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Are We Drifting To A New Political Era?

SUNSHINE TIME, it would appear, has once again come upon Sri Lanka. *Sunshine Stories* have proliferated abundantly over the state-owned radio and in the columns of newspapers directly or remotely managed by governmental authorities. *Sunshine Days* are here again with de-rated flour freely available from April Fool's Day at Rs. 1.10 a lb (a price at which the government makes an unconscionable profit), with de-rated textiles readily available at prices which very few can afford (low quality imported textiles at fantastically marked up prices to pay for

the unnecessarily large numbers employed by the Salu Sala), and with promises that everything unavailable for a long time (garlic, *suthuru*, *mathuru*, tumeric, dates, etc., etc) will be distributed for New Year, with assurances that the queues at the co-ops would end soon, with boastful announcements of a better Railway service (without restaurant cars), in short with everything better everywhere.

It is not clear yet whether this supreme effort to build an atmosphere of a paradise on earth (in spite of the international economic crisis and the adverse weather

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LAND REFORM ANOMALIES

When the history of the current Land Reform comes to be written objectively, without the polemical bias which now clouds any discussion on the matter, it will be found that present Land Reform has in many cases, benefited persons who were not expected to get any benefits at all. Some of these instances have gained such notoriety that they have become the talking point in political circles within the United Front hierarchy itself. These facts have not yet filtered through in a big way to Opposition quarters but there is no doubt that they will sooner or later, and when this happens it will provide good propaganda material for the next elections. To cut a long story short, certain political bosses including MPs have been placed in charge of a large number of highly developed estates and agricultural units. One of them, *Tribune* has discovered, is the overlord of nearly 10,000 acres of high yielding lands. And if stories are believed he is a true lord and master of all he surveys. Accounting procedures have not yet been evolved to help operate these large extents which have come under the control of a few individuals. And accountability is not a concept that worries those who are today implementing land reform. Big private landowners have disappeared, but a new breed of new *land-controllers* have appeared. And at the moment these *land-controllers* are not accountable to anybody. The newspapers recently had a story about a report from the Auditor General in which he pointed out that monies deposited into the Kegalle kachcheri on account of Yaterderiya Estate (taken over) had been drawn by a persons who had not accounted for the money. The withdrawals had not been covered either by receipts or vouchers. This same story will be repeated in a very large (really large) number of cases.

conditions in the island), especially by Minister Ilangaratne, has been prompted by (a) the need to undermine the UNP campaign to denigrate the government on the basis of hardships now being suffered by the people, (b) the imperative urgency to impress the delegates attending the IPU conference next week that Sri Lanka has climbed over the hump of its travails, (c) to tell the Arab and other countries sceptical about Sri Lanka's capability to host the Non-aligned Summit in September 1976 that everything was hunky-dory once again; and (d) to unleash a propaganda barrage based on popular measures like de-ratifying flour and textiles to set up a battlement from which to launch a preemptive strike against any possible attempt to form a National Government which would include elements from the UNP.

Moreover, it is also customary in the era of adult franchise and parliamentary elections, for governments in Sri Lanka to endeavour to placate and appease Sinhala Buddhist voters with tidbits and delicacies (thus also spreading sunshine to a few others living in the favoured electorates) for the celebrations in mid-April. Such efforts at morale-boosting have been undertaken so often during the last thirty years by the different governments that the fresh effort, now being made with a big bang, has so far not generated any special enthusiasm—except amongst the politically committed and the favoured elite at different levels brought into being after 1970 by the United Front. Nearly everybody (except the young who are anyhow in the dumps owing to the absence of

proper educational and employment facilities) know how these efforts at *sunshine spreading* had, in the past, nearly always turned into mirages and moonshine. This transformation from sunshine to moonshine has happened ever so often that nobody (except the slogan shouters) will be taken in by the current outburst of glad tidings. De-rated wheat flour, everybody knows, is to make people forget the unavailability of off-ration rice in the coming months, and that de-rated textiles is only to spread a smokescreen over the mess in Salu Sala which has accumulated stocks of poor quality textiles which must be cleared before they deteriorate any further (it is a Clearance Sale with the prices marked up!)

SUCH SUNSHINE FAIRY TALES (which will soon be transformed into mirages and moonshine) will fool nobody. It will only make people more angry. They know that economic conditions are deteriorating everyday. For one thing, the number of registered unemployed had topped the half million mark at the end of last October. According to the January issue of the official *Sri Lanka Labour Gazette*, which was released only a short time ago, the number registered in October for employment was 500,519. In January 1974, the figure had been 473,734. It will be some months before the January 1975 figures are made available. The classification of the 500,519 was as follows: Technical and clerical 91,212; skilled, 45,735; semi-skilled 115,511; and unskilled, 248,252. Even if some under-employed persons (in the first three categories) had also put their names down for better jobs, the statistics are appalling for a population of 13 million people. The number of persons placed in employment in October last was only 92.

One can detail a whole lot of other statistical data to show that conditions are deteriorating in important sectors of the economy and that the attempts to boost morale by presenting insignificant improvements in inconsequential matters as world-shaking improvements will soon boomerang on the purveyors of glad-tidings in no uncertain manner.

It is true that a few more tourists have come to Sri Lanka in 1974 as

compared to 1973, but challenging the statistics of the Central Bank on tourists earnings (which will probably be asked to toe the line as in the case of the paddy production statistics of 1974) will not turn black into white and make people believe that tourism will save Sri Lanka's economy. Gem exports have certainly brought into governmental coffers part of the millions which had earlier gone into the blackmarket and the black-money hoards of a few individuals, but are gem exports permanent, (how long will our deposits last?), and how long will the boom last? And, have gem exports with CRAs not created socio-political and economic problems which threaten to bring discredit to certain governmental authorities? And can the export of the so-called non-traditional exports (in many cases commodities essential for internal consumption) bridge the gulf in our trade balances and the gap in our foreign exchange earning deficits? And can the volume of our traditional exports (in the face of sharply declining production) be stabilised, because what is important in the long run is not the prices obtained in the unreal world of inflation today but the total quantity we produce? And can the mere expansion of public sector control over large segments of the economy bring (per se) happiness, contentment, socialism (synonymous with good life) and (in god's good time) plenitude with affluence for the ordinary people and the masses of Sri Lanka?

APOLOGISTS AGREE that things are bad, but they say that it is only necessary for Government to hold on until 1976, when the waters of the Mahaveli will flow into the dry areas of the Wannai (inducing an agricultural boom which will put any Green Revolution anywhere to shame), when oil from Pesalai will not only stop the drain of foreign exchange for oil imports but will also enable us to earn foreign exchange from oil exports, and when non-traditional exports, (gem exports), and tourism will be such that it would be no longer necessary to depend on our traditional exports like tea, rubber and coconut (with production declining owing the disruption caused by land reform which was essential, it is said, to pave the way for a classless society).

Mahaveli water will certainly go north to the Wannai, but whether it will enable bigtime cultivation to effect a major breakthrough into agricultural self-sufficiency within a year (before the 1977 elections) is doubtful. For the Mahaveli diversion scheme to bring appreciable results will take many more years than what some people imagine. As for oil, we had been assured last year that by this Sinhala New Year (1975) we will be using Pesalai oil, but that has now been put back by another year. It will, however, take a few more years before the oil from Pesalai or Delft or Muilaitivu—or even offshore near Hambantota to please the kindly souls from the South—can make any sizable impact on our economy.

There is no doubt, however, that this Government has effectively accomplished many fundamental changes—much more than any other after Independence. We have a new land tenure system, we have a new education system, we have a new tax system, we have a new pattern in the import and export economy, we have a new wholesale and retail distribution system, we have nationalised many segments in the economy, we have public sector undertakings making millions for the state exchequer (though the prices charged for goods and services are unnecessarily high), we have a new legal system (pregnant with many new concepts floating around like a "committed judiciary"), and we have a brand new Constitution and a new name for the island.

All these things have been done, but the question is whether these changes will pave the way for socialism or something else: whether these changes and the way they were put into effect will contribute to economic development and the consequent economic emancipation of the masses; whether our pre-occupation with these doctrinaire-motivated changes has made us subordinate basic economic imperatives to transient political considerations (believed crucial for the next elections) and thereby undermined production and productivity; whether in pursuing objectives which we thought were infallible we did not fall victim to sectarianism which

has made national unity impossible of achievement in the foreseeable future; and also whether in our anxiety to get quick results and ensure super-duper social welfarism for our workers (which even affluent societies, let alone developing, either capitalist or socialist, can ever hope to give its entire population in these critical times when so much is spent on armaments), we have failed to provide the appropriate inducements for peasants to produce more food (nor have our workers got anywhere near minimum productivity with all the feather-bedding and pampering they have received).

One reason which workers and peasants trot out for not working as hard as they should is that the new elite (into which most of the old elite of UNP vintage have been successfully merged) gaud about arrogantly in 5 Sri and 6 Sri cars, indulge in ostentatious consumption expenditure (buying and selling smuggled luxury items etc.), flock to the new tourist hotels and inns spending money freely—all this and more without doing an eight hours' job work every day. If workers and peasants are prepared to excuse private capitalists and entrepreneurs (who are among the closest to some of our Ministers and top bureaucratic bigwigs) for such lapses, they are not disposed to excuse the new breed of Corporation chairman, directors and officials seen at the wrong places at the wrong times (who somehow even find the money to patronise regularly hotels and blackmarket shops). And, the luxury air-conditioned cars which our Ministers use have become a matter of common talk in the villages. (By comparison, UNP leaders and political activities seem to lead much more austere lives, and this was much talked about in the rural villages of the Kala-wewa electorate during the last by-election).

WHAT A LARGE NUMBER of those who are enthusiastic about this Government do not seem to realise is that there has grown a great credibility and confidence gap between the ruling elite and the ordinary people—and this is growing daily in spite of the sunshine stories spread by the Radio and the newspapers. The fact that people have not expressed their dissatisfaction in more voluble and vehement terms (no doubt because

the UNP has not been able to give a positive and purposeful lead) should not blind the leaders of the Government to realities. The volcano can blow up anytime.

Moreover, what many ignore is that there is great disillusionment within various sections of the Government and the United Front itself. There is talk—for the first time since 1970 in the most unexpected quarters—about a National Government of the Centre-Right consisting of elements from the SLFP and UNP with the Left kept out if the Left oppose a new national programme of regeneration. There are whisperers about secret confabulations about which nobody wants to speak in public or openly.

To meet this "threat" of a National Government, the Left (through the trade unions in particular) has started a hue and cry about the danger of fascism—a doctrinaire term which has little or no meaning for those not already indoctrinated by Left ideology. This kind of oblique strategy to contain the tide of rightwingism cannot produce the desired results.

