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Elections In 1975

—Is It Possible?—

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF SPECULATION in political circles in Colombo about the frontpage lead article and the editorial in the *Ada* of March 23, 1975. This paper is associated with Mr. Anura Bandaranaike and many believe that it reflects the thinking of an influential section in the Establishment whilst the *Janavegaya* is said to represent that of another section. In the context of the current polemical controversy between the UNP and the UF regarding the date of the next General Elections these two *Ada* articles have some significance.

The frontpage lead story of the *Ada* was under the headlined question whether there will be or will not be a General Elections in 1975. This is a rough and ready gist-in-translation of the article.

From next month (April) flour will be off ration and the public will be able to buy any quantity. There is a plan to issue 20 yards of textiles. There will not be any rice cut, instead there were plans to increase the ration. From next month dhal, green gram, tinned fish will be available. It looks as if the people who were suffering for the last two or three years owing to the food problem will get some relief. The moot question is whether all this is because they will hold an election very soon, whether they are going to dissolve Government (Parliament) this year?

Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, is going from place to place telling the masses there will be a general election in 1975 and that the fact that prices were being brought down was a sign and indication of the truth of his prophecy.

The masses were inclined to think that that there will be a general election soon because it had been the practice of past governments to bring down the prices of essential commodities when a general elections was round the corner. At the opening of the Fisheries Corporation's wholesale centre in Colombo on last Thursday the Premier had re-iterated the Government's position that there will not be a General Election this year. But at a recent meeting she had said that if a certain group within the UF try to create trouble she will dissolve the NSA. According to responsible Ministries the reason why prices of essential commodities have fallen was because world market prices had declined. However, the only person who knows whether there will be an election this year is the Prime Minister and no one else.

Such was the firstpage lead.

It posed the question squarely and asked whether the fact that strenuous steps were being taken to supply consumer goods denied to the people for a long time at (very) slightly lower prices was not an indication that an election was round the corner. Since the *Ada* article was written more benefits had been announced, the most important being the de-rationing of textiles. Observers who know the local scene feel that there is something in the *Ada* logic because in the realities of today it will not be possible for the Government to maintain the tempo of price reductions and the like until 1977.

It is also just possible that these price concessions and de-rationing is a very temporary one to take

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the sting out of the present UNP campaign for an elections in 1975. Another important fact which has been alluded to in this article is a statement that the Prime Minister had stated that "if a certain group within the UF try to create trouble she will dissolve the NSA" thus making a General Election inevitable. No other paper has, as far as we are aware, referred to such a statement made by the PM. But since *Ada* is so very definite about this, observers have begun to wonder whether a premature dissolution was not a distinct possibility.

Before proceeding to examine the import and significance of these statements, it would be pertinent to refer to the editorial published in the *Ada* on the same day, March 23, 1975. This was how it ran:

J. R. Jayawardene is quite certain that there will be elections in 1975 and the Prime Minister is equally certain that there will not be a general election in 1975. The Opposition has now raised the question as to why the prices of essential commodities should come down if elections were not imminent. The Government's reply is that the prices had come down and that de-rationing had become possible because of the successful implementation of the Government's plans and also because of the decline in world prices.

It is true that when there is an election round the corner, scarce goods become available in plenty and prices of available goods drop. J.R. says, that the elections will be in 1975, and the Premier says, it will in 1977, but it is not possible to say when the election will be held. This is because there

is no evidence on which one can make a finding. The only thing done in our country at a General Election is to change the colour. The Blue and Red is painted Green or the Green is painted Blue and Red.

Politically, it is true that no progress can be achieved if we have enemies in our midst. But, it is a dangerous pastime and crime to destroy and do away with the Plans of the previous government when a new Government comes to power. For example, if the UNP had not put a stop to the Pugoda Mills our production in textiles would have increased very much. Similarly if the present Government had not delayed the Mahaveli Diversion Scheme for two years much greater development could have been done by this time. If the fertiliser factory had not been delayed by five years, the farmers could have derived much benefit. Politics should not be treated as a short cut to luxury or a way to punish opponents. It should be the duty of every politician to do everything possible to develop the country and thereby help the masses out of their difficulties. It is futile to boast that they will kill 36,000 people when they come to power or to say that their friends will be appointed to high offices. A Government is needed to rule the country and not make a mess (undo) of everything done by the previous regime or create a new elite to rule the country. Long-term plans for development, whoever may have initiated them, must be continued. Political rivalry should not be mixed with the development of the country.

Without a consensus of thinking on this, it would be immaterial whether the elections are held in 1975 or 1977?

Such is the sum and substance of the Ada editorial.

Discerning observers will draw three important inferences from the lead story and the editorial.

First, the statement of the Prime Minister that the elections will be in 1977 and that of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, that it will be in 1975 are evenly weighted and balanced. This is the first time that anyone or any paper close to the SLFP top hierarchy and the Establishment, has

equated the Leader of the SLFP and the Leader of the UNP in this way.

Second, this is also the first time that anyone or any paper close to the inner councils of the SLFP Establishment has publicly and in print even contemplated that the general elections could take place in 1975. So far the SLFP and the whole of the UF have with one voice asserted that the General Elections will be only in 1977 and not before, but now Ada, which cannot be anymore dismissed as a youthful and gossipy prattler of political adolescence, has hinted in a categorical manner that the elections could take place in 1975. The first hint that that there was some re-thinking on the matter was dropped when Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, instead of asserting as before that the General Elections would be in 1977, was reported to have said (in public speeches) that the General Elections would be held "according to the Constitution" (without giving any dates). Anti-Anura elements had drawn the conclusion that since Anura could not hope to get into Parliament at a by-election he was anxious to have a general elections at an early date. Apart from the stress laid on the fact that a General Elections could take place in 1975 (as much as in 1977), what is significant is that the *modus operandi* for making a General Elections possible was mentioned: the dissolution of the NSA—if one group or some MPs continued to thwart the wishes of the Prime Minister. It was with good reason that the Ada had emphasised that the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister alone, could know when the election would take place.

Third, the editorial has outlined a basis for an electoral understanding (or even more, right up to a merger) of the Centrists in the SLFP and the UNP with a tilt to the Right while neutralising as much of the Left as possible (pointing to the visits to Kim Ill Sung and Chou En-lai). The basic requirement mentioned is a *bi-partisan* attitude to the administrative, bureaucratic and political elite created either by the UNP or the SLFP (even the UF)—no party names are mentioned but attention is focussed on this through colours the different parties used. Certain

UNP leaders had recently made statements that they would dismiss everyone employed by the UF as reprisal for what the UF had done to pro-UNPers in 1970. It is no doubt an assurance of this kind that the new post-1970 elite of the SLFP could be persuaded to follow Anura Bandaranaike to make a deal with J. R. Jayewardene and the UNP.

It is an open secret in political circles that Anura Bandaranaike from about the time of the Kalawewa by-election favours a new coalition of all the centrist, rightist and very slightly pinkish elements in the country—from the SLFP and the UNP. In trying to precipitate this merger, during the Kalawewa, the appercart had been upset both on the side of the UNP as well as the SLFP. But now a new effort in the same direction seems to be in the air if one is to attach any meaning to the Ada editorial. And observers feel that if Anura proceeds more cautiously without unnecessarily treading on the corns and susceptibilities of much older SLFP politicians, (who will be tempted to think on the same lines), he will make much greater progress than he did during Kalawewa.

It is in this setting that one must consider JR's statement, made so unequivocally when he announced his decision to resign his seat, that there would be a General Elections in 1975—and that if such a general election did not materialise he would resign as leader of the UNP. In the light of what the Ada has set out on March 23, JR's statement acquires a new dimension. We had ourselves been tempted to think that if a merger of SLFP-UNP centre-right forces could not brought about—as it seemed unlikely—this threat was only the first shot in a war of nerves. But today, the Ada article and editorial open new visas for speculation.

When JR had made his threat to resign his leadership of the UNP—it was thought to be a foolish and vainglorious boast—Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, had sought to analyse and dissect this statement. But, now, after the Ada articles it makes even more interesting reading, and compels a detached observer to fall back on the Hamletian cliché that there were more things in our

politics than contemplated by theoreticians or in the dialectical logic of the Socialist Study Circle. In the frontpage of the Daily News of March 10, 1975, under the heading WHAT'S BEHIND JR'S RESIGNATION? ILLANGARATNE LISTS THE POSSIBILITIES.

There is no chance for Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, leader of the Opposition and the United National Party, in the current Establishment. If he intends to creep in through the back door, a side door, or a window it can be only over the dead bodies of the United Front leadership, said Mr. T. B. Illangaratne Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, at a political seminar sponsored by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party at Mulleriyawa on Saturday.

Mr. Illangaratne said the threat of the Leader of the Opposition to resign his seat can be attributed to one or more of the following:— (i) It is impossible for him to remain in the National State Assembly if the verdict of the Select Committee inquiring into his conduct in the NSA goes against him; he may be anticipating such a verdict as he alone knows the facts; (ii) he is unable to keep his unruly followers together unless he resorts to another stunt like the Satyagraha; (iii) his illusion that by creating disturbances in the country he can make another attempt to form a National government by bargaining with the U.F; (iv) his fear that at the rate the current UF government is progressing with socialist measures there will be no chance in 1977 to campaign for the notorious capitalist oriented UNP regime; (v) his political impotence since his attempts to join the UF in 1970 failed; (vi) wishful thinking that vested interests, both local and foreign, who are hurt by the progressive measures of the UF might rally round him if he creates the right conditions by agitating against rising costs and scarcities although he himself has no solution. Mr. Illangaratne referring, to recent CIA activities now coming to light said he always had a suspicion that the CIA had a big hand both in the assassination of the late Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and the 1971 April insurgency. He wondered whether Mr. Jayewardene expected support from the CIA or similar undemocratic organisations when he made the

statement that there will be a general election in 1975.

Mr. Illangaratne said that according to the Constitution the UF government had the legal and moral right to govern till 1977. The Constitution was introduced through the universally accepted democratic machinery unlike the previous ones which were forced on the country. In the UF election manifesto of 1970 a mandate was sought for MPs to function simultaneously as a Constituent Assembly to draft, adopt and operate a new Constitution, which was to declare Ceylon a free, sovereign and independent republic pledged to realise the objective of a socialist democracy.

A mandate by a simple majority was expected but the UF was returned with a more than two-third majority adequate to change the Constitution. He said no democratic person, however frustrated he might be, can say that the UF government has neither the legal nor moral right to rule according to the Constitution. Mr. Illangaratne called for the strengthening of the progressive forces in the country.

He said rivers never flow backwards but attempts can be made to erect dams as in 1960 and 1965. He added: 'We cannot allow that to happen any more for if it happens again there will be full blooded fascism.'

We do not know what Mr. Illangaratne will say to the Ada articles. But in a speech he had made at Angoda and which was reported in the Daily News of March 25 under the title WE CAN EXTEND THE TERM OF OFFICE BEYOND '77, Illangaratne was reported to have said:

"We have the mandate to rule the country till 1977 and there is no necessity to dissolve Parliament before then. Our opponents are impatiently awaiting the fall of our government. They should understand that we have a two-thirds majority and if we want we can extend beyond 1977" said Mr. T. B. Illangaratne, Minister of Trade, at a meeting held at Angoda. He added that hereafter they would not give room to create disturbances in the country. Some cereal producers had complained that their cereals

were going down in price owing to the import of flour but Mr. Illangaratne had warned that they must be responsible for distribution at a reasonable rate to consumers. It is likely that this speech was made before the Ada came on the newstands, but the talk of a premature dissolution as a way of precipitating a General Elections has been in the air in political circles for sometime now. Mr. Illangaratne, who is regarded as



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the spear-head of the Left within the SLFP, and who has recently begun reminding his audiences that he was the "kapuwa" (broker) who had brought different parties into the UF, has been busy making spectacular speeches.

