with the Sinhalese people on other issues should not bar this Government from contemplating dialogues as the Tamils are on the point of making a decision for no return—CDM. The Ceylon Shipping Corporation and Central Flight Bureau of Sri Lanka have been successful in persuading the Iraq National Shipping Lines to carry cargo other than tea to Basrah with a port surcharge of 15 per cent and not 100 per cent as demanded by the Shipping Line earlier—CDM. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike said yesterday that the multi million rupee Samanawewa project to be undertaken with Soviet assistance will provide water and hydro electricity to an appreciable area in the island; it will also provide development and employment—CDN. Education Minister, Dr. Badi-Ud-din Mahmud told a representative gathering of Buddhist monks yesterday that the Pirivena Education Bill will be introduced in the National State Assembly without any further delay—CDN. The JCTUO wrote to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, congratulating her and the United Front Government on the recent take over the Gas Company—CDN.

U.S. Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger, will leave on March 5 for an extended tour of the Middle East to work out the next stage on an Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement. Major oil exporting nations have ordered urgent studies to determine if the dollar should continue to be used to calculate oil revenues.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 1:** According to the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, there is every possibility of finding oil deposits in the South, too, in the off-shore area of Hambantota and even on the off-shore area extending from Puttalam to Colombo and therefore the current marine survey will be extended to these areas as well as—CDM. Nurses of all Government hospitals in the island will begin a work-to-rule campaign today in support of three demands they had put forward few months earlier—CDN & CDM. A special sessions of the UNP will be held at the party's headquarters to consider the decision of the President, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, to resign his seat in the National State Assembly—CDM Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, Minister of Plantation Industries, told a seminar of the Institute of Chemistry that although synthetic rubber has been challenging natural

rubber in the world market over the years this trend has now been reversed and by 1980, forty two per cent of the world market will be for natural rubber—CDN. Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Shirley Amerasinghe, who was defeated in his bid to succeed U Thant as U.N. Secretary General in 1971, has announced his candidacy for President of next year's General Assembly—CDN. The Prime Minister addressing a meeting at Veyangoda stated that the UF Government had a mandate to rule the country till 1977—CDN. The Action Committee of the Tamil United Front meets this morning in Jaffna to consider what steps should be taken to ensure the release of the thirty Tamil youths still in custody—CDM. TUF Members in the NSA will not resign their seats along with the proposed resignation of the Opposition leader—CDN.

China has cancelled orders for another 382,000 tonnes of wheat from the US and observers believed the cancellation was due to better-than-expected Chinese crops and a deteriorating foreign exchange position which has forced China to cut back its imports. Turkey has said that the country will produce nuclear weapons, if necessary, for its national defence. President Anwar Sadat has said that a very dangerous situation would be created if Dr. Kissinger failed in his Middle East mission.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 2:** The Minister of Education, Dr. Badi-ud-din Mahmud, has appointed a one-man commission to probe the recent indecent ragging at the Vidyalandara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka—ST & CO. The Tea and Rubber Control Department have relaxed regulations which prohibited the growing of food crops on acreages of estates which were set apart for "resting": owners of estates are to be allowed to grow subsidiary crops on such land—ST. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, President of the UNP, and leader of the Opposition, told the party delegations yesterday that they could elect a new leader for the party if he did not give them a general election during the course of this year: at the delegates meeting yesterday the party unanimously endorsed Mr. Jayewardene's decision to resign from his seat in the NSA and seek a fresh mandate—ST & CO. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, warned public servants not to be misled by disruptive elements and said that stern action would be taken against those who resorted to sabotage and worked against the Constitution—CO. The first meeting of the Board of Management of the Bandaranaike National Memorial Foundation was held at the BMICH yesterday under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister—CO. The co-operation of all diplomatic and other missions accredited to Sri Lanka has been sought by the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs in order to reduce the heavy pressure of work that is being cast on the Prime Minister—ST. Unemployed persons are being recruited to the UNP through its youth leagues and the women's organisations throughout the country on the promise of providing them with jobs when the UNP returns to power: these recruits are expected to attend classes at which lectures are given by leading UNPers: the type of propaganda they should carry out will also to be outlined at these classes—ST.

At least 20 people died and more than 70 were injured when a crowded underground train crashed in London. International wheat prices have been declining substantially in recent months with flour prices



that stood around £ 135 a ton in November coming down to around £ 100 level.

**MONDAY, MARCH 3:** Moves are afoot to normalise diplomatic ties between Sri Lanka and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: the Chief Organiser of SLFP Youth Leagues, Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, leaves for North Korea tomorrow to initiate unofficial talks on the subject—CDM. The 5000-strong United Front of Public Service Staff Officer's Union will seek an interview with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance with regard to their demand for an increase of Rs. 75 per month for those drawing salaries over Rs. 800—CDN. One of the main links in the multi-million-rupee Indo-Sri Lanka opium smuggling racket was severed by Narcotics Bureau operatives in the Jaffna district last week: this followed the arrest of a man described in official circles as one of the chief dealers in the local opium business—CDN. The annual Kachchativu festival commences on March 9—CDN. The second phase of the Education Reforms will be introduced from January 1976: the Minister of Education has asked all Departments under it to be in readiness for it and to avoid at all costs, the mistakes made in the implementation of the first phase of the Reforms that came into force in 1972—CDM. A Sri Lanka State Assembly delegation led by the Speaker, Mr. Stanley Tilakeratne, left for Australia yesterday to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Conference—CDM. The Nursing Services Trade Union Federation has claimed that its work-to-rule campaigns of matrons, sisters and nurses launched last Saturday was a success—CDM. Bilateral scientific and technical seminars of problems of common interest and joint research programmes leading to application in industrial and agricultural production are envisaged in the five-year agreement on science and technology signed between India and Sri Lanka on Friday in New Delhi—CDN.