J. R. Jayewardene, for a long time, had an oversimplified belief that rightwing polarisation would take place when the proper persons and sections were sermonised (privately and not publicly) about their class interests and the need to contain revolutionary communism. This kind of over-simplified strategy had produced the most temporary of results in the days when the cold war of John Foster Dulles had been dominant. But those days are now no more.

Neither rightwing polarisation nor leftwing polarisation can be achieved in the way some infantile doctrinaire textbooks prescribe or dogmatic pundits preach. Class forces and class alignments have undergone so many changes not only in every part of the world but also in Sri Lanka that none of the old formulae seem to work.

But it would seem that the Right is learning the lessons of the changes sooner than the Left. It will be noticed that the Right in Sri Lanka now no longer insists on being the leader of the fight against the Left. It seeks to win over the Centre and induce it to become the leading

force in such a coalition. It is no longer a Right-Centre coalition they want. It is Centre-Right coalition. The UNP, or at least dominant sections of its leadership led by JR, are willing to make Centrist SLFP elements the leaders of a new Coalition they will call a National Government.

This challenge cannot be met by the Left by haranguing about a fascist rightwing conspiracy. The centrists in the proposed National



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Government coalition will not be disturbed by alarmist cries about "fascism".

Though the Left in Sri Lanka has scored many victories since 1970 and captured positions of strength in the Government, in the Administration and in the Economic Establishment, it is still very isolated from the Centrist elements in the SLFP and in the country. Shouting about fascism will not bring the Centrists to the Left, and without the Centrists, the Left will be far too isolated from the masses of ordinary people especially in the rural areas. At this time they are not strong enough to take over power all by themselves. The Left, unfortunately, has by some of its *too-much-in-a-hurry* policies, (which they stampeded the Centrist leaders to accept and adopt), created a gulf between the still uncommitted masses of the country and the United Front Coalition. And the Centrists in the SLFP have begun to feel the impact of this isolation (as evidenced in the recent by-elections) and many of them (at least in secret so far), have begun to think fresh about alignments and coalitions before the next elections.

THE PRESENT UF COALITION is a Centre-Left coalition, and in the years after 1970 the Left has pushed its policies to the fore, often without getting the necessary consensus. And it is also true that this haste (and hurry) has produced adverse results. And now the Centrists have become apprehensive and have begun to think things over as to what is in their best political interests. And the UNP is willing to adopt Centrist postures and permit the longstanding Centrists of the SLFP to be the dominant factor in a coalition.

The crucial question now being asked in certain quarters is whether the Left will be willing to support a Centre-Right coalition or even participate in a National Government of that complexion? The Left has four options: *one* to join such a coalition, but exercise far less power than it has done after 1970 and even to see some of its pet legislation reversed; *second* to stay out of such a coalition and form the official Opposition in the Assembly until such times as it can win sufficient popularity to form a Government; *third* to make a fresh bid to effect a new polarisation so as to secure adequate support

from within the SLFP Centrists so that it can form a Government of its own (Left-Centre) with Centrist support.

There is also the *fourth* option: that is to preserve the present Centre-Left coalition as it is and continue to push a left programme through the Centrists in the coalition. There is no doubt that this is the option which is being pushed forward under great stress at the moment. There has been trade union mobilisation to meet the creeping challenge from the UNP seeking a new coalition under SLFP leadership. Owing to the tactical mistakes of the UNP, this challenge did not materialise during the Kalawewa by-election time. But, the same mistakes may not be made again.

If the fourth option cannot meet the dynamic needs of the current situation, or it has become too late and too anachronistic to work, the Left will have to fall back upon one of the first three options. Will it temporarily co-operate in a National Government with only a shadow of the power the Left has enjoyed in the last five years? Will the Left want to stop to conquer in this fashion? Or will it prefer to become the official Opposition in the parliamentary system and bide its time to win governmental power at an election? Or is the Left strong and clever enough to compel a new polarisation to bring about a *Left-centre* coalition.

Chile is always cited as an example where a rightwing counter-revolutionary conspiracy overthrew a (romantic-idealistic) Left government. Allende went too far and too fast with his leftwing policies without winning consensus and thereby alienating the Centrist middle classes. The Chilean army was very much on the Right but it had taken a neutral position until the middle classes had been induced to challenge Allende (the CIA was able to assist in this process only because the conditions had been created by Allende's mistakes for such intervention). Allende could not withstand a *de facto* coalition of the Centre-Right, but a bunch of stupid army colonels have brutalised the elimination of the Left to such a degree that the Junta has not been able to win national, regional or international sympathy or support.

In Portugal, the Left is proceeding much more cautiously and much

more cleverly. The Communists, who are admittedly the best organised party in the Armed Forces Movement, in the Trade Unions and even among important sections of the middle classes, have insisted that a National Coalition on a common programme must be set up—although the Communist Party is in a position to assume supreme power through the Armed Forces Movement. It is interesting to watch developments in Portugal. The Left has to find a *modus vivendi* to survive in Western Europe, within the bosom of NATO, and with the USA casting anxious eyes on developments in Portugal.

One wrong move by the Left will end in setbacks that will put the clock back—from the Left point of view. One false move by the Right had been cleverly seized upon by the Left to ease out Centrist political opponents who wanted a big tilting to the Right. The extreme Right had been weakened by the April 1974 bloodless coup and Caetano had fled to Brazil. The March 1975 mini-coup led by Spínola (who had been moved out towards the end of last year from top leadership) was evidently organised by Rightists who had masqueraded as Centrists and Leftists so far. But this mini-coup was a fatal mistake so far as the Rightists and Centrists were concerned.

In Sri Lanka we have entered a new phase which is likely to usher in a completely new political situation within a short time. We have written about this on many occasions in the recent past, more especially during the Kalawewa by-election: There has been a lull in the process of rethinking of this trend in many quarters, but it is now evident that influential circles in our political firmament are again on the move to find a way out of current difficulties and also ensure victory in the 1977 elections.

Will there be fundamental changes in political alignments at all? Will the UF continue in its present form until 1977 and thereafter? Or will a new coalition or 2 new series of coalitions emerge in the course of the next two years?

These are questions that baffle politicians but are of consuming interest to students of politics and observers of the contemporary scene.

Tribunania

Petrodollars

Anura

THE WORLD ECONOMIC RECESSIONARY CRISIS continues to grow in complexity. Saudi Arabia decided in the second week of this month to cut currency links with the Dollar and fix a new parity against the IMF Special Drawing Right. Kuwait is likely to follow suit within a short time, if she has not already done it by the time this appears in print. This is the inference which observers have drawn from the fact that on March 17 Kuwait had suspended all dollar transactions in view of the unsettled monetary situation.

Iran had already decided to link her currency with the SDR. Kuwait will be third major oil exporting to do so. One by one, oil-exporting countries are abandoning the weakening dollar as its monetary yardstick and instead are hooking on to the "basket" of 16 leading currencies against which the IMF unit is valued. Concretely this will not have any immediate effect on the cost of oil to importing countries—contracts are still written in dollars and sterling—but this is an indication of growing weakness of the dollar and may ultimately help to keep down the cost of the oil to consumer countries.

This cutting away from the dollar has stemmed from the apprehension OPEC countries have shown over the reduction of their purchasing power caused by the dollar's decline against other important currencies. The IMF does not permit oil exporting countries which have adopted the SDR parity to revalue their currencies against the dollar—which would have the result of reducing industrial imports for them from the US. As more and more of the oil-exporters switch to SDR-based currencies, OPEC will have the task of safeguarding oil revenues against currency fluctuations and the global inflation. OPEC will therefore want to fix oil prices in terms of the IMF unit or some other currency basket and then index the

price on the cost of the member's industrial imports.

Within a day or two of Kuwait's decision to suspend dollar transactions, Qatar followed suit and it is expected that all countries in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will also seek a revaluation of their currency, the *dirham*. Although it was first believed that the Saudi Arabian *ryal* would be raised by 2.3 percent in relation to the US dollar, giving a new exchange rate of \$ 1 to 3.47 rials, the Saudi Arabian government decided otherwise and severed its links with its dollar in favour of the IMF's SDR. And UAE bankers now seem to be already basing their calculations in SDRs.

In this connection it is interesting to note that World Bank President McNamara has recently visited the UAE countries to negotiate a plan to increase the Arab (OPEC) countries share of the organisation's weighted voting rights to a level consistent with their contributions to the capital and special facilities. Mr. McNamara is also believed to have discussed other matters like the export of capital by oil exporters as loans to countries with balance-of-payments difficulties and about OPEC participation in financing development projects. Mr. McNamara has visited not only UAE countries on this trip, but also Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar.

Oil exporting countries had, for a long time now, felt that their currencies were grossly undervalued and there has been talk that they were likely to be revalued as against the dollar. But instead they have chosen to fix new parities against SDR units. Even before the OPEC countries had started pushing up oil prices they had complained about the inflated prices they had to pay for food—they have to import all of their food requirements. Global inflation still keeps prices high whilst oil revenues are coming down because of the reduced world consumption of oil.

The Arab oil exporting countries' decision to sever their links with the dollar is only another manifestation of the growing intricacies of the world economic and monetary recession. The Bretton Woods agreement making the dollar one of the two reserve currencies can now be regarded

as a dead letter, and without much fanfare SDR's seem to be stepping into the vacuum in a world where currencies had been allowed to float for too long a time.

Although developing countries have shown a great deal of sympathy and understanding for the OPEC countries in their fight against the rich western industrialised countries and Japan, the investment policies now being pursued by the oil-exporters are not likely to be of any value or significance to the poorer developing countries. Fidel Castro, at a recent meeting of the non-aligned nations in Havana, had good reason to ask the OPEC countries to invest, in the first instances, in the poor developing countries. This request was no doubt made because the rich oil-exporting Arab countries had so far invested the bulk—the overwhelming bulk—of their surplus money in Western countries. So heavy has been the deluge of such petrodollars that there has been talk in Britain France and the USA about putting up barriers to keep the Arab sheiks away from taking over major industrial companies. Whenever the oil countries wanted to inject money into "sick" companies they were most welcome, like Iran buying *ailing in-the-red* Pan Am in the USA or putting massive doses of cash into the sagging Krupp Empire in West Germany. But when the Iranians and Arabs cast covetous eyes on Daimler Benz, the makers of the Mercedes Benz cars and trucks there was an immediate outcry and there were suggestions about snap legislation to keep them away. In the US, there has been serious talk about legislation to keep foreigners away from taking over traditional companies.