But Mr. Illangaratne probably does not realise that his threat that "the two-thirds majority" could be used to extend the life of the NSA even beyond 1977 would do his cause more harm than good. Such a threat may satisfy the committed Left (for them to think that they will continue to stay in power), but it will drive the uncommitted, the centrists and others away from the Left. If the Left is to win a parliamentary majority either in the NSA as constituted today or at a general elections it must be able to win the support of the bulk of the uncommitted and even the centrists. If the Left is not able to do this, it cannot hope to win a majority in the NSA

or at a general elections in the immediate future.

In this connection, some of the statements and actions of the JCTUO while no doubt helping to mobilise the working class, will tend to alienate and frighten the centrist-middle classes in urban areas and the presently discontented rural masses. A General Strike, as we have pointed out often, will undoubtedly paralyse the country for a time, but it cannot win a general elections for the Left, whether in 1975 or 1977 or even in 1978.

Such are the political perspectives which are emerging into the open at the moment. Sri Lanka is a country where confrontations fizzle out and parties and governments limp along on compromises. And for the last five years the UF has maintained its rule because nobody in it wanted to throw away the power in hand for anything better that may be behind the bush (right in front), but now the end of this kind of politics

has come into sight. The Left is openly and consciously mobilising for what they call the fight against reaction and fascism. The other side, if there is any coherent other side as yet, is divided, confused and uncertain.

In the face of the Leftists closing their ranks, what will the Centrists and Rightists do?

These terms—leftists, centrists, rightists, the committed and the uncommitted—suffer from oversimplification, but those who know Sri Lankan politics can make the necessary identification, whilst at the same time making allowances for the fact in this country persons and politicians cross and re-cross political boundaries and barriers with gay and reckless abandon and as often as necessary.

Will there be an General Elections in 1975? Will there be new political alignments, mergers and coalitions in the next year or two? Or even before that?

CHRONICLE

MARCH 18 — 26

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 18: The action committee of the Tamil United Front has ruled that no person who is a member of a political party which does not subscribe to the policies of the TUF could continue in its membership; the first member of the TUF to whom this rule applies according to TUF sources is Mr. K.W. Devanayagam, the MP for Kalkudah; the action committee has written to him informing that he will have to decide whether he wishes to remain in the TUF; if he does he will have to resign from the UNP—CDN. Repatriation of estate workers, which started at a slow pace, has now accelerated to such an extent that the depletion of work forces would create serious problems in the estate sector—CDM. The Health Department is not prepared to have any discussions with employees in the paramedical services who are on strike until they resume work—CDM. The University of Sri Lanka has begun negotiations with the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation for the establishment of a third channel for the exclusive use of the Open University, which is scheduled to begin in June; once the SLBC works out the cost of installing Channel 3, the University will seek foreign assistance for the import of the transmitters—CDM. The Crow's Island Fisheries Training Institute which was gifted by the Japanese Government, will be declared opened by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, early next month; six Japanese

fisheries experts are already in the island to give the necessary instructions to students who were selected to this institution—CDN. Two of six suspects who appeared yesterday before the JJC inquiring into foreign exchange offences pleaded guilty to the charges preferred against them: one of the suspects who pleaded guilty was fined Rs. 25,000 and imprisoned till 12 noon and the sentence on the other was postponed—CDN.

Indian Defence Minister, Y. Chavan said in a newspaper interview he hoped Pakistan would not maintain its attitude of confrontation with India. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger extended his stay in Israel as Egyptian proposals for a peace settlement ran into heavy opposition in Jerusalem.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19: The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, will personally represent Sri Lanka at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference scheduled for the end of next month in Jamaica; The Premier will also make a two-day state visit to Iraq in response to an invitation by President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr; on an earlier occasion the Prime Minister visited Iran, but did not go to Iraq; the Prime Minister is also expected to have talks with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Wilson, during this visit abroad; the date of Mrs. Bandaranaike's visit is likely to be in the third week of April—CDN. Certain Muslim leaders who are expected to attend the next Non-Aligned Conference to be held in Sri Lanka in September 1976 have raised the question of finding alternative dates for the conference because a September meeting would coincide with the Muslim fasting month of Ramazan; for this reason the Prime Minister has addressed a letter to the heads of the Non-Aligned countries bringing to their notice the new development and has inquired from them whether they would prefer the timing of the conference to be advanced to a suitable date in

August 1976—CDN. The leader of the Yugoslav trade delegation currently in Sri Lanka, Dr. Asen Simtiev, has said that Yugoslav enterprises were willing to increase their imports of tea, rubber, coconut and industrial products from Sri Lanka to further strengthen the economic ties between the two countries—CDN. The UNICEF has just announced its plans to provide special assistance of US \$ 2.7 million to Sri Lanka for child nutrition service in 1975-1966—CDM. The strike of para medical men in the Department of Health continued yesterday with no signs of any settlement—CDM.

Prime Minister Ali Bhutto of Pakistan has proposed holding talks with India over Kashmir, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, became the first such Prime Minister of that country to appear before a court when she defended herself in Allahabad, High Court against charges of corrupt election practices.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20: The Customs following the Police seizure of a large quantity of imported sarees, yesterday commenced a top level investigation into a large scale smuggling racket believed to be based in the Maldives: Customs sources said that the Police seizure made on Tuesday night at Bentota indicated that ships bringing in contraband were now landing the goods through fishing boats along the Southern coast to circumvent the heightened security along the Western and North Western sea boards—CDM. The striking Radiographers, Physiotherapists and Medical Laboratory Technologists decided to call off their strike yesterday morning but reversed their decision in the afternoon alleging that the Secretary to the Ministry of Health had laid down a condition that all those on strike should be physically present at their work place before any discussion could be held with the Minister of Health—CDM. The railway yesterday announced a 40 per cent reduction in its freight rates for vegetables and tea from the up country in a bid to bring down the cost of living and boost CGR earnings: the reduced rates come into operation from April 2—CDN. A broad gauge rail track between Fort and Homagama to replace the KV line will be laid shortly: the General Manager of Railways yesterday announced that the estimated cost for laying the broad gauge track will be around Rs. 30,590,000 of which the foreign exchange component will be around Rs. 12,385,000—CDN. The demand for Sri Lanka plywood has been growing steadily during the last few months—CDN. The Government has asked the National Planning Council's Committee on mass media to probe the use and distribution of newsprint: according to government sources that a change in the quantity in the quotas and a tighter control over the movement of newsprint stocks was likely depending on the report of the sectoral committee—CDN.

The Soviet Union has test-fired a big new nuclear missile deep into the South Pacific. Ethiopia's left wing military government executed six men for opposing the reforms initiated by the military after they deposed emperor Haile Selassie last September.

FRIDAY, MARCH 21: The three members of the Criminal Justice Commission (Exchange Frauds) Mr. G. P. A. Silva, former Chief Justice (Chairman), Mr. Justice Jaya Pathirana, and Mr. Justice D. Q. M. Siri-manne yesterday submitted their resignations to the Commission to the Chief Justice Mr. Victor Tennekoon: there was no official information about the reasons for

their resignation: shortly before their resignations yesterday the three judges called individually on the President, Mr. William Gopallawa—CDN & CDM. The Minister of Finance Dr. N. M. Perera disclosed in the National State Assembly yesterday that no person is allowed to sell his convertible Rupees to another person: advertisements that appear in the Press offering C.R.A.s for sale are bogus—CDM. The strike by the Radiographers, Physiotherapists and Medical Laboratory Technologists was called off yesterday: the members of the striking unions will report for work today—CDM. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief Organiser of the SLFP Youth Leagues, who is leading a goodwill delegation to North Korea and the People's Republic of China, met the Prime Minister of China, Mr. Chou En-lai on Monday night in hospital: the talks between them lasted more than half an hour: the Chinese Government has decided to donate 350 water pumps for Sri Lanka's Food Drive—CDN. An international fair to attract foreign buyers will be held in the BMICH from May 3 to 10 where 90 exhibitors will display a wide range of Sri Lanka products to international buyers—CDN. Trincomalee port will soon become home base for the world's largest tankers now idling for want of oil due to the energy crisis: the Ministry of Shipping and Tourism has contacted the owners of these tankers and apprised them of the "lay by" facilities available in Trincomalee for berthing these idle tankers—CDN.

Turkish Cypriots have rejected Geneva as the venue for resumed Cyprus peace talks and US Secretary General Kurt Waldheim has turned down a counter proposal for a meeting in Teheran.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22: The Government of Yugoslavia yesterday announced that it will make an outright grant of 10,000 US dollars to Sri Lanka in the form of agricultural machinery to be credited to the Prime Minister's Food Production Drive: it will also extend a commercial line of credit of two and a half million US dollars for the purchase of agricultural and construction machinery: the announcement followed the conclusion of the four-day discussions at the first meeting of the Joint Committee on Economic Co-operation between Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia—CDN & CDM. The Government has decided to do away with the textile rationing scheme from today: consumers can now buy poplins and fabrics from their co-ops, Salu Sala and CWE outlets and registered private dealers at Rs. 6.50 per yard, the price at which rationed textiles are available—CDN. Government hospitals may soon run short of drugs and vital surgical instruments and equipment if arrangements are not made immediately to release the necessary foreign exchange for its import—CDM. The Government of Denmark and the Government of Sri Lanka concluded an agreement yesterday, providing for an interest free loan of 20 million Danish Kroners (Rs. 24,040,000)—CDM & CDN. The Government Medical Officer's Association has warned the Government to watch those mischievous elements who may deliberately attempt to deprive the Government of the abundant goodwill it has won a result of trying to implement the main recommendations of the Cabinet Sub Committee on "Brain Drain"—CDM.

Runway British MP John Stonehouse was arrested yesterday on an ex-tradition warrant issued in London and later appeared in Court in Melbourne on 15 charges

of fraud and theft. The world oil crisis has caused India to have second thoughts about a multi-million dollar order for three big crude oil tankers. The London daily sugar price fell to 237 sterling per long tonne, a drop of eight sterling; the price is at its lowest since last July.

SUNDAY, MARCH 23: Mr. Justice G. T. Samarawickrama (Chairman), Mr. Justice C. V. Udalgama and Mr. Justice S. W. Walpita have been appointed as the new members of the Criminal Justice Commission inquiring into foreign exchange offences: their appointments followed the resignation last Thursday of the former Chief Justice, Mr. G. P. A. Silva (Chairman), Mr. Justice, D. Q. M. Sirimanne and Mr. Justice Jaya Pathirana from the former Commission—CO & ST. The Prime Minister, Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike, has assured the Muslim community that all the problems of the community will be sympathetically considered by her: the assurance was given when a deputation of Islamic Socialist Front met the Premier a few days ago for discussions on problems facing the community—ST. The new export oriented projects, with foreign collaboration, in pineapples and shell fish will be launched in Sri Lanka very shortly, the Export Promotion Secretariat announced yesterday—CO. A Museum of Natural History is to be established in Colombo: this Museum will be set up under the Third stage of the Museum Extension Program: a section of the Museum is expected to be opened during the Non-Aligned Conference to be held in Colombo in September 1976—CO. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief organiser of the SLFP Youth Leagues, will return to the island today after a visit to China and North Korea where he met the Premier Chou En-lai and President Kim Il Sung—ST. The City Vice Squad last Friday detected unscrupulous tavern men removing coconut arrack from sealed bottles of the State Distilleries Corporation and filling them with water and other spirits: the investigations regarding this are being continued—ST.

Government forces unable to get reinforcements from Phnom Penh, have withdrawn from several important areas in the Northwestern province following reports of massive insurgent troops concentrating there; according to Government sources: Battambang, Cambodia's second largest city is cut off. Foreign correspondents based in Saigon expressed outrage and grief at the brutal killing of a French Correspondent eight days ago by the Saigon Police.