Most of Italy's 7,000 judges are magistrates began an indefinite work-to-rule to support pay demands. China has said that US must stop immediately all assistance to President Lon Nols regime of Cambodia. The Chogyal (ruler) of Sikkim has rejected speculation that he was planning to take up residence in Nepal.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 4:** The blueprint for a Prices Commission is now complete and legislation for the purpose will soon be introduced in the National State Assembly: among the main factions of the commission will be a review of prices of commodities which are either imported or locally produced and put particularly by the public sector—CDN. Work in the Colombo group of hospitals was seriously disrupted yesterday by the work-to-rule campaign being carried on by the nursing staff throughout the island—CDN. Members of the Parliament belonging to the TUF will not boycott proceedings of the NSA: they will continue to attend the sittings of the Assembly and function in such a way as to place the problems of the Tamils before the world—CDM. The Aid Consortium countries are scheduled to meet in Paris early next month to decide the quantum of assistance to be given to Sri Lanka during 1975—CDM. Sri Lanka's tea industry, the country's biggest foreign exchange earner, goes metric next month: estate have already started packaging in metric in preparation for

the first metric tea auction to be held on April 2—CDM. The Railway decided to launch a crash program costing Rs. 25 million to provide better passenger and goods service—CDM. The inquiry into the case against Sheikh Noordeen Sultan Abdul Cader, the second suspect in the Rs. 1 million gem smuggling case, will be taken up before the CJC (Foreign Exchange Frauds) today—CDM.

US Senator Edward Kennedy announced yesterday that he would introduce legislation this week to remove prohibition against US trade with Cuba. China condemned the incorporation of Kashmir into India and said it posed a threat to peace in the region. The Shah of Iran has declared a one-party system in the country and asked all existing parties to disband and join a new one to be headed by Premier Abbas Hoveyda. Egypt has assured its allies on the eve of Dr. Henry Kissinger's new Middle East peace trip, that any agreement with Israel will be purely military and not involve political concessions by Egypt.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5:** According to the Ministry of Health, the nurse's work-to-rule campaign is virtually a go-slow: according to the Secretary to the Ministry, the Minister of Health Services is prepared to have discussions with the Nursing Services Trade Union Federation provided the campaign is called off—CDN. The United Front parties are making preparations to hold a mammoth May Day celebration in Colombo and there won't be any celebrations in the outstations—CDN. Bribery Department officials have been called in by the Ministry of Education to investigate a series of allegations in connection with the selection of 3,000 uncertified teachers: the Ministry has received a spate of complaints from the applicants and public that certain persons are soliciting gratifications from the applicants—CDM. Defence squads will be set up in all workplaces throughout the country: this follows a unanimous decision taken at a UF summit held on Monday—CDM. The mission from the Kuwait Fund for Development is expected to be in Sri Lanka by the middle of this month to finalise arrangements regarding the lines of aid: a sum of 10 million dollars pledged earlier by Kuwait for development aid to Sri Lanka is likely to be increased—CDN. The pilgrimage to the annual Catholic festival at Kachchativu begins tomorrow—CDN. The bill to establish Credit Councils has been gazetted on the order of the Minister of Finance: a department known as the Department of Credit Councils will be established and there will also be a Director of Credit Councils and a Deputy Director—CDN.

Yugoslav President Tito urged the better-off non-aligned nations to help those worst hit by the world economic crisis, and called for resistance to threats of force to settle it. Pakistan and the United States signed an agreement in Islamabad under which Pakistan will get an additional 300,000 tons of wheat valued at 48,800,000 dollars. Poland has signed a record 450 million rouble contract to import Soviet oil and oil products in 1975. The Chilean defence minister was killed in an air crash.

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## AN UNFINISHED SAGA

— work will go on —

by ANATORY BUKOBA

January 22.

STARTING this early am I; my finishing at twelve last night was bad. We had not done much today. *Amicus* went home and told us to expect him this evening, there is plenty of time for that, yet. *Lucky* resumed clearing where *Major* left off; not *Major's* style, making a clean job of stripping, but the old *hena* or *chena* way, tall stumps everywhere. I used that word stripping because clearing secondary or tertiary forests, which means old *hena*, is like that. You fell big trees; there is a lot of creeper and vine, mostly thorn on the old abandoned *chenas*, hence stripping. I have been wanting to say, for a long while, that *Lucky* has the bit between his teeth. I thought it wiser not to restrain him. He has cleared all that corner of the *Shamba* that should be, and the road-side, or, I should say, road. There is a culvert at that point. I have been allotted the land between the *alla* or declivity, you could hardly call it a valley, which leads up to the bottom of the culvert on our side of the road. The neighbours, who trespassed, cleared a large chunk of this land, the most arable and level part, from this *alla* too near my house. Between that and the road was a real jungle: except for the tiniest little bit, which he has still to do. *Lucky* has cleared all this. We have to get rid of the fallen vegetation by dragging it away, heaping it, and setting fire to it. As usual, we shall save what wood is worth saving, even for fire-wood, this is not the *chena*, way where most of it is destroyed by fire. Where there is very old secondary forest, what survives the fire goes to make a log fence built the *chena* way, and strong enough, it would seem, to resist elephants or, I should say, deter them. What has still to be cleared in the sense of felled, or stripped, is that long stretch of wood or forest that lies at the opposite side to the road, and which

neighbours have cleared. This screen, as I have said, has virtually been pierced by *Major*, a third of the way down from the path that lies at the upper end of it, near the river. Finally, I think we shall have to cut back the forest edge a bit along the top of the river bank. There are some minaws, or maybe one, making a great noise at the back of the house, out of sight, a few yards from my ear. A delightful noise, of bird song. *Lucky* has gone to fetch water from the river, before he sets to, cooking. The time is 4.45 p.m., the housewife asked it half-an-hour ago. The sky is dull, but it will not rain. We are expecting rain about the Sinhalese New Year. *Lucky* has his eye on this, but I hope I will not have to go on supporting him all that while; there is water from the river. *Waterkollu* and *brinjal*, I hear, grow quickest.

January 23.