One significant development which has not been adequately dealt with in our local daily press is that US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, with the backing of Britain and West Germany, has succeeded to some extent in dividing the OPEC countries. Neither Iran nor Arab countries have any original ideas about investing their vast cash surpluses. Moreover, their leading investment advisers and consultants, their bankers and financial experts and their economic experts and analysts are Western. Merchant bankers from London, New York and Hamburg are today moving from one Arab (oil-

exporting) capital to another making deals. British, American and German real estate agents are also on the prowl trying to sell choice properties to the sheiks at astronomical figures. Some castles, some beautiful houses and prestigious blocks of flats have fallen into Arab hands. There is a story floating around that a curious Asian had asked a British merchant what the people would do if they suddenly found that the Arabs had cornered the best British properties, and the reply was simply: "...we will just nationalise them one day and decide ourselves what compensation to pay them..."

Many oil sheiks are now worried about such consequences, and they are having second thoughts about dumping their money into western industrialised companies. Apart from anything else, there is nothing to stop those concerns from "going bankrupt" while the going was good with all the Arab cash—and the Arabs have neither the expertise nor the political and racial connections to run these companies. It is not unlikely that western bankers and investment agents are taking the Arabs for a ride to fritter away their cash surpluses.

OPEC countries have thus found it necessary to re-think their dealings with Western countries. Boumediene has asked the western countries for better co-operation, because the Arabs and the Iranians have now discovered that they are paying highly inflated prices for their food, technology military hardware and investments in Western countries.

It must be noted that Saudi Arabia and a few other Arab states in the Persian Gulf area do not see eye to eye with other members of OPEC in regard to oil prices or production cuts. In this back-

ground, the conference which will meet in Paris next month of oil exporting and oil consuming countries has great significance. France is the one western country which has refused to meet the oil crisis with "confrontation", and it has laboured hard to bring about such a conference in the correct climate and atmosphere. The present disunity in the OPEC countries, with Algeria and others taking an aggressive attitude whilst Saudi Arabia and other countries are taking a more flexible and moderate role will help the consumers of oil to arrange for oil supplies at prices more reasonable than they were in 1974.

One reason for this is that consuming countries are buying less oil (they cannot afford to pay the prices fixed by OPEC), and a large number of the super-tankers are therefore idle. Furthermore OPEC countries find that petrodollar surpluses can create many new problems which are more difficult to solve than the old problems they sought to overcome by obtaining higher prices for oil. Petrodollars may soon go the way that Eurodollars have already gone.

ANURA BANDARANAIKE AND KIM ILL SUNG. Nearer home, many eye-brows were lifted when Anura Bandaranaike was sent as a kind of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and as the leader of a high-powered official delegation to North Korea and China. Before this he had acquired an official status as an Adviser (Honorary) on Youth Participation to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and had also been appointed as a member of the National Advisory Committee on Student Affairs. With these credentials, Anura Bandaranaike had gone to Peking and North Korea.

In Pyongyang he has had a three hour chat with Kim Ill Sung and among other matters seems to have even persuaded the North Korean leader to visit Sri Lanka in 1976 if North Korea was invited to attend the Non-aligned Summit. Anura Bandaranaike was sent to normalise diplomatic relations with North Korea on a step-by-step basis but he seems to have done more. He has persuaded Kim Ill Sung to give Sri Lanka about Rs 7 million worth of agricultural pumps, tractors and the like as a gift.

But what is intriguing to local observers is that in an interview to the *Daily Mirror* after his return, Anura Bandaranaike had stated: "Some of the so-called leftists had tried to brand me as a reactionary. But I would like to tell them that if I were a reactionary I would have visited South Korea and not North Korea, gone to Taiwan and not Peking and met the American Ambassador in China instead of Prince Sihanouk."

It is clear that Anura Bandaranaike wants to establish his position as a Centrist with Leftwing sympathies rather than let his opponents brand him as a Rightwing reactionary. Interesting developments are expected in the coming weeks in the mini-cold war that has enlivened the atmosphere within the United Front for sometime now. In the meantime, the latest issue of *Ada*, a paper believed to reflect the views of Anura Bandaranaike, has hinted that a general elections in 1975 was a possibility—because under certain circumstances the PM might be compelled to dissolve Parliament even this year. *Tribune* will examine this in the next issue.

CHRONICLE

MARCH 11 — 17

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 11: Diplomatic sources in Colombo yesterday confirmed reports of a palace revolution in the Maldives; these sources said that the Maldivian Prime Minister Mr. Ahmed Zaki has been deposed by President Mr. Ibrahim Nazir on Thursday night; Mr. Zaki and his chief of protocol, Mr. Ahmed Jaleel, were confined to an island close to Male—CDN.

Top level discussions are in progress to introduce further progressive approaches in the SLFP-LSSP-CP United Front's common programme to cover the two years left before the next General Elections in May 1977: leaders of the three constituent parties of the United Front have been meeting regularly to discuss a series of proposals which have been put up by the different parties—CDN. Employees in private sector firms not governed by the Collective Agreement and in receipt of salaries less than Rs. 800 per month will receive a wage increase of Rs. 25 with effect from February 1st—CDM. Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and Construction speaking at a meeting in Colombo said that the UNP should start to look around for a new leader in 1976 as Mr. J. R. Jayewardene will never be able to make good his promise to force a general election

in 1975—CDN & CDM. A joint India-Sri Lanka police dragnet is expected to close in on key operators of the Indian connection of the drug traffic—CDM. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Chief Organiser of the SLFP youth league was accorded a rousing welcome when he arrived in Pyongyang from Peking by a special plane provided by President Kim Ill Sung CDM. The counterfeit currency bureau of the CID yesterday contacted its counterpart in the United State and INTERPOL in connection with the detection of a large quantity of forged US \$ 20 bills in Colombo during the week-end—CDN.

According to *Time* magazine the Central Intelligence Agency of America once used hired gunmen to try to kill Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba, Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican republic and Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier of Haiti. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger left Israel for a short visit to Ankara.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12: Kuwait, which has allocated one third of its oil revenue to assist the developing countries, is likely to increase its aid to Sri Lanka too: Kuwait has already pledged a sum of Rs. 10 million US dollars as development aid to Sri Lanka—CDN. The official black-out on news from the Maldivé Islands followed the removal of Premier Zaki in a palace revolution last Thursday continued yesterday in Colombo: neither the Ambassador nor any Embassy official was available for comment yesterday—CDN. Sri Lanka's trade delegation to Australia has contracted to purchase 50,000 tons of flour from the Australia Wheat Board at very favourable terms: the delegation returned to the island last night—CDM. The Joint Council of Management of the X-Ray Technical Officers Union, Government Physiotherapists' Union and Government Medical Laboratory Technologists Union have endorsed their earlier decision to call out their members throughout the island on strike from Friday—CDM. The Colombo branch of the GMOA meets at noon today to review the situation regarding its threat of trade union action over the non-release of three medical officers to take to up appointment in the University of Sri Lanka—CDN. Fortysix countries have accepted invitation to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference which is to take place at the MBICH from March 31 to April 5: seventy six countries have been invited and about 500 representatives are expected to attend—CDN. Owing to the strict enforcement of regulations by the Customs fewer Indians attended the annual Kachchativu festival this year according to Indian press reports—CDM. 50 per cent of the science graduates who are appointed to Government teaching posts abandon their posts: the Ministry of Education is finding it difficult to recruit personnel to teach science subjects in Government schools—CDM.

India is to receive aid worth about £ 23 million from Britain under an agreement signed in New Delhi by both countries. Pakistan Prime Minister Ali Bhutto said he was reluctant to take the Kashmir dispute back to the United Nations for fear of aggravating Sino-Soviet relations. Judge John Sirica dismissed all Watergate cover-up conspiracy charges against former White House aide Jordan Strachan.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13: A post graduate Institute of Agriculture which will work in association with other scientific research institutes and the Ministries

of Agriculture, Planning and Plantation Industries will be established by the University of Sri Lanka: the Institute will have a free hand in research activities in agriculture and would award degrees, diploma etc.—CDN. An agreement for a second Canadian loan of C \$ 2,100,000 for the purchase of nylon tyre cord, newsprint and woodpulp was signed yesterday in Colombo: in terms of the agreement the loan will be free of interest and would be payable in 50 years including an initial grace period of 10 years: the loan will be utilised for the purchase of nylon tyre cord, newsprint and woodpulp—CDN. The training of workers in parade drill which began early this month will be for the purpose of the May Day procession only, the UF May Day committee decided on Tuesday—CDN. Flour will be lifted off the ration from March 31 and sold in the open market in unrestricted quantities: this was announced by the Government yesterday in view of the adequate stocks of flour available with the Food Department: however there will be no change in the existing price of Rs. 1.10 per pound—CDM & CDN. Air Ceylon made a record profit of Rs. 15,873,410 for the year 1970-73—CDM. All cars in good running condition in the possession of Government Departments and Corporations will be "requisitioned" for use during the Non-Aligned Summit Conference to be held in Colombo in September 1976: the Department of Motor Traffic has notified all heads of Departments and Corporations asking particulars of the cars in good running condition—CDM. Fines totalling nearly Rs 24 lakhs were imposed by the Customs on eight persons who were taken into custody in connection with the detection of Rs. 300,000 worth of Japanese nylax sarees and other material from a house at Boralessamuwa—CDM

Portugal's left leaning Government appeared strengthened after an abortive military revolt fizzled out with General Antonio de Spínola, the country's former conservative President, fleeing to neighbouring Spain. Cyprus set today the deadline for the adoption of the Security Council resolution to break the deadlock on the island and said there would be no resumption of inter-communal talks without one.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14: The Criminal Justice Commission inquiring into foreign exchange offences yesterday ordered the issue of summons on Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, a former Governor General, Mr. C. Sathanandan, Mrs. S. Sathanandan, Mr. A. R. M. Mukthar, Mr. Thowfeek Mukthar and Mr. Fahmy Mukthar to appear before the Commission on April 3 for the purpose of inquiring into various charges concerning foreign exchange violations: the CJC also ordered the serving of summonses on a large number of other persons in respect of 28 similar inquiries concerning transactions with Mubarak Thaha and Kingsley Jackson: among the 28 are high ranking businessmen, professional persons Government and Corporation employees—CDN. The Treasury has told secretaries of ministries and heads of departments to initiate arrangements to set up Credit Councils: the bill has been gazetted and will be tabled before the National State Assembly shortly—CDN. The National Textile Corporation's new factory in Pugoda will be declared open this afternoon by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike: the mill which is a 16 million rupee outright gift from the People's Republic of China will this year produce 2,186,000 pounds of yarn and 6,703,000 yards of cloth and will

provide employment opportunities to 1500 persons when the factory begins operations on full scale—CDN. & CDM. Speculation is rife in diplomatic circles in Colombo that certain outside forces were responsible for the ousting of the Maldivian Prime Minister Mr. Ahmed Zaki on Thursday: according to these sources the right wing elements in the Maldives have probably been influenced by the Central Intelligence Agency leading to the deposing of Mr. Zaki—CDM. The five-day-week has been done away with for all the employees of the C.T.B. with effect from this month—CDM.

