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Whither Sri Lanka?

— chasing silver linings —

SPECULATIONS ABOUT WHAT IS IN STORE for Sri Lanka, in the next few months, today dominate political discussions of concerned circles in Colombo. Whilst the LSSP newspapers and periodicals have not openly indulged in thinking aloud on this matter, the communist *Aththa* has plunged straight into the fray by reporting a speech alleged to have been made by Minister Felix R. Dias Bandaranaike with scare headlines of a compelling

nature. This had been followed by an editorial which had demanded that explanations and clarifications should be forthcoming from unnamed responsible quarters regarding the true meaning of the speech in question.

This speech had been reported in brief in the *Dinamina* (and, of course, in the *Aththa*). No other paper seems to have carried a report. But a report about the main content of the speech (made in

Dompe) had come over in one or more news-bulletins of the SLBC. As far as it is possible to recollect the SLBC report, it had stated that Minister Felix R. Dias Bandaranaike had announced that the Prime Minister had "plans" ready for a fundamental "transformation" of society in Sri Lanka from September this year: and that this would be done with "foreign assistance. With the news bulletins of the SLBC currently so completely overwhelmed by reports about the speeches and activities of the Bandaranaikes—Mrs. Sirimavo, Mr. Felix and Mr. Anura and occasionally Mrs. Sunethra—it is not possible for listeners to remember the details about particular speeches with meticulous exactitude.

Though the SLBC report of this speech of Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike was certainly not "just one another" in the series of political sermons from UF ministerial oracles, only a few of the listeners had asked themselves the questions which naturally arose from it: what was the "transformation" contemplated and that with "foreign assistance"? And why from September? The *Dinamina* report had been a little more lengthy than the SLBC's, but it had not made anything clear. And, the *Aththa* had thereupon pounced on this speech to sound the alarms about the "fascist menace" that the Left in Sri Lanka has now begun to see on the political horizon.

The first *Aththa* report of the speech seemed to have been slanted with interpretative connotations of what Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike is alleged to have said. If one understood the *Aththa* report correctly

THE YEAR OF THE DEMON

In wishing its readers the best of everything possible in the New Year (Sinhala and Tamil), *Tribune* cannot be unmindful of the difficulties confronting the country at the moment. Prices are still very high, shortages are acute (in spite of the wheat flour bonanza and the *alutavurudda* jamboree), unemployment is on the upward trend and discontent against bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption and maladministration is daily mounting. In spite of the glory-hallelujah stories about gushing tube-wells in Mannar and elsewhere (most of them still to come), the drought continues in the Wann and other areas, and most of the major (and minor tanks) are still bone-dry. Exaggerated reports about the millennium round the corner, especially when put over the discredited SLBC, cannot be expected to boost anybody's morale. One does not need to believe in astrology or other occult prognostications to know that 1975 would be a bad and difficult year not only for Sri Lanka but for the world. Already from January the world has witnessed a spate of catastrophes which have shaken the foundations of the old order. The Chinese have names for the different years in terms of known animals. This year it is the year of the Hare. The Tamils have a roster of sixty names for their almanac of three score cycle of solar years. Even if everything Tamil in Sri Lanka today stands discounted (for a variety of reasons including the vagaries of TUF behaviour), it is interesting to note that the new year which dawns on April 14 is the Year of *Rakshasha*. "Demon" is not best translation for *Rakshasha*, but it is the only word one can think of immediately to convey the meaning in English. The last Year of the Demon (*Rakshasha*) was 1915. The first world war attained its greatest fury in that year. The *Emden* played havoc in the Indian Ocean. The Sinhala-Muslims riots took place in Ceylon. The year of the *Rakshasha* in the first quarter of this century ushered in the greatest socio-political and economic changes in the entire history mankind so far. What will the Year of the *Rakshasha* in the final quarter of the twentieth century bring?

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one got the impression that Minister had threatened the country with a National Government (after September) of a one-party nature. How the Aththa had come to this conclusion is a little difficult to understand because other reports indicated that what Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike is purported to have said was that the Government (after September) would not be disturbed by party (sectarian) infighting, dissensions and squabbles while the PM's plans for national transformation were being implemented.

The Aththa must have had second thoughts about the slant it had imparted to what was alleged to have been said by Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike and it followed up therefore with an editorial in which it had asked clarifications about what it feared the Minister had said: What was this National Government, what was this talk about a one-party government (or was it a one-party state), why September, and what was this "transformation"? At the time of writing these notes no amplifications or clarifications have been forthcoming, and a question mark must continue to hang over all this.

This Domespeech and the political tantrums so uninhibitedly displayed by the Aththa have made people begin to wonder whether there was not something more than met the eye in the Ada's hint (vide Tribune, 5/4/75) that a General Election was round the corner in 1975.

IN THE MEANTIME, the propaganda media of the United Front seems intent on chasing the silver linings which UF optimists (wishfully, in most instances) see off the ever darkening horizons that presently envelop Sri Lanka. And to make these silver linings look like living realities consumers have been promised a surfeit of every thing that has been denied to them for a long time under the austerity measures of the United Front (which went side by side with the opulent and ostentatious consumer expenditure indulged in by the new breed of CRA and gem capitalists, Corporation Chairmen, Directors and Officials).

The Rs. 25 wage increase for all employees in the public and private (mercantile) sectors was only a backdrop to this season of glad tidings and sunshine of (UF) bounty.

Textiles were derationed, and the Salu Sala (no doubt to prevent hoarding for blackmarketing during the season) has in the last fortnight sold twenty yards of cloth to every person who had queued up at its counters. School children were given cloth for uniform-making on letters from school principals. Some of the prices of textiles have been brought down a wee bit from the earlier blackmarket rates. The SLBC wavelengths are full of stories about 12 millions yards of fabrics being sold and distributed before the Sinhalese and Hindu New Year.

This is how the Times of Ceylon has reported the Ministerial attempt to see that everybody had a chance of getting some textiles.

The Minister of Foreign and Internal Trade, Mr. T. B. Illangaratne has ensured that textiles on the ration and off will be available in ample quantities for the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year. Even now there are brisk sales in most parts of the Island. The Minister told "The Times of Ceylon" that he had given strict instructions to Salu Sala and the C.W.E. to make available to all co-operative unions and authorised dealers in textiles the necessary stocks to meet the demand. The authorities propose taking stern disciplinary action against those who flout these instructions in regard to the distribution of textiles. Textiles on coupon cost Rs. 6.50 a yard while off ration textiles cost Rs. 7.50 a yard.

It is learnt that what happens in some co-operative stores is that the management and staff select the best materials for themselves for sale or use leaving the rest for the customers. In this connection it is proposed to have surprise raids on co-ops to ensure that all textiles are displayed in the showcases for sale and not stocked for other purposes.

With the de-rationing of textiles one would have thought that the blackmarket would disappear because of the plenitude of stocks, and it was therefore intriguing to read that "surprise raids on co-ops" would be carried out in order to ensure that stocks were not hidden for "other purposes". In actual fact, in the co-ops people get a limited quantity per person (not 20 yards) at the discretion of each co-op's management, and there is also very little opportunity for selection because of the take-

it-or-leave-it attitude of the co-op staff. But at the shops of private dealers the same stuff can be bought in the normal way (where the customer could select the textiles he wanted) at slightly higher prices. This should not mean that private retail traders should be eliminated—they perform a service which the co-ops cannot at present discharge. What has to be done is to flood the market with more and more textiles—which the Government claims it has—and also streamline the working of the existing co-ops (without proliferating the number of these co-ops which are today nests of inefficiency and corruption).

Textiles were not the only good things made available to the public. The Times of Ceylon on March 20 said it in headlines: DHAL, GREEN GRAM, TINNED FOODS FOR THE NEW YEAR. This headline and report below, repeatedly published in several newspapers and even over the SLBC, made everybody's heart glow.

Dhal, green gram, garlic and tinned foods which were not available to the people for the last few years will be made available from the first week of next month. Instructions have been given to the CWE by the Ministry of Foreign and Internal Trade to make available these items through the government's distribution network to the people. Ample stocks of food items and other consumer goods have already arrived and more shipments are due shortly according to an official of the Ministry of Foreign and Internal Trade. The official said the Ministry would do everything possible to provide enough food, textiles and other goods which would go to make the Sinhala New Year bright for the people. All those items would be made available at the co-operative stores, he added.

Those who have endeavoured to get these good things have a different tale to tell. Only a lucky few (especially those who are prepared to wait in queues for hours—and most of them do this in order to feed the blackmarket) get these at the co-ops. The rest get them in the blackmarket which is entirely supplied from the co-ops and the other governmental agencies. Nevertheless, there is a general feeling of satisfaction that one has had an opportunity of seeing a stick of garlic, or a quarter ounce

Whither Sri Lanka?

of tumeric, or a few dates, after a very long time. And, even if one did not actually get some of these goodies for consumption, it is heartwarming that some neighbour or friend had actually got some of the stuff-raising hopes that one would get some oneself sooner or later.

Even more thrilling was the headline in the *Times of Ceylon* on March 13 which proclaimed EGGS AT 30 CENTS BY NEXT MONTH. Eggs had moved up in price from about 25 to 30 cents each to well over 60 cents a few weeks ago, but prices had dropped to around 50 cents for a few at the beginning of March. But, at the time of writing the price has shot up to 65 cents an egg. But the *Times* said:

Eggs should drop in price to around 30 cents for the medium size by next month, according to poultry food manufacturers. The Government's policy of passing the benefit of the price reductions to the consumer will result in the cost of production of eggs and milk being reduced by 20 per cent as the prices of poultry food and cattle food have come down by over Rs. 50 per ton in addition to the discounts granted to breeders. The Government, which is the successor to the undertakings of the British Ceylon Corporation Ltd., has reduced the prices of both poultry food and cattle food in order to help breeders. A Corporation official told "The Times of Ceylon" that the price reduction of animal food was in keeping with Government's policy of passing the benefits of reductions to the consumer. He said the price of poonac had dropped from Rs. 1,200 to Rs. 500 thereby reducing the cost of production of animal food. However, the cost of fish meal and other items necessary for the manufacture of animal food had gone up considerably. In addition to the Rs. 50 drop in the price of animal food, a discount of Rs. 20 per ton for breeders who buy two to five tons of such food and Rs. 30 for those who buy above five tons will be granted according to the official. Some poultry breeders told "The Times of Ceylon" that with the reduction in the price of poultry food they would be able to sell eggs for about 30 cents each by next month.

At present eggs sell at 48 cents.

But at the end of first week of April, the price of eggs had not registered any appreciable drop

towards the mythical 30 cents an egg. On the contrary the price had shot up! Nor has the Oil and Fats Corporation which is the biggest producer of poultry food reduced its prices—although poonac prices had registered such a tumble. Even after poultry food prices actually come down—there have been some notional reductions by private manufacturers of poultry food—it will take time for farmers and breeders to get started again—many of them had shut down several months ago.

Eggs were not only the only thing which were expected to come down in price. The *Ceylon Observer* of March 19 had proclaimed that CORP SHOES DOWN BY 30%. This was certainly good news. But what was the Government doing when the Corporation had pushed up its prices to unconscionable limits during the course of the last two years. An aura of mighty deeds was spread by claiming that miracles were being achieved in the export field, but news has now filtered through that there were some rackets in the export sector which had necessitated sweeping changes in the top management of the Corporation.

The Leather Products Corporation has reduced the prices of all its products. Price reductions go up to 30 per cent on certain items, Leather Corporation Chairman Mr. Oliver Fernando said. From yesterday, these special price reductions came into effect and will go on till the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. These price reductions are at Kollupitiya, Fort and Maradana stalls. Prizes will be awarded on the receipts too. Leather goods like hand bags, skins, travel bags and other items which were made only for the export market, too have been put out for sale, the Corporation Chairman said. After the middle of next month the special discount will be withdrawn but the goods of the corporation will be sold at less than what they were being sold for earlier.