MONDAY, MARCH 24: North Korea will help Sri Lanka's food drive with an outright gift of Rs. 7 million: this will be in the form of agricultural aid consisting of specially modified tractors to suit climatic and ground conditions in Sri Lanka and powerful water pumps to help tap ground water: this assistance is the outcome of the visit of Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief Organiser of the SLFP Youth Leagues, to North Korea: in the discussions Mr. Bandaranaike had with President Kim Il Sung it was decided to re-establish diplomatic relations between the two countries—CDN & CDM. An insurance cover for paddy crops effective from this month has been announced by the Agricultural Insurance Board: the first of its type insurance cover is being provided for the loss of paddy crop due to lack of water, drought, excess water, floods, plant diseases, insect infestation and damage caused by wild animals and birds—CDN. Several thousands, majority of whom are G.C.E. (A)

qualified students, shut out of the University under the district quota system of admissions are among those seeking entry to the University as external candidates for degree examinations—CDN. The Department of Examinations has sought the help of the Criminal Investigation Department to investigate several cases of forgeries of examination certificates: most of these forged certificates had been submitted by candidates to secure foreign jobs or to gain admission to higher educational institutions abroad—CDM. Mr. Egerton B. Weerakoon, the City Coroner, died yesterday at the age of 59: he was City Coroner for the last eight years.

The White House announced that Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger's Middle East peace mission had been suspended because the involved countries had been unable to reach agreements. Israeli newspapers said that President Ford sent a sharp note to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin last Thursday in which he accused Israel of taking too tough a position in the latest Middle East peace talks. President Lon Nol is seriously considering resigning but only if he is assured that peace negotiations with the Khmer Rouge will result.

TUESDAY, MARCH 25: Negotiations are going between the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation and the private oil companies—Shell and Esso—regarding the payment of compensation following the nationalisation of bunkering and aviation refuelling services in 1971 and 1972: no figure has yet been decided on: the compensation paid to the three oil companies—Shell, Esso and Caltex—after the nationalisation of the distribution of petrol in Sri Lanka finally amounted to Rs. 55 million—CDN. The newly constituted CJC (Exchange Frauds) will sit for the first time today—CDN & CDM. About 60 of the 74 member countries of the Inter-Parliamentary Union are scheduled to participate in the Spring Sessions which are to be held for the first time in Sri Lanka from March 31 to April 5—CDM. The Colombo Municipal Council wants the Minister of Health to introduce a National Informative Labelling Scheme to give shoppers the information they need when purchasing goods: the decision was taken at a Council meeting yesterday—CDM. Over two thousand policemen will be recruited into the Special Police Reserve for duties during the Non Aligned Summit Conference to be held in Colombo next year—CDM. Air Ceylon's international domestic flights returned to normal during the weekend after settlement of a strike by its cabin crews demanding better hotel accommodation in Karachi—CDN. The OPDs of hospitals and dispensaries in the Anuradhapura district are crowded with people who claim that they are suffering from malaria—CDN.

Government troops have pulled out of the capital of Quang Tri Province after National Liberation forces attacked in another thrust towards South Vietnam's North-Central coast: the American airlift of essential supplies into Cambodian capital resumed after two-day suspension following a rocket attack which hit the city and the airport. The Portuguese military authorities aid that a secret armed organisation based in Spain was involved in the recent abortive military uprising in Portugal.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26: The Governments of the U.S.A. and Sri Lanka yesterday signed an agreement to provide Sri Lanka with Wheat flour to the value

of Rs. 153,348,400 (24.5 million dollars). This is the largest PL 480 food assistance to Sri Lanka for any single year in the history of the US food assistance program—CDM & CDN. Around a three-quarter million candidates are expected sit the GCE O Level and the NCGE examination this December: around 560,000 candidates are expected to take up the GCE O Level and around 190,000 the NCGE—CDN. The Attorney General will, henceforth be personally appearing in all inquiries before the Criminal Justice Commission (Foreign Exchange Offences) and will be present during the proceedings: this was brought to the notice of the new Commission during its first sittings by the Solicitor General—CDM. A deferred annuity scheme for the self-employed and ex-gratia payment of one third more as workmen's compensation will be introduced by the Insurance Corporation from April 1—CDN. The British Foreign Office has expressed concern to Sri

Lanka about alleged poor conditions on British-owned tea estates in Sri Lanka: The concern was conveyed to Mr. Navaratne, Sri Lanka's Deputy Agriculture Minister, by British Deputy Foreign Minister, David Enals at a one-hour meeting: the discussions took place in the light of British television program last week—*Reuter* (CDN).

King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was shot dead by one of his nephews in his palace in Riyadh, an assassination which could have sweeping effects on the whole Middle East situation: the 68-year old monarch whose command of the world's biggest oil reserve and Islam's holy places gave him the most power and prestige in the Arab world died on the anniversary of the Prophet Mohammed: Riyadh radio said that the assassin was mentally deranged: soon after the assassination Crown Prince Khalid Ibn Abdul Aziz was proclaimed King of Saudi Arabia.

INDIA

• PM's Security • Relations With USSR, USA & China

from *Tribune's* Special Correspondent

New Delhi, March 23.

There has been a great deal of concern in the capital that a man with a 12-bore loaded revolver was arrested at the High Court in Allahabad where the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was to give evidence in the election petition against her. This was on March 18, and the man concerned was Govind Mishra, the 30-year old man claiming to be journalist. It is reported that Mishra was wearing a lawyer's black coat (he is not a lawyer) and was hiding the weapon in his clothes. The man had been searched when a metal detector placed in the gallery leading to the room where the Prime Minister was to appear had indicated a metallic object on his person. Mishra had told the Police that he had been carrying the weapon for the last four months for his own personal safety. It would seem that Mishra had been charged for the murder of a neighbour but had been recently acquitted by the High Court. Besides the loaded revolver, Mishra carried two extra cartridges in his coat pocket.

Allahabad sources had indicated that Mishra was reputedly a Congressman, but investigations had shown that whatever party affiliations he had proclaimed, Mishra

was a nondescript individual passing off as a local journalist. He was said to be deeply involved in litigation and was schizophrenic imagining that he had many enemies wanting to ruin him. In Parliament, the leaders of all Parties, when the matter was raised displayed rare unanimity in condemning the incident and had wanted the Government to take the greatest precautions to ensure the PM's safety inside and outside the Court. All party leaders had pointed out that this incident was another shocking symptom of the prevailing atmosphere of hatred and violence in the country.

A full investigation is now going on into the personal background and the real political affiliations of Mishra. Only then would it be possible to come to any conclusion about possible motivations in his attempting to make an unauthorised entry into the court premises armed with a loaded revolver after he failed to secure a pass to be in the court room to see the Prime Minister give evidence. Parliamentarians were worried how Mishra was able to get through the most elaborate security arrangements that had been made by the Central and State agencies both in and around the High Court and go near the room where Mrs. Gandhi was due to give her evidence. It was a metal detector which had discovered the revolver, a detector placed at the entrance to the court room to make doubly sure that none of the passholders watching the proceedings carried any concealed weapons. Mishra was caught when he got near the detector about which he apparently

did not know. What worries many is how he was able to get through the police cordons both outside and inside the High Court premises. It is felt that there is no such thing as completely fool-proof security arrangements if an intruder was prepared to take certain risks and gamble with his life.

AFTER THE RECENT STORM over the American lifting of the arms embargo to the subcontinent, there are indications and that India and the US were once again edging closer to one another. It would seem that both governments were anxious to keep political issues separate from economic relations. The food deal between the two countries has now been finalised and the agreements will be signed in Washington shortly. There had been difficulties about mandatory conditions the US had sought to impose regarding what could be done with the wheat—the US did not want re-export or for it to be used to make repayments of loan wheat—but these have now been resolved. These provisions in the original text have either been waived or have been whittled down to India's satisfaction. These conditions had revolved around questions like the return of the Soviet food loan, the utilisation of sale proceeds and the procedures for the repayment of the dollar loans.

A local commentator has summed the situation: "An equally important development on the Indo-American front is that the two Governments have agreed to go ahead with the implementation of the recommendations made by the three sub-commissions dealing with

economic, scientific, and cultural co-operation, without waiting for the formal endorsement of these suggestions by the Joint Commissions in due course. In other words, the postponement of the first ministerial level meeting of the Joint Commission following the cancellation of Mr. Chavan's visit to Washington is not being allowed by either side to come in the way of implementing the conclusions already agreed upon by the three sub-commissions.

"Though the two Governments have not yet got back to the smiling stage, they are no longer grimacing at each other despite the persisting differences over the proposed resumption of arms supplies to Pakistan. What they are aiming at is a reasonable working relationship free from the democratic traditions so that the two countries could concentrate more on the limited area of co-operation still open to them. Whatever the nature of the lingering differences over the arms issue, the two countries are equally interested in creating a better atmosphere to enable President Ford to pay his projected visit to India later this year. While the policy-makers on the Indian side are not hazarding any guess at this stage about the future course of Indo-American relations, the general expectation is that sooner or later, perhaps sooner than later, the two countries would settle down to a sort of limited understanding giving them enough flexibility to pursue their respective policies without ruffling each other's susceptibilities all the time."

Whatever the present difficulties and misunderstandings, there are indications that both the US and Indian governments are anxious that friendly relations should be developed. The US attitude to Pakistan would be crucial so far as India was concerned. If Pakistan was to be supplied arms at cut prices on disguised loans in the way the US has built up the armed forces of certain satellites, it would mean further estrangement.

"But much would depend on the types and quantities of arms that the U.S. is going to give and the pricing and payment procedures it is going to adopt, in resuming its military supplies to Pakistan. If it is going to live up to its oft-

repeated assurances that it would do nothing to upset the present power balances in the sub-continent it would be possible to stabilise the Indo-American relationship to a limited extent in the near future. So the initiative for restoring the necessary understanding really rests with the United States."

IN THE MEANTIME, there has arisen a delicate and serious problem with the USSR regarding the exchange rate between the two countries. A Soviet delegation is now in the capital to find a solution to the difficulties that have arisen about rupee-rouble exchange rate. At present the rates of exchange between the rupee and the currencies of socialist countries are determined with reference to the gold content of the respective currencies. The rates have been prescribed so far in the trade and payments agreements which have been concluded from time to time. Official circles here are keeping their lips sealed on the content of the talks. The Soviet Union, it is stated, has been greatly exercised for some time now over the devaluation of the rupee in terms of other currencies and its impact on the rupee account in which trade is maintained between India and the Soviet Union. The Indian Ambassador in Moscow, Mr. D. P. Dhar, has also recently written to the Union Government drawing its attention to the Soviet anxiety that something should be done to protect its interests. The Soviet Union is seeking a mark-up of the rupee dues from India in the trade account by as much as Rs. 400 crores.

This matter had been taken up in Parliament at question time and the Finance Minister had stated that the reports in some newspapers on this subject were "speculative" and "unfortunate" as discussions were then in progress. Mr. Subramaniam had said that the exchange rates announced by the State Bank of the USSR affected non-commercial transactions which accounted for less than one per cent of the transactions between the two countries. Credit repayments in respect of commercial transactions which accounted for 99.5 per cent, would continue to be made at the rate of Rs. 8.33 per rouble he said. Mr. Subramaniam also dismissed suggestions that the USSR had adop-

ted an unhelpful attitude towards India on the economic front while continuing to profess friendship on the political front. He said he did not expect to encounter any difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory arrangement with the USSR in the course of the current discussions with the official team. He appealed to members not to put embarrassing questions and expect him to answer them when the discussions were in progress.