Democrats in the House of Representatives today overwhelmingly voted against any additional military aid for Cambodia and South Vietnam. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat received Israel's suggestions for a new troop disengagement and an Egyptian spokesman said afterwards there were still some difficulties.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15: Thirty five persons have been notified to appear before the CJC inquiring into exchange frauds to answer charges of foreign exchange violations involving sums aggregating £ 75,000—these names have been listed in 28 inquiries which will come up before the Commission between March 17 and 21 these are persons whose names transpired in the courts in the case against A. Mubarak Thaha—CDN. A press statement issued by the Secretary of the Tamil United Front states that the TUF had nothing to do with the troubles that were created at the UNP meeting which ended abruptly at the Jaffna esplanade on Sunday—CDM. The "Open University" scheme which aims at giving every adult above 25 years of age the opportunity of a University Education, regardless of academic qualification, will begin to function in May this year—CDM. Over thousand Radiographers, Medical Laboratory Technologists and Physiotherapists throughout the island came out on strike yesterday demanding better prospects of service: the Joint Council of the trade unions of these employees yesterday claimed that their strike was a hundred percent success—CDM. The Government of Singapore has offered one thousand training awards in various fields to member countries in the Colombo plan and Sri Lanka is expected to benefit by this move—CDM. Principals of schools have been told to keep a check on all stocks of arsenic sulphate and potassium chlorate in their science laboratories: these chemicals form the base for the manufacture of hand bombs and other explosives—CDM.

Portugal's new Military Revolutionary Council decreed that nearly all banks in Portugal are to be nationalised. US Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger, said he was slowly making progress towards a new troop disengagement between Egypt and Israel. Turkey has agreed to the resumption of peace negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, but made it clear it will not halt its campaign to have Cyprus declared a two-state federation.

SUNDAY, MARCH 16: The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation has called for world-wide tenders for drilling off-shore oil wells: tenders were issued to the respective Sri Lanka embassies abroad—CO. The Sri Lanka Administrative Service Association has requested the Government to amalgamate the Administrative Service with Sri Lanka Overseas Service—CO. The Auditor General in his latest report to the National State Assembly has pointed out that ten thousand cases of machinery were lying in the open exposed to the elements and subjects to considerable damage as well

as theft at the Thulhiriya textile project—ST. Many Maldivian cargo vessels are now openly carrying on smuggling operations off the coasts of Sri Lanka according to Customs Intelligence reports, because the Customs have been debarred from raiding their vessels, without the prior permission of Ministry of Foreign Affairs: since the middle of last year the Customs had been directed not to carry out surprise or lightning raids on Maldivian merchants vessels on the tip-offs for contraband, without providing certain proof that such goods were actually being carried to the satisfaction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—ST. Mr. Sam H. Silva has been re-appointed Chairman of the national carrier Air Ceylon Ltd; with effect from yesterday: during his tenure of office Air Ceylon made the highest profit amounting to Rs. 15.8 million following the pool agreement with UTA French became operative in 1972—ST.

Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis, one of the world's richest men and husband of Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of late John F. Kennedy former, President of America, died in America: one of his doctors said the pulmonary infection he had suffered since an operation to remove his gall bladder on February 9 was uncontrollable.

MONDAY, MARCH 17: A top ranking economic delegation from Yugoslavia begins discussions in Colombo tomorrow for further economic co-operation between Sri Lanka and Yugoslavia. Tomorrow's meeting is the direct sequel to a decision reached during the recent visit of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike to Yugoslavia to set up a joint committee for co-operation to expand trade and cultural ties between the two countries—CDN. The University Act will soon be amended to give the Vice Chancellor wider powers and greater freedom in enforcing discipline which has become the "main bugbear" of university administration: he will also be made answerable to the Ministry of Education—CDM. Housing Ministers of the South Asian Region will meet for the first time in Sri Lanka this year and the conference will be declared open by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike: the participating countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka—CDM. The proposal of the Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs to set up an Agro Industries Corporation has gone one stage further with Government approval being given for a committee of three officials to report very early on what can be identified for agro industries development—CDN. The Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, has directed that the tapping of ground water for cultivation through experimental wells should be extended to new areas like Walawe, Galenbindunuwewa and Medawachchiya—CDN. According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Health on the present strike of para-medical men, the Health Ministry will not countenance any threats by any group of its employees to cause harassment and inconvenience to the public and endanger the lives of the people—CDM. The police crack down on all bogus subscription list collectors going from house to house collecting monies for various purpose.—CDM.

US Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, said in Amman that it was entirely up to Jordan to decide whether to attend the Geneva Middle East peace conference. The Senate Committee investigating US intelligence operations has asked President Ford for records on White House approvals.

MALDIVIAN MYSTERY—I

Interpretative Background

A Tribune Analysis
MYSTERY STILL SURROUNDS the latest developments in the Maldives centring around the arrest and imprisonment of the Prime Minister Ahmed Zaki by the President Ibrahim Nasir under the special Emergency Powers vested in him under the Constitution. Very little hard news has as yet come out of the Maldives. What little is known has not thrown much light on the real causes which led to the arrest of Ahmed Zaki very shortly after a newly elected Majlis had chosen him as Prime Minister (by a majority vote). The President had re-appointed him Premier and the Prime Ministers of India and of Sri Lanka had sent him congratulatory messages.

From the meagre reports received, it would appear that, on March 6/7, Zaki and Jaleel (chief of protocol) were arrested. Zaki was banished Maldivian-style to one of the islands while the fate of Jaleel is not known. Reports also suggest that 25 to 40 adherents of Zaki had also been arrested but nothing is known about the action taken against them. The President—who had earlier been Prime Minister for over 10 years—had taken over the functions of the Prime Minister as provided for in the Constitution.

This is all the hard news so far available in Colombo.

Also known are bits and pieces of background information about politics and personalities in the Maldives—much of it controversial and some of it unbelievable—and these add colour rather than understating. All the rest, except for occasional flashes of intelligent anticipation, consists of nothing more than speculative gossip, wishful interpretative analysis and inspired geopolitical theorising to tickle the imagination of the inquisitive and the curious.

What we say in this is only an amalgam of what we have heard-from hard news to hypothetical speculation—infused with the *Tribune* brand of interpretative conjectur-

ing from which our readers derive much pleasure, profit and information. Some interested and discerning readers are often able to use our analytical articles for further political theorising of their own.

Tribune had written about the Maldives in five issues last year, on 16/2/74, 30/3/74, 25/5/74, 17/8/74 and 31/8/74. And in our issue of 15/3/75 we had a self-congratulatory *we-told-you-so* piece. Our mini-exultation stemmed from the prophetic hint we had dropped in the issue of 31/8/74 that Zaki would find himself in trouble if he fell (too seriously) for the advice given him by certain elements in Sri Lanka about how he could make himself the only man-on-the-spot in the Maldives, almost overnight, by edging out President Nasir and business tycoon Ali Manicku. This advice given to Zaki, we had hinted, was based on wrong evaluation of the relative strength of the *dramatis personae* in the mock-heroic melodrama that makes contemporary politics in the Maldives.

All observers say that Ahmed Zaki had within a short time become a sizable force in the Maldives, that his style and manner had improved immeasurably: that his self-confidence had grown to the point cocksureness. With his State visits to India, Sri Lanka and Great Britain, the visits the Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and India had paid the Maldives, under the sole auspices of the dazzling showmanship of the Zaki-Jaleel combine had, it is said, begun to make him a little too big for his shoes! Ahmed Zaki was also scheduled to go on State visit to Pakistan next month, and it is whispered that it would not have been long before he paid his personal homage to the Shah of Iran now dreaming of making himself with his petrodollars not only the greatest power in the Persian Gulf but also in the Indian Ocean Zone, to start with at least in the Arabian Sea and southwards to the South Pole.

To undermine the Nasir-Ali-manicku-Sattar triumvirate—which we mentioned in our article on 31/6/74 as the most dominant political force in the Maldives, Zaki's political style, observers testify, proliferated into a new brand of Maldivian demogogy. He promised, as all demagogues d

the moon to the Maldivians whose *per capita* income is among the lowest in the world. His closest aides thereafter whispered into the ears of the discontented (found even in the Maldives) that Zaki would be able to perform the miracle of delivering the goods (free medicine, free education, free food—like in Sri Lanka) if the republican-style sultans (Nasir and Ali manicku) were eased out of power and removed from the seats of glory in Male.

Some young hotheads, led remote-control by Zaki's brother, former Agriculture Minister Farook, had attempted to stage a pseudo-violent coup by trying to capture the one and only armoury in Male (and the Maldives bar Gan) by shouting slogans, sometime between June 12 to 15 last year. The President's intelligence had tipped him off about this attempt to seize power: and he was ready for the power-snatchers. He let the slogan shouters walk into the trap, and with one rattle from a solitary machinegun, the revolutionaries had run helter-skelter for cover and asylum. It was not difficult thereafter for the President to (send for and) arrest Farook who had been waiting in his house to drive up in limousine to take over the Presidential Palace which he thought the revolutionaries would capture without difficulty after taking over the armoury.

Ahmed Zaki's dexterity as a politician was shown when he was able to survive a coup led by his brother without a scratch. The President must have had his suspicions, but he is probably one of those who allows people enough rope to hang themselves. It was after this abortive coup that Zaki had come as a State guest to Sri Lanka and had persuaded our Prime Minister to undertake an unexpected but a fairly lengthy state visit to his country just before her grand European tour last September.

Realising that remote-controlled coups did not always pay dividends Zaki seems to have turned to demogogy. For foreign consumption he talked of non-alignment using the jargon of the "progressives" of the Third World whilst internally he learnt the art of wooing-the voters Sri Lanka style. In the last election to the Majlis he was

able to secure the return of a preponderant majority of his supporters, in spite of the millions which his apologists in Sri Lanka say Nasir and Alimanicku had spent in order to have a Majlis subservient to them as in the past. A lady, it is said, was put up to contest Zaki for the Prime Minister's post, no doubt because the Nasir-Manicku combine had thought it prudent to meet a man's demogogy with woman's lib. If the Presidential plan had succeeded, observers say, that the Indian Ocean Zone would have had three women Prime Ministers—India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. But this was not to be, Zaki was able to win the contest 36 to 16 (some say it was 38 to 14). Of the 16 (or 14), 8 persons were nominated to the Majlis by the President under the Constitution.

It would be a mistake to think that Zaki had depended solely on the razzle-dazzle his demogogy to have Majlis-power. He had buttressed his demogogy with adequate money power. In the last twelve to eighteen months, observers say, that Zaki and Jaleel had sneaked their way into the realm of big business without going under the custodial patronage of the Nasir-Alimanicku *zabats*. Zaki had started his trading activities in a small way and this had not worried the Presidential caucus. But when his activities mushroomed into the bigtime, many eye-brows had been raised. Observers assert that Zaki and Jaleel had made a hit in the kind of trading in which Maldivians excel. Cynics (and customs officers) do not call this trading but use other terms, but this is not a distinction that matters, at least not in the Maldives. Some people are wonder-struck when they hear tales of how Zaki was able to move around a million dollar worth of watches and Jaleel was able to transport lakhs (may be crores) worth of textiles on magic carpets from old Araby.