WE HAVE to get down to trying to live on less money. *Lucky* was away a very long time, he said he went miles to search for *manioc* cheaper than it is sold in *kaddays*. What with what happened in the recent past, a sort of settling of old scores, which luckily went no further than it did, I thought he might have been put away and buried. He has just come in with water and says he bought the *manioc* at fifty cents a pound, fourteen pounds of it, which would cost sixty or seventyfive cents in a shop. He went miles to try to save us the difference and bought it straight off a farm. People say that *manioc* is the same as *tapioca*, which used to have as a pudding on *Bibby* line ships, and a regular feature it was on the menu. In Africa, it is called *cassava* and Europeans there had a very poor view of its nutritional value. It appeared it was for Africans what straw is to cattle, just a tummy-filler. While *Lucky* was away I gathered up cut vegetation, most of it thorn, and piled them on heaps which were already there. I shall

be going out to burn them when I have done this stint of writing. I am alone, I interperse my work with reading. The three-year old comes alone to our house to ask for things for her mother. She does it with much sweetness, I think the word is demurely, and I take pains to try to understand what she says. Visitors we had this evening, three lads who came on bicycles. The three younger counterparts of these lads, for there was a brother of one who came today, were here at the weekend when I was away. We bought jaggery off those today; one of the lads makes it alone. He buys coconut honey at ten rupees a bottle, and makes good jaggery which he sells at eleven cents each, but sold to us for ten. I bought five rupees worth, and I told *Lucky* I would deduct this from what I give him next time. *Lucky* seems to be all on the surface, strong-willed, the housewife called him quick-tempered; but willing to learn. He speaks about the strangest Sinhalese I have heard yet, but he is Sinhalese to the core. My colleague had work today. Readers may wonder what happened to our hens. I had a talk about this with what I would like to call the *Tribune Agricultural Advisory Service*. They pointed out the hazards of keeping fowls here. I thought we were not ready for them yet, and any doubts I had to the contrary, or leanings towards the hens, were put paid to by the T.A.A.S. In the event, it is quite possible that they have been proved right, for if the hens had failed to produce the eggs and the eggs an income, we may have well have been left in the lurch. As it is, I am only just right as regards the money. We may have eaten the eggs and lived on that but to have eaten the hens would have destroyed our capital.

January 24.

VISITORS come and one's whole routine is upset, but thank heavens for the visitors. I wonder where it was I read that there is an African saying that a visitor is never an interruption; and how wise an outlook. I have read that the great *Ibn Saud*, of Saudi Arabia, never failed to get on to his feet when a visitor arrived, however insignificant the visitor, and this to the annoyance of important visitors, who



disliked the interruptions to the matter they had in hand. So it would appear that a visitor was admitted at once to the King's tent on his arrival, an admirable practice which I think might be copied by those people whom other people come to see. Instead of, as in the case, being kept hours waiting. We had some visitors back again today, and they came with a seventeen-pound pumpkin, fresh fish, and a comb of plantains, *koli-kutus*. So we had a grand meal, all of us, on half the pumpkin and all the fish, garnished with a sambol, and it was all so good that none of us, I would think, felt we had had enough to eat. This was our night's dinner taken at 3 p.m., to accommodate the visitors. There were two of them, four of us and a baby. In these days of paper shortage, one has to cut down on the quantity one writes, and so, I think this is enough for the day.

January 25.

THE HOUSEWIFE was helping me put the felled vegetation into piles today. I showed her the way I like doing it. *Lucky* says he would like her to help, and until another man joins us, I shall fork out for her the food allowance that another man would get, at least until I came back, and as *Lucky* says, only on the condition that she really does help. My colleague has been away more than an hour, causing us all great anxiety, but the housewife and me for probably different reasons. He has been under a cloud, and any absence on his part is going to embarrass me; the housewife is restless as a wife would be. *Lucky* has gone to get some lamp oil and it is quite dark now, but there is moonlight for him to see his way back. There is *Lucky* come back by the foot path. A week ago *Lucky* and *Amicus* helped my colleague renew the roof over his kitchen. His house is one large room. More than enough for them, his wife says. *Lucky* has made two doors for our house, stout ones of cadjans and sticks. As with the Holy Year Door at St. Peter's Rome, these doors, like that bronze door, have to be moved bodily, one at the back and one at the front, of the house. The door of the other house is like ours. Some of the cadjans taken off the roof of the old house have replaced those that were on the walls, and the effect is

to make the house much tidier on the outside. It is neary always tidy. The *massa* bed in that house has been taken down again. This time it has not been put back, and the whole family are on the floor. There is a cultural element in this, deriving from India, I think. Africans have their grass huts, the walls of mud and wattle, and the floors sometimes covered with dried grass as with a carpet, but the African do have chairs, made without so much as a wooden peg in them if I remember rightly, and most certainly no nails, and yet folding wooden chairs, or should I say, wooden folding chairs.

My colleague is back. He has drawn his day's pay, but he is already wondering what he is going to eat tomorrow. With rice at 4/50, as, I am told, it must be difficult. *Lucky* says it is their appetite. I know the housewife and her daughter have a sweet tooth, or seem to, for whenever I bought a packet of jaggery which was meant to last two weeks, loose jaggery being so expensive in the shops, it always went in three days. With the housewife helping me with the work, her daughter was there too, and so I had a chance to hear her after a long while. She talked incessantly as she gathered her own little pile of sticks, her mother keeping up a response, so that there was no monologue. The little girl, three years, was ill some weeks ago, and she was very quiet from that time until a few days ago. Now again she is her old talkative self. It is moonlight, and *kiralo* birds are making a lot of noise. They seem to be flying around too. Our little girl even talks to me now, all much to the point. She has come on errands to our house; she walks in, does what she has to do, it may be put a plate down, and at once gets out. There she must feel safer. If it is a message she has to convey, she does not cross the threshold.

January 26.