Mr. Subramaniam said the discussions had been necessitated by the fact that the exchange value of the rupee which was linked to the sterling fluctuated in the international market with the floating of the sterling. Confessing that he was not an expert in international exchange of currencies, the Finance Minister said that experts had averred that it was to India's advantage to continue the rupee's traditional link with the sterling. He said that experts had also expressed themselves against operating a rouble account in India as a reciprocal arrangement. He said the exchange rates announced from time to time affected the Soviet Union.

Giving the background of the subject the Finance Minister said that for some time, and particularly since March, 1974, the State Bank of the Soviet Union had been announcing periodically what it called the "official exchange rate" between the rupee and the rouble. This rate differed from the exchange rate that had prevailed between the two currencies and which was determined strictly in accordance with the official gold content of the respective currencies. According to the Soviet authorities, the revised rates of exchange were arrived at by calculating the value of the rupee by averaging the gross rates of the major currencies in the international market with the Indian rupee. "On the other hand, we have pointed out that the statutory gold content of the Indian rupee remains unchanged," Mr. Subramaniam added.

Mr. Mishra, who had raised the question, said he failed to see how parity could be maintained between convertible and non-convertible currencies especially in view of the fact that the gold con-

tent of the currencies of the East European countries including the rouble had never been defined. He pointed out that Poland, which had long-standing trade transactions with India, had not asked for any adjustments in the exchange rates. He wanted that India should operate on a reciprocal basis a rouble account.

Yet another question, which the Finance Minister did not wish to answer, related to the category to which India's sizable defence purchases from the USSR belong. If they come under 'non-commercial transactions', then the exchange rate will impose a heavy burden on India by way of repayments through commodity exports. Apart from the Soviet Union, the other East European countries have also been putting pressure in India to compensate them for the losses on account of the devaluation of the rupee in terms of other currencies. India has already had to agree with Poland in terms of dollars and there has been similar demand from Czechoslovakia.

Though alarmist reports have appeared in many newspapers, it was noticeable that even traditional anti-Soviet opinion was restrained and cautious. This was understandable in view of the manner in which the US had begun to tilt towards Pakistan on the question of arms supplies. However it is interesting that the weekly *Himmat*, 21/3/75, which has always been pro-western and anti-soviet set out the position in an editorial note in this way:

"Over the last year, the Soviet Union has been unilaterally reducing the value of the rupee vis-a-vis the rouble. Following the devaluation of the rupee in 1966, the exchange rate was fixed at 12 roubles per Rs. 100. When the dollar was devalued in 1971, the Soviet Union changed the rate to 11.39 roubles per Rs. 100. In March 1974 it dropped to 9.5 roubles and now it stands at only 8.66 roubles. At first the Indian Government did not take particular note of this changing of currency rates. The reason was that only Rs. 3 crores of "non-commercial transactions" per year were affected. These consisted of the cost of training over 2000 defence and civilian Indian technicians in the USSR, expenditure on the Indian Embassy

in Moscow and part of the payment of Soviet technicians in India. India has had a favourable balance of trade with the USSR in some years over Rs. 100 crores.

"A few days ago the Indian Government sat up in consternation when it received a Soviet demand that repayments of outstanding credit be revalued to the tune of Rs. 400 crores. The Russians say that the rupee, since its delinking from gold and linking with pound sterling, has in effect been devalued vis-a-vis foreign currencies. The Indian Government feels that:

"(a) It is agreed that repayments are made in rupees but commercial transactions are done on the basis of international prices: (b) Out of India's total trade 40 per cent is conducted in pounds sterling (with which the rupee has a fixed parity): 25 per cent is in the rupee payment area (with the USSR) and the balance of 35 per cent in other foreign currencies which have appreciated vis-a-vis the rupee; (c) Since the rouble is not freely transacted in the international money market, it is not fair on the part of the Russians to ask for revaluation. The Soviet Government, if it is genuine in its repeated assurances of friendship with India, must play fair. Indians may be tolerant but there is always a time to cry 'halt'. Unlimited rupee funds of the US in India was one of the causes of misunderstanding between the two countries till recently. The Soviet Union should not effect overnight sweeping changes of policy and attitude which could hurt its 'much valued' friendship with India."

RELATIONS WITH CHINA is a recurring matter for thought, consideration and concern in India. Of late, there has been a sudden hardening of Chinese attitude towards India so soon after the recent ping pong overtures. Observers have speculated whether this was not connected with the US arms supplies to Pakistan. Though New Delhi opinion does not accept the view that the US and China are working in unison to revive and sustain old tensions in the subcontinent, "India does not think it is only a matter of coincidence that China has reverted to its hostile postures almost immediately after the US has lifted the embargo on arms supplies to Pakistan."

China's latest propaganda blast accusing India all over again of dismembering Pakistan, annexing Sikkim and intimidating Nepal has been received in the governmental circles with feeling of relief that their advocacy for greater caution in dealing with China had been vindicated. It is known that persons very high in the Establishment and in the Administration had been taken in by the ping pong diplomatic friendliness and had even suggested that the Prime Minister should invite the leader of the Chinese ping-pong delegation for a tete-a-tete to set the ball rolling for a Sino-Indian dialogue.

One commentator here had stated: "But the idea was subsequently given up after a lively internal debate over the pros and cons of a new Indian initiative in the absence of any positive response from China to the various gestures already made by the Government. So it was decided that only officers of appropriate seniority should receive the leader of the Chinese delegation if he expressed a desire to make some courtesy calls on them. The Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister were thus saved the embarrassment of being placed in a false position by subsequent developments, although it is a debatable point whether the Chinese would have suddenly reverted to such a hostile posture had India taken the initiative in breaking the ice at the political level during their ping-pong team's visit to Delhi."

India's present attitude to China can be said to be a *wait-and-see* policy, waiting for a positive response from the Chinese side whilst continuing to reciprocate expressions of goodwill and refuting the accusations of expansionism. In the meantime students of Sino-Indian relations, judging from articles and comments that have appeared in the serious periodical press during the last twelve months and more especially in recent weeks, have sought to review the whole history of the relations between the two countries in the post-war period. Independent India, it is felt, adopted Nehru's foreign policy right from the year 1947. India has, it is stressed, always made a positive and constructive contribution to world politics including the emphasis on a policy of peace and co-operation in Asia. India

has stood by a policy of nonalignment and had opposed military blocs, more particularly in this part of the world. India had also sought to eradicate the remnants of colonialism and had opposed neocolonialism. The Bandung Declaration had embodied these principles which India had supported with a large number of other countries in Asia and Africa.

Soon after the Communists had come to power in China in 1949, it has been pointed out, that the leaders of the People's Republic of China had declared that they were following a policy of peaceful co-existence. In 1954 they had proclaimed the principles of *Pancha Sila* and in their relations with India had displayed the greatest friendship and cordiality. After that, the Chinese had put forward a proposal for a collective agreement for peace in Asia and the Pacific. But the manner in which this was proposed and the maps which had been published in China had made many of her neighbours suspicious. In the meantime, India had recognised China's "suzerainty" over Tibet without any reservations. At this time, China had put forward ideological arguments in support of "people wars" as the only way of achieving national liberation, political independence and economic emancipation. This was a contradictory line which had baffled many observers at that time. They had wondered how it was possible to speak about a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism and about peaceful co-existence whilst advocating an armed struggle as the only effective form of achieving political objectives. In this phase, it is felt that China had virtually renounced its policy of peaceful co-existence and had adopted a policy of armed struggle and national liberation wars.

For some strange reason, it has been pointed out, that China had begun to show hostility to India. Was it because they feared that India would stand in the way of China achieving her still undisclosed objectives in the continent? In 1959 and in 1962, China had stepped up its demands for a revision of natural borders and boundaries (they were said to be imperialist-drawn) into armed conflicts. At the same time China had carried on a political struggle not only by seeking to use the pro-Chinese Marxists in

India to denigrate the Government but also by denouncing India internationally as "expansionist". It is also pointed out that China had stirred up with revolutionary slogans tribal peoples on the borders of India and incited some of them into starting armed struggles against the Indian state. The recent increase in the troubles among the Nagas and the Mizos, it is felt in Delhi, was the culmination of long-time Chinese and Maoist activities in this region. It is known that groups from both these regions have gone to China and have received training in guerilla fighting. The border in this part is difficult to police and there was regular contact between the two countries along difficult and tortuous mountain paths. When the question of troubles in Nagaland was raised in Parliament recently, the Prime Minister had admitted that there was evidence that some "foreign country" was involved in subversive activities, but she (naturally) did not name any country, but everybody knew which country was meant.

With all the professions about democracy, socialism and progress China had supported the feudal-military regimes in Pakistan, and this attitude had come into the forefront when trouble had broken out between India and Pakistan in 1965, with fighting in the Rann of Kutch and in Kashmir. China, did not, as some had thought she might, militarily attack India along the disputed borders, but the "support" given to Pakistan on the political and propaganda sectors was complete and total. China has consistently supported Pakistan as against India right up to the December 1971 war over Bangladesh. And after that, too. The unexpectedly quick defeat of the Pakistani army and the creation of Bangladesh had come as a shock to the Chinese leaders.

In the new phase of Chinese foreign policy strategy, China has sought to establish friendly relations with a large number of countries especially after she was admitted to the UN after displacing Taiwan. But with India, there was no friendship. Many are puzzled by the contradictions in China's foreign policy which they cannot explain: why China supports NATO and even CENTO and why she has indicated that she would like the Americans

to maintain a greater presence in Asia. China has also not condemned the expansion of the military facilities on Diego Garcia.

At no time in this period has China shown a change in its attitude towards India. India is accused of being "expansionist", and this is said to be the cause of India's difficulties to be friendly with China and other countries neighbouring India. China does not see any good in India. Even the Simla Agreements of 1973 was seen by Peking as being "the result of Pakistan's efforts in its struggle against the expansionism" of India. And inside India too China gives encouragement to the activities of all forces opposed to the Government of Indira Gandhi—not merely the Maoist-inclined Marxist elements but all Opposition parties and groups.

At the moment there is a Pakistan *cum* China build up against India over Kashmir. "If China is bent on inciting Pakistan to adopt a hostile posture over Kashmir, India is prepared to face them with quiet confidence. In the event of a fresh Sino-Pak attempt to rake up the Kashmir issue in the Security Council, India will restate its position and stage a walk-out as it did on the last occasion. In either case India is not going to allow itself to be bullied or brow-beaten by China acting on its own or in concert with other powers to reopen the Kashmir issue"

Finally, the current position in regard to India's attitude to China has been aptly summed by one of Delhi's best known commentators, G. K. Reddy. "One of the foremost tasks of the new policy planning committee in the External Affairs Ministry is to work out a credible China policy consistent with the country's capabilities and objectives, so that the Government is not placed every now and then in the slippery position of having to react to Chinese actions. There is a greater awareness now of the need to move away from the past habits of getting excited over an odd smile or handshake, or reading too much into routine platitudes.

"Those that are closely associated with India's China policy are equally conscious of the pitfalls of proceeding on the assumption that the U.S. and China have a com-

mon interest in keeping the sub-continent in state of flux, when India should be doing everything possible to prevent such a convergence. Though China is going to get increasingly involved in the inter-play of the super power rivalry in South Asia, it is not beyond India's diplomatic capability to deny Peking the advantages of such an involvement by keeping the China factor out of its own controversies with the United States."

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—27

The Laggard Champion (iii)

By Herbert Keuneman

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOME AFFAIRS.

July 1974

Dear Mr. Keuneman,

I am directed by the Hon. Minister to acknowledge receipt of your Letter dated 9.7.74 relating to I.M. Pinhamy of Galkadawala, Ehetuwewa, and to request you to be kind enough to furnish full particular of the person concerned together with details of the problems that require solutions.