The simple fact is that Zaki (and his lieutenant Jaleel) had begun to challenge the Presidential oligarchy's power, in politics and in trade in a big way. With a touch of demogogy they were able to outwit the President and his group in wooing the voters and were also able to match money for money to withstand the conventional methods used by vested interests to keep any electorate

well oiled and suppliant. Zaki had found a way to undermine the brute-force of sultan power, backed by older money power, with a new kind of demogogy interlaced with new money with a political edge.

But in all melodrama of this kind, tragedy overtakes anyone who lets his ego to make him forget himself! Zaki let his ambitions outstrip his discretion. Zaki, observers feel, thought that the world-image he was seeking to build for himself as a third world non-aligned democratic statesman would enable him to leapfrog over the Presidential group. This was his miscalculation. A sad miscalculation.

Zaki had emerged in the first instance from within the bandwagon of the President's group—Nasir was always willing to use personable go-getters like Zaki—but Zaki was not willing to bide his time. Zaki, observers say, on the advice and guidance he had got from outside (Sri Lanka), became a man in a hurry and he deluded himself into the believe that his demogogy and his (new) money power were already enough to outwit and outmanoeuvre the President and his men.

But what Zaki did not realise sufficiently was that the only armed force in the Maldivian Republic was the small but highly loyal (to Ibrahim Nasir) police force still at the beck and call of the President. The Majlis had no say or voice over this police force. The Constitution gives the President supreme power in a crisis. One does not know what reasons were trotted out for invoking section 37 of the Constitution to arrest and depose the Prime Minister. It is anybody's guess. The million-dollar watch transaction could easily have been made one of the excuses for the Presidential action. Zaki admirers have told *Tribune* in this connection, that people in glass houses could not afford to throw stones, but President Nasir with the entire Maldivian armed services with him can afford to do so.

Such is one way in which the Maldivian drama can be viewed. It is no doubt a subjective indigenous view focussing attention to the in-fighting for power in the Maldives. It is a kind worm's eye view of the situation from the angle of an ordinary but discerning Maldivian.

But many outsiders, especially those who regard themselves as Maldives-specialists in Sri Lanka, view these developments as part of the international proletarian class struggle with minor overtones (or undertones) of indigenous in-fighting. What gives the Maldives this international geopolitical significance is that Gan is an important British air force post and communications centre in the Indian Ocean. There is also at the moment a Big Power struggle for establishing their presence in the region and in view of the British decision to quit Gan by April 1976, there was a race not only by the Big Powers but also some of the littoral states to fill the vacuum that must necessarily arise when the British quit Gan. These same gentlemen (and ladies), now forming an influential lobby, in Colombo, believe that Sri Lanka with the Sirimavo Indian Ocean Peace Zone Plan had a sacred duty to keep the Big Powers with big navies (like the USA and Russia) and littoral states with growing naval power (like India) out of Gan and also ensure that these power-hungry countries do not exercise any significant influence in the Republic with its 2000 atolls spread over a big stretch of the Indian Ocean. This group does not see any danger from China because China has proclaimed that it had no ambitions of wanting to be a super-power and also because it had no Navy big enough to establish a presence in the Indian Ocean even if some misguided persons attribute such motives to China. That is why this group in Sri Lanka had welcomed the fact that Ahmed Zaki had invited a team of Chinese telecommunications experts to establish an Inter-Island Telecommunication Service in the Maldivian Archipelago whereas they had objected most strenuously to the advantages India had gained by being permitted to open the only bank in Male and also to the arrangements made to have teachers, technicians and others trained and educated in India, to the joint-schemes to exploit tourism and to the expansion of trade between the two countries (these bi-lateral arrangements between India and the Maldives were reflected in the joint communique issued after Mrs. Indira Gandhi's visit to the Maldives a few weeks ago.)

After Mrs. Bandaranaike's visit to the Maldives a similar joint

communique had indicated the bilateral arrangements envisaged to promote Sri Lanka-Maldives cultural friendship and trade relations. Sri Lanka had offered to train and educate Maldivians, as she had been done in the past, but unfortunately anyone seeking primary, secondary, university or even technical education in Sri Lanka today must be willing to have instruction in Sinhala (with English as a distant and doubtful second language) whereas in India it is possible to have instruction in the English medium. The Maldivians being realists know that English is a *sine qua non* for developing trade, tourism and shipping, and nobody can blame them for going to India for their education. Furthermore, India has much more to offer than Sri Lanka in the way of joint tourist ventures as well as in the field of trade and commerce.

The Sri Lankan Zaki lobby was naturally disappointed that the rulers of the Maldives did not realise the supreme importance of maintaining their link and connection with Sinhala which they claim was the progenitor of the Maldivian language. It is a moot point whether the language spoken by the Maldivians is an offshoot dialect of Sinhala or whether it is a hotch-potch of several Oriental languages including Arabic and Sinhala plus Indo-Aryan/Dravidan admixtures. But whatever the origins of the Maldivian language (or dialect), what the Maldivians want today is not a romanticised (and therefore lopsided) version of their links with the ancient Sinhalas, but a language to communicate with the world. And, for this there was none better than English. And, today all know that the teaching of English in Sri Lanka has deteriorated to the point that what passes for English in our schools and our campuses today is not English anymore (and hence the frantic appeals to the British Council and Commonwealth House in the UK for assistance to help us improve our English). And the Maldivians know this, and they naturally prefer to send their students to India or to Singapore where they have opportunities of learning English to help them in their trade, tourism and shipping. Gone are the days when Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was known for its education. The number which can still obtain employment

abroad is fast dwindling—because from our schools and our university we are now getting products who have not only nothing to communicate but also cannot communicate in any language, Sinhala or Tamil (leave alone English). This is the tragedy of Sri Lanka education today, and we should not be disappointed even if the tiny Maldives turns away to India, Singapore and other places for educational facilities.

To the lobby in Sri Lanka which wanted the Maldives tied to our apronstrings, the language link was perhaps only a lever to bring the Maldives into Sri Lanka's sphere of influence. Some of them quote appreciatively in private what S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, in a different context, had said about Sri Lanka's "rights" *vis a vis* the Maldives. They referred to a statement on 5.3.57 (vide *Daily News* 8.3.57 and *Hansard* Vol 27 col 1331) as follows: "...In the meanwhile, of course, I will bring my mind to bear on making claims to the Maldivian islands on behalf of Ceylon. I am rather serious about that, because they were a dependency of this country in the olden days, and I am informed that we have quite a good claim..."

He was not clear what action he could take, and in Parliament on 24.7.57 he had occasion (vide *Hansard*, vol 28 col 1783) "...I am not naturally a military minded person nor have I the ambitions of conquest, even may I say of the Maldivian Islands by violent methods..." But when a little trouble had erupted in the Maldives after that, he had wanted an amicable settlement. 'All I want,' he had said, "is a friendly relation with our neighbours". (vide *Hansard* Vol 36, (5.8.59), col. 354.) He had suggested an exchange of representatives between Ceylon and the Maldivian Islands, and this was done shortly after that, (but in the meantime SWRD had been assassinated on 25.9.59).

An American political commentator, C. L. Sulzberger, had in an article in the *New York Times* on 23.3.57 had said that Solomon Bandaranaike had "territorial ambitions" and that he had an eye on the Maldives. "If the Maldives comes under Ceylon," SWRD is reported to have said, "we would not wish to cancel their British contracts." In fact, Ceylon had not registered

any objection to the Maldivian Government agreeing to the setting up of an air base at Gan as it was for the Maldivian Government to decide it. Even India had not objected at that time.

G. M. Prasad in his book *CEYLON'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE BANDARANAIKES* (1956-65) deals with this aspect of Sri Lanka's connections with the Maldives fairly exhaustively.

But, the Maldives cannot once again be made a "dependency" of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), as in the glorious days of old, but it was thought possible by some that through the proper manipulation of geopolitical rivalries and cross-currents it would be possible to bring the Maldives within the orbit of Sri Lankan non-alignment by making its rulers accept, adopt and practice the kind of non-alignment Sri Lanka followed. If corridor gossip in Colombo is to be believed, Ahmed Zaki had been persuaded to believe in the virtues of a Sri Lankan-type non-alignment as the best *modus vivendi* for a cluster of small islands, now the sovereign independent republic of the Maldives, to survive in a harsh and brutal world. Whether Zaki believed in this as a practical political proposition or whether he thought of it as a suitable smokescreen to get international backing for own power struggle against the Nasir-Alimanicku-Sattar set-up is not likely to be known, but nobody can quarrel with Maldivians who think that Ahmed Zaki had adopted the posture of a champion of non-alignment to obtain the support and assistance (surreptitious, if necessary and possible) of progressive third world and socialist bloc countries to eliminate reactionary—feudal and capitalist—vested interests in his own.

At this time when some Sri Lankans who wanted to extend Bandaranaike non-alignment over the seas and bring, in the first instance, the Maldivian Archipelago under a Sri Lankan umbrella, relations between the countries had been soured by the blundering blunderbuss tactics of some of bureaucrats and diplomats. *Tribune* had pointed out this in the article it published in 1974. The Maldivian National Trading Company (MNTC) which operated over 45 ships had, as a result of the heavy-handed and unimagi-

native actions of our bureaucrats, shifted its headquarters from Colombo to Bombay (with a big branch in Singapore).

It was thought that Zaki could help to restore better relations between the two countries. And as Prime Minister he was in a position to do so. But the Sri Lanka Lobby for better relations with the Maldives made itself a pro-Zaki lobby and it conceived grandiose schemes of helping the Zaki "progressives" in the Maldives to oust the "reactionaries" and to bring a government to power in Male in the image of the United Front government of Sri Lanka or at least one "progressive" segment of it.

Neither the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, nor the highest echelons of our Foreign Office, say knowledgeable observers seemed to have been aware of this undercurrent link of sympathy and support between certain persons in Sri Lanka and Ahmed Zaki. This was not even suspected when some of these persons went round the town with petitions that Sri Lanka should intervene to save the revolutionaries who had staged the abortive June 12-15 coup of 1974. A wit had even quipped that Sri Lanka should send the *Gajabahu* out to the Maldives to bring the reactionaries to their senses and free the imprisoned "progressives."

At that time, these Sri Lankans had confided in their friends that it would not be long before Zaki became the supreme power in the Maldives for the "revolutionaries" (said to be ardent pro-Lankans and believers in nonalignment) to be freed to become the ruling hierarchy. When Zaki won the *Majlis* elections and he was nominated as the Prime Minister there was great rejoicing that the dawn of liberation and emancipation had descended upon the Maldives.