Why these Corporations, like the Leather Corporation, do not concentrate on supplying the domestic market in the first instance with utility articles at a reasonable price is hard to say. But it is certainly good news that the Leather Corporation has thought fit to reduce its prices. A good many other Corporations will do well to follow suit. While on the subject of Corporations, among the glad

tidings brought to the public was the fact that the Petroleum Corporation had made many millions in profit (by overcharging local customers including farmers for kerosene and diesel), that the Shipping Corporation had made over Rs. 40 million in profits, and so on and so forth.

One of the choicest news reports was under the headline SUGAR CORPORATION HONEY FOR FESTIVE OIL CAKES. This corpora-



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tion has, over the years made a mess about sugar cane cultivation and sugar manufacture in the island. More recently, when sugar became scarce, it had tried to make unconscionable and illegitimate profits by jacking up prices from the already high and unrealistic prices it had maintained. The prices were brought down to the old (high enough) levels owing to public protests. And, now:

The Sri Lanka Sugar Corporation will offer an adequate supply of treacle (UK PENI) for the making of oil cakes for the Sinhala and Hindu New Year. The people will be able to make enough oil cakes and other sweet-meats during this Sinhala and Hindu New Year with this increased production of "Uk Peni". At present there is a heavy demand for "Ranvan" and "Ranketi" manufactured by the Sri Lanka Sugar Corporation. The Corporation has also decided to reduce the price of a bottle of "Uk Peni" from Rs. 9.50 to Rs. 7.50. According to Mr. Mahi Wickramaratna, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Sugar Corporation, sugar production at Kantalai has been considerably increased. The factory at Walawe will soon start production work. Several housewives told the "Times of Ceylon" that this offer was a great boon to them as treacle from the coconut palm has shot up in price.

But housewives know that at the present prices not many households will have money for Sugar Corporation "honey"—after buying more durable essentials like textiles and food at prices which make everybody (except CRAs and Corporation chieftains) shudder.

Finally, to cut a long story short, the Times of Ceylon on the eve of April Fool's Day had a stirring headline: OIL BEFORE SINHALESE NEW YEAR. Minister Subasinghe was undoubtedly anxious to fulfil one of the boasts he had made last year that Sri Lanka will have its own oil before the Sinhala New Year in 1975. At that time, he had stated that people would be able to use Sri Lanka oil by the 1975 Sinhala New Year.

We now have a new version of the same boast:

Oil is expected to gush out of the first production well drilled this month close to the first test well at Pesalai, before the Sinhalese New Year, as predicted by Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, Minister of Industries

and Scientific Affairs, at the commencement of the oil exploration in Sri Lanka by the Soviet experts last year. Engineers and other workers of the Petroleum Corporation, working round the clock at the Pesalai production well, are encouraged by the day-to-day reports, which confirm the presence of oil. Oil is expected to gush out any day before the Sinhalese New Year, according to reports from Pesalai. This well will intersect the oil-bearing structures in the Mannar Peninsula which has a potential of 200 millions tons of crude oil. The four oil-bearing structures discovered by the Soviet experts are similar to those at Bombay High where oil was found recently.

A government spokesman told "The Times of Ceylon" that if they struck oil in Sri Lanka in April, the Opposition and the anti-government elements could go "gathering nuts in May."

There is no doubt that there is oil in Pesalai and in the North. Tribune had said this in 1958 (mind you, in 1958!). Tribune was the first, and only paper, at that time, which had pressed the nationalisation of foreign oil companies in Sri Lanka, and had wanted one or more refineries to be set up and had written a series of articles on this matter.

But, it is a totally different matter to say that oil would be made available to the public just like that—no sooner a well strikes oil. There is a time lag between oil gushing out for the first time and the time when the same oil can be supplied to the public in adequate quantities. It is demogogy at its worst to make boasts which cannot be fulfilled within the time limits specified.

There is oil in Pesalai, but the prospect of getting it cannot be made a political lever to side-track the hard realities which have stemmed from the acts of commission and omission of the Government. This will only play into the hands of the political opponents of the Government.

While some of the Ministers of the Government keep chasing the silver linings, the talk about an election in 1975 gathers momentum, in spite of Minister Illangaratne's further pronouncements that with

the two-thirds majority the elections could be postponed until 1982. This kind of intimidatory threat is now being counter-balanced by hints from other quarters of a National Government before September with prospects of a one-party state (after the image no doubt of certain African countries or even the Shahshah's Iran).

Whither is Sri Lanka drifting?

Tribunania

- Hill Country
- Farmers' Profits

GEM TERRITORY. The Government's action to take over the group of sterling company estates whose ownership changed hands in London recently without the required approval of the Sri Lanka government is something to be commended. It was the Observer which had at first drawn attention to this deal when Arab and Hongkong speculators had secured a transfer of these estates (with an acreage totalling to 10,372 acres) in London. The price mentioned as the sale price was ridiculously low (working out at some thing like £ 13, or about Rs. 200, an acre).

It was obvious that the stated price not the real price; and that like the proverbial iceberg the major part of it was under. It is not necessary to speculate what was passed under. This is only one aspect of the matter.

The other is that all these estates are extremely valuable gem territory and there is no doubt that the Arabs and the Hongkong entrepreneurs (together with a few Sri Lankans in the deal who are believed to have high political connections) were after gems and that they did not have any interest in the cultivation of tea or rubber which grows on these estates. Like the taking over of the Gas Company (which had been deliberately managed on a derelict and run-down basis—and which is now able to furnish customers with adequate supplies of gas), the takeover of

these estates was essential and necessary in the national interest. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that in the indiscriminate opening up of our lands for plantations in the past century, no consideration was paid to the mineral wealth under the soil (not merely gems but other minerals as well). When the comprehensive geological survey of the island now being conducted by Government is complete, it would become necessary to abandon plantation crops in some areas in favour of mining.

In the same way, it will be necessary for Government to put back into jungle about 10,000 to 20,000 acres of tea-lands in the Adam's Peak watershed area. Even at the time these estates were being opened up by destroying primeval jungle, British agricultural experts (nearly a hundred years ago) had pointed out that if these jungles were destroyed, the results would be disastrous. Today the results are self-evident. The run-off of water immediately after the rains is so great that much valuable soil in the hills has been carried away. The clear water of the rivers have become muddy and the rich soil they carried have not only silted even our navigable rivers but also silted some of our major tanks. This quick run-off caused recurring floods.

In short, the entire agricultural system in the lowlands has been undermined. The Government has been compelled to spend billions in reservoirs, dams and other flood protection schemes, but it has not been able to do anything adequate about the soil erosion or the silting. Even today, the remedy is to let the tea bushes grow into mighty trees (whilst the Government undertakes longrange afforestation) in the entire Adams Peak-Horton Plains watershed region. In the ultimate analysis, this is the only way of ensuring that agriculture in the "dry" lowlands and in the Wanni is successfully developed. This is the only way of ensuring that recurrent floods do not upset agricultural programmes. And this would be the only way of re-opening some of rivers to navigation.

But instead of following a sane policy of this kind, the

recent devastation of even the few remaining forest reserves around Nuwara Eliya in order to satisfy the land hunger of the new elite will only increase the problems on this score. It is not enough to blame the bad old colonialists for a policy which had raped our forests and brought ruin to our agriculture. It is time that people in responsible circles woke up to the latest wave of suicidal de-forestation which is going on in the hill country. What is needed is a correct policy for our lands in the hill country.

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO FARMERS' PROFITS? Under this heading, the *Daily News*, on March 18 had reported a speech made by the Minister of Finance, Dr. N. M. Perera, at the third anniversary of the establishment of the National Savings Bank. We publish below the report as it appeared in the *Daily News* report. What the Minister of Finance said has great significance and relevance in the present context. He has also raised questions of fundamental importance.

Tribune has raised similar questions in regard to other sections of the community which has been afflicted with affluence in the period after Independence, and especially during the post-1970 period. The CRAs and the gem capitalists spend the money which comes into the hands, especially the money which still comes under, in the most ostentatious ways (and the Government enables them to do this by permitting the import of luxuries and super cars), and can farmers be criticised for wanting to buy nylon shirts and transistors—even to the detriment of their agriculture? It is interesting to read Dr. Perera's lament:

Something like Rs. 1000 million passed into the hands of the agricultural producer during the last few years in this country. Buying paddy alone, the government has spent as much as Rs. 600 million. The growers of chillies, potatoes, onions, and other subsidiary crops made the balance. What happened to this money? Was it saved or wasted? Did it pass into hands of the middle man or the producer, asked Dr. N. M. Perera, Minister of Finance when he addressed a seminar orga-

nised by the National Savings Bank to mark the third anniversary of this establishment.

The seminar was held at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institution and was attended by a large number of invitees from government departments, banks, firms, co-operatives and schools. The farmer went on a buying spree. One transistor for the family was not enough. They bought one for each member of the family. We do not quite blame the farmer's desire for luxury goods, but we have to impress on him the need to save. As a result when hard times came with the drought they had no savings. The government has to spend Rs. 20 million on drought relief, said Dr Perera.

We have to take the savings message from door to door. It has to make its impact on every single person. This was the purpose of the establishment of the National Savings Bank, he said. Before its establishment there was the National Savings movement, the banks and the Post office savings bank. But these institutions waited till the saver came to them. They did not go to the people and try to persuade them to save or spread the savings habit among them, Dr. Perera continued. One reason for the economic upsurge in Japan was that savings rose to the level of 40 per cent. When the NSB took over our rate stood at 10-12 per cent. This is not enough Dr. Perera emphasised. We have to save at least 25 per cent.

One answer to the international economic crisis is to save more, grow more so that we can produce all our food internally. We are extending the banking habit by opening more and more bank branches in the rural areas. We hope to introduce a system whereby savings stamps are sold. The savings habit is ingrained in us concluded Dr. Perera referring to how housewives used to put by a handful of rice.

Everything Dr. Perera said is correct.

FOR NEWS
BEHIND THE NEWS
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But who is to blame for the wrong values which are still being inculcated in the country?

It is not enough to preach sermons over the SLBC or from public platforms. What is more important is to see that the proper examples are set. If governmental circles get a realistic picture of what is being said and felt among the ordinary people—not the bogus

reports from "catchers" about the praise being showered on the Ministers and the Government—they will know that the greatest damage to social, economic and political values is being done by the 5 Sri, 6 Sri (and very soon 7 Sri) cars in which Corporation chiefs, directors, officials, favoured government servants and selected private citizens run about the country when it is obvious to ordinary people

that most the work they pretend to do on behalf of the people (in the national interest) could easily be done without such luxury cars.

If these officials were compelled to use public transport—as they are compelled to do in some countries—there is no doubt that our system of public transport will also show a marked improvement.