RAIN we had in the early hours of the morning. The path to the main road from our old road was slippery, but I managed to stay on my feet. It rains, they say, at full moon. Someone confidently predicted this would be the last of the rains of the North-East monsoon, I presume, until, I suppose April,

and as he said, what falls now will not fill up the tanks. People think that schemes, plans and drawings are enough to put any agricultural project through to a fruitful conclusion. This may have been so when money had some value, and there was enough of it to buy labour on those terms. Enhanced wages now mean very little. It is people, their association with one another, that alone will pull this country through a food crisis. The initiative has to come voluntarily from the people themselves, mutual co-operation, no bullying. Then any project conceived by them will succeed. For this we need a new theology; it is all one theology of course, but written from a different standpoint. We have had the individual or psychological one of St. Augustine, a masterpiece, the *City of God*, an even greater book, I think, than Chesterton's, *The Everlasting Man*. About nine hundred years later came St. Thomas Aquina's *Summa Theologica*, which gave us theology from a universal or global standpoint. So say people, who know more about this than I do. What we want now is somebody, it will come in God's good time, to write theology from the point of view, or standpoint, of the group. When this is done, or even before it is done, we shall have learned a new way of working together for our mutual good. It will not be without heartaches, for we have Christ's cross to remind us of that, the battle sign of christians. Theologically, or whatever the correct word is, this may be put in a different way, three stages corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity, three Persons in one God, as Christians teach. The first age, of Augustine, the personal one, corresponding to the first person of the Trinity, who is the Father, the Creator. The second age, that of Aquinas, corresponding to the second person, the universal, the son, who is Wisdom. Then the Age which must start now, the group, to the Third Person, who is Love or the Holy Spirit.

February 2.

A WEEK, was I away; arrived I, by daylight, and what a change greeted me. Some of what *Lucky* had cleared by the road had been burnt, and so the place was open. I even took the more direct way



to our house, and not the usual one by the other house. I came by the track the buffaloes use to the river, and I turned off this to our house. The house is changed, too. The wall at the head of the *massa* bed has been moved back in line with the wall at the back of the fireplace. The door which separates the two, I should say doorway, is at right angles to what it was before, and parallel, but not quite opposite to the door at the front of the house. So what I once called our pantry, or woodshed, has been taken into the main body of the house. My feet dangle in this space as I write, and I sit at the end of the bed, at the head of it, which was not possible before. I got a better reflection of light here from the hanging lamp. As *Lucky* says, the house has more room in it now. He was lying, reading, when I arrived, it being a holiday. Good man, he has managed a week without me. He ate the last of the food at lunch. One of the first things I did was to send him out shopping. He is just serving out the cowpea for our dinner, and I shall stop this to eat. We had it with coconut and a little sambol and it was good. *Lucky* says he did the house today. We had two separate visitors while I was away, and I gather he was a good host, even inviting them to stay, which they were unable to do. He says the housewife and my colleague did two days' work here, together, and when my colleague returned to his more regular employment across the river, building, the housewife started work on another's *chena* near by. The view beyond the back of the *Shamba* now is of, open rolling, country. It is a fine view. As I know from experience that a house in the *Wanni* should have a dark interior to keep eye-flies away, I shall not comment now on the view through the back door. It is good. I shall wait to see what the day brings. *Lucky* has done some new clearing at the back of the *Shamba*, in that wall of jungle at the end of it, adjoining the part of the *Shamba* that some near-neighbours cleared. My colleague and his wife helped pile what had been cut down before. Their daughter is really fat.

February 3,

A MONTH has *Lucky* been here, and that, he seems to me, to have

made the biggest impression on the *Shamba*, of all who have been here, may be because he is the last of line of about four people who did make a difference; and in the natural order of succession, his seems more complete, coming, as it does, at the end. He was set on going into town today, and thwarted, as he was, once before I thought I owed it to him to let him go this time, but I would have been happier if he had gone tomorrow. *Lucky* was with me years ago, when I had similar ideas to what I have now, and he has not needed much prompting to enter into the spirit of what I want to do. He has made my ideas his own, which is what I mean. After his departure, and he went saying he would be back in the early afternoon, I attended to a few matters and then I got out the mamoty and did a little clearing with that, in front of and around the house. Then I came in and read a new book I started last evening. Before I comment on this, I would like to say that some time ago, in these notes, I got mixed up between two shows I had seen, the *Pirates of Penzance* and the *Mikado*. It has been on my conscience since browsing through an even older number of *Tribune* had put me wise. What I had intended to say about the *Pirates of Penzance*, I said about the *Mikado*. The *Mikado* was all right. It was very good; there was nothing wrong with it; it was the *Pirates of Penzance* that was rather dry, striving for a perfection that one ought not to find in an amateur show, and which is the bane of a professional show and makes them dull compared with the amateur. Now, as to what I am reading. Among Arthur van Langenburg's books I found a translation of Cardinal Mercier's *The Origins of Contemporary Psychology*. It is a fitting sequel, for me, Maritain's *Dream of Descartes* that I found in the same Library. Written first in 1897, it was revised in 1908, and the edition I read was published in 1918. Difficult to read, it covers the whole range of philosophers, starting at the beginning of the book with Descartes, then Malebranche and Spinoza; then through Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant, reading like the British Isles and Germany, I think, thrown in together, and that is as far as I have got. It finished up,

I believe with Plato and Aristotle, history in reverse. It needs leisure to understand a book like this for some reason, I thought of the words of the new Catholic rite of the mass, at the Offertory; the bread which earth has given and human hands have made; wine, the fruit of the vine and work of human hands; *through your goodness*.

February 4,

INDEPENDENCE DAY, and that feast of Mary under her title of *Lady of Lanka*, and so took the day off to visit friends; but first there was a wedding, one of the most attractive I have been to. I was at the service because of the feast. I had not been asked to the wedding but there is no church law against attending a wedding service. I knew the bridegroom, and after the mass, the bridegroom's father came round to us in the church porch and offered us cigarettes. I took one although I do not smoke, but first we made our *salaams* to the bridegroom and his wife. This was a strictly Sinhalese wedding. At a Kaffir one, some time back, I think I kissed the bride; it was then or never. That wife's sister-in-law has just had a baby; given her husband, she has, what must be a bonny son. I have not seen him yet. Anyway, they are all very happy about it, and so am I.