There was a belief in Sri Lanka, even in high places, that President, Nasir was a spent force and also that Ali Manicku was on his way out. President Nasir's sullen reaction to Sri Lanka had been noted out, no attention paid to it. Nasir, an old boy St. Joseph's College, Colombo (as against Zaki's St. Peter's) had always over the years come to Colombo for his medical treatment but when he started going to Singa-

pore (via Colombo) for treatment in the period after August 1974, nothing was done to find out why he behaved in this way—no doubt because it was assumed that a reactionary on the way out in the Maldives could no longer be happy in a progressive environment like Colombo and that he had therefore sought solace in the reactionary capitalist stronghold of Singapore. President Nasir had been virtually written off by Sri Lanka's Administration.

This was a fatal mistake as the event of march 6/7 showed.

Zaki adherents in Colombo now say that Zaki would stage a comeback within a short time on the crest of a revolutionary upsurge that would sweep through the Maldives. Whether this evaluation is correct or whether it is another wrong assessment of the realities of the Maldivian situation is yet to be seen, but it would interesting to examine how the Zaki lobby has (and the local press) reacted to what was really a counter-coup to the coup of June 1974.

No sooner the story came through that Zaki had been arrested, despatched and banished there was consternation among circles which had been certain that Sri Lanka had successfully established its presence as the main outside force in the Maldives. They were baffled, indignant and worried. How did they explain this reverse? What was the line they took?

(To Be Continued)

BUILDING A VILLAGE HOUSE—26

The Laggard Champion (ii)

By Herbert Keuneman

IT WAS the middle of March (1974) when Y's case was actually called in the Courts at Anuradhapura and on his way back I sent Pinhamy to meet him off the train at Galgamuwa, gambling that not many others were likely to descend from the 1st Class Air-conditioned Coach on one day in such a station.

Pinhamy recognized him without difficulty, and introduced himself,

and on hearing that there was not yet even an acknowledgement of the application—nearly five months, now—Y very typically suggested that they go straightaway to the office of the AGA Galgamuwa to discover if possible what progress had been made. The Grama Sevakaya had assured Pinhamy that his papers were safely there. They were not. But neither was the Tappai Clerk; so although the AGA (Galgamuwa) was sure the papers had been forwarded to Kurunegala and promised to do all he could towards following them up, nothing could be confirmed.

Meanwhile, I waited lunch for Y, and waited, and finally, having missed two buses while the mills of the Galgamuwa AGA's office ground slowly and unproductively, he arrived. He might have been considerably earlier; for he had run into an old friend from his Anuradhapura days—X—and X was driving to Ehetuwewa and might have been expected to offer him a lift. But this was the occasion upon which X made the threat against me that I quoted in an earlier article, and it all started with X's finding Y in 'bad' company—Pinhamy's: 'What are you doing with that damn scoundrel?..He's my enemy..I'll teach him'—and if you are an X kind of person you don't offer lifts to friends however old if you don't approve the company they keep.

Thank goodness Y is a Y kind of person. This is the kind of officer staffed by whom even a Bureaucracy could become a revolutionary agency: one who didn't mouth revolutionary ideologies but made them a fact by taking every opportunity (and some considerable trouble) to mediate the gains of socialism to those on whose behalf the gains were supposed to have been made. One who took every opportunity, however unspectacular, to do so. Who preferred attempt, however, unsuccessful, to hollowly resounding claptrap concerning achievements that were never tested. These are, no doubt, the kind of officers the believers in revolution-by-bureaucracy envisage staffing the Administrative Service. But if Pinhamy's experience is anything to go by—and I maintain it is—it is a pipe-dream vision: in sober

reality the Y's are too far outnumbered by the Xs, and the Zs. (z-z-z is the snoring sound emitted by the officers, the majority, who simply are hypnotized by their cautious concentration on rubbing no influential person the wrong way!) But, to get on.....

Y had been going to spend the next day quietly with me gazing out at the tank and watching coot and jacanas and sipping cold shandy-gaff and discussing shoes and ships—there is little sealing wax any more: but there is always! red tape—a welcome break, I was sure, from a heavy if not grinding routine; and then he was going to spend a second night in the country cool and quiet before getting back to Colombo. Instead, he was up at dawn to take Pinhamy to the Kurunegala Kachcheri (I think it is called the Secretariat now: a bad sign) and show him how to chivy clerks and office assistants and the bigger shots, who have to be assisted, and how to chase papers about: which is the only way the private individual seems able any longer to engage the attention of the public officer. Moreover, though Y could have travelled, on his official ticket, in 1st Class air-conditioned dignity, he chose to travel 3rd Class, with Pinhamy.

I CANNOT, I will not forbear to point another moral; even a as yet another digression, it hardly serves to adorn the method of telling my tale! I am not suggesting that it is in the last measure practical for the Public Servant to hand-guide the unaccustomed and bemused private simpleton through the intricate maze of bureaucratic process as Y was doing with Pinhamy. But I am not only suggesting—I am *insisting*—that unless representatives of the Administration, from Grama Sevakayas to Government Agents, or at least the majority of them, begin not to protest but to *display* a comparable enthusiasm instead of fulfilling the bureaucrat's traditional role of seat-warmer, socialism will not have been brought about. Socialism is not a form of Constitution; it is a state of Administration. One is almost ashamed to utter truisms like this. But why, then, has every date-warmer's seat been left comfortably undisturbed after a case where it took 1 year, 1 month and 16 days for a per-

fectly straightforward request to be answered with a straightforward Yes or No? If a *soi-disant* socialist Administration is not the small man's Champion, WHO IS?

At Kurunegala Y introduced Pinhamy to the AGA, who assured them that no official papers in connexion with Pinhamy's application had been received at the Kachcheri at any time. Apparently the AGA Galgamuwa had been in wishful error. But one must not blame him: doubtless, in the absence of the Tappal Clerk a Tappal Register remains a Sybilline oracle! The AGA Kurunegala handed Pinhamy a letter to be personally delivered, directing the AGA Galgamuwa's office to forward the relevant papers without delay.

The Grama Sevakaya (Embogama) within whose jurisdiction Pinhamy's village of Galkadawala falls, and who had helped Pinhamy fill in his first set of application forms, may have been questioned about them; at all events, on 22 March he called at Pinhamy's house, confessed he had 'lost' the original set, and now helped fill in another. It was less than a week after Y had stepped in and jolted machinery that no unaided villager could ever have jolted.

Pinhamy asked whether from this point a decision would take long to be arrived at. The Grama-Sevakaya replied that perhaps it would take a little long—it did—because first he must make his own observations (yes, of course they would be favourable) and then he must see the Grama Sevakaya who served (he did not say 'served'; he said: 'who had charge of') the village in which the land in question lay, and then the AGA Galgamuwa (who, by the way, had expressed to Y his not mere willingness but positive eagerness to see a just decision early arrived at) must make his own report, and then the papers would be forwarded to Kurunegala, and then... It seemed to me, when Pinhamy related this latest development, and interminable process. But Pinhamy was unaccountably jubilant; Y's kindness and concern seemed to have raised him to the point of euphoria; there is in the simple citizen so deep a will to believe, against all the evidence, in the *benevolence* of authority. How deep a cynicism—or a torpidity—

it must take to flout or be simply unmoved by this.

On April 24 the AGA Kurunegala wrote to Pinhamy—the first official acknowledgement, after six months, of his existence—bidding his presence on the following 17 May at an enquiry resulting from his application, to be held at my house! Thus was I drawn into the fringe of this official mild maelstrom, although nobody had consulted me in the matter! Nevertheless, I was very pleased. I liked the AGA and he and I had a common interest in Kandyan Dance and I looked forward to continuing a discussion about it we had begun at our first meeting (which Y, a mutual friend, had brought about as soon as he knew I had returned to Ehetuwewa alone) and I invited him to lunch with me on the Enquiry day but added that should he prefer not to, in view of my connexion with Pinhamy's application tenuous though that was, I should not take it amiss. I added that should I not hear to the contrary I should expect him and any officer with him as luncheon guests.

On 17 May, after lunch had long been prepared, a message which had been telephoned through was sent me from the local post office cancelling not the lunch date but the Enquiry! It was interesting that our Grama Sevakaya had turned up earlier that morning asking me—me—whether the AGA was indeed coming? had I had message cancelling his visit? but the other Grama Sevakaya involved, named in the AGA's letter to Pinhamy as being summoned also, had put in no appearance I knew of. (Our own Grama Sevakaya had been at pains to explain away to me the loss of Pinhamy's first set of forms. But I said I had no rights in the matter and should anyway have lodged no complaint against him without informing him beforehand: a principle I still stick to but of whose wisdom I grow more and more doubtful!)

SINCE IT NOW SEEMED to be taken for granted that I was concerned in Pinhamy's business, on the day after the cancellation of the Enquiry I wrote to the AGA Kurunegala expressing my disappointment at his non-arrival and urging him to make an early ruling on Pinhamy's application because I had recently heard that two appointees of the feudalistic *ex-arachchi* who believed,

the tract containing the land applied for was still under his aegis were already at work upon portions of it. They were, as usual not of the *ex-arachchi's* village; but either chosen dupes or chosen stooges of the *ex-arachchi!*

By the middle of July 1974—nearly nine months now—Pinhamy's euphoria had completely left him. He went about now with the air of a man who has just won a sweep-stake and lost the ticket! Saving the 24 April letter announcing the aborted Enquiry, he had heard not a word from any official source concerning the progress of his application. But he had heard enough un-officially—and the village grapevine is a fairly reliable source—to disturb him. X, it was rumoured—it was never anything but a rumour—was the *ex-arachchi's* prime ally and instigator, X, not to mention the *ex-arachchi*, as a 16-years plus resident in Ehetuwewa and close affinities amongst the wealthier and more intransigent inhabitants of the village, was and is a bad enemy.

Between land-hunger and apprehensiveness, the melancholy Pinhamy was a depressing spectacle. A planet of my own firmament, he shed deep gloom whenever he passed! and I resolved to make a real effort to put him out of his misery. If he knew only whether he could have the land or not, he could either rejoice or adjust to the disappointment: hope—dim hope, especially—is the cruellest of human conditions. And there was probably chagrin in this, as well. As I have recounted, Pinhamy's brother many years ago had been greatly wronged by the *ex-arachchi* and all his petitions for redress had been suppressed. The whirligig of time had seemed perhaps to have brought in a chance of affiliable revenge. No doubt that came into it. But the need for land was genuine.

As I say, it seemed that willy nilly I was in this, now: so I resolved when I next went to Colombo I would try to see the Minister, taking the matter to the highest level I could.