CHRONICLE

MAR. 27—APR. 2

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

THURSDAY, MARCH 27: The Government yesterday decided to declare today a day of national mourning in honour of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia who was assassinated on Tuesday: the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike has requested that all public buildings fly national flags at half-mast today: meanwhile a special delegation from Sri Lanka left for Riyadh last night to attend the funeral of King Faisal: the delegation comprised the Minister of Education, Al Haj Dr. Badiuddin Mahmud and Mr. M. S. Alif, Director General of Cabinet Affairs: they carried with them a special message of condolence from the Prime Minister and the President Mr. William Gopallawa to Crown Prince Khalid Ibn Abdul Aziz, brother of King Faisal—CDM. The Ministry of Health has sent out an urgent appeal to all its medical personnel to exercise greater economy in the use of drugs in view of a recent "phenomenal increase" in world market prices: the Ministry's expenditure on drugs and surgical requisites has shot up from around Rs. 20 million four years ago to Rs. 45 million this year—CDN. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, Minister of Plantation Industries, who is currently on a visit to Malaysia said that Sri Lanka is interested in Malaysia's proposal for an international buffer stock scheme to stabilise prices of natural rubber—CDN (Reuter). The recent merit promotions effected to fill vacancies in Class 3 of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service has raised a hornet's nest among these officers who went before the special interview board: officers of the Supra Grade and Class 1 of the General Clerical Service are in a huff and already complained to the Minister of Public Administration that the interview board had deviated from the principle hitherto adopted in promoting officers from the Clerical Service to the SLAS—CDM. North Vietnam has accused the United States of alleged blatant violation of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam. Soon after the assassination of King Faisal the Royal family named as the new King Khalid Ibn Abdul Aziz, 61 Faisal's brother: in turn Khalid immediately chose his brother, dynamic Prince Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz, as his Crown Prince: Prince Fahd nine years younger than the new King and a skilled administrator could well be a major power, according to political observers.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28: A master plan which will make the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka a fully equipped institution capable of admitting 3,000 undergraduates within the next six years was set in motion this week: the first stage of massive building program has been estimated to cost Rs. one and half million: the entire cost of the project has not been envisaged as yet but work on it is scheduled to commence by the end of this year and completed by 1980—CDN: the proposal to establish a Campus of the University in the South has been shelved: the committee appointed by the Ministry of Education to report on the feasibility of setting up a Campus in the South has reported that the present parlous financial position of the country did not warrant such a step: however the Committee has added that a Campus could be established in the South if there were private donations to finance the cost—CDM. The Ministry of Health yesterday announced that two trade unions representing the Assistant Medical Practitioners and Registered Medical Practitioners employed in the Department of Health have called out their members on strike from yesterday: the reason for the strike is stated to be the "long delay" in the implementation of their "recommended demands"—CDM & CDK. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief Organiser of the SLFP Youth Leagues, yesterday received Mr. Gi Jong Joon, Senior Vice President of North Korea, at the BIA: he came to attend the IPU conference—CDN: the new North Korean Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Mr. Yu Song Jin, arrived in Sri Lanka yesterday to present his credentials to the President—CDM. Subsequent to a drop in coconut oil price, all prices of soaps manufactured by one firm will be reduced by 5 cents with effect from Monday—CDM. According to reliable sources the Saudi Prince accused of assassinating King Faisal is still alive, and undergoing interrogation in complete secrecy. President Van Thieu of South Vietnam declared that his forces would make no further withdrawals in the face of the current communist offensive. The PLO has condemned FRG's proposal to pay another 600 million marks to Israel.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29: A major triumph for local technical skill is now being enacted in the dockyards of Trincomalee: the breaking of the Sri Lanka Navy's first flag ship, the 1000 ton Vijaya, which the big names in industry in Sri Lanka had described as a job to be undertaken only with foreign collaboration, had been undertaken by a handful of men with no serious experience in this field: members of Sri Lanka Light Engineering Industrial Co-operative Union Ltd has undertaken this test—CDN. The Health

Ministry yesterday gave an assurance that all steps necessary will be taken to ensure that the public is not inconvenienced by the strike of assistant medical practitioners and registered medical practitioners: it said that the strike was totally unjustifiable and described it "as a challenge deliberately thrown at the Government and a pre-meditated attempt to defy it by holding the public to ransom"—CDN. World topics ranging from non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to the role of parliament in defending the rights of women will be discussed when parliamentarians from about 60 countries meet at the BMICH for the six day spring meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union which will be ceremonially opened by the President on April 1—CDN. The Sri Lanka Air Transport Employees Union yesterday asked the Ministry of Defence to request the Sri Lanka High Commission in Pakistan to assist the Air Ceylon crew charged with arson in Karachi—CDN. The new King of Saudi Arabia, Khalid Ibn Abdul Aziz, made clear his determination to continue with the domestic and international policies of his elder brother King Faisal assassinated three days ago. The United States Commerce Department announced yesterday that a massive drop in oil imports in February pushed the US's foreign trade balance to record surplus.

SUNDAY, MARCH 30: The biggest-ever May Day procession and rally will be organised by the United Front this year, according to a spokesman of the JCTUO: the show of strength on May Day will be a warning to those anti Government elements which are of a fascist character—ST. Sri Lanka's first professional centre, which will get the best out of the country's professional men in development planning, technological research, manpower, legislation and administrative innovation will be set up soon with the assistance of the Commonwealth Foundation: Mr. John Chadwick, Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, who is in Sri Lanka, outlined the need for a centre of this nature when he addressed a body of Sri Lanka professional men last week: the meeting was convened by the Secretary of Ministry of Housing and Construction—CO. The State Film Corporation will take over the total import of all foreign films from this year: hitherto only part of the English films were being imported by the Corporation while about 50 per cent were being imported by the private film distributors—ST. A public reception, organised by the SLFP Youth Leagues and the Sri Lanka Independent Trade Union Federation, to Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief Organiser, SLFP Youth Leagues on the success of his mission to the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, will be held on April 3 at the Navaranghahala—CO. Saudi Arabia's new King reshuffled the Cabinet, appointing the Crown Prince and Interior Minister, Prince Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz, as First Deputy Prime Minister. The Indian oil and Natural Gas Company has started drilling for oil at Mandapam in Ramanathapuram district. Communist troops appeared to be in effective control of Da Nang, South Vietnam's second biggest City, according to military sources.

MONDAY, MARCH 31: A co-ordinated plan of police action to curb two of the main criminal offences now plaguing the Asian region—drug trafficking and corrupt practice—will be discussed this week at the first regional meeting of Interpol for the Asian region, to be held in Manila: with the opening of the Suez to international

shipping on June 5, Sri Lanka's ports—Colombo, Trincomalee and Galle—will assume greater significance in the underworld of this region—CDN. Police have blown the lid off a million-rupee racket involving thousands of gallons of spirits imported for the State Distilleries Corporation: about 15 employees of the Corporation, including personnel of Security staff, have been detained by the detectives for questioning: the Minister of Finance Dr. N. M. Perera has asked the Crime Detective Bureau to probe the matter fully and bring the culprits to book irrespective of trade union and political affiliations—CDM. A large number of delegates arrived during the week-end for the 1975 Spring Meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference which will be ceremonially opened by the President, Mr. William Gopallawa tomorrow, at the BMICH—CDM. The Commissioner of Examinations yesterday informed all foreign countries to check back with the local authorities the validity of academic certificates produced by Ceylonese seeking scholarship facilities and employment: according to the Commissioner of Examinations it was proved last week by the Criminal Investigation Department that a number of Ceylonese had offered forged certificates and obtained scholarships at foreign educational institutions—CDN. The patriarch of Ayurvedic physicians in Sri Lanka, Pandit G. P. Wickremarachchi, passed away on Saturday—CDM & CDN. Saigon's Deputy Premier Phan Qung Dan yesterday confirmed the loss of Da Nang, South Vietnam's second biggest city, to National Liberation Forces. The Government of Guinea Bissau has foiled a plot to kill its left wing leaders by elements of the Portuguese colonial regime. Cambodian Presidential Lon Nol was reported to be planning to leave the country next week for an official three-nation tour.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1: The Health Ministry yesterday described the current strike of registered and assistant medical practitioners as a "premeditated and deliberate attempt to sabotage the health services of the country" particularly in the rural areas: registered and assistant medical practitioners yesterday said their strike was not politically motivated but was the result of "administrators standing between the Health Minister and the two unions—CDN. The Ministry of Health has instructed all Superintendents of Health Services to employ retired doctors, General Medical Practitioners or Registered Medical Practitioners to attend to the work of the government Registered and Assistant Medical Practitioners who are on strike—CDM. The biggest ever International conference to be held in Sri Lanka so far will open when over 300 delegates from sixty-four, countries of diverse political lines and professing various ideologies, meet at the BMICH today for the 1975 Spring Meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union—CDM. The *Sunday Times* of London has carried a news item that child slaves can be bought in Sri Lanka for as little as two pounds sterling a head—CDM. Special security measures will be taken in Colombo on May Day this year: both the UF and the UNP had been granted permission to hold demonstrations and meetings in Colombo—CDM. A resolution calling upon the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, to request the Secretary General of the United Nations to cause a full and impartial inquiry into the events, that led to the assassination of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was passed at a mass condolence meeting held in Colombo yester-

day—CDM. Summons issued by the CJC inquiring into foreign exchange frauds on Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, a former Governor General, has been served on him in London by the Scotland Yard Police—CDN. President Ford has asked Dr. Kissinger to stay on as Secretary of State until at least January 1977 and it is reported that Dr. Kissinger has agreed. Former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt in a television interview has mounted fears that a US refusal to provide military aid to South Vietnam and Cambodia would provoke European fears that the US was pulling back from its commitments.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2: Addressing the ceremonial opening of the Spring Sessions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting at the BMICH, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, denounced those powerful nations that paid low prices for raw materials of developing countries like Sri Lanka to maintain and improve their already very high standards of living: the Premier termed this exploitation "economic colonialism": the President, Mr. William Gopallawa, addressing the conference said that he hoped the acquaintances they make in Sri Lanka would be in due course blossom into lasting friendships: the Speaker of the Indian Lok Sabha and President of the IPU, Dr. G. S. Dhillon, said that the work of the IPU has perhaps never had greater relevance than today: the Speaker of the NSA, Mr. Stanley Tillekeratne, referred to the range and scope of the

activities of the IPU and its potential as a forum of international opinion—CDN & CDM. The Philippines has sought Sri Lanka's assistance to rehabilitate its coconut industry: the request has been made to a Colombo agency house through its contacts in Hong Kong—CDN. Mr. Sarin Chhak, Foreign Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia, arrived yesterday with a message from Prince Sihanouk to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike—CDN. Four Arab countries have expressed their willingness to gift four million US dollars in cash to Sri Lanka to make the 1976 non-Aligned Summit Conference in Colombo a success and an East European country has already agreed to provide telecommunication equipment to the value of 500,000 US dollars—CDM. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, Minister of Plantation Industries, who returned from Malaysia on Sunday after discussions with the Malaysian authorities, said that Sri Lanka would not contribute more than 25 per cent of the production if she agrees to an international buffer stock put forward by Malaysia—CDN. Liberation forces, who in just one week have captured more major cities in South Vietnam than in two decades of war, was now fighting 45 miles from Saigon. Rockets slammed into Phnom Penh's airport as President Lon Nol boarded a jet liner for a trip abroad saying he would return to Cambodia whenever the people needed him. India has recognized Prince Sihanouk's Cambodian Government.

INTERNATIONAL - AFFAIRS

BY ARIEL

KING FAISAL

IN THE THREE TO FOUR WEEKS since this column was written last, (vide *Tribune* March 22, but the piece was probably written a week before), so much of great significance has taken place that it is hard to believe that so many events of such great consequence, especially for the future, could have been cramped into such a small period of time.

The assassination of King Faisal has introduced a new dimension to Middle Eastern and Arab politics. What this will bring is anybody's guess. The failure of the Kissinger mission to achieve a step-by-step peace settlement between Egypt and Israel has thrown the whole Middle Eastern question into the melting pot. In Indochina, the US-backed Lon Nol and Thieu regimes have lost the military battle and it is only a matter of time before they disappear. Kissinger's inability to achieve a Middle East peace, the fact that his Indochina Paris Peace Accords have collapsed like a house of cards, the refusal of the US Congress to support

the Ford Administration's plans in Vietnam and Cambodia, the increasing unemployment in the US in the face of the galloping inflationary spiral (and the Congress substituting its own economic programme to fight inflation and virtually rejecting the White House blueprint) and the continued weakening of the once mighty US dollar in the money markets of world has brought gloom to the mighty in Washington. The developments in Portugal with a steady progression to a communist left has brought uneasiness not only to the United States but also to its NATO partners.

In Asia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines are on the brink of diplomatically recognising Peking, thus leaving Indonesia stand alone among the ASEAN countries within the cold war orbit these countries had earlier favoured in their relations *vis a vis* China. Malaysia was the first to break this *cordon sanitaire*. The new government in Thailand has suggested that the US withdraw all its forces from that country within a year, and President Marcos in Philippines has indicated that his government was likely to review its relations with the US—in the same way that President Ford wants to review US policies *vis a vis* the Middle

East and Indochina. In the meantime, the death of Chiang Kai Shek brings an era of US policy in regard to China to an end. Will China and Taiwan get together and thereby enable the US and China to normalise diplomatic relations—more on China's terms rather than USA's?