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Lucky worked today. We are still after finding him a mate, a partner, not a wife. Hearing that a lad, I know, is on his own, I was on my way to see him, some distance away, when I met him on the road and brought him here. He will let us know his intentions, as regards joining us, tomorrow. There are one or two people who may turn up from our major town, what is to us our metropolis. Lucky says he can carry on, on his own, even if no one joins him. I have told him I shall reduce the money I give him and a mate, or even when he is on his own. He says it will be all right, but he came back from town yesterday unable to account for how he spent ten rupees over and above what he actually spent. His mind is blank as regards how it went. That has happened to me whenever I have been horrified about the amount of money I have used up, but by cudgelling (is this spelt right?) my brains, I can usually account for the money, to the last rupee at least. Major would have had all his answers ready, if I had had, on this occasion, to ask him to account for this tanner; Lucky seemed just as non-plussed as me. Well, it rained this evening; a quite heavy shower which lasted, I would say, more than an hour. All the land seemed flooded, but about twenty minutes after the rain the drier parts were really bone dry. Yet a great deal of water fell, witness the new rivulets running into the river, the river itself in a minor flood, and the pools of water lying about the acre. Whenever I am here, I send Lucy over, with a torch, to the other house in the evenings as I used to do with Major. The frogs are having a grand time, and also what sounds like crickets, or I would even say like birds.

February 5.

TOMORROW, and I shall have been here two years, and with today, two years of these *Shamba* notes. Weeded by hand, did I this morning, a weed, a herb called *bethe anodha*, pronouncing that first e like a Latin *a*, and the second e, mute as in French. Lucky did not recognise it, but a friend of ours did, he is convinced that dried, it will fetch us so me money. With the river in flood, its state rather, in a normal rainy season we felt we ought to get another,

*kalla-geddi*, which we did today, as one *kalla-geddi*, or water-pot hardly gives sediment time to settle. That takes an hour or so, and we have use to the water at once. Lucky cleared a little patch, near the soya bean, for sorghum, and then he spent the rest of the morning shaving down the mammoth handle. We put six more *cadjan* on the roof, right along the centre, where it leaked yesterday. These were folded over, two at a time, and the wood that hold the *cadjans* down, in this case, long poles, in pairs, joined at one end, was replaced over them. My colleague and his wife are at work today in their various places, away from the *Shamba*, I write this in the afternoon, as Lucky is away shopping, as he said we have nothing in for breakfast tomorrow. He will also have a haircut while he is out. He seems determined to carry on, even alone. This means he will get a little financial support from me. I would be happier to see someone else here with him. I think he will be sooner on his own feet financially, if he is not alone. We are rather despondent about anybody turning up this evening, or rather, he is. I have been commissioned to try to bring his younger brother here, but even that seem a long shot, as even Lucky does not know if his brother is at his house, the home his mother has made, these last ten years or more in the *Wanni*.

AS WITH EPICS, it seems good to close these *Shamba* notes, an unfinished saga. The *Shamba*, goes on, I presume, Here, let me quote some words from the Fourth Canon of the Mass. Here goes. *You formed man in your own likeness and set him over the whole world to serve you, his creator, and to rule over all creatures.* That I would say, is life. By its very context, I would say men are not meant where the word creature, is used. What is indicated, I should think, is any kind of performance even such as going to the moon, but men did once try to build a tower to heaven, and we know what become of that. It came to be called the Tower of Babel. Perhaps, too, we ought not to try to resolve everything into systems. Only one thing is necessary, said Christ and that, perhaps, is not a good life, but the best life.

## U.S. SUGGESTION

# How To Bring Oil Prices Down

by Eugene Drake

Washington,

Many Americans—and probably some non-Americans as well—are having trouble following the logic of the U.S. Government's latest proposals to deal with international aspects of the energy problem.

If the United States wants to see oil prices come down, why is it proposing to prop oil prices up? While the goal and the method appear to be in conflict, in fact it is all perfectly logical. Ford administration officials have come to the conclusion that the only way to bring oil prices down is to bring market pressure to bear on the oil cartel on both the demand side and the supply side.

On the demand side, this means restraining consumption of energy—particularly imported oil—in the importing nations. On the supply side, this means encouraging the development of alternative sources of energy within the consuming nations themselves—new oil and gas wells on land and off shore, extracting of oil from oil shales and oil sands, production of synthetic from coal, faster development of nuclear energy, and eventually more exotic sources.

U.S. EXPERTS calculate that, at present world prices, it would be profitable to bring in large supplies of new energy sources—such large supplies, in fact, that in time over-supply would cause prices to tumble.

But to understand why these alternative sources might never be developed without some sort of assurance on price, put yourself in the shoes of an investor considering a large capital investment in energy production. That investor faces a very serious risk: The cost of production in some major OPEC (Organization Of Petroleum Exporting Countries) nations is only a few cents per barrel, far below the present world price. Anytime it wanted to, the cartel could easily drop the price of oil down low enough to make the new



investments unprofitable. The probability of such price cuts would increase as reduced consumer demand for imported oil placed in increasing pressure on the OPEC cartel.

Thus the decline in import prices that oil consumers so ardently desire might not occur, because of the inhibiting effect on domestic supply generated by the downside price risk. However, if you change this picture to include some sort of assurance as to the future prices what can be earned by producers of new energy sources in the consuming nations, this dilemma can be overcome. According to official U.S. thinking, a price guarantee or a floor price substantially below current prices will be sufficient to overcome investor reluctance, and the resulting increase in every supply should be sufficient to bring import prices down.

The idea of protection against downside risk appeals to many U.S. officials, since it would be an effective way of restraining consumption while simultaneously increasing supplies. It also carries significant benefits for countries with minimal fossil fuel possibilities, increases in non-OPEC supply generated by the large-scale investments of resource-rich countries—such as the United States—together with reduced consumption would reduce import demand and lower world oil prices. Countries with limited fossil fuel potential would derive balance of payments benefits from lower prices, as well as fiscal gains from increased tariff revenues, while bearing a small share of the resources cost. In addition, supply diversification and reduced vulnerability to a future embargo would benefit all IEA countries.