Yours faithfully,

D.B.I.P.S. Siriwardhana
Secretary.

16 July 1974

as from: EHETUWEWA (n.w.p.)
via Galgamuwa

Dear Mr. Siriwardhana

Thank you for your letter of (sic) 'July 1974'.

I am most grateful for this opportunity to make clear what I have taken the liberty of bothering the Minister about.

I fear that in the very rushed circumstances in which, as it transpired, he and I could yesterday meet I was probably unable to convince him that what I was seeking was anything more significant than that a point be stretched in a protegee's favour; whereas something far worthier and more fundamental is in fact involved.

What is involved is the image of a People's Government as protector of the People against administrative lethargy, or worse; and against the prolongation of feudal attitudes and systems: to all of which the People's Government is avowedly opposed. (...above all, it is on this willingness and ability of the Government that the People's faith is ultimately pinned.)

In the present case, a Land matter... is only a distal question. The immediate problem is an inexplicable (or, at all events, hitherto wholly unexplained) shelving of an issue for more than nine months... on the part of various Public servants who it might have been hoped could come to an earlier decision for or against if all that was involved was the merits of an application. It is my reluctant belief that this temporization has—at certain levels—been the result of more sinister influences than the normal delays of administration.

It is for this reason that as a citizen, and as a supporter of and believer in the ideals of the Government, I earnestly request a check on why it has not been considered possible, or desirable? to make any decision and communicate it to the original petitioner.

I am perfectly satisfied that the check was promptly and impartially made.

15, July 1974

I was nervous about my meeting with the Minister, though I had been slightly acquainted with him in my days in the Church, for he had grown now from a dignified, reserved, highly intelligent and high-principled student to a power in the land; yet I had, also, great confidence, for I knew that while he might prove personally somewhat unapproachable nothing in his career had seemed to undermine the sense of principle for which he had once risked his political future. The event was to prove just so.

I telephoned his Private Secretary asking for an appointment, and she very reasonably suggested that I put my request and the reasons for it in writing. Which I did. There was a prompt reply allowing me 15 minutes with the Minister at the Ministry of Justice at 11.00 a.m. on July 15.

Everything started rather inauspiciously when I arrived on the dot and found the Minister 'not in his seat': he was 'at a conference' in a room nearby. There began an interminable wait in the Minister's office, during which—with nothing to read (even the office calendar was not a pin-up) and nothing to do but fidget—my spectacles came apart and had to be patched up by the Minister's peon! This passed about 15 minutes; and after it the peon came and smiled at me from time to time, which was helpful.

THE MINISTER finally turned up at five to 3.00 p.m. I did not hear the conference—which had been an important one—break up; but suddenly he was there in the room before me and saying, quite affably; 'I haven't had my lunch yet.' Then he placed an upright chair, which he straddled, in front of the more comfortable lounge which I occupied and his lunch was brought to him—an execrably toasted bun (plainly from the office canteen) stuffed, I think, with *sini sambal*; and a single cup of tea—and we talked as he ate.

I was quite undone. I am slow-thinking, long-winded and garrulous (as you know from these articles) and nothing more greatly puts me off than a sense of urgency and fleeting limited time. Besides, despite the affability and the informality a great deal of that once reserve remained; and there seemed also a new air by which I suppose any politician must eventually come: an air of appraisal, of scepticism, as though everybody, even an ex-priest—perhaps especially? an ex-priest—was suspect of trying it on! And then there was that disconcerting claim: 'I know Ehetuwewa.' As I have said, I do not believe it was intended to disconcert. But he was unlikely to know it the way I wanted him to know it, from the inside all the way out instead of from the outside a little way in, yet if he thought he knew it he could resent my wanting to tell him about something he knew. I had had my facts beautifully marshalled in my mind and—given the 15 minutes I had counted on—I could have presented them without losing my place; but a hurried interview shoots me to pieces!

However, I could not have made as great a mess of my mission as I had feared; or perhaps the Minis-

ter saw, he had had me at a disadvantage he had not meant; for there followed the letter from his Permanent Secretary, which I have quoted, and my reply, from which I have quoted the peroratoric parts!

THE POINT is that there was immediate and altogether encouraging reaction from the Ministry which, after all, is a way of saying the Minister: or his Permanent Secretary, at least.

But a point that, alas! follows is that movement initiated at Ministerial level, no matter how impartial and right-minded and idealistic—and please note that I never use idealistic in a pejorative sense—simply lacks the momentum to reach all the way down the long train of official hierarchy; somewhere along the line, corruptibility or, at best, sheer otiosity intervenes and inertia resumes. I had, it is true, believed that a Ministerial directive could prove a petty irresistible force. But I had not reckoned with the immovable weight of bureaucratic habituation. And not even I could expect a Minister or Permanent Secretary to go chasing every investigation he orders all the way, just to ensure that—or how—it is carried out.

See what happens.

18 July (Action within a couple of days!)

Pinhamy is sent a letter by the AGA Kurunegala bidding him attend 'a further enquiry'—none has been held so far—into his application for land, at 9.0 a.m. on 8 August. Copies to: the Grama Sevakaya, Embogama; to the Grama Sevakaya in whose jurisdiction the land applied for lies; and to the AGA Galgamuwa. None to me, although the Enquiry is again convened at my house: this time the refreshments shall be only *kurumbawater!*

8 August 1974

The Enquiry actually takes place. I send the AGA Kurunegala, (the AGA Galgamuwa is not present, and may not have been required to attend) upstairs, together with the Grama Sevakayas and Pinhamy, who is accompanied by his brother. I myself, naturally, stay downstairs, having and desiring no authorized part in the discussion (of which all I can hear is an apparently amicable murmur.)

Suddenly there is an irruption from without, when the *ex-arachchi* and a couple of supporters arrive and demand of me where the meeting is taking place. They are obviously in cantankerous mood and have no time even for the common rural civilities; but I send them upstairs, unsuspectingly, and from that time the sounds from above begin to sound like the bruit of battle. Finally, I hear one of the voices (it is not a voice I know) shout: '*api denne naha! kohoma kiyvat, khoma keruvat, api dennema naha-mayi!*' We will not make concession! Whatever you say or do, we positively will not make concession! Whereupon they storm out, not so much as pausing to nod to me (who have been, after all, in a sense their host) as they pass. Shortly afterwards the meeting breaks up. The AGA is obviously discomposed and asks of me, *why me?* 'Who told those men about the Enquiry?' It is not difficult to guess; but his guess is as good as mine. I remark that if they had no right to be there he should have turned them out. I also remark (but to myself) that I never once heard him slap them down, which he had every right to do, as more than once and pretty sharply I had overheard him slap down Pinhamy's brother for putting his unauthorized oar in. I could not help overhear; for his tone with Pinhamy's brother was loud and authoritative.

I BEG the AGA to drive down in his jeep and inspect the tract in which the land Pinhamy has asked for lies; because the crux of the matter seems to be that the *ex-arachchi* claims all that tract as *his own* and maintains that except for a few years when it has lain fallow it has been consistently cultivated. A personal inspection could certainly show whether the latter claim, at least, is true or not. But the AGA is too preoccupied with '26 marriages' he has to register at Galgamuwa. It seems to me hardly a situation that will spoil from a half-hour delay—some of them have been living together for twelve, fifteen years—but the statistics seem to fascinate the AGA—'26! For 12, 15 years!'—and he presses on, to bureaucratize a situation that after all those years must surely appear stable enough—missing the opportunity to take a useful step towards solving a *real* problem: re-

member, whatever else this is it is also a battle on the Food Front.

It is my reluctant impression that in fact the AGA is somewhat intimidated by the *ex-arachchi's* belligerence and prefers to be physically dissociated. He promises to send a surveyor, though I point out that by the time surveyor is likely to come the face of the land Pinhamy is interested in can be greatly changed. But the AGA is adamant—I, alas! am the kind of person anybody can be adamant with—and hares off to his much-married brides and bridegrooms.

This is what appals me in today's administrative set up! If you are murderous you can get away with murder. Even if you are merely a bit criminal you can get away with a great deal: everybody is anxious to buy you off, or be bought off. But individuals like me, or in this case Pinhamy, who pin their faith on 'due process', must gnaw the nail and tarry until faith withers and die.

For are you consoling yourself that this long wearily-unwinding prosy tale—which I could claim I have thus told in order to demonstrate the deadly pace of normal administration—has now reached the flurry of denouement? Not by a long chalk! I have enough 'anti' developments and anticlimaxes to fill another article (which I promise shall be the last on the subject) and I do not think you will guess precisely how the eventual judgement was made.

* *

**For News Behind
the News**

read

TRIBUNE

regularly

In A Coconut Estate

By ANATORY BUKOBA

February 21,

The atmosphere surrounding a coconut estate must be the same all over the island. This one will have been in the possession of the same family for over a hundred years. Times were quieter then. A telegram, to the estate, brought a bullock cart to the railway station to meet the train bringing the present owner, the third generation, at least, of the family, for a weekend from school. Now he comes in the opposite direction from a house on the same town site, but in a car.

The town is not exactly a peaceful area to one closer to its inner working. A village connotes a rural area, and I use the word town to signify the built up area. There may be a number of reasons for this. It may just be a temporary phase. Whatever fame the town acquired in 1971 was a local one, for it supplied the local leader of those events then. His fate might not be unconnected with the present unrest, but the wrong people have to bear the brunt of it, particularly the fourth generation. No harm has been done yet. As regards the recent reforms, the owner decided to give a few acres to the Land Reform Commission, or whatever the agency is for receiving these lands. The rest was kept in accordance with the new law.

Specialization embarked on by estates is an old custom, but years ago the present owner made the first departure as regards this estate. There had always been cattle on the estate for the sake of their manure, but the owner decided on a dairy. His experienced superintendent said it could not be done, but it was.

At first there was a Sindhi bull. There were sales of cattle, and various cows were bought from time to time. Then an Ayrshire bull replaced the Sindhi bull, and he has been followed by other Ayrshires. The bull being used just now is an Ayrshire-Friesian cross, and his progeny is either Ayrshire-looking or red.

Carts collect the nuts, and all the cart bulls being used now, were bred on the estate. New generations of cart bulls are being brought on. The reserve stud bull was bred on the estate, and his successor has been earmarked, chosen. The emphasis now is on cattle-breeding as a source of both milk and meat. The calf is not removed from the cow, except at certain times. With the present high cost of cattle feed, this is a great gain. In spite of this, there is quite enough milk. Milking used to be done in the morning, but now certain cows are also milked at noon. This has not led to a drop in the morning's yield. When feeding stuffs were discontinued when prices went up, there was no drop in the milk then. There was not even a drop in the fat, I think I am right in saying. This was low until the cans were sealed, and then it went right, up, and there was a vastly better return on the milk.

During the long drought last year, there was no deterioration in the health or the appearance of the animals. The Superintendent put this down to the proximity of the river.

Grass does not grow well in the interplanted, replanted areas, because of the almost perpetual shade. What grows looks more like sparse heather or short fern. Fallen coconut leaves, or their accumulation all over the place, must interfere with the growth of grass, or the grazing. It would be better if these were thrown straight into heaps, as regularly as the fallen nuts are gathered.

The estate has gone back to having buffaloes. There used to be buffaloes, the last being two males. Buffaloes are the source of curd, and they are useful for harrowing. Those old male buffaloes drew a cart. The braying of donkeys, by the way, are supposed to keep the trunk-boring *Kurulminiya* off estates. Buffaloes are said to reduce the incidence of leaches.

Most animals, sold, end at the butcher's. Owners cannot be choosy to whom they sell. Most young bulls, suitable for breeding, go this way and many a poorer heifer or young cow, which could adorn many a villager's back garden and give him a little milk, goes this way, too. It breaks a breeder's heart

but no owner can just go on accumulating cattle, and if that was so before, it is even more so now with the land ceiling, for he cannot acquire more land to keep these animals a little longer as part of the nation's wealth.