In the light of developments in Indochina and the Middle East, the regional problems in Western Europe (referendum in Britain, the political crisis in Spain, the economic crisis in Italy, etc.), the growing confrontations in Southern Africa (with Rhodesia beating a retreat by freeing Sishole), the growing in turmoil in Latin America (bloodbaths in Argentine, the institutionalised brutality and terror in Chile, and the growth of anti-US sentiments everywhere and which has made a Kissingerian journey to that continent an impossibility), all look small in comparison. But, nevertheless, they are real and important.

Over all these is the dark shadow of the world economic crisis. The US dollar is no longer the main convertible currency. The oil exporting countries have deserted the dollar and have switched to SDRs and their pick from the basket of 16 other strong currencies. A French-convened conference of oil

exporting and consuming countries began deliberations in Paris on April 7. There is now a glut of oil on the world markets and the Arab sheiks have begun to discover that a petrodollar boom can boom-erang in a way not provided for by their experts.

KING FAISAL'S ASSASSINATION on Tuesday, March 25, by one of his many nephews had shocked the world. Nasser, (and more recently Gaddafi), had failed to shake the Saudi princely hierarchy, but from within of the family had come a University (US) dropout, who had become "deranged" by radical pan-Arab sentiments (with overtones of anti-US sentiments), to kill King Faisal. The kind of pro-western, anti-soviet and anti-zionist stability which Faisal had given his kingdom can no longer be restored even if his successors have proclaimed that they will faithfully follow in his footsteps. The world will no longer be the same without Faisal and his death came hard on the heels of Kissinger's failure to achieve a separate peace between Israel and Egypt—something which Faisal had wanted and had promoted because Sadat was eating out his hand. It was because of this that Ford and Kissinger were so intent on (almost) forcing Israel to agree to a separate (step-by-step) peace with Egypt, and that is why they have been so critical of Israel's understandable caution in not making any withdrawals until they got an adequate *quid pro quo* in the form of an Egyptian declaration of non-belligerency. The rest of the Arab world (bar Sadat and Faisal) were opposed to a separate peace between Egypt and Israel, and the assassination of Faisal by a nephew, who was admittedly infected with extreme pan-Arab and anti-Israeli sentiments, is an indication that the virus of disruption has entered the corpus of the Saudi princely order and that it will be only a matter of time before democratic and plebian ideas bring changes that Faisal had tried his best to keep out of his territory and his ruling family. The assassination of Faisal by a nephew, unbalanced by raw ideas, is the first indication that even the Saudi dynasty cannot withstand the egalitarian and democratic ideas which have begun to spread even to the darkest corners of the contemporary world.

King Faisal had brought pro western moderation to the aggressive policies of other oil exporting Arab OPEC countries. Faisal was one of the staunchest anti-communists still left in a world where deep rooted anti-communism has been dented by the compelling need for detente. But Faisal with a small population of 7 millions and the richest oil reserves in the world had no use for detente and also had no reason to practice co-existence with communism. He was willing to spend millions, even billions, of US dollars to edge Egypt out of the Soviet orbit, but the question is whether his successors will be willing to throw so much good money to keep Sadat happy in order to keep him free of Soviet influence

But Faisal had no use either for western democratic ideas and models. His attempt to keep Saudi Arabia free from communist ideas, free from western democratic traditions and free from the encroachments of zionism via Palestine, was successful as long as he had lived, but whether his successors would be able to achieve the same degree of success is a problematic question.

The Economist, 29/3/75, had indicated that "...Faisal has not been without political opposition, and there could be real trouble if the very fact of his royal assassination sets off a train of anti-conservative intrigue which Faisal's successors lack the authority to stem..." According to all reports, King Khalid is a dutiful figurehead. He was a step brother of King Faisal. The real ruler is Prince Fahd and US Vice President, Rockefeller had not delayed even one day in establishing contact with him. What Fahd will do is anybody's guess. The Economist's estimate of Prince Fahd is certainly much more cautious than the over-enthusiastic reports about his pro-westernism that have appeared in many papers. Prince Fahd's pro-Arabism may bring new dimension into his political logic that may surprise many in the West. And Prince Faisal, the assassin, though he may have done the dark deed alone, may well have many followers (of his ideas)—many more than what people in the rest of the world can guess at this time. The Economist's evaluation of the situation is most revealing.

"...The important question is whether Faisal's younger half-brother, Prince Fahd, will remain de facto chairman of the council of ministers which means prime minister. Prince Fahd, 54 to Faisal's 69, was being prepared for an eventual succession; as prime minister and now crown prince he will be the real ruler of the country, and may be a little later, the titular ruler too. And he could be a good one, better in many ways than Faisal. Although he believes as Faisal did in Saudi Arabia finding its own pattern for political and social development, he is a travelled man and more open-minded than his brother. Faisal, give his beliefs, had taken Saudi Arabia as far as he could into the modern world; Prince Fahd can be expected to take greater risks with introducing the twentieth century into Saudi Arabia. So long as the royal family, and the army, hold together, the Saudis could benefit from government by a man whose dedication to tradition is less extreme than Faisal's was.

"On the Arab Israeli issue, however, Prince Fahd may be tougher than his brother. Faisal declared his beliefs and then, like President

Japan: Uncontrolled use of Ground Water

Tokyo,

The uncontrolled use of ground water by industrialists has led to a sharp lowering of the ground level in many areas of the country. And in coastal areas water became unfit for use as a result of exceedingly high salt content, says the report by the Japanese Ministry of Construction. In Western districts of the Japanese capital, for example, in one year from January 1973 to January 1974 alone, as the survey has shown the ground level lowered by 25.2 centimetres. The annual consumption of water in Japan is 76,500 million tons, 13,300 million of them being ground water. The country's public demands that the government adopt a law determining ground waters as public property in the course of seven years. Such a legislation has been drafted by the Construction Ministry, but has not tabled in parliament so far.

Sadat, trusted in the Americans to bring about a sequence of actions that might eventually have led to the Arabs regaining their holy places in Jerusalem. Prince Fahd is far more hawk-like, at least on the record of recent interviews, in his ideas about the right of an Israeli state to existence. In the aftermath of the failure of Mr. Kissinger's mission earlier this week, the Saudis are now more likely to take an initiative themselves, based on their financial strength. At the same time, Prince Fahd is free from the simplistic obsessions that led Faisal to equate communism and Zionism—a wrong turning that embarrassed even the most fervent anti-Zionists.

If Prince Fahd and his full brothers, who include prince Sultan the minister of defence, remain in control, there is likely to be little change in Saudi Arabia's present oil policy. The determinant here is that Faisal's policy, as carried out by Sheikh Yamani, was evidently in Saudi Arabia's own interest. Sheikh Yamani himself was very much Faisal's man and as such his position could be at risk. But Faisal's successors may well decide to retain him for his experience in dealing with the west. Even so, Faisal's murder is a blow to American policy. The old king trusted the Americans. And the Americans, for their part, had learnt to live with the King's knee-jerk reactions to matters involving Islam or communism.

Prince Fahd and Saudi Arabia's other new rulers are more unpredictable. They are unlikely to depart radically from Faisal's line but they are less simple and less trusting. Circumstances made Faisal an Arab, as well as a Saudi Arabian and Islamic, leader; perhaps the new men, inheriting this leadership, will somehow manage to exercise with as much discretion.

This is very typical of British pragmatism, but there is an element of wishful thinking that the Saudi Royal Family will continue to hold the ruins in that country for some more time.

Although an attempt was made, immediately after the assassination to make it appear that the assassination of Faisal was "non-political", information which is now filtering out indicates that an element of

political motivation cannot be ruled out. The Times (London) in an article reproduced by the Ceylon Observer, 6/4/75, has given some interesting details about the assassin's history. Prince Faisal Ibn Musa'ed Ibn Abdul Aziz had spent many years at Universities in the USA. He had last been at the Berkeley branch of the University of California where "it is reported he became increasingly involved with militant Arab groups." The New York Post, it stated had quoted one of his friends there as saying 'he often remarked that his family was one the major obstacles to progress in the Arab world.' Many times had said that the Saudi Royal family was 'interested primarily in co-operating with American interests in keeping Saudi Arabia backward'. Though, it was said, that most of his friends could not believe that he had turned assassin, none of them were willing to agree that he was "mentally deranged." He was said to be "a mild, pleasant mannered young man who had consistently poor academic results and very probably had difficulty in reconciling his own personal background in Saudi Arabia with the competitive mobile society of the United States. He left Berkeley in 1973 after failing to maintain the required standard in the post-graduate course in political science which he was following there." After references to a love affair with a fellow student, Christina Surma, who now, claims to have lived with him for five years, the article recalled a brief brush he had with the law on charges of conspiracy to sell LSD—he had served an year's probation. It was said that it was in his last year at Berkeley that Prince Faisal had started to become "radical politically..He spent a lot of time with Arab Marxists and supporters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.." One acquaintance had commented, according to the article: "he was against the royal family in many ways..he was quite radical about the Palestine situation. He was anti-Zionist and believed that the royal family was too weak on that. He was sometimes embarrassed at being part of the royal family." At the time he left Berkeley Prince Faisal is said to have been in a state of "personal turmoil." According to his friends "he was searching for a new ideological framework.."

Such is the picture which has begun to emerge about the assassin of King Faisal.

The over-reaction in some quarters in Sri Lanka to the death of King Faisal has surprised many people who had taken the radical and progressive professions of the United Front government seriously. Faisal may have been a kindly man, a benevolent soul, but he was a relic of a feudal desert monarchy which was on the way out of history. He was anti-communist, anti-progressive, anti-democratic and even anti-liberal. He was an ultra conservative in religion and in everything. And yet, we witnessed the spectacle of radical Sri Lanka, claiming to be on the brink of socialism, mourning the passing away of Faisal as a blow to mankind. Faisal's generosity was always motivated: it was either for Islam or it was anti-Zionist or it was anti-Communist. He wooed Sadat to turn him against Moscow and he was currently working on the PLO to keep them away from Moscow and Peking, and other revolutionaries like Gaddafi.

Where did Sri Lanka fit into King Faisal's scheme of petrodollars' charity? The emotional over-reaction exhibited by Muslims in Sri Lanka, nostalgically and wishfully dreaming of a Moslem state in all the pristine blary of an archaic society known 1500 years ago among nomads in a desert, is understandable, but why the wailing

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by so many others? An official condolence message by the state is part of the protocol of diplomacy, but why the sack clothes and ashes by the progressives?

It will be interesting to see what Arab socialists will have to say about King Faisal and the government of the Saudi Royal Family. For a long time even his anti-zionism had been negative because he did not like the radicalism of Nasser. Why cannot free and independent republics like Sri Lanka deal with petrodollar benefactors with a modicum of self-respect and dignity?

Sadat of Egypt who had only recently been throwing brickbats at the Soviet Union has once again turned to Moscow with an appeal to reconvene the Geneva Conference on the Middle East. The USA which is co-chairman with the USSR had also made a similar request.

In the meantime, Egypt has announced that it will open the Suez Canal for traffic on June 5—the anniversary day of the 1967 war. But Israeli ships, he had said, would not be able to use the canal until a peace settlement was arrived at.

Next Issue: Indochina, Western Europe, USA.

MALDIVIAN MYSTERY—3

LOVE TO HATRED

—detente on smuggling?—

A Tribune Analysis

IN THE LAST ARTICLE, attention was drawn to the manner in which the news about the Maldivian coup was handled by the English language daily press in Colombo and also by some correspondents for foreign newspapers who were stationed here. Whilst the local papers had, on the first two days, played the story straight in cautious reports, the informant who had flashed the message to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of Hongkong had introduced the *India-Did-It* line which the pro-Zaki lobby and certain influential circles in Sri Lanka had endeavoured to circulate among the journalistic fraternity no sooner they had got over the initial shock of Zaki's removal.