In the proposals announced by Secretary of State Kissinger at the National Press Club in Washington on February 3 and presented to the International Energy Agency meeting in Paris the following week, the United States suggested two alternative approaches to these objectives.

Under one approach, the consumer nations would agree to establish a common floor price for oil imports. Each nation would then decide how it was going to assure that imported oil would not be sold at a price lower than

the agreed floor. It could use import quotas or fixed tariffs, or it could impose variable levies that would always raise the cost of imported oil to the target price. ANOTHER APPROACH would be for the major consuming nations who are members of the International Energy Agency to establish a common external tariff on oil. The tariff would apply to all oil brought into the consuming nations from the OPEC nations, but would not apply to oil moving within the consumer nations group—from Canada to the United States, for example, or from Norway to Germany.

A floor price of common tariff approach could—and probably would—be used in combination with specific price guarantees on some of the higher-cost alternative sources projects. The subject of a price floor for petroleum has admittedly been a controversial subject, even within the Ford Administration. But White House spokesmen Ron Nessen, seeking to dispel the impression that there were still disagreements within the Administration on the subject, told newsmen on February 13 that Secretary Kissinger's Press Club speech "represents the President's policy."

President Ford said in his State-Of-The-Union Address in January that he would ask for legislation to assure energy price stability within the United States. However, Mr. Nessen said the President had not yet decided what the mechanism will be, what price level to seek, or what the timing will be.

The idea of a price floor for petroleum offers the opportunity for a deal with the oil-exporting nations: the oil-exporting nations could be assured of good markets and reasonably generous prices for their oil in the future, in return for lower prices now and assurances that the oil exporters will not again cut off supplies as in the 1973 embargo. The possibility for such an agreement may be explored at a meeting of oil-consuming and oil-exporting nations expected to be held later this year, after a preliminary procedural meeting tentatively scheduled for March.

Thomas Enders, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, told skeptical Senators at

a Congressional hearing on February 14 that any agreed price floor would have to be substantially below present prices, and admitted that he could not guarantee that such an agreement with the producers would be possible.

It has always been in the best interests of the producing nations to keep the price rises moderate so as to discourage the development of alternative sources, he said, but they have not seen it that way.

If some sort of price agreement is not reached, Mr. Enders foresees a "Roller-Coaster" pattern developing over the years:

- First, very high prices
- Then development of new supplies through private and government efforts leads to oversupply and a sharp plunge in prices;
- The low price again stimulates excessive consumer-Nation dependence on imports, which again puts the oil cartel in a position to enforce excessive prices.

The consuming nations can live with this "roller-coaster" situation, Thomas Enders, believes: but he also believes that both consumers and producers would be better off if petroleum prices could take a smoother ride.

**Kindred Profession?**

The trial of a tailor which opened in Flensburg (Federal Republic of Germany) on November 12 had unexpected, scandalous consequences. The hearings revealed that the defendant had decided to augment his earnings by practising medicine and had chosen what the thought was the most popular branch of medical science—surgery. If he could cut and mend for a client, he reasoned, why couldn't he do the same with the client. The result of the entrprising tailor's "experiment" is several invalids. The case led to investigations which have shown that he is by far not the only person engaged in quackery. According to a police spokesman, this illegal medical business is becoming increasingly widespread in the Federal Republic because of the high fees demanded by doctors.



## Kavuda Raja ?

By Herbert Keuneman

I am not at all sure how revolution is going to come in this country—it isn't already here, by a long chalk; all we've yet got is, simply, disorganization—nor am I any longer dedicated to the idea that (in its violent sense) it *should* come as the only effective sociological determinant nor am I any longer convinced that it *will* come as a matter of historical predestination.

But of one thing I *am* convinced; and that is that if it must come and when it does come it will not be brought in, as some of our milder politicians seem to hope, by a reformed bureaucracy. Not in Sri Lanka, not with our national psychology.

I should, of course—and I *could*, of course—expand this argument to make it convincing or even just cogent. But, rather than keep it hypothetical, I shall illustrate it; by two or three examples from recent village history.

**THE LITTLE TYRANT OF THEIR FIELDS.** Soon after I had moved into my new house, a village tank nearby came to require renewal of its sluice. After much petitioning and (in view of what later transpired) probably a suitable *pour boire* the work was put in hand and the old sluice dug out. This left a six-foot breach in the bund, and the tank drained dry. Then, unaccountably as it seemed to me, work on the tank—which fed the fields and supplied the comforts of about 30 families—was completely abandoned for about four months, with the rains that should irrigate the *yala* crop approaching.

Gradually, panic seized upon the village farmers. Again petitions were sent, and multiplied. No reply. Deputations presented themselves before the minor official (I cannot recall his current designation) whose duty it was to look after the tanks of the area. No reaction. As the time for sowing approached, those who could afford it offered him bribes: a bottle of arrack, two bottles of arrack, a hundred rupees, two hundred rupees. No result. To add insult to injury, the same official

had meanwhile been observed to put Government labour onto repairing a small tank owned by, and solely by, a relative he had recently acquired.

About this time a friend of mine came to stay with me. In conversation concerning village bureaucrats and their works I told him about the ravished tank and the desperate village that depended upon it and had now to go elsewhere even so much as to bathe and we went together to look at the scene of deliberate depredation. My friend was horrified. Moreover, being one of these Business Executive types, he was moved to effective action. He posted off forthwith a letter under his own name to the Prime Minister, a copy to Minister Maithripala Senanayake, a copy to the M.P. concerned (but Olympianly unconcerned in fact) and several others where they might be hoped to do some good.

It would be idle to pretend that I did not whole-heartedly approve of his action. I did indeed. But it did not occur to me at that time to take such a step. If it had, I suppose I should have approached the officer first and told him what I proposed to do. He would then have prepared a defence or adopted some other tactic which would have rendered any such letters as ineffectual as the one I had, actually, previously written him urging him to relieve the villagers, on purely humanitarian grounds.