Milk from the afternoon's milking on the estate is given to the workers for a nominal sum, and it was for this service I think that the afternoon's milking was started. A pamphlet by the English National Dairy Council says about milk, that it, and I quote its own words, more than any other single food supplies protein, vitamins and minerals, and is a greater provider of energy; and *Tribune* has described, before this, how the great Masai tribesmen, a quick witted race from East Africa, live on milk and cow's blood alone.

At the recent Trinity College prize-giving the Principal in his report remarked about the College's success in growing Guinea grass on its farm, and about that grasses outstanding qualities. In the U.S.A. maize is fed to cattle, and, in England, many root crops are given to animals. The emphasis now is on subsidiary food-crops directly for human consumption; milk is one such food, and its only draw back is that it is not a solid. These subsidiary crops are being grown, but not in sight of the main road.

There is much talk of sugar cane. With all the coconut in Ceylon, and *pal panni* or coconut honey, and jaggery, I do not see why sugar should be a problem.

MALDIVIAN MYSTERY—2

The Story Breaks

—A Tribune

Analysis—

EARLY IN THE MORNING of Saturday, March 8, it was known in certain circles in Colombo that something "like a coup" had taken place in the Maldives. The news, for some strange reason, was kept within a select circle, but like everything else in Sri Lanka this news was secret only for a short time. Like ripples, in ever widening circles, this news reached some of watchdogs of the nation in the daily press

a little before noon, but their efforts to get confirmation were futile. Even the persons who were in a position to know refused to say anything. Some of them reluctantly admitted that they had heard a gossipy rumour that a coup had taken place, but that they could not say whether it was true or not.

Why some people who definitely knew that a coup had taken place the previous day and that the Prime Minister Ahmed Zaki had been deposed were unwilling to say anything is a mystery? There was a news blackout in Male, but this was understandable, but why was there such a blackout in official and semi-official quarters in Colombo?

The Sri Lanka Air Force maintains a commercial charter service to the Maldives, and officers of the SLAF also help the new *Air Maldives* to fly their own plane. The SLAF undoubtedly has a radio link with Maldives but being a unit of the Armed Services, the SLAF has no obligation to provide any information to the press or the public. Unfortunately, Sri Lanka being on a five-day week schedule, the Information Services at the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of External Affairs were shut—and it was only on Monday, March 10, were the offices open, but no news was forthcoming. It must be remembered that Colombo is the only place from which all news about the Maldives can be gathered and flashed to the rest of the world, and if the Information Services in Sri Lanka are not able to help news-gatherers, nobody can be blamed if they fall back on gossip and rumour.

Air Ceylon has a regular flight schedule to the Maldives and Saturday is one of the days on which there is such a flight—the plane that leaves Katunayake very early in the morning gets back from the Maldives by 11 a.m. On this Saturday, March 8, this plane did not return at the scheduled time. It had not come back on Saturday evening or even on Sunday. Some of the journalists who failed to get information from the normal sources had begun to see something sinister in the non-return of the Air Ceylon plane. It was only late on Sunday afternoon that it was known that the Air Ceylon plane

had been held up because of a mechanical defect, but many refused to believe this story. A *Very Important Person*, told *Tribune* "...a thing like this can happen only to an Air Ceylon plane..." Whatever suspicions had been entertained in some quarters that the Air Ceylon plane had been detained by the Maldivian authorities, it has now been made abundantly clear that the only mishap suffered by the Air Ceylon plane was its broken gearbox and there was no reason to disbelieve this story.

But before any official or semi-official news was available—and this was available only on Monday March 10 and Tuesday March 11—the Zaki Lobby in Colombo had put forward the story among journalists, especially those who were correspondents for foreign newspapers and newsagencies, that India had been responsible for the coup against Zaki because he had been unwilling to hand over Gan to India when the British quit. But what was even more significant was that this anti-India line found a sympathetic echo in certain circles and persons high up in the Administration—even if such sympathies were described as strictly private, personal and unofficial.

This story was whispered in the strictest confidence on an off-the-record basis—as something of a favour for the newspapermen concerned. This became the talk of the town among journalists who called this story "the communique on the Maldives..."

One does not know how many of the foreign correspondents fell for this story, but from the news cuttings we have received so far it does look as if many of them swallowed this tale because there were no hard facts to support it. *Reuter's* despatches carried only ascertainable facts without the insinuation that *India-did-it*. The APF had one line at the tail end of its report that India was considered to be the likely beneficiary as a result of the coup—nothing more.

But, one prestigious Asian news-magazine had fallen for the *India-did-it* line in a big way. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* of March 21, 1975 (received in Colombo on March 17—posted in Hongkong three or four days earlier) had a paragraph in its INTELLIGENCE column (like *Newsweek's* PERIS-

COPE which was a watered-down version of the story being put out by the Zaki lobby in Colombo. Evidently the story had been flashed out from Colombo fairly quickly after March 8 to beat the *FEER* deadline for the foreign edition which has to be jet-speeded at least by March 14.

The *Far Eastern Economic Review* report read: "The continuing power-play for dominance of the Indian ocean appears to have claimed another victim. The Prime Minister of the Maldives, Ahmed Zaki, was removed from the post and, together with 26 colleagues, was banished to one of the islands in the 2,000 atoll chain which make up the Maldives. Sri Lanka sees the hand of India behind Zaki's dismissal, as the former premier was firmly behind the concept of the neutrality of the Indian Ocean and was determined to keep the big powers out of Gan, a strategically-placed island presently being used by Britain's Royal Air Force as a staging post. A visit to Male, the capital of the Maldives, last year Indian Premier Indira Gandhi failed to sway Zaki away from his neutrality pledge. While Zaki retained political power in the islands, President Ibrahim Nasir, who now takes over the post of Premier controlled economic power. The President was aided by ship-owner Ali Manicku, who courted Sri Lanka's disavowal for allegedly being involved in a smuggling incident. Later, however, New Delhi lent Manicku its support, which raised many official eye-brows in Colombo. The latest move is seen by many observers as bolstering India's influence in the vital Maldives region."

If ever there was an inspired "leak", this was one. But the *FEER* slipped up when it stated that the Indian Premier had gone to Male "last year". Though she had been first scheduled to go there in November 1974, she actually went there only this year in February.

Though the *FEER* has an active, knowledgeable and competent correspondent in Colombo, and one who writes regularly under his name, this INTELLIGENCE report was without a by-line. But the *FEER* paragraph spoke authoritatively that "Sri Lanka sees the hand of India..." in the Maldivian coup. All newspapermen in Colombo know how this story was spread.

Blackout in Male

It is pointless to pursue this beyond a point, as it would be more interesting to examine the new reports which appeared in Sri Lanka and abroad.

What is significant is that the news stories published in Colombo did not carry the anti-Indian line as in the FEER. But the Daily Mirror had hinted on March 14 that it might have been a CIA job—but more about this later.

The first hint people in Sri Lanka had about the coup was from a paragraph in the Daily News on March 10 under the heading MALDIVES BLACKOUT.

Speculation regarding some untoward happenings in the Maldives Islands has been gaining ground following unscheduled delays in air traffic between Maldives and Sri Lanka. There has also been a virtual blackout of news from the Maldives and disruption of communications. The Air Ceylon plane which was due to return from the Maldives on Saturday at 11.45 a.m. did not arrive up to the time of going to Press.

Air Ceylon sources said the delay was due to "technical reasons" and were unable to say when the plane was due to arrive. The flight to the Maldives scheduled to leave at 6.30 this morning would "be delayed by some hours", the same sources said. The Maldivian Embassy contacted by the "Daily News" was neither able to confirm nor deny the speculations.

The evening Observer on March 10, had a frontpage splash under the heading FIRST INFORMATION TRICKLING IN SAYS: MALDIVES PM OUT OF OFFICE: SITUATION QUITE NORMAL. The story was by Manik de Silva.

Information reaching Colombo from the Maldivian Islands indicates that the Prime Minister of the Republic, Mr. Ahmed Zaki, has been removed from office by the President, Mr. Ibrahim Nasir. Informed sources however indicated that there were no riots, internal security problems or anarchy prevailing in this Indian Ocean archipelago of hundreds of atolls. No new Prime Minister has been appointed according to information available here. But, according to news reaching official sources here, the Maldivian Prime Minister, Mr. Ahmed Zaki, together with Chief of Protocol, Mr. Jaleel had been arrested last Thursday night and

confined to an island. The President, Mr. Ibrahim Nasir, has reportedly taken over.

The Sri Lanka Air Force yesterday operated an Air Maldives flight to the islands carrying some 40 passengers including four Air Ceylon engineers who are trying get the national carrier's Avro aircraft, stuck there with a gear box problem, airborne. On Saturday, the SLAF operated two flights, to the Maldives each carrying 44 and 38 passengers respectively. About a hundred holidaymakers were brought back to Colombo on these flights. The dismissal of Prime Minister Zaki by President Nasir has been constitutional and done under provisions of section 37 of the Republic's Constitution, sources close to Maldivian Embassy here said. The Embassy itself said that the situation in the Republic was "quite normal". Visitors who returned to Sri Lanka from the Maldives over the week-end said that the changes appeared to have taken place last week. Foreigners were completely unaffected. Though Government offices had been closed, shops had been kept open. Last month there had been a prime ministerial election when Parliament had re-elected Mr. Zaki as Prime Minister, these visitors to the Maldives said. Air Maldives was flying its scheduled flight to the Maldives today. Meanwhile, Air Ceylon has had a series of technical problems on aircraft operated by them and have indefinitely suspended all regional flights and some of its domestic services.

The Times of Ceylon on March 10 had a frontpage story by Prema de Mel: PRESIDENT NASIR TAKES CONTROL: MALDIVIAN PM "DEPOSED".

President Amir Ibrahim Nasir of the Republic of the Maldives, has ousted its Prime Minister, Mr. Ahmed Zaki, according to information reaching the diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka. The deposed Premier, it is understood, has been exiled to an island in the atolls. President Nasir has taken full control under Section 37 of the Maldivian Constitution which empowers the President to assume full control in an emergency. When "The Times of Ceylon" contacted the Maldivian Embassy in Colombo the telephone operator

said she had been instructed to inform all callers that "everything was quiet in the islands." No telephone calls were put through to any embassy officials. Yesterday the Air Ceylon flight from the Maldives was held up owing to a breakdown in communications. A spokesman for Air Ceylon told "The Times of Ceylon" that the plane was now scheduled to arrive at Katunayake this afternoon.

The PTI despatched from Colombo on March 10 the following message which appeared in all the Indian papers. The heading given in most papers using the story was MALDIVIAN PRESIDENT OUSTS PM.

President Amir Ibrahim Nasir, President of Maldives, has ousted the Prime Minister, Mr. Ahmed Zaki, from power, banished him to one of the uninhabited outlying islets of tiny Muslim republic and assumed control, diplomatic sources in Colombo confirmed here this morning. The bloodless coup resulting in removal of the 43-year-old Zaki, who had been heading Maldivian Government since 1972 and was re-elected to the post in February this year, took place on the night of Friday last. Mr. Zaki was stated to have been detained along with the Chief of Protocol, Mr. Jaleel. President Ibrahim Nasir has assumed powers under Article 37 of the Constitution which authorises him to do so in the event of an emergency.