The evening papers on Monday March 10 and the morning papers on March 11 had frontpage banner headlines about the Maldivian "coup" with the most meagre and sketchy reports of what had taken place. The *Times of Ceylon* on the evening of March 11 had a wishy-washy editorial which said really nothing about the latest Maldivian developments though it painstakingly presented some background facts, nothing very new but a welcome repetition of what many people tend to forget.

Thereafter the Maldivian coup, as such, was virtually forgotten by the local press. There was no attempt to evaluate the event politically or in any other way. There was feeble attempt to suggest that the CIA had encouraged reactionary vested interests to remove the progressive Ahmed Zaki, but this was only in one news report and a few whispered off-the-record briefings. Only the *Scribe* in the *Miscellany* column in the *Daily News*, 21/4/75, made a tongue-in-his-cheek roundup, in camouflaged innuendo, of the various theories which were floating around the city about the Maldivian coup. We shall examine this piece later, but what is significant is that the press in Sri Lanka is now totally devoid of any interpretative analysis or writing.

The *Daily News* on March 14 had a centre-page feature by the retired Lake House journalist, A.B. Mendis, reminiscing about the two trips he had made to the Maldives, first at the invitation of the RAF when Gan had been made operational (this was probably in the late fifties), and the other more recently when Sri Lanka had taken a few VIPs and journalists to the Maldives when they had handed over the "gift" of a landing strip at Hululle, an island close to Male. We will examine this article together with the only politically significant article which had appeared in recent times, viz. Theja Gunawardhana's article in the *Observer* in August 1974, in the concluding parts of this series.

ON THE MORNING of March 12, the *Daily News* had started playing down the Maldivian coup with a single column low-profile: MALDIVES: NEWS BLACKOUT STILL.

The official black-out on news from the Maldivian Islands following the removal of Prime Minister

Ahmed Zaki in a palace revolution last Thursday continued yesterday in Colombo. Neither the Ambassador nor any Embassy official was available for comment yesterday. Information reaching Colombo through unofficial channels however confirmed that life and business was 'normal' in Male following Thursday's deposition of the Prime Minister by the President of the Maldivian Republic, Mr. Ibrahim Nasir, who took over the Premiership. Meanwhile tourist traffic to and from Male has continued uninterrupted according to Air Ceylon and Sri Lanka Air Force sources. Notable among the arrivals in Colombo from Male has been that of a prominent Maldivian businessman Mr. Ali Manikku.

It is understandable that the Maldivian Embassy in Colombo was silent. The Maldives have no tradition of a free press (as in Sri Lanka in the days gone by) and even after the Maldives had become a free, sovereign and independent Republic there was no private, official or even semi-official news gathering or distribution system based on the Maldives. In fact, there is probably little or no need for a news distribution system in the Maldives. But this was no reason why the newspapers in Colombo did not present all the news fit to print about the Maldives (and there was quite a lot) to its readers.

And it is unfortunate that newspapers in Sri Lanka are reluctant to comment on or analyse the burning topics of the day in the manner newspapers do the world over—that is in countries where papers are free to do so. At least in theory and in law, newspapers in Sri Lanka are free to comment on the facts, as known, but it is surprising why the newspapers as presently constituted do not do so.

The only other news item in the *Daily News* on the same day, March 12, was a tendentious report with the heading ARAB PORTS OUT OF BOUNDS TO MALDIVIAN SHIPS

Maldivian shipping vessels will not be permitted to enter Arab ports after the middle of this year. According to information reaching Colombo this decision was taken by the Arab League which represents 21 Arab countries following the failure of the Maldivian Government to respond to the request of

the Arab world to sever diplomatic ties with Israel. The Maldivian Government is the only Muslim Government in the world which has diplomatic relations with Israel. The Economic Boycotting Committee of the Arab League had unanimously decided recently to boycott countries and firms which have close relations with Israel. Many leading firms such as Marks and Spence in London and eight other firms in the United States were blacklisted and the Arab world does not have any dealings with these firms.

The news report had an unfriendly touch, unfriendly to Ali Manicku the Maldivian shipping tycoon and his "partner", the President, Ibrahim Nasir. It was strange why the Arab countries should not have woken up to the fact that the Maldives had not severed its connections with Israel long before this. Ali Manicku, when he had passed through Colombo, the day before, could have been asked his views about this. The news was said to be from "information reaching Colombo", but if the Arab League had indeed "taken a decision", there would surely have been an official communique about it, (neither the Arabs nor the Arab League hide their light under the proverbial bushel). What is significant was that within a week there was a semi-official denial of this by Middle Eastern news agency sources that the Arab League had made no such decision and that the situation was as before. (The Daily News, on 21/3/75, had carried this item tucked away in a corner). Under the Wijewardenas, Lake House papers had been guilty of carrying tendentious and slanted news to foster particular viewpoints, but now the refurbished state-controlled Lake House indulges in slanting news to satisfy the whims of particular lobbies, this time to satisfy the pro-Zaki lobby which was desperately seeking to establish that without the "progressive" Zaki ruin would descend upon the Maldives.

TO THE CREDIT of the Daily News, it must be said, that this was first and only attempt to slant the news about the Maldives with tendentious Innuendos. Apart from the A. B. Mendis article on the Maldives, and the Scribe column, the Daily News has forgotten that anything took place on the Maldives at all—no doubt much to the chagrin of the pro-Zaki lobby.

The Daily Mirror On March 14 also had one shot on another slant: "RIGHTWING, CIA LINKS. IN OUSTING THE MALDIVIAN PM.

Speculations is rife in diplomatic circles here that certain outside forces were responsible for the ousting of the Maldivian Prime Minister Mr. Ahmed Zaki last Thursday. These sources said that the right wing elements in the Maldives have probably been influenced by the Central Intelligence Agency leading to the deposing of Mr. Zaki. The sources further stated that Mr. Zaki favoured the Third World. He had discussions with the Indian Premier Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mr. R. Nishanov, Soviet Ambassador in Sri Lanka a few weeks before he was re-elected Prime Minister of Maldives. As he was in favour of making the Indian Ocean a Peace Zone, the elements against such a move acted against the views of the people of Maldives, the source added.

There is no doubt that CIA has been up to many dirty tricks in many parts of the world. But, this piece was only an inference that because Zaki had had "discussions" with the Indian PM and the Russian Ambassador in Sri Lanka (also accredited to the Maldives), the CIA had got busy and incited rightwing circles in the Maldives to oust Zaki. The report hinted that these rightwing circles were opposed to Zaki's adherence to non-alignment and the Indian Ocean Peace Plan.

There is no knowing whether the CIA had anything to do with this, or whether this was another canard which could easily be foisted on the CIA just because the CIA had been stupid enough to blunder its way into so many embarrassing situations in different countries. But as has been pointed out in this series earlier, it seems a little premature for the CIA to have acted at this moment of time in the Maldives, because Ahmed Zaki was due to go to Pakistan in April and thereafter Iran (to pay due homage to the Shah). Zaki would have, in the normal course, if he has not done it already, paid homage to the Saudis each time he went to Mecca and Medina. The American Ambassador in Sri Lanka is known to have visited the Maldives and to have had "discussions" with

Zaki, but the USA and the CIA could have more easily made the necessary effort to wean Zaki from his "progressivism" whilst he was in Pakistan, in Iran or in Saudi Arabia. Before this attempt was made to win over Zaki, it seems premature for the CIA to have acted in the way alleged (specially at the moment with all the Congressional hue-and-cry about CIA doings).

Only the "Our Own Correspondent" of the Madras Hindu in Colombo seems to have picked up this story in a big way and the Hindu of 15/3/75 published his despatch under the heading CIA LINK WITH MALDIVES COUP. Any anti-CIA story goes down in India and in many parts of the world and to give the Nasir-Alimanicku oligarchy in the Maldives a linkage with the CIA was one way of securing sympathy and support for Ahmed Zaki in the Third World and in the socialist camp.

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency might have had some link with the recent coup in the Maldives, Sri Lanka's English newspaper "Daily Mirror", said to-day, quoting diplomatic sources. It reported that the rightwing elements in the Maldives had probably been influenced by the CIA leading to the deposition of Prime Minister Ahmed Zaki. It said Mr. Zaki favoured the third world, and had discussions with the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mr. R. Nishanov, Soviet Ambassador in Sri Lanka, a few weeks before he was re-elected Prime Minister. As Mr. Zaki was in favour of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace, rightwing elements in the Maldives, probably financed by the CIA, opposed the idea and acted against it, the paper said.

It will be only when someone like Jack Anderson publishes more revelations about CIA's links, if any, with the rightwing elements in the Maldives, that the truth will be known. In the meantime, it would be more realistic to evaluate the developments in the Maldives as an internal in-fighting power struggle where the older vested interests wanted to eliminate the challenge from newer vested interests before its vocal champion, Ahmed Zaki, was able to gather more support from outside circles in Sri Lanka, or in the "progressive" Third World, or Russia, or even in the reactionary

circles in Pakistan, Iran or the USA. THERE IS NO DOUBT that the pro-Zaki lobby in Colombo knew that the India-Did-It line would go down well in the Far East (where the Hongkong magazine is widely circulated) with Peking's constant propaganda about Indian "expansionism", and that the CIA-did-It story would be lapped up in India, in the socialist world, in the Arab countries and the non-aligned Third World. Either way it was intended to evoke sympathy for Zaki and induce opposition to the Nasir-Alimanicku establishment.

However, the PTI (Press Trust of India) correspondent in Colombo in a despatch dated March 16 (in an interpretative roundup) felt that CHANGE IN MALDIVES' FOREIGN POLICY UNLIKELY.

No significant change in the Maldives foreign policy is expected as a result of recent political changes in the Indian Ocean republic, according to knowledgeable observers here. These observers, basing their assessment on information trickling out of the Republic's capital, Male, believe the country will continue to cultivate friendly relations with third world countries. It will also try to strengthen its bonds with neighbouring countries like India whose policy is based on non-alignment and secularism.

Sources here say the reasons for the palace revolution of March 6 when Prime Minister Ahmed Zaki was banished and President Ibrahim Nasir assumed power are mainly contradictions in the two leaders' policy leading to friction. Mr. Zaki wanted a progressive reduction of role of the private sector and enhancement of State investment in the economy. But President Nasir found himself in sharp disagreement with that policy. Mr. Nasir and his family are said to have big business interests in the republic.

As Mr. Zaki had socialist leanings, Mr. Nasir was said to have tried to dissuade members of Parliament (Majlis) from electing Mr. Zaki at its last session in February. Mr. Zaki however, was re-elected by 36 votes to 16. Some diplomatic observers also believe that the threat by the Arab League that it would refuse entry to Maldivian vessels to ports of Islamic countries unless Male sever diplomatic

relations with Israel has also contributed to Mr. Zaki's fall.

President Nasir is reported to have a big chunk of shares in the Maldivian merchant line which is the main carrier of goods to Gulf ports. Diplomatic observers, however, believe that Mr. Nasir might yield to Arab pressure in some form or other but he might not recast completely Maldives' present foreign policy.

It will be seen that this correspondent saw the Maldivian coup as a purely domestic matter tied up with policy differences. Dispassionately, but with undoubted sympathy for Ahmed Zaki, he seemed to regard him as a "progressive" who had wanted a reduction of the role of private sector in the Maldives and an enhancement of State investment in the economy and that this policy clashed very sharply with the private enterprise near-monopoly capitalistic policies of the President and his group. This is certainly a very kindly way of looking at the matter investing the confrontation with high-minded policy objectives—a democratic socialist (or a social democrat) versus a profit-hungry capitalist.