But I repeat, as I was to repeat it to the Minister: I was NOT asking, on Pinhamy's behalf, for land. I was asking, only, for the making of a shamefully procrastinated decision.

Inania of this, that and the other

Politics And Cups Of Cold Water

BY INNA

Hill country station.

Sunday service.

A real big-wig is in the Church.

The preacher does not know it. He starts a superb sermon on the importance of teaching religion, gets lost in details of exams and syllabus, of methods, and know-how. Plays down and simplifies difficult truths, and losses trend and makes them laugh and all go away thoroughly happy. The service hasn't touched them. The pastor looks askance at the visiting preacher. For a moment a "what-to-do, that's the way" look spreads across his face.

Another Sunday.

Another church.

Another big-wig comes that way.

The visiting preacher decries the set-up of the township: of its exploitation, its rabid punishment of workers in the downtown stores; of the unhappy lack of impact of the church on the people down below, or nearby, the tinker, the tailor and the brass-lamp maker, all sadness-makers by their exploitation of labour.

The big-wig gets it for his looking-up into the sky for inspiration instead of getting down to a job of work. The irate preacher surveys the whole waterless area where tanks overflow with 2-inch bore breaches in them and no water—inspectors to examine, report and stop the flow. He speaks of getting interested in men: of giving cups of cold water in the Lord's name by agitating to set up a water-works, a sorely-needed proposition for this up-and-coming area.

Two days later, I see the preacher sauntering along..and recall now his last words: "the big-wig spoke to the pastor and got me, and the likes of me silenced. He felt the sting of the water-jet in my sermon."

And then I thought, how easily Truth is tied to a stake

and burnt at the stake, only to rise above the flames once more. Phoenix, did you say? Sure!

"The political man, he too has to be evangelized (in the new sense of the word): the Good news has to be preached to him, the news of liberation"—so said a catholic priest when I went and spoke to him about this incident. He then handed me a beautiful piece of writing.

"I became a christian, but I have not renounced for that matter my political convictions. I continue to be personally convinced of the historical necessity of socialism as a scientifically irrefutable datum. If I am a socialist, it is not because I am a christian, but because I am a political man. It is true that I find in socialism more favourable elements, favourable to evangelisation. There are more elements of justice, equality in it which allows of greater explicitation of the message and thus to render Christ accessible to men. But Socialism has historical causes, not evangelical causes. If one reduces faith to the dimensions of socialism, one would find the kingdom already here below.. My faith which is at the basis of my christian commitment does not turn me away from my socialist option, but it is neither an ideological instrument of this option. I believe in God, I believe in the kingdom, I believe in Salvation. I believe in man who builds his history, and who builds it independent of the fact of whether he believes or does not believe in God. The presence of Christ in the history of mankind is the dialectical synthesis of the relationship God-Man."

The words are from Andres Campos, Salvadorian student (19), expelled from Montevideo to Brazil where he was arrested and tortured during 11 days. (The text is what he narrated to Convergence, n.l. 1972, Jura, 1701 Fribourg.)

FOR NEWS
BEHIND THE NEWS

read

TRIBUNE

regularly

In The Elahera Area

By ANATORY BUKOBA

February 9.

The name Elahera, as far as I know, stands for a colonization scheme, a vast one, but it is different in more than one respect from all other places with a name. In April 1971, it was the only place, so far as I am aware, and I am speaking of the region and not the town, please be sure of this, where the older villages took advantage of the situation, created by the youngsters, to put their own oar in. It is the only colonization scheme, so far as I know, to depend for its water on a river without the intervention of a tank. The channel or canal gets its water, I believe, from the Amban Ganga, which flows from the Matale region and empties itself into the lower reaches of the Mahaveli.

As for its situation, we must go to the direct Colombo-Trincomalee road, which, on the map, looks like a straight line. The Kandy-Jaffna road cuts this at Dambulla. Going on towards Trincomalee, you come to Habarana. Here the Batticaloa roads branches off more to the east, to reach its most northerly point at Minneriya, and then through Giritale and Polonnaruwa to Batticaloa, a large area as it were. This is even more emphasised if you consider the road passing from Kandy, through Matale, Naula, Dambulla, Habarana, Minneriya, Giritale, and Polonnaruwa to Batticaloa. There is a remote road joining Naula to Giritale, and what I call the Elahera Scheme lies along this. People, I met, said the scheme was about twenty-five years old dating back to the time of D. S. Senanayake. Much of the road from Naula to Giritale runs along the top of a bund, formed, it must be from the earth scooped up to from the Elahera canal or channel which runs for miles. The canal was full, and the water nearly at the level of the land which lay on the other side. Water from the Mahaveli Scheme, it looked, would flood this land.

The water from the Mahaveli Diversion Scheme, will banch into two, I gathered, near Naula. One would feed the Elahera canal and flow eventually into the Minneriya and Giritale tanks. The other would go straight on and flow into the Hurulle Tank, mentioned in the first Kazi article, and thence on to Jaffna, as they say. The bank on the far side of the Elahera canal will be raised. It was hoped to finish it this year, but the height of the water, as it is now, may defer work and delay completion till the middle of next year. The level of the water, I was told, goes down in the Yala season, but there is always enough water in the canal for irrigation. This is a major irrigation scheme, it would seem, that never fails.

In connection with the Mahaveli Diversion, there are two dams being constructed round and about Naula, and a tunnel. Where the bus stopped on the Elahera road, there was only one tea boutique, and the price of the food was high. This must be a prosperous region, as it is always well watered by the canal. Where I went, a private house, I was given meat and bread for my tea, and I was not expected. I had turned up two days early. The canal is wide. The house was on the other side, and the approach was along tree trunks, placed end to end, pillars supporting the ends, and the width of the footbridge was only a narrow tree's girth. There was a hand rail of sorts: the uprights to hold this hand-rail was broken in one place, and the hand rail swung perilously. It would have snapped if it had had to support any weight. The bridge has a great height off the water, which has deep.

The house where I went had been built not many months before, and some finishing touches had yet to be put to it but it was cosy, well made, with an eye to style, and not the plain solid types that the old village houses tend to be. There was a dog tied up on a stack of wood to frighten *wanderoo* monkeys away; a handsome dog, looking well-bred, and two or three times did the wife draw her husband's attention to the number of *wanderoo* around. It was a well-planted garden. My host's brother was a mechanic, who earned, or rather, plied his trade, by travelling here and there, whenever a summons

came to him by post demanding his services to repair an machine of engine.

Where I got off the bus, there were two lands and a young woman bathing in the canal. On the land side, as it were, but off the main canal road, there was a small boutique belonging to the brother of the man whose house I was seeking, to find a guide to the house to which I had been invited. I had stayed some years before at the first house. The people bathing were relations of those in the boutique. One of those bathing led me to the house I had been summoned to, which was across the canal. These other people were also relations. My host preferred to talk to me in English.

I had been invited to stay a few days, but I could only manage a few hours, two to be precise, and I left promising to come again. I had half-an-hour, I thought, to have a bath in the canal and to visit the people with whom I had stayed before. As I was getting ready to change for my bath, a bus came, and I hurriedly caught it, I guess it was the last bus, and the time was 4.30 p.m. I passed Bakamuna, I think the place is called, where I first saw buffaloes swimming, their whole body immersed, only their nostrils showing. Where I crossed the canal on this visit I again saw buffaloes swimming, but this time the whole of the tops of their faces showed.

The bus route from Giritale to Naula is expensive. Where I went was about half-way between these two places or, to put it differently, between the Polonnaruwa road and the Matale road. The return journey was interesting in this respect, that you at places, could see mountains in the distance.

My destination was now Wahacotte, the famous Portuguese settlement in Dutch times. To save long bus journeys, the shortest either about twenty-five miles round by Dambulla, or an equal distance round by near Matale beyond Naula on the Matale road, in the opposite direction, I preferred to get off the bus two miles and to walk three-and-a-half miles along a road, I had not traversed before, to a road that came from Matale via Partipola. Where I hit that road was two miles to Wahacotte. I got there ten minu-

tes before a bus came along, and I had started the walk in twilight. Someone said that a bus was to be put on the route I had walked. Some hope, I thought, after I had traversed it; the road was going to need major repairs first. Near Pattipola an uncle of mine made chocolate for many years, and in the first world war, he sold it to the British Government for the troops.

Here are some quotations. From Hebrews first. Do not neglect to do good and share what you have, for such sacrifice are pleasing to God. Then Isaiah: he is talking about sacrifice. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Again. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness; and so on. It seems to me that all this is the best recipe for development. But we must also, I think, root out dishonesty from our midst. I once heard a village say a remarkable thing about Sir John Kotelawala, that he would tolerate no thieving when he was Prime Minister. An old villager told me yesterday, and he was speaking about food: that in British times there were no problems about that in this country. As a Ceylonese, I felt embarrassed. I wrote all this on a bed in room in a monastery at Wahacotte. There is also a wash basin in the room, and table and four pegs for clothes on the wall. That is all the furniture. Quite adequate.

A TRIBUTE

Hilda Roversi Exhibition

By R. C. T.

"The Mission of Art is to represent NATURE—not to imitate HER."

The wisdom of the writer of eminence who pronounced this infallible judgement was so eloquently expressed by MISS HILDA ROVERSI at her Exhibition of paintings held on the 3rd of March at the Lionel Wendt Memorial Hall. Everyone of the large and selective gathering,

who were treated to an exquisite display of her many-spended 'ensemble-par-Excellence' on canvas, endorsed this view in no uncertain terms. She indubitably proved that her work was the sincere "EXPRESSION of an enlightened soul communicating her love of NATURE to others commending the "DELIGHT in simple things, And joys that have NO bitter sting"

The "HIGH BROW" HUBRIS of Art criticism and the esoteric expertise of local "Pundits" may be the prerogative of some who cannot create but can only criticise. To an untutored mind of a layman like me, the sophistry of the epistemology of Art is beyond my ken. I have only the humble blessing of appreciating anything that is beautiful—a joy that has the virtue of perpetual stimulation for simple living.

In the real generic sense, MISS ROVERSI's virtuosity and creative genius have their origin from the noble lineage and Cultural rapport with the Country of her forbears—a Country which gave the world priceless and immortal treasures like the magnificent Works of the great Masters like Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo Raphael and others.

She is also a cousin of the Late Prime Minister, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, who was a great lover of Art and Literature. It was, therefore, a fitting tribute that the present Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, in spite of her crowded programme of official engagements graced the occasion to declare the Exhibition open.

AMONGST SOME OF THE CRITICS with their irrepressible urge for discursive polemics, there were many young and eager students who indisputably were excitedly inspired by the "Magnum Opus" in which she has indelibly imprinted her deep devotion and indefatigable enthusiasm. There was no doubt that she, as GOETHE so aptly enunciated, "Caused by appearance the illusion of a LOFTIER REALITY."