My friends' letters, on the other hand, produced immediate and practical effect. Within days an official from the local officer's headquarters was in Ehetuwewa to conduct an enquiry—and, *mirabile dictu*, the evening before the enquiry he called at my place quite clearly to pump me as to any malice behind the complaint; although my name had no official connexion with the complaint whatever—and the enquiry was held and the minor official transferred though not as far away as I personally should have liked. Transferred, that is all; so that he can continue his labours for the proletarian benefit in some new and unexploited field! The work on the tank was finished a few weeks later.

In fact, the only person who came off badly from all this seems to have been I. My friend's splen-

did letters, which set the whole thing off, have been laid at my door; and I have a permanent enemy in the little crook who is convinced that the public disgrace—whatever the private possibilities—of his transfer was at my instigation. Shortly, after the following conversation took place between 'mine enemy' and a second friend from Colombo who is also an acquaintance of his.

'Hallo! I say. What are you doing here?..

'What? you're staying with *him*?

'That's in that cadjan house, no? I say, you warn your damn friend: those houses are dangerous, sometimes they can catch fire!'

**THE MASTERFUL SUB POST-MASTER.** Sub Postmasters are masterful by nature; that is why they desire to become sub-post masters in the first place: the position is a short cut to achieving ambitions of many kinds. Money, naturally, is one of the chief of these. Quite a surprising total circulates through even a small village post office, and it can always be 'rolled' for use in private transactions by such easy expedients as delaying the payment of Money Orders—the official advice has not been received, or there is not the required change, or the post office funds have been cleaned out by the cashing of a large Money Order prior to your presentation of your own—and when a postmaster is sufficiently established he can even expand into off-the-record transactions such as receiving a small percentage for services more promptly than usually rendered. (This is particularly good with regular customers such as pensioners or those on the dole.) Most villagers are willing to settle for some such permanent arrangement, since to be on good terms with your postmaster is at least as important as to be on good terms with your *mudalali*. Then, there is the postmasterful opportunity to keep a finger upon the pulse of the village: not only by the expedient of steaming open the occasional letter—the average villager hardly realizes it if his letter is a day or two late being delivered; and if he did realize it whom would he complain to—but by merely keeping tabs upon who writes to



whom and how often: not difficult, because it is common village practice for a cover to be endorsed with the sender's name.

I often wonder whether local politicians do not make use of such facilities. I do not wonder—I know that one village girl of the 'wrong' political persuasion nearly lost a scholarship she had won abroad when the Education Department's letter bidding her to a final briefing did not reach her. Only her accidental discovery (by a chance meeting with a similarly successful friend) and her gumption in obtaining from the local Education Office a statement that such a letter had indeed been posted produced the letter after all...with the explanation that it had been 'overlooked!'

However, about the worst example of sub-postmaster-mindedness that I know took place in a post office not far from Ehetuwewa as recently as the beginning of this year. The postmaster, as so many of his kind, was a man of consequence and one held in his village in that blend of diffidence and ingratiation that too often in village society is dignified by the word 'respect'. Although a convert to the Government party only after it became obvious that its power was assured, and (as nobody doubts) wide open to reconversion if its power should fall, he is head of one of the new proliferating proletarian Committee of such awesome and capricious authority with the *ex officio* Honour that goes with his appointment; his son is head of another political rig; his daughter of another yet; and he himself is the firm friend and votary of his local MP. Father, son and daughter have all of them at some time been faced with charges of financial corruption and got away with varying quantities of reputation intact; but MPs., as the world knows, are bigger men than can be sullied by their associations!

In January 1975 the dole paid to destitute persons—I do not know the official terms for it or them—was raised by the State Social Services Department from the cuckoo land sum of Rs. 9 a month at this day and age and juncture! to Rs. 11 a month. (It will doubtless be described in official reports not as a two-rupee rise but as a 22.22 one!) Even this, never-

theless, must have seemed to much rise—or, in the charitable alternative, to negligible a rise—to our Sub-Postmaster. When the day came for these pitiful pensions to be collected at his post office, he had the receipts signed for Rs 11 but paid out the accustomed Rs 9! The swine was Rs 2 to the good on every pauper! Does it surprise you I have collected four exclamation marks in this single paragraph?

I suppose that word 'accustomed' is the key word: this pillar of politics and society could always claim that it was sheer habit that misled him and he paid, unthinkingly, the sum he had so long been used to paying. This, I believe, was the argument he used to combat the petition against him that followed. Also the fact that when the mistake was discovered he went so far as to make restitution, in a village where the proportion of charity pensioners was unusually high, by handing the unpaid sum (as regards that village) to the Grama Sevakaya to be distributed amongst those entitled to it.

But it never came out at what passed for an official Enquiry which followed the petition how the cheat came to light as early as it did. A couple of minor members of the sub-Postmaster's own staff, innured though they must have been to more commonplace acts of post office dishonesty, were so genuinely appalled at the cynicism and meanness of this one that they themselves warned the victims of their victimization. Nothing else came out of the enquiry, either. Not, as I have been given to understand, so much as a reprimand. Indeed, the general effect has been to strengthen the position of this petty representative of the bureaucracy: his position grows resignedly regarded as inviolable.

Even worse than the crime itself (for I am sure a crime was intended, whatever departmental varnish be daubed to cover it) was an act of high-handedness that I am all the more indignant against because I have more than half a belief that once again I—and once again in contradiction of the fact—am suspected of being at the bottom of the petition; since, with my name, I am credited with being a 'trouble maker' by an increasing circle of local types who had rather

conduct their misfeasances without trouble.

By a queerish coincidence, one of the pensioners involved was the mother of a girl my wife and I had once employed. To this woman came a peremptory message from the Sub-Postmaster bidding her wait upon him without delay. Which the foolish creature, perhaps nursing hopes of a further hand-out! humbly did. The Bureaucrat addressed her as he might a suppliant: with one stern question: 'Was it you that had that petition drawn against me? Very well, then, if she was indeed innocent she might go.