Many observers feel that this is far too a simplistic an approach to the in-fighting for political power in the Maldives. Though it may sound cynical and ungentle, many feel that it would be more realistic to see in Zaki a demagogue who was out to challenge a feudal oligarchy which had begun to realise the virtues of profit acquired, sustained and extended through crude sultan-power where the interests of few families were regarded as identical with those of that a whole country whether called a sultanate or a republic.

To the extent that Zaki was likely to be a catalyst of change it could be said that he might have played a progressive role (in the jargon of contemporary Third World political terminology), but taking into consideration so many historical examples in recent times, where individuals and not parties dominated the scene, it is difficult to say how long Zaki would have continued to be a "progressive" or even whether he as one at all. (But political wsturing, no doubt, helps to

push history in one direction or another—under certain circumstances).

THE MAIN PURPORT of the PTI despatch was to assess the foreign policy which the Maldives was likely to follow after the exit of Zaki, and the correspondent very correctly stated that no change of any serious kind was likely to result from the Presidential coup.

Whilst the coup in the Maldives was being evaluated differently by different people, a section of the local daily press started a campaign (which had been dropped ever since a detente had been established between Sri Lanka and the Zaki regime) that Maldivian citizens and Maldivian ships were smuggling, or helping to smuggle goods into Ceylon. On March 20, the Daily Mirror spread a banner headline across its front page (much larger and bolder than the one for the coup); SAREE HAUL THE POINTER—LARGE SCALE SMUGGLING FROM THE MALDIVES.

"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 the Police seizure made on Tuesday night at Kalu Modera, 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.

According to a Customs spokesman Tuesday night's haul of rolls of imported nylax sarees were valued at Rs. 365,000. The rolls of sarees which bore Maldivian markings were found in a house at Kalu Modera, Bentota. Two occupants were arrested and fined Rs. 365,000 each.

At the time of going to Press they were still in Customs custody. The Customs spokesman said that security arrangements against smuggling and transporting contraband to Colombo was easy along the southern seaboard as there were no security checks along the Galle Road as yet. The spokesman further said the type of nylax sarees seized was sold locally for as much as from Rs. 200 to Rs. 275

each. Further investigations were being made to trace the kingpins in the racket.

Meanwhile, it was only last week the Police detected yet another big consignment of sarees—Japanese Nylax—valued at around Rs. 300,000 hidden in a house at Boralesgamuwa. Eight men taken into custody including a policeman were each fined Rs. 300,000 by the Customs. Investigations have revealed that these sarees had been smuggled in from the Beruwela coast.

It will be recalled that relations between Sri Lanka and the Maldives had become strained after an incident relating to Ali Manicku (who held a diplomatic passport in addition to his ordinary one) because of a small sum of foreign currency which he said he had forgotten to declare at the time he had passed through Customs. Our bureaucrats had made a song and dance about it thinking that if they caught a whale, with a tiny fragment of a smuggled shrimp on its person, a great victory had been won. But the victory was pyrrhic. The Maldivians had thereupon pulled out their business headquarters out of Colombo and had found better havens in Bombay and Singapore.

IN THE MEANTIME, Sri Lanka decided to woo the Maldives and Zaki. And Zaki, like Barkis, was willing. Discerning people will remember that one of the matters which Zaki had taken up with our Foreign Office was that our Customs, Police and other officials were "harassing" Maldivian ships on the pretext of looking for smuggled goods. It was a fact that our preventive services had become been very hard on Maldivian ships and personnel and the Alimanicku episode could be said to have been the culmination of increased vigilance against the Maldivians. So pressing were Zaki's representations on this matter that there were reports hinting that there would be greater relaxation in the matter. Reports in the daily papers (not officially confirmed) had stated that permission had to be obtained from higher authorities in the Foreign Office) before a Maldivian ship was raided—this was to ensure that tipoffs on which the Customs acted were bona fide.

Whatever the nature of the understanding arrived at, there was

kind of detente on the question of smuggling from the Maldives. It is not necessary to go into the question of what really took place during this period of Jayaweera Zaki on the smuggling front, but what is important is that no sooner Zaki was removed there seemed to be an end to the detente. Within a week of Zaki's exit, there were raids galore in respect of goods alleged to have been smuggled from the Maldives or in Maldivian ships. The Daily Mirror story of March 20 opened the newspaper campaign against the current Maldivian regime on the smuggling question. Ever since that day, there were frequent reports in the daily press about the seizure of goods alleged to have been smuggled from the Maldives.

Thus, the "line" for internal domestic consumption about the latest Maldivian changes is that without Zaki the Maldivian regime was no better than a government for smugglers. How far this propaganda build-up will go is difficult to say. And whether this toughness on smugglers will bring Zaki back to power is problematic.

AS MENTIONED EARLIER, the only attempt to sum up the Maldivian episode from a political (cold war) angle had come in the *Miscellany* column by Scribe in the *Daily News* of March 21.

There is endless speculation going on among the cocktail set in Colombo about the Maldivian "coup". The theories are as wide, varied (and prejudiced) as the particular interests of the missions. Number one is the Big Brother theory after years of mutual tensions Premier Zaki was able to establish a base for co-operation with India. There was also Premier Gandhi's visit to the Islands. Naturally there are Big powers who want to make sure that India does not have too much influence in the area.

Number Two is the Big Bear theory, that Indian involvement in and around the Maldives will merely be an excuse for the Russians to extend their area of influence in the Indian Ocean. Naturally, again there are other powers interested in making sure that such a thing does not happen.

Number Three is the Uncle Sam theory, that the good old U.S. in A. will not be satisfied with

Diego Garcia and now that the domestic activities of the CIA are severely curtailed, they have started their covert foreign operations again.

Now that the CIA has been brought into it, will it shortly follow that the CIA's dancing partner, the KGB, will also join the act.

Among the other less interesting theories, but equally amusing, is that the Sri Lanka press seems to know much more about the 'coup' than they let out. This seems to be the impression created in the Indian press, which relies entirely on reports from Sri Lanka.

At the rate the speculation is amounting, it will only be a short time before somebody discovers that the "real culprits" are the Sri Lanka CID Special Branch!

This was a clever piece of writing.

It referred to the *India-Did-It* story, and threw in a *Russia-Did-It* version before referring to the *CIA-Did-It* gambit. And to cap everything with ridicule, the columnist stated that some people may attribute the coup to the Sri Lanka CID Special branch, elevating our cloak and dagger boys to the status of the CIA and the KGB. The columnist also seems to have been "amused" by the theory floating around, especially in the Indian press, that "the Sri Lanka press seems to know much more about the coup than they let out.."

This sketchy Scribe comment is the nearest to any kind "analysis" of the Maldivian situation that has appeared in the local press. But it is not a political analysis of the developing situation in the Maldives. It is only a summary of the cold war theories regarding the Maldivian coup. One cannot dispute that further revelations may show that India, Russia, the USA or even Sri Lanka (CID Special Branch) may have done the trick. But, why was no mention made of China? For the moment, however, there is nothing to indicate which the "guilty" country is. Without incriminating facts, it would be futile to pursue these theories. adumbrated by Scribe.

It would be more pertinent to examine known and available facts and also critically analysis press reports and statements by different persons who have written about the Maldives. (To be Continued)

The Laggard Champion

— concluded —

By Herbert Keuneman

LET US RUN, in this our observation of Bureaucracy in 'action', once again through the list of non-events in a single case that took place for nine months; continue through the period of one month's animation that an appeal to the highest authorities temporarily produced; and carry it finally to its end in a whimper six months later!

30 October 1973

I. M. Pinhamy of Galakadawela, Ehetuwewa, applied for a parcel of uncultivated but irrigable land of no proved ownership; for purpose of growing paddy. (Minister of Agriculture Mr. Kobbekaduwa had but lately announced that every available acre must be grown with food-crops, on pain of confiscation I enclosed, at his request, a personal letter to the AGA Kurunegala testifying to his competence as a farmer and requesting whatever sympathy his application merited.

1 November 1973

Pinhamy met his Grama Sevakaya (Embogama) who told him there was proper form for such an application, helped him fill it in, and promised to forward it with a recommendation. Not even an acknowledgement followed.

December 1973

No acknowledgement.

January 1974

No acknowledgement. Reminder similarly ignored.

February 1974

Nothing.

14 March 1974

Nothing.

15 March

'Y', a friend in an important Government post who was visiting with me, a person deeply familiar with the area, at my request took Pinhamy to the office of the AGA Galgamuwa where he was told the papers had been forwarded to Kurunegala (the provincial Capital).

16 March

My friend Y took Pinhamy with him to the Kurunegala Kachcheri and introduced him to the AGA. The latter promised to do all he properly might, but stated that no papers at all seemed to have been received at the Kachcheri in connexion with the application, and handed Pinhamy a letter to be personally delivered at the AGA's office Galgamuwa directing that all relevant papers be despatched without delay.

March (later)

The Grama Sevakaya Embogama meeting Pinhamy explained that the original set of papers had been lost!

22 March

The Grama Sevakaya called at Pinhamy's house to fill in a second set of forms.

23 April 1974

No development during the whole intervening month.

24 April

Letter from AGA Kurunegala summoning Pinhamy to an Enquiry concerning his application, to be held on 17 May, at my house! After six months, this was first official acknowledgement of Pinhamy's existence in the case!

17 May 1974

Enquiry cancelled *sine die* (et *sine causa data*!) by telephone message via Ehetuwewa sub-postoffice and addressed to me.

June 1974

No communication nor other official development.

8 July 1974

Still no development.

9 July

Accepting the role apparently assigned me, of participant by right, I wrote to the Minister of Public Administration and requested the favour of an interview, which was granted.

15 July

Interview took place.

? (undated) July

Letter from Permanent Secretary requesting details of problem to be solved and particulars of persons concerned.

18 July

Posted reply to Permanent Secretary.

19 July

Pinhamy received letter (of date 18 July) from AGA Kurunegala bidding him to 'a further enquiry' (though none had previously taken place) on 8 August; again at my house, though no official intimation to me!

8 August 1974

Enquiry held. Proceedings 'crashed' by belligerent and contumacious *ex-arachchi* (claiming rights over land in question) with followers. Results inconclusive; and personal inspection of land, of which might have proved useful, avoided by AGA.

August (later)

Government surveyor sent to report on land in dispute and, if no reason appeared to the contrary, demarcate a portion to be granted to Pinhamy. We later heard unofficially that the surveyor had reported that the whole tract in which the land lay was clearly an uncultivated one, and that he had, indeed, temporarily marked out a block which Pinhamy might be allotted.

THE CLERICAL STAFF in the Kurunegala Kachcheri seemed to be unaccountably represented in the Ehetuwewa area on that day, and several called on me—why me? No one called on Pinhamy—of whom I particularly remember two, an elderly man and a much younger one, because when in a reckless access of hospitality I produced three-quarters of a bottle of Mendis Special, intending a light refreshment, they scoffed the lot! They told me they were all going to lunch at a village nearby, where something special in the way of lunch had apparently been laid on! I may be quite wrong—I have no proof whatever—but I received the undeniable impression that the *ex-arachchi* through an ally was somehow concerned in this. (This is what I mean when I say that to 'know' a village one must know it from the inside; doubtless my three-quarter bottle could be sinisterly regarded too!)

Of one thing I am sure, though again without proof. From the time of the 'Enquiry' on, I began to be subjected to minor... I would call them annoyances; the normally a little paranoid villager would tend to regard them as persecutions.

I had had the good fortune to find a really splendid boy in Nesan

place. Young though he was, he was a knowledgeable and enthusiastic farmer to the fingertips. So much so that he had awakened even in me, who had never before planted so much as tomato, an enthusiasm for Growing More Food! Together, and with Dinga's at most-as-well-informed and unstinted aid, we had reared quite a successful little vegetable garden. We had a complex compost system, with burning-pits and turning-pits and whatnot, which was one of the sights of the village! Now suddenly the boy's father, one of the ex-arachchi's creatures, though he had promised the boy should stay two years at least in exchange for my promise to help him then toward permanent employment, on an obviously trumped-up excuse demanded his immediate release. He now does odd jobs; and the vegetable garden, despite Dinga's gallant efforts, is almost extinct.