No further details of the development are available here as there has been complete blackout of news from Male, capital of the Republic and air traffic between Maldives and Colombo has also been disrupted since Saturday last. Reports reaching here did not speak of riots or violence in the Republic. A spokesman at the Maldivian embassy said "The situation in the Maldives is quite normal. The Maldives, an archipelago of 2000 small islands with a population of 1,23,000 and 1,640 kms. south-west of here, was a British protectorate for 78 years until it became a republic in 1965. For some time now, Mr. Nasir has been wielding real power with the Colombo-educated Mr. Zaki reduced to a figure-headed. Under Mr. Zaki's rule the Muslim Republic had been adopting a secularistic pose in international rela-

tions with no intimate ties with the Islamic forces. Maldives did not also participate in the last Islamic summit held in Pakistan, despite strong pressure from the Muslims nations. Maldives has also diplomatic relations with Israel. It has been developing close ties with India during Mr. Zaki's Prime Ministership, ignoring Pakistan.

On March 11, the Daily News threw caution to the winds and proclaimed in banner headlines on the frontpage. **MALDIVIAN PREMIER DEPOSED: PRESIDENT BANISHES ZAKI, AIDE TO ISLAND NEAR MALE.**

Diplomatic sources in Colombo yesterday confirmed reports of a palace revolution in the Maldives. These sources said that the Maldivian Prime Minister, Mr. Ahmed Zaki has been deposed by President Mr. Ibrahim Nasir on Thursday night. Forty-three-year-old Mr. Zaki and his chief of protocol Mr. Ahmed Jaleel were confined to an island close to Male sources said. Maldivian Embassy officials were not available for comment at the time of going to press. Reports also said that the situation was normal and no incident were reported.

Speculation regarding the delay of an Air Ceylon plain which was scheduled to arrive in Colombo on Saturday was ended by a spokesman for Air Ceylon yesterday. The plane was held up in Male due to engine trouble, the spokesman said. A spokesman for the Sri Lanka Air Force said that its tourist charter flights to the Maldives would continue uninterrupted and reports reaching the SLAF indicated that the situation there was normal.

Mr. Ahmed Zaki was educated in Sri Lanka—at St. Peter's College. He visited Sri Lanka recently and received Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike when she visited the Maldives shortly thereafter. He was elected Prime Minister of the Maldivian Republic in 1972 and re-elected Prime Minister in February this year. The Indian Ocean Archipelago of which Mr. Zaki was Prime Minister is estimated to have a population of about 135,000.

The Daily Mirror on March 11 had a story on a low key: **MALDIVIAN PRIME MINISTER OUSTED.**

Mr. Ahmed Zaki the Prime Minister of Maldivian Islands has been removed from office by the President Mr. Ibrahim Nasir according to reports reaching here from the Maldives. Communications from Maldives were temporarily disrupted but informed sources said that there had been no riots or internal security problems.

According to reports Mr. Zaki and the Chief of Protocol, Mr. Jaleel were arrested last Thursday night and confined to an island. No successor to Mr. Zaki has yet been appointed. The President Mr. Nasir, it is learnt has taken over their duties. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet of the Maldivian Islands are not elected representatives. They are appointed by the President. Mr. Zaki paid a State visit to Sri Lanka in August.

The Ceylon Observer on March 11 had thought it fit to play down the story: **MALDIVIAN SITUATION NORMAL...**

Mr. K. Ali Manicku, prominent Maldivian businessman, arrived in Sri Lanka yesterday on board a flight from the Maldivian Islands. Mr. Manicku is en-route to Singapore. He is expected to leave Sri Lanka tomorrow. His visit here was described as a "routine one." Informed sources indicated to the 'Observer' today that the situation in the Maldives was perfectly normal. There were two SLAF-Air Maldives flights to Male yesterday—one inward and the other outward. Tourist traffic continued to flow there unabated and with the Air Ceylon Avro held up at Male back in business all scheduled flights there will continue. There is absolutely no problem there", these sources said.

The Ceylon Observer recorded the fact that Mr. Alimanicku passed through Colombo on March 10, but no comment was made about him in the English language press although some Sinhala papers, a few days later, had alleged that Mr. Alimanicku was responsible for the coup against Ahmed Zaki!

The Times of Ceylon on March 11 had another stirring report by Prema de Mel and M. K. Pillai: **OVER 25 ARRESTS IN MALDIVES** Over 25 Maldivians have been arrested since the Maldivian Prime Minister, Mr. Ahmed Zaki, was removed from office and exiled by the President Mr. Ibrahim

Nasir, over the week-end, according to information received here by foreign missions. Diplomatic sources said trouble had been brewing in the Republic of the Maldives for several months and an attempted coup against the regime was foiled last June. There had been growing discontent among the Maldivian people, more particularly the youth, over the Government's economic and educational policies the sources added. During the past few months many militants were reported to have been arrested and confined to a number of atolls in the Maldivian archipelago. They include several young seamen, who after their travels abroad, have been critical of the social conditions in the Maldives. Tourists who arrived here from Male yesterday said the tourist industry had not been affected by the political developments. The removal of Mr. Zaki, diplomatic observers here believe, is unlikely to change the Maldives neutralist foreign policy. The Maldives have supported the Sri Lanka Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's, proposal to make the Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

The Times of Ceylon on March 11 editorialised about **CHANGES IN MALDIVES.** (Incidentally, this is the only editorial in any English language daily in Colombo on the Maldivian coup).

Diplomatic sources in Colombo have confirmed the news that was pieced together yesterday that the Prime Minister of the Maldives, Mr. Ahmed Zaki, has been removed from office and is being confined to one of that country's thousand and one islands. The Maldives, which now has population approximately the size of Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia voted to become a republic in 1968. In August, it will be ten years since this so-called speck in the Indian Ocean became a member of the United Nations. It was only last August that Mr. Zaki visited Sri Lanka. The Maldivians owe their living to the sea and it speaks much for their enterprise that they have been able to "go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters" with a merchant navy that has been held up as an example to the people of Sri Lanka.

But no doubt these islanders have their problems, especially those of an economic nature pressing on them. The per capita income of the Maldivians is \$ 100 which compares with \$ 110 for Sri Lanka and India. Population increase at 1.7 per cent is substantially less than Sri Lanka's 2.4 per cent but it is still higher than the rate of increase of 0.6 per cent, in the GNP per capita for the period 1965-72. In recent years, the Maldives has gone all out to develop tourism in its islands in the sun. Its strategic position in the Indian Ocean has brought it the advantages as well as the inevitable headaches that result when big powers would like to play their games of global chess with the lesser powers as pawns.

The English language papers in Colombo, on the first two days after the coup story broke, did only straight reporting, although the Zaki lobby in Colombo was during its utmost to plug the India-did-it line so far as the foreign news agencies and papers were concerned.

But from March 12, a "line" began to manifest itself for local consumption.

(To be Continued)

FOR THE RECORD

On The Sinhala-Tamil-Muslim Writers' Conference For National Integration.

—under the auspices of the Ceylon Progressive Writers Association—

The Ceylon Progressive Writers' Association has decided to convene a Sinhala-Tamil-Muslim writers' Conference to focus attention on National Amity.

Writers are the creators of social consciousness, and the pioneers, the eyes and ears, and the conscience of society. It is but fitting that

they should contribute their mite towards building up national unity which is so essential a pre-requisite for the development of our Society at its present stage.

This Conference will carry the message of National Unity to the Writer's and to the people whose ideals and aspiration find expression through writers. An ideal or concept, however noble it might be, cannot become effective by passionate calls and fervent appeals alone. These ideals and aims should be realised in practice and become living realities, if they are to be meaningful and useful.

Thus it becomes necessary for this Conference to place before the people a concrete plan and chalk out a path to achieve National Amity—the cherished aim of all of us. It is also necessary that the support and approval of all democratic forces and right-thinking persons should be secured for this purpose. We feel that a firm basis for National Amity can be laid only upon a fair and just solution of the language and Nationalities problems.

No sane or honest person will deny the fact that considerable progress has been made in this field in the recent past. The need for National Amity is felt at all levels and is being constantly advocated. This healthy atmosphere must be preserved and stabilised.

We should act with caution and foresight to expose and defeat anti-national elements who will strive to exploit the genuine and reasonable sentiments of the communities for their surreptitious anti-national designs. It is urgently necessary for us to eradicate on a national scale all factors that generate prejudices and misunderstandings which lead to national dissension.

Indeed, it is not possible to eradicate at a single stroke the enmity, hatred and friction which were planned and fostered by the colonialists and the propertied class with the sinister motive of perpetuating their domination and preserving the vested interests of the imperialists and the exploiters. But, it is an undeniable fact that we can neither hope to establish National Unity nor to embark on national re-construction without taking definite steps to eradicate the above prejudices and to strengthen mutual understanding and trust.

We believe that the contradictions between nationalities are neither basic nor lasting but are superficial and transient and therefore that it is definitely possible to arrive at an amicable solution.

At the present stage it is possible and necessary to formulate a tentatively fair solution for our racial problem based on the popular aspirations, the present phase of democratic growth, and the political maturity of the people.

We believe that the following suggestions could form the basis for arriving at such a democratic solutions:

- (1) Both sides to accept that the unity and the territorial integrity of the nation are indivisible and the individuality of the all peoples must be preserved and enriched.
- (2) Both sides to recognise and respect the reasonable aspirations of the Sinhala and Tamil speaking people.
- (3) Both sides to accept the Official Language Act, and the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act as the basis for just solution of the language problem.
- (4) To implement honestly the Act prescribing the use of Sinhala as the official language without adversely affecting the Tamil speaking people and to take adequate steps to minimise the difficulties and inconveniences that the public servants and the general public may have to face in the process of implementation.
- (5) To guarantee in full practical terms the right of the Tamil speaking people to transact through Tamil, all their business with the Government and with Government offices, public institutions, corporations, police stations etc.
- (6) To set up adequate administrative machinery to put into practice the democratic principle that the people should be provided opportunity to manage their own affairs and to expand the scope and power of local Govt. bodies.
- (7) To take steps to expand regional planning for economic development within the overall frame work of the national economic development plan, and to give preference to people of the respective regions in the formu-

lation, participation and management of those regional plans.

- (8) To ensure the just principle of providing equal opportunity to all children in the field of higher education by expanding facilities for a higher and specialised education.
- (9) To expedite the humanitarian implementation of Srīma-Shastri Pact and to accelerate the process of integration of the plantation workers in the national life and to remove certain hardships that this section of people now face.
- (10) To eradicate completely any discrimination on the basis of nationality, religion or caste in matters of recruitment and promotion in the public services, and to ensure adequate representations for Tamil-speaking people in institutions connected with their interests.
- (11) To provide all assistance and incentives for the all peoples to develop their arts, literature and culture and to create an atmosphere for cultural exchange by mutual translations and publication of literary works in both the languages.
- (12) To declare the incitement of communal and religious hatred and discord as a severely punishable offence.

We believe that the above suggestions will help to formulate a preliminary solution for the communal and language problems, to eradicate communalism from our national life and from politics and will pave the way for a solution for our national problems.

Premji Gnanasunderam
General Secretary

4/44, Polhengoda Road,
Colombo-5.

BOOK REVIEW

Famine and Triage

FAMINE: 1975 by William and Paul Paddock.

THIS ECONOMIC 'MODEL' of the food situation of the world first published in 1968—reasonably ahead of the crisis—is by two brothers, William and Paul Paddock. It has acquired some prophetic impact and validity.

Some of its conclusions and projections have been borne out by current events. If the book misses any trends, then these are only the events connected with the energy crisis, inflation, 'stagflation' and the petrodollars. Nearly everyone has been stumped by these.

The main thesis of the book is old hat. It is simply Parson Malthus resurrected. In mod terms this is the 'stork-farmer' race which the more aerodynamic stork usually wins, leaving the people without food.