Now, why she as first suspect amongst so many dozens he had swindled? (Though that, of course is not the real question. The real question is: How can a People's Government exist when this typical attitude of self-seeking browbeating insolence in a paid servant of the People not only occurs but is politically protected?)

I confess that I have argued this week from what is largely hearsay or conjecture. Next week I shall begin an argument that I hope will prove more telling; for the matter is one in which I became personally involved, and I shall quote date and names and chapter and verse.

#### Russian Rockets for Switzerland

Yes, but not for military purposes. Nor for fireworks. But to change the weather. The Swiss have for a long time been experimenting with small rockets to disperse summer hailstorms of the type that can lay waste a whole area's developing grape harvest in a few minutes. Some time ago a special federal commission was set up in Berne to study the matter, and its first interim conclusion was that all the techniques which have been tried till now have shown themselves pretty useless. Now they are thinking of importing Russian anti-hail rockets on an experimental basis to see if these can work to better effect. Their reputation has gone before them, but it remains to be proved.—SPR



# IS IT TRUE?

## Sherlock Holmes

### • Zaki Of The Maldives

IS IT NOT TRUE that this column in the *Tribune* has paid a great deal of attention to the Maldives? That it was this column which had first pointed out the maladroit mishandling by bureaucratic bunglers which had driven the Maldivians to shift their trading headquarters from Colombo to Bombay and Singapore? That this matter was first dealt with in the *Tribune* of February 16, 1974 (Vol. 18 No. 43)? That the issue of *Tribune* of March 30, 1974 (Vol. 18 No. 49) had spotlighted the diplomatic reverses suffered by Sri Lanka because of the heavy-handed big brother attitudes our bureaucrats had adopted towards the Maldivians? That India had stolen a big march over Sri Lanka in the matter of developing fraternal, cordial and even economic relations with the Maldives? That these sharp and pin-pointed articles in this column had made many people in the Administration and the Establishment to sit up? That without any public acknowledgement about the role played by the *Tribune* (this kind of graciousness is now a forgotten virtue in Sri Lanka) steps were taken to rectify the sad default? That this process of the new awakening that had come over our Foreign Office and the Establishment was recorded on this page in the issue of May 25 (Vol. 19 No. 3)? That this column had concluded its comments with the following: "That when *Tribune* had made these exposures, some of the bureaucrats, guilty of conduct detrimental to the best interests of Sri Lanka had sought to make it out that *Tribune* was being mischievous and anti-government? That today the position taken by the *Tribune* has been amply vindicated? That apart from the formal and public rapprochement that has been made by our Government vis a vis the Maldives, top level negotiations on a quieter note have been initiated to establish more friendly relations?

That the Government must be congratulated for making efforts to rectify fast mistakes before the situation grew worse?" That this column had once again referred to the Maldives in the issue of August 17, 1974 (Vol. 19 No. 15)? That this was a little before our PM's visit to the Maldives, very shortly after the Maldivian PM had been given a spectacular reception in Sri Lanka? That this column finally had a revealing analysis about Maldivians politics after our PM's visit to the archipelago in the issue of August 31, 1974 (Vol. 19 No. 17)?

IS IT NOT STRANGE that some of things anticipated in this column on August 31, 1974 have now come to pass? That this week the news has come about the arrest of the Prime Minister Ahmed Zaki (only recently re-appointed) and about his being sent to a lonely island for confinement in the customary Maldivian fashion? That many people in Sri Lanka have expressed surprise that this should have happened? That in our column on August 31 was summarised the mechanics and dynamics of the power politics in the Maldives and we had analysed the power structure of the ruling elite? That after stating that our PM had scored a personal triumph in the Maldives, this column had warned the Government that some persons in our Establishment and country were seeking to play power politics in the Maldives? That this column had expressed apprehensions regarding the attempts being made "to and bolster the Maldivian PM, Ahmed Zaki, as the most important force in the Maldives? That there also seems to be an idea in many quarters that if Zaki were now not the strongest force, Sri Lanka should assist him to become the strongest?... That whispers have already reached *Tribune* that there are apprehensions among political circles in Male

that Sri Lanka was seeking, to build up Zaki as 'its man' in the Republic? That inadequate attention was paid to President Nasir who is still the supreme force in the archipelago in conjunction with Ali Manickon and the Finance Sattar?" That after referring briefly to various events in the politics of Maldives—the attempted coup of June 12-15, 1974 and other such matters—this column had emphasised that the President was the biggest force in the place in spite of wrong evaluations many Sri Lankans had made? That this column had made a prophetic statement: "that Zaki can exist only with the support of this powerful clique surrounding the President? That it is only with the leave and licence of the Nasir-Manickoo-Sattar group that Zaki now flourishes? That Sri Lanka's attempt to make Zaki the most important force in the Maldives may be even the undoing of Zaki? That Sri Lanka will do well to tread warily and pay due heed to the power set-up in the Maldives? That though Zaki is a go-getter he is not yet the voice of Maldivian vested interests? That though had his schooling in Sri Lanka he has sent his sons (aged 20 and 18) to study in Australia and the Soviet Union? That Maldivian students who had come to study in Sri Lanka before now go to India or Singapore for studies because what they want more than anything else is the English language medium and this is one thing which Sri Lanka cannot offer just now...?" That in the period after August 1974 there was great deal of secret gloating in certain quarters in Colombo that Zaki was becoming more and more powerful? That it was said that in a short time he would supercede President Nasir in power and prestige? That as a result very poor attention was paid to President Nasir even when he passed through Colombo in transit? That Zaki was made out to the big man who counted? That the news that he had been arrested and banished had come as a shock to many wise-acres in Colombo? That it is not yet possible for *Tribune* to comment on the latest events? That this cannot be done until more information filters through? That news comes out of the Maldives only very very slowly and that only in bits and pieces? That whatever the news it is not likely to please or flatter those who had disagreed with what *Tribune* has said on August 31, 1974?