I used to hire a knapsack sprayer once a week from a neighbouring village where the ex-arachchi had once had considerable sway, in order to spray my chillis (the Ehetwewa Village Committees sprayer was out of order.) After the Enquiry this sprayer went out of order too.

Good friends in the area, of the ex-arachchi's landed-gentry status (radalayas), suddenly began to boycott to me.

Nothing really hurtful, of course; but, put together, a clear enough hands-off warning.

Meanwhile we reverted to the old stalemate.

9 August

On my advice, Pinhamy addressed a letter to the Ministry of Public Affairs, reporting on the futility of the previous day's Enquiry and begging that the issue be hastened.

15 August

A letter from the Ministry acknowledging Pinhamy's letter, stating that it had been forwarded to the Government Agent Kurunegala, and directing that all future correspondence be conducted with the latter. He would correspond direct.

Clearly the Ministry's bolt was shot: at least, as far as they could afford the time and energy to shoot it.

September 1974

No correspondence!

October 1974

ditto

November 1974

ditto

December 1974

ditto

January 1975

ditto

15 February 1975

Out of the blue, a letter from the Kurunegala Kachcheri informing Pinhamy that he could not have the land applied for because it was paraveni (hereditary) land belonging to the ex-arachchi's village.

TOTAL TIME taken to determine this complicated issue: 1 year, 1 month, and 16 days. And this during the Food War!

But one is tempted, besides to protest if not against the decision itself at least against the process by which the decision was arrived at.

For nearly six months Pinhamy's application seems to have been by someone and for some reason suppressed.

After pressure at the Kurunegala Kachcheri there was a small flurry, which came to nothing, and after this the matter remained in abeyance for a further four months.

After pressure then at the Ministry there was great flurry; but in a month the excitement caused had died down and it took six more months for this sudden decision on unexpected grounds. Unexpected.

One might have thought that the first thing an efficient administration would do on receipt of an application for land would be to check out on the land and then check in with the records as to whether anybody but the State owned the land or not.

Did anyone?

I had had, about September 1974, a letter from Y who—still interested and active in the case—had asked a friend in the Ministry of Lands to investigate what was happening, and the friend had reported that in fact this land lay in an area still not 'settled': that is, still not adjudicated upon as to boundaries and ownership.

I could scarcely credit this; for why, then, could not Pinhamy then

have been told so instead of being made sick with deferred hope? After all, if settlement showed him entitled, the grant could always still be made (for I believe there was a genuine willingness—at the higher levels, at all events—to grant his application if it was possible).

But it is not enough for a revolutionary administration to be willing on the whole, in the long run, in its own good time, to help the People to whom it is committed. It must be—and must appear to be—eager to do so, enthusiastic and sympathetic in doing so,

The people must see it as their Champion against the old entrenched inequitable ways. Pinhamy's case presented no such edifying spectacle.

KAZI - 4

Rajangana To The Deep South

By ANATORY BUKOBA

February 22,

The Kalawewa tank empties itself into the Rajangane tank, and from there the water flows into the sea after passing through the Wilpattu Park. The Rajangane Area lies for the most part between two major roads that leave Anuradhapura, one going to Puttalam, the other the most westerly of the roads that leads to Kurunegala. Several roads join these two arms, roads at great distances from each other. The last of these, coming away from Anuradhapura, joins two Kala Oyas, or two Rajangane junctions, that called so by the people on the Puttalam road, and that called so by the people on the Kurunegala road. The people at this last place call the first place the Puttalam Junction. Until you get used to these contradictions it can be confusing. The road passes roughly through the middle of the Rajangane colonization scheme and it does not pass in sight of the tank. The turn-off to the tank is at Police Junction, where the Police station used to stand until 1971. It has now been moved to Tambuttegama, the place that I said the local people call Rajangane Junction.

tion. The people on the Puttalam road call it Tambuttegama junction. Enough of these confusions.

The two roads coming out of Anuradhapura, and the Rajangane road that joins them, form a right-angled triangle, the base of which is the shortest of the sides; yet it costs about the same to go round by the two long arms via Anuradhapura by bus, as to traverse, by bus the base from one Rajangane junction to the other. Enough of this, too.

The provincial boundary passes through the middle of the colonization scheme, and three provinces meet at the official Kala Oya, that is shown on the map. All the Rajangane area falling within the three provinces is administered from Anuradhapura for convenience, and so as not to split the scheme. The police and certain other government departments keep to the old provincial boundaries as their lines of demarcation. Now I have said much about the geography of the place, about that which the French call the *infrastructure*, a beautiful word, even if its meaning is rather vague.

What I want to write about is one farm in this Rajangane area, and I shall use that as a pivot for focussing attention on the area. Prior to April 1961, I had heard, through the newspapers, perhaps, of searchlights playing on the Puttalam road, and some other strange events, which I cannot recall, which for all I know, may have had as much substance as flying saucers. Even now, when the name Rajangane is mentioned some people say, ah! was that not a hotbed of J.V.P. activity? Of all this, I can say I do not know much. If it was so, I can say that people are not inclined to talk much. I did not know Sinhalese people could be so secretive. My only complaint is that there seems to be an avarice for money on the part of those who live there, almost all of whom have their homes in other parts of the island.

The person who runs this farm is a lad who is tough, fearless, both dedicated and carefree, dedicated in his mind, almost carefree in his ways; he can manage on little or no food when the occasion requires it. He hails from Kandy, but the remnants of his family have lived in the Wannai for about twenty

years, in another colonization scheme many miles to the north-east. The lad talks of Kandy, as his home, as if his family home for the last twenty years did not exist. His mother still works, his father is dead. His eldest married brother is the main prop of his mother

As far as I can gather, the lad has led a sort of wandering life, two years here, two years there, always close to authority, the authorities of the state, guardian of order, and so he has a clean slate. He came to live on this farm not so long ago, and I have seen with my eyes the transformation he has wrought. He cannot do it all off his own bat, and he has to lean on a friend, one who knew him long ago.

When I was there the last time, a lad from the area came looking for work, and we talked. For him to be paid a wage was not possible, and the occasion led me to ask him question about himself. His mother lived not far away. There were younger members of the family. Like everybody else, many crops had died which they had sowed, and they were just hoping that what was left would survive. He found work where he could. He mentioned earning Rs. 2/- a day at times, or, rather, on a certain job not so long ago. Knowing the circumstances, I would say that if anybody called this exploitation of labour, he would be talking through his hat. I feel many of our social workers who have never really suffered, but who feel they know suffering at first hand, because they have seen it, as if you could see such a thing, do a tremendous lot of harm with their theorizing. This brought me on to the question of hunger. The lad's prospects looked bleak, and they looked as if they had been bleak for a long time, but we agreed that no one in this island is really starving and that no one has died of hunger. I myself have seen people dead on the road, but they certainly did not die of hunger. He certainly looked happy, and happy listening to the farmer-lad talk

February 23,

When I did this trip to the deep south in the early sixties, what struck me was the closeness of the coconuts trees to each other compared to the distance between them in the other coconut areas. I soon got used to this,

for I ceased to notice it. I was also struck then by the number of trees joined to each other by rope bridges, the work of toddy tappers. I cannot say that I saw any this time. What I did see was the prosperity of the far South, in their well-built houses, profuse all in their small gardens, such prosperity that I do not think I saw ten and more years ago. I wondered today how all these people found a living. I asked them. People do not usually give a true, or correct, answer when a question like this is suddenly fired at them; and it is about their neighbours. Then I remembered how, years ago whenever I met a man up in the Sinhalese north, and I had asked him from where he was, he almost invariably replied that was from Galle or Matara. I do not think that is so now. Apart from the ubiquitous coconut tree I cannot say that I saw any agriculture. There was sea fishing and the fishermen. I was told, mostly lived within sight of the sea. Well, I came away with my question still partly unanswered. Of industry, I saw nothing. About what, I saw in a town, I shall come to presently. As to the country folk, prosperous they were judged by those observations I have already made about their houses, if that is anything to go by.

The remarkable thing is that it was this prosperous South that was, by repute, the area where the youth was most affected by the insurgency, more, I would gather, than in other parts of Ceylon. I do not know how true this is, but if it is so, then it bears comparison with a parallel situation in the United States. Hippysm, you might say, is the Western version of what the Insurgency meant in Ceylon, only that our lads took it a stage further. Now there are European hippies but the hippies are really from California, which is, they say, the most advanced state materially in the United States. I would say that the lesson to be drawn from this parallel, if there is a parallel, is that the youth want something more than just material success. In the case of our Ceylon youth, I would say that they want the door a little more opened on the world, on a world that they have not yet fully experienced. In the case of the American youth, they also want a door opened on the world,

but a world that they have lost: hence their bizarre appearance, which is their way of expressing their revolt. Our government in Ceylon must wake up to this. The youth will not have, by proxy, all the good things that the world has to offer. Hire purchase, television, and more food on the ration, all of which is other school of thought is not going to content them either.

Someone took me round his business, unsolicited on my part. He was proud to show me what he was doing. He first drew my attention to the ample space. That was the first requirement, the primary ingredient in the pudding. I was reminded by this how Henry Ford, who started the Ford motor business, said the same thing about space in relation to assembly lines. Here, everything was tidy, and yet it seemed the last refuge for all the town's junk. If you had a few rags to dispose of, you could sell them here, even two inches square if you had enough to make it worth your while. Bottles, gunny sacks, everything was here. Every seller could sell what he had here and after the business had brought it, there was yet another buyer for what you had brought. You would receive a fair price, and the business would yet make a profit. It was some thing very close to my heart, that policy of, why waste anything, why throw it away?

Something else struck me. The owner reminded me how seven years ago you could buy a good gunny sack for about seventy cents. Now this same sack cost up to four rupees each. As he went round, he told me how much he bought the various items for, and how much he sold them at. His prices seemed fair to me. He pointed out the service he was rendering to the poor for they were sure to find a ready buyer in him. He was not much obsessed by money, and yet he made it. There was rope for sale, rope that would have put me in pocket for a long while to come if I had bought it. This part of the business, where he dealt in goods, was where he made his money. The other part was a shop, and I saw there little things that I had not seen for years. They were little conveniences, not costing much, that I had almost forgotten about, so unfamiliar had they become, and yet had been very much a part

of my youth, and bearing the hallmark, I should think, *Made in Ceylon* at least, metaphorically.

When the tourist hotels and beaches had been left far behind one came upon really beautiful beaches. There was one at Dondra Head, too small to be used by tourists. Where I slept, the sea thundered at night and yet it was not rough, nor the stormy season, and by daylight I was surprised to see that I was by no means on the seashore. The Dondra Head lighthouse, rather like the High Commission, is under the Jurisdiction of the British Government. It is one of these places forgotten about after the British left. It flashes its light, I think every four seconds. You cannot see the lighthouse until you are right there, as it is only to the east that it is not obscured by trees, most people come at it from the west. It is a fearsome height, and it stands on a small promontory which is the most southerly point of Ceylon. We had two days with heavy showers of rain. I do not think there is much of a food problem in that part of the South. Rice costs a rupee less than it does in all the other places I know of. The bus service between the South and the metropolis is the most efficient that I know. Even the trains, I hear, are fast.

Politically, I gather it is not too happy. I heard of people, youth, being turned off land they had cultivated with permission of the authorities, and turned off at the request of politicians because they were from another electorate. You would almost think that we were not supposed to be one country, with right of movement and settlement anywhere. I used the word request two sentences ago; it was insistence amounting to an order. I shall not go on about this.