Once derided as a dismal philosopher, Malthus now haunts the world like a Super-spectre with cosmic connections. The world that did not heed his warning has rushed in panic to Bucharest (to contain Population growth) and to Rome (to search for a solution to what is really man's oldest problem). Both Conferences were inconclusive and the Malthusian nightmare is with us—and likely to remain for awhile.

A survey by the United States Department of Agriculture fixed 1984 as the crucial year of the famines, but the Paddock brothers hit the bulls-eye with their interpretation of trends. They contend that these famines "will last for years, perhaps decades, and they are for a surety inevitable."

FEW PEOPLE realise that some 111 countries, including Sri Lanka, have coasted since 1954 on food aid from the temperate zone. This aid was mainly under PL 480 from the United States in exchange for 'funny money'. The recipients have had no hard currency to pay and they are not likely to have much in the future. Having posed the threat of looming shortages, the authors turn to demolish one by one the quick 'panaceas' with which the haunted nations of the world have optimistically drugged themselves.

One has readily to agree with the Paddock brothers that Synthetic Food, Hydroponics, Desalinization, Food from the Oceans, Agricultural Research and increased application of fertilisers are just good slogans but inadequate as instant cures for the crisis. Likewise Marginal Land, Land Reform, Irrigation and Price supports also fail to have any immediate effects on the food supply.

But in an age of increasing misery there is an increasing belief in miracles.

This is a universal law in search of a propounder!

One must concede that all the popular 'panaceas' require time to operate. Agriculture remains to this day a complex process that cannot be pushed ahead of its time or revolutionised overnight. Though people are apt to forget, this has been so since 6000 B.C. when agriculture was first invented. With us in the tropics agriculture is also a ceaseless struggle with the weather.

THE BOOK next examines the effects of the crisis. There is bound to be a heavy build-up of pressures on the national leaders and of strain on the traditional systems and institutions. Several mental and psychological blocks will also hinder attempts in the short period to increase food output.

For instance, the conflicts between rural/urban issues, of practical men hamstrung by bureaucrats, of new ideas pitched against traditions and of demogoguery and apathy will sharpen. All such conflicts will arise at a time when the need for energetic leadership is at the greatest

The first section of 'Famine-1975' ends on a note of undisguised admiration for the leaders of the small weak nations. They had faced Churchillian tasks well in the post-colonial period. But the book warns of likely regression when the small nations face famines. "They thereby become weak pawns of the major powers, just as they were pawns of the earlier colonialists. The remaining portion of the book dealt with the available and potential resources of food in the temperate zone. It also suggests a manner in which American food aid might be distributed during a major crisis.

During the 'crisis of glut' in 1954-1971 "getting rid of the stuff" was a problem and a major part in American policy was to gain leverage for other products and to win political vessels.

Hence PL 480; under which food was dumped non-commercially in Asia, Africa and Latin America. There was method in this madness. It was necessary at the time to dump the food to reduce costs of storage and to satisfy powerful

lobbies from farming States in Amercia.

ALL THIS has changed. With inflation and soaring food prices Americans are questioning the wisdom of a policy that provides free food aid. And the United States Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, has bluntly asserted that it is the farmer—and not the Government—that produces grain. And the incentive is profit.

Thus there arises the need for a set of ironclad principles on which to allocate the limited and scarce food resources between the conflicting wants of several starving nations. The authors offer the cold-blooded Triage principle, as being satisfactory from the American angle.

In brief, triage is a battlefield principle when limited medical facilities and personnel have to be assigned rationally to a flow of casualties. It is suitable for a crisis. Triage requires that the casualties (in this case the starving nations) be first classified. There would be three categories: firstly *Can be saved*; secondly, *Walking Wounded*; and, lastly, *Can be Saved*. This last group would have priority of minimum treatment (or food which will enable them to save themselves by their own efforts to increase food outputs).

The principles of triage are then applied in a few cases. In the book the grim game is continued to the point where the reader is provided with a few blank pages to test himself and put his opinions against the authors' assessments.

Little complacency can be derived from the fact that Sri Lanka is not directly classified. Our country finds mention as a viable economic unit wherein effective preparation for the crisis has been disturbed and the issues made more formidable by disunity, but having the potential for bringing 5 million acres under the plough. (Compare this with the 264 - million acre potential of America!)

We can thus either sink the differences and get down to the job or sink with them in the years ahead. It is for us to decide.

Now, the task calls for blood, sweat and tears. We can no longer sing for our supper.

Shirley J. Payoe

A BOON

Pre-Cooked Rice Developed

By K. V. Narain

The age of instant foods has been a boon to housewives the world over by saving them a lot of laborious chores in the kitchen and now comes word of what may prove to be an even bigger relief to housewives all over Asia and in other places where rice is the staple food. This is pre-cooked rice. All that is needed is to pour hot water on the pre-cooked rice and wait for three to five minutes and then the rice is ready to be eaten.

Development of this new process of pre-cooked rice has been announced by Nisshin Food Company, a leading Japanese manufacturer of foodstuffs. According to Nisshin, the rice is processed by cooking it at a high temperature and under high pressure and then it is flash-dried. While a mass or ordinary rice is affected in an uneven manner in its various parts by the application of heat, the Nisshin pre-cooked rice cooks quickly and uniformly. It is claimed that any kind of rice, old or new, can be processed by the new method. Under normal conditions, it is stated that the pre-cooked rice can be kept for two years without going bad.

While many housewives should welcome the new pre-cooked rice for their households, it should prove to be even more advantageous for large consumers of rice like schools and restaurants not to mention perhaps even more important users like army canteens. In fact, Nisshin executives foresee an even bigger market potential for pre-cooked rice than for instant "ramen" (Chinese noodles).

The company has applied for patents for the new process and its product in 13 countries. It plans to start marketing pre-cooked rice in dish-cup form towards the end of next year and for this purpose it is putting up a large plant with a daily capacity of 50 tons, or the equivalent of 50,000 meal portions.

VEGETABLE TONIC

ASH GOURD

One of the two species among the cucurbit or gourd family with large size fruits is the ash gourd which is a common vegetable in the South while it is used mostly for confectionary in the north. It is a must for all marriage feasts and hence has acquired the name of "Kalyana pushini". Apart from the general use particularly by poor families, who can go in for this vegetable which provides a good quantity of edible matter, the ash gourd is valued for its medical properties. It has been recommended as a tonic for patients with a weak nervous system in the form of "Iehyam". According to an ancient publication on the value of various food materials, published by the Saraswathi Mahal Library, Thanjavur, ash gourd effectively controls urinary afflictions, piles and breathlessness. It has been picked out as the best vegetable among those produced by creepers.

Nutritionally, the ash gourd (botanically known as *Benincasa hispida*) contains in 100 grams of edible material 0.4 gm protein, 1.9 gm carbohydrates, 0.1 gm fat and 0.3 gms minerals. Its low fat content and richness in elements like calcium (30 mg) and phosphorus 20 mg, presumably contributes to the toning effect attributed to this vegetable. In addition, it has 0.8 mg of iron, 0.6 mg. thiamine, 0.1 mg riboflavin and 1.0 mg vitamin C and 0.4 mg nicotinic acid.

Though it is popular as a vegetable in South India, the ash gourd is supposed to have its origin in Java and Japan. The cultivation of this vegetable, also known as the wax gourd, is said to be very ancient in China. This is a vegetable that can cater to all classes of people. Varieties with compact creepers and small size fruits are yet to be evolved in this vegetable as has been done in the case of the yellow pumpkin such a development will be quite welcome for spreading the cultivation of ash gourd in kitchen gardens.

—Hindu

IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

• BORAHS • LANDS TAKEOVER

IS IT TRUE that the problems of the Borah community in Colombo have not yet been resolved? That there is a virtual stalemate because one faction has taken up the position that the head of the religious affairs is also the supreme head of all secular and property matters? That the orders of the temporal (religious) head should be accepted as an infallible truth on all secular and property matters? That the religious head in Bombay had the right to hold all the property that belonged to the community here in Colombo in his personal name? That his word could not be questioned in any way? That the other faction, however, took up the position that whilst they were willing to accept the orders and decrees of the High Priest as infallible on all religious questions they were not willing to blindly follow everything he said about secular matters? That they did not think that the property belonging to the Borah community in Colombo—trust property—should be transferred to the personal name of the High Priest?

That this column, having been drawn into this Borah imbroglio, a little investigation has revealed that this rumpus had begun way back in 1970 when the High Priest had visited Ceylon and had wanted the Mosque, Cemetery, the Community Hall and the School Building to be transferred to his personal name? That this matter, at the unanimous request of the Trustees, was referred to eminent senior counsel for an opinion? That these lawyers had advised the Trustees that they had no right to effect such a transfer? That this had enraged the High Priest and his brother, both of whom had then come to Ceylon in 1971, and had initiated the quarrel which has led to the current cold war (and hot war with blows) in the Borah community

in Colombo? That the story of what took from that time to now will fill a volume? That one of the thrilling episodes in this great Borah war took place in 1974? That a new Hall had to be formally opened in Glenaber Place? That the High Priest had wanted a sum of Rs. 150,000 as the "fee" for coming down for Bombay to perform the opening ceremony? That the story whether this amount was paid (or was not paid) together with the rest of scenario and sequences will make another thrilling episode in this history of the BoraHS? That this will be told on another occasion?

IS IT NOT A FACT that the controlled press does not publish anything which would upset persons who are temporarily on top of the world? That the Aththa, which has always been with the United Front, sometimes publishes reports which portray more realistically the situation in country than the "managed news" which is all that now found in the controlled press? That the Aththa of March 13 had a frontpage second lead entitled LABOUR MINISTER IS AGAINST THE TAKING OVER OF DEVELOPED LANDS? That according to the report, Mr. M. P. de Z. Siriwardene had stated that "...under the Ceiling on Lands Act it was the policy of the United Front Government to take over lands over 50 acres in extent. It is a very progressive move. But, as a member of the Cabinet I am against the taking over of agriculturally developed lands."? That he had said this at a ceremony to open a co-operative stores at Katugasthara in the Minuwangoda electorate? That he had gone on to say, according to the Aththa, that the taking over of agriculturally developed lands has resulted in extensive damage to these lands? That as an example he had pointed out to the takeover of 75 acres of land

which had belonged to the Obeysekera Walawe in Katana? That he had stressed "...I am a progressive from the old days...Of the 75 members of the Sinhala Maha Sabha it was only Mr. K. P. Keerthiratne and myself who had declined to join the UNP. I have still not changed that policy. Under the UF government I have always given priority to SLFP, LSSP and CP youth in giving jobs and employment or even in assisting in other activities..."? That the Aththa had further reported that Mr. B. Ariyadasa, Chief Organiser of the Katugasthara SLFP Youth League, had declared that during the 1970 general elections the youth of the Minuwangoda electorate, especially the youth of Katugasthara, had played a very active role, but that he was now compelled to say in public that since the elections the Minister had not shown any anxiety whatsoever to help the youths and that this neglect of the Minister had resulted in the youths joining communist organisations today? That the Aththa, no doubt, had something to crow about when an SLFP Organiser, while criticising the Minister had stated that youth were being attracted by communist organisations, but it cannot be forgotten that what is important is that in spite of the takeover of lands, the problems of the youth and employment have not been solved? That the truth is that these lands were taken over without any plan for utilising them and that while plans for such utilisation are being drawn up, the developed lands have been ruined? That this kind of overhasty takeover of developed land has neither solved the employment problems nor increased utilisation (and productivity)? That, on the contrary production has declined with neglect and the youth have begun to turn away from the SLFP (and, in many cases, the UF) in disgust?

NEXT WEEK

- ① MALDIVIAN MYSTERY—3
— Love to Hatred?
- ① INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
— Middle East, Indochina, Western Europe
- ① IS IT TRUE?
— In the Plantations
- ① WHITHER SRI LANKA?
— Elections in 1975?