There are, so far as I know, no real colonization schemes in the far South, and so a description of the area has to be done in a way different from those of the other Kazi articles. Galle has a Fort which is even bigger than the Jaffna fort and yet you can get only a glimpse of this from outside. The Jaffna Fort looks more impressive because it can be seen as a whole. Matara has a Fort, but one hardly notices it. It may be a little bigger than the Fort at Batticaloa

judging by only the little of it that saw today. The Fort in Ceylon must be what the cathedrals are in England but as befits their purpose, they are quite differently situated. The forts here, as the cathedrals there, are the major buildings, but they are not half as old as the cathedrals. You would not think, seeing it now, that Galle was once Ceylon's major port.

Inania of this, that and the other

61 to 301! BY INNA

SOME YEARS AGO there was a big *furor* in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, about some clergymen who spoke up for justice and asked that the question of matrimony / celibacy be rethought and re-discussed because it "really did not belong to church dogma but to a particular discipline of the Latin church" (as I have it on good authority).

They may have had their own ideas, but the terrible onslaught and the onrush of the usually sedate clergymen of Ceylon on that unhappy band of 61 (or is it more?) still sounds nightmarish, if you ask some who stayed behind in this country. The most vociferously puritan and purity loving suddenly became unchristian and uncharitable almost over-night.

On the other hand, perhaps re-thinking celibacy and marriage etc might have been a happy pastime for those who feel they have nothing else to do in a church (or churches) that do not do much else besides buying to find out what next to do for the church (or churches!)

Comes like a whiff of fresh air, the news-item—it's old now, dated 18th June 1974—that 301 (301) Vietnamese priests made a declaration and signed it accusing the Thieu regime of corruption, injustice and social vice. They condemn;

"the rotten politics and the egoism of those who, wishing to possess power and riches, consider the individual person and human values as commercial goods".

THESE PRIESTS do not mince their words as they rebuke the government, calling by name the "governmental maffia" that stockpiles food, fertilizer, raw material

and drugs with the complicity of racketeers in order to "impo-
rish the poor and enrich the wealthy."
They assert that the politics of
the economic blockade directed
at the enemy has only served to
make the people poorer: that
these people have to buy rice at ex-
pensive rates and that many fami-
lies die of starvation in the central
Vietnam provinces.

The courageous priests—few and
far between in S.E. Asia—signed
the document and made an appeal
to Catholics: asking them "to
collaborate in all the efforts at
realising a revolution meant to
bring greater vigour to corrupt
society, a revolution that is meant
to rebuild a new society, true
and just, one which will assure to
all levels of society a decent life,
peace and happiness."

*Vicars-general, Professors of semi-
naries, Military chaplains, parish
priests and assistants have signed
up. The tenor of the document sug-
gests they are prepared to sign with
their blood.*

When the text was issued, the
police had cordoned off a sector
of Saigon in which the members
of this movement were to hold a
press-conference. *ICI, Asie, p.
30/n. 460, 15 juillet 1974.* No
one would expect the 301 to be-
come 1001, but wait! Reflect!

The Christian Churches always
say they have come to preach to
the poor and they have the needle-
story about the rich, etc. but when
it comes to face-saving, Asia, or
Australia or any continent, Vietnam
or Atlantis, it's all the same: a
little opposition and a good many
of the 1001, of the 301 and the 61
soon become 21 and we'll be glad
if it comes down even to five! No
body is to blame any one else.
We are all selfish, but if we looked
to the hard-core of the religious
principles — which we generally
leave and go around for better
pastures—of all religions, we will
find a radical plea for *selflessness*.

FARMING

OLD AND NEW

by N. C. B. Lekamge

—Edited by Jepharis

Mr. N. C. B. Lekamge writes
to me from Kundasale: "I had
put away in my file what I had
written about the talk on agricul-
tural methods. It was most interest-
ing and the young farmers (of
Devasaranaramaya) questioned the

speaker for a long time, showing
how keen they were about it.
I wish I had taken down some
notes, as I could have made the
article of greater value to the
public." Anyhow we have pleasure
in quoting in extenso from
the material he has sent, viz:
"Our old agricultural methods
practised by our grandfathers are
more suitable to the villages and
are in every way far superior to
the modern methods", stated Mr.
M. Tennekoon, a veteran farmer of
the Heladiya Govi Sammenalaya.
He was addressing the young
farmers of the Collective Farm at
Devasaranaramaya, Ibbagamuwa.
Land belonging to any farmer in
a village could be divided into 3
sections. (1) The *Kotuwa* or the
home-garden, where medicinal
plants, herbs, betel and various
useful plants grew. (2) The *Hena*
or *chena* where all kinds of grains
and vegetables grew. (3) The
Kumbura or paddy field.

In the *Kotuwa*, daily requirements
of leaves such as Kankung and
Mukunuwenna and medicinal herbs
grew in an enclosed area. The leaves
that fell from trees, the ash from
the fireplace, rubbish from the
kitchen and cow-dung etc made
excellent manure. There was no
need for artificial fertilisers or
insecticides. (No need for insecti-
cides!—Jeph.)

In the *Hena*, villagers cleared
the jungle and burnt it. The ash
formed a layer of manure on the
rich top soil, which was then turned
over by digging with a mamoty.
There was no need for a tractor
which often dug too deep into
the soil and thus did more harm
than good. (The top-soil was of
the greatest nutrient value—Jeph.)
The Farmer grew gingelly (*thala*)
as the first crop. This prevented
the subsequent crops from getting
any kind of disease. He had learnt
this from experience or from the
advice given by older farmers.
He next grew various kinds of grain
or vegetables to find out which of
them thrived best in that soil,
climate or in that particular area.
His father and grandfather had
found out these methods by trial
and error and handed down their
experience to their sons, who fol-
lowed the advice faithfully. There
was no need, for instance, to test
the soil and follow the instructions
of agricultural officers, perhaps
more scientific though they may be

In the *Kumbura* too the village
farmer of old used the mamoty
and the nagula to prepare the paddy
field. The use of the tractor did
more harm than good. (Buffaloes
would be better—Jeph.) It made it
absolutely necessary to use artificial
manure, which in itself was more
harmful to the soil and also far
too expensive for the poor village
farmer. (It was also readily avail-
able—Jeph.)

He used the best seed paddy of
certain varieties which, by experi-
ence, he had found most suitable
for that area. The names of these
fine local varieties are not even
known by the young farmers of
today. For, these very same vari-
eties have been sent to countries
like the Phillipines, where they
are mixed with other varieties for
better yield and sent back to us
with different names such as IR 8.

If one wanted to find out how
good these local varieties of paddy
are or the many different methods
used in olden times one had to
speak to the grandfather of the
present day farmer. The speaker
had visited villages in various parts
of the island and spoken to this
outgoing tribe of old farmers full
of knowledge of the best vari-
eties of paddy, now not heard of,
and traditional methods adopted
by many generations with very
good results. When questioned
they testified that those vari-
eties could be preserved for longer
periods, were tastier, more nour-
ishing in that they supplied more strength
to the hard-working farmers.
*Whereas the new varieties, like
IR 8, though producing bigger yield
by the use of artificial fertilisers,
were tasteless and like straw, could
not be preserved for long periods
and supplied no energy to the toiling
farmer. After a heavy meal, in a
very short time, one felt hungry again.*
The old farmers knew different kinds
of plants grown near paddy fields
to control pests and harmful insects
which attacked the paddy plant.
They explained how some fine sand
from the oya or river, after re-
petition of some manthram (*mathu-
rala*) was hurled at the insects
which were thus destroyed. Like
some of the best medicines
of the ancient vedaras, this excel-
lent knowledge of Sinhala agricul-
tural methods handed down for
generations past will die with the
'Siyas' of the villages.

IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

• In The Plantations

IS IT NOT HEARTENING that at least the *Aththa*, of all the daily papers, should give publicity to certain realities that cannot be overlooked? That the *Aththa* of March 11 in a lead story had reported that a shortage running into lakhs of rupees had been discovered in the accounts of Yatederiya Estate in the Kegalle District? That a few excerpts from the *Aththa* report are published below without comment?

"The Auditor General is conducting an inquiry into a cash shortage in the accounts of the Yatederiya Estate which was taken over under Land Reform and which is presently administered by the Kegalle Kachcheri. The inquiries of the Auditor General has revealed that although all income from this estate is deposited in a miscellaneous account at the Kachcheri, monies running into lakhs have been withdrawn without any authority from any responsible officer. Yatederiya estate consists of tea and rubber. The produce is sold to John Keel and Company. Between February 1973 and February 1975 nearly 10 lakhs from the income of this estate had been deposited in the miscellaneous account maintained at the Kegalle Kachcheri. Although it is required that, whenever monies are withdrawn, the authority of the officers of the Kachcheri has to be obtained. The inquiries reveal that the monies have been authorised and withdrawn by a clerk at the Kachcheri. It is also required that monies withdrawn have to be supported by vouchers and receipts. No such procedure has been followed. The Kachcheri officials have failed to produce any paysheets and receipts relating to payment of wages to the workers of Yatederiya Estate."

IS IT ANY SURPRISE that the UNP, should pick on these sad defaults and make propaganda against the Government? That a recent issue of the (UNP) *Journal* drew

attention the new situation which has begun to manifest itself in the plantation areas? That this issue of the *Journal* had stated thus: "....

"...The UF it appears has turned deaf to those tales and blind to the actual happenings. Occasionally, a whisper is heard as was seen in the CP's '*Aththa*' when it had an editorial pointing out how the estates have become the private property of MPs. In short, it said that a new landed class was in the process of being born. This class is more or less the reincarnation of the dreaded early feudal class and alike thrives on the sweat, misery and pain of those under their control. This new landlord class lives in luxury and holds regular tamashas for various purposes. The ceilings are no barriers to the new UF landlords. They rob the lands in numerous ways. The chief are the following: (1) Only part of the full wage is paid to the labourers, the balance is robbed by the new landlords; (2) In the case of tea leaf plucked by the workers, they are paid for part of the quantity and the balance is taken by the new landlords and made into tea without being shown in the books. Some of this 'stolen' tea is openly sold to the tourists; (3) Voted monies, in fact, are under-expended but inflated receipts are produced; (4) Estate property like mammoties etc. are declared 'lost' and secretly sold; (5) Bogus purchases are being made. By these and many other ways, the new landlord class is exploiting the workers and the people. All these have to a large extent become possible because the workers have been deprived of the trade union rights. By a deliberate stroke the new landlords have taken away the rights of these people and reduced them to a voiceless class. The slightest suspicion is enough and the workers are thrown out..."

That this excerpt too does not need any comment? That UF enthusiasts who do not know any-

thing about developments in the estates might be tempted to argue that a reactionary and Opposition paper like the UNP's *Journal* publishes false stories to bring discredit to the Government? That no notice should be taken of anything which appears in the *Journal*? That this argument might go down with those who do not know that many trade unionists from UF trade unions confirm everything set out by the *Aththa* and the *Journal* in regard to conditions in the estates taken over under Land Reform? That the UF trade unions have been silent about some of these happenings? That the *Aththa* will naturally check such facts with communist activists in the CP-led trade unions in the plantations? That the CWC has been shouting its head off about some of these scandalous developments in the plantations, but UF propagandists seem to think that no attention need be paid to anything from Thondaman? That Thondaman or not, truth like murder will out, sooner or later?

That, except in the estates being managed by the State Plantations Corporation where trade union rights of the workers even if they are of Indian origin are still respected in some measure (especially if they also pretend to belong to the LSSP union), workers who had been employed in the estates taken over under land reform have virtually lost all trade union and human rights? That workers with non-Sinhala names are treated worse than in the worst days of the old planters' raj before trade unionism had brought any sense of self-respect and dignity to these much exploited "labourers"? That the stories one hears from UF trade union organisers in the plantations about the treatment being meted out to workers (not merely workers of Indian origin) by the new land-controllers (no more landowners) makes one wonder whether we have slipped back a few centuries into old world feudal slavery? That occasional Ministerial proclamations that workers' rights were being observed in the plantations taken over by Land Reform are far removed from actual realities?

THERE WILL BE NO ISSUE OF TRIBUNE NEXT WEEK AS IT IS THE SINHALA AND TAMIL NEW YEAR WEEK.