The treatment of the themes studiously selected was so appealingly simple and scintillating. Almost all of them had the tingling vibrancy of something inexpressibly DELIGHTFUL. The landscapes, like the view of Trincomalee (Item No. 4), OLIVE GROVE (Item No. 11) KANDY LAKE (Item No. 15)

and others with the azure sky turquoise sea, the sun-kissed golden beaches in vivid and emphatic perspective vivaciously come to life with the exotic magic of colour and rhythm. She has faithfully followed the Classical Landscape Style—"The GOLDEN GLOW of VENETIAN ART."

The Flowers, most of them found in her country villa in Pasyala and the other items of Indian Roses, BALANGODA ROSES, etc crystallized in a strangely 'spiritual' dimension permanently capture the irresistible charm of SRI LANKA'S scenic grandeur. To an ardent lover of Nature, They seem to commune with the restful mind, ecstatic with the much sought after "inner PEACE" and harmony with life visualized in Wordsworth's moving sentiments:—

"And then my heart with pleasure fills.

And dances with the daffodils."

Wordsworth spurned the artificiality of the crass, commercial world when he also wrote:—

*"The world is too much with us:
Late and soon,*

*Getting and spending, we lay
waste our powers;*

*Little we see in NATURE that
is ours;*

*We have given our hearts away,
a SORDID boon!"*

Her STILLS are consonant with PAUL C'EZANNE'S Punctilious penchant for impeccable arrangement, depth and juxtaposition of colour. The sentimental PORTRAITS of her Sister, Mrs. E. R. PERERA, the Three Sisters, daughters of her energetic and versatile niece, Mrs. V. T. DICKMAN, who gave her inspiring and unstinted assistance in organising the Exhibition, reflect the dignity, elegance and charm of the orthodox style of REALISTIC CONVENTION. They depict such sensitive detail and have been rendered meticulously with a unique radiance and verisimilitude. These portraits especially of the Three Sisters like The WYNDHAM SISTERS painted by JOHN SARGENT, bring out the individual traits, character and aspirations of the subjects. When Sargent's "Three Sisters" were exhibited at the Royal Academy in LONDON, the public bestowed their appreciation by christening the Master-piece —"THE THREE GRACES."

I DOUBT whether anyone would be so penurious in his heart to deny to MISS ROVERSI the encomium paid to the great artist SIR JOHN MILLAIS that her works on canvas are "Master-pieces, not only of Execution but also of INTENSE POETIC INSIGHT."

Art has been called "the UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE" and the accepted verdict appears to be that Science "KNOWS" but Art "DOES". The product of Miss RoverSI's intellect and imagination should serve as an open text book of tremendous aesthetic influence, to the young students so that they, with their potentially positive attitudes, can contribute their share to that Treasure which is indivisible from Peace—the CULTURE of this Island Paradise of ours to reflect its SOUL, FEELING and TRUTH.

It was Joubert who said that the evening of a "well-spent life brings its lamps with it." In the case of Miss RoverSI, the effulgence of her own satisfying representation not only dispels the gloom of a dark, dreary and mundane world but also serves as a beacon with an undying flame shedding the sheltering and guiding LIGHT to every fervent lover of ART.

May the Good Lord bless her with strength and long life to continue her work of True Art—the reverent imitation of God with dedication which, according to RUSKIN is the "EXPRESSION OF MAN'S DELIGHT IN GOD'S WORK—Not his own."

* * *

LETTERS

Land Reform
KKS & Tribune

Sir,

Two issues ago your paper had given a very correct analysis of Land Reforms and its repercussions on productivity, food shortages, and on Financial Institutions set up by the Government to assist in development. Here is our experience of what has happened to produc-

tion as a result of Land Reforms and its implementation. A group of us were cultivating a block of land belonging to a Temple and coming within the meaning of "Viharagam Lands" under Land Reforms Law. In spite of representations made to the effect that the land in question does not come within the Land Reforms Law, it was taken over when we were ready to cultivate about 40 Acres in paddy in September 1974.

Having taken over the land and equipment, and as the land was ready for sowing we thought that the Land Reforms authority would continue with the cultivation. They did nothing of the kind; they just abandoned it and has allowed the whole extent to go back into jungle. Not only that, there are about five acres of Oranges which we brought up to the bearing stage over a period of five years—this has been brought to nothing due to neglect and want of irrigation. Similarly a large extent of grafted mangoe plants are fast dying out. The equipment is rotting away in sun and rain. Even the equipment does not come under the meaning of "Agricultural Land" and when we wanted to remove the equipment, for use elsewhere one of the BUREAUCRATS said "you cannot remove them but we will negotiate with you to take over". "When will be that?" we asked; "You will have to wait till it suits me" was the reply. It is with this type of bureaucrat that "our" country hopes to be self-sufficient in food.

We do not mind government taking over the land even though the taking over etc. is illegal and does not come within the Land Reforms Law, but do something with it, instead of allowing it to go back into jungle and deny the country its production.

At the end of Maha 1973/74 and Yala 1974, we sold to the Paddy Marketing Board about 2500 bushels of paddy, cultivated and produced under lift irrigation. The country would have been richer by this amount if we were allowed to cultivate, instead of abandoning it.

The Land Reforms Commissions has accepted that the land in question is Viharagama lands and therefore does not come under the Land Reforms Law and that taking over is an injustice. But there

is no appeal against such an injustice. I am sending this letter for publication to show how correct your feature article on Land Reforms etc. is.

R. KAHAWITA

286, R. A. de Mel Mawatha,
Colombo.
25.2.75.

Sir,

In your leading article under the title "After Kankasanturai" in your issue of the 15th February, you write: "Even LSSP and CP stalwarts had maintained (one of them even in the columns of the *Tribune*) that the United Front had conceded all the legitimate rights of the Tamils and that nothing more need be done, and that whatever grievances which now existed were only in the imaginary and reactionary outpourings of the Federalists."

I do not claim to be a 'stalwart' of any party. But your statement is an obvious reference to my letter that appeared in your paper of 26 October 1974. Let me recount the facts.

In your issue of 12 October 1974, in an article titled "Prime Minister in Jaffna: The Tamil Problem," you had written: "some of these grievances (i.e. of the Tamil people) and sense of humiliation may be imaginary or induced by designing communal leaders, but the fact that they exist must be recognized if a solution is to be found."

It was in reply to that statement that I wrote in my letter: "If there are genuine grievances among the Tamil people, they have only to bring them up before the Government which has promised to look into them and grant redress. But what can the Government do about imaginary grievances fanned by designing politicians for their own ends? What kind of solutions do you want for imaginary grievances? imaginary solutions?"

I trust that this explanation will help make it clear that it was not a "stalwart" of the LSSP or CP, but the *Tribune* itself that admitted that some, at least, of the grievances of the Tamil people are imaginary ones "induced by designing communal leaders."

Colombo
17.2.75. **BASIL PERERA**

THE U.S.A.

THE NEW CONGRESS

—younger, more liberal,
more democrats—

By Wendy Ross

Washington.

The 535 members of the 94th Congress assembled in Washington on January 14 to begin their two-year session. Perhaps the most conspicuous feature of the new Congress is the large increase in the number of Democrats. Although the outcome of a few of last November's Congressional elections are still being contested, the party lineup in the new Congress looks like this: of the 435 members of the House of Representatives, 291 will sit on the Democratic side of the aisle, 144 on the Republican side; of the 100 senators, 61 will line up with the Democrats, 39 with the Republicans. This is a gain for the Democratic majority of 46 seats overall.

But perhaps even more significant than the rise in the number of Democrats is the high ratio of members elected to Congress for the first time. Nearly one in five members will be new, replacing members who were defeated or retired. Ninety-two Representatives—75 of them Democrats—and eleven senators—eight of them Democrats—will fall into the Freshmen Category. These new legislators are generally younger than those they replaced and, according to most political analysts, more liberal in their political outlook.

WITH THE LARGE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITIES in both Chambers, Congress undoubtedly will focus on legislation which the liberals wanted in the last Congress but were not able to get through the legislative pipeline. The 94th Congress, for example, is more likely than the 93rd to vote for stronger business regulation, Land-use planning, consumer protection and wage-price controls. According to a survey made by the highly respected magazine "National Journal Reports," based on the way members campaigned in the November elections, the new Congress will probably continue the

trend toward cutting foreign aid and defense spending, especially spending for new weapons systems and overseas bases.

It also will undoubtedly continue to assert its renewed sense of Congressional power in relation to the Executive branch, particularly in matters of foreign policy. It will take steps to strengthen its oversight of the Central Intelligence Agency, with hearings already scheduled on that sensitive subject. The overriding problem for Congress, however, will be how to cope with the nation's economy. Party leaders and the rank-and-file will be under extraordinary pressures to produce solutions to the twin problems of inflation and recession.

If the new Congress doesn't produce sound legislation the voters may blame the Nation's problems, especially the economic ones, on Congressional ineptitude, and the Democratic majority in Congress would have the most to lose.

Democrats in Congress are well aware of this. As Senator Hubert Humphrey said "Democrats beware, now you have to deliver." And Representative Henry Reuss, a Ten-term Democrat from Wisconsin echoed this by saying: "to the Democratic victors belong not the spoils, but the sweat and toil of reversing the nation's unparalleled inflation-recession."

TAKING COGNIZANCE of such comments, House Speaker Carl Albert has appointed ten-member Task Force to draft a comprehensive Program of Action for the Democrats to pursue in the New Congress. "The condition of the economy and demands for a positive Program of Energy Conservation and Development make it necessary that Congress assert firm leadership," he said.

In theory, the sweeping Democratic majorities in both Chambers—reminiscent of the heavily democratic 89th Congress—should have little difficulty in passing their Programs. In practice, however, much will depend on the ability of the Democrats to reach common policy objectives and to bend the legislative machinery to their will. It must be remembered that Party solidarity is not as strong in the American political system as in a parliamentary system. Elected

representatives in the United States generally vote more in response to the wishes of their constituents than to the dictates of Party leadership.

Nevertheless, one can expect more Party conformity among Democrats in this session of Congress than in the last one, due to the growing role of the Democratic caucus in the House—the Party group to which all House Democrats belong.

John Anderson, a House leader, recently criticised the growing powers of the Democratic caucus. He compared it to the Democratic caucus at the turn of the century which, he said, "ran roughshod over the legislative process by dictating the legislative business of the house and even rewriting committee bills behind closed caucus doors and then imposing binding instructions on Democrats in Committees and on the floor."

There is no doubt that the Democrats, in meetings last month to organize their party in the house, did make some far-reaching changes which could radically alter the old way of doing things in the house.

MOST PUBLICIZED of these changes was the unanimous vote to expand the powerful Ways and Means Committee—the tax writing Committee of the House which has jurisdiction over a wide range of vital issues—from 25 to 37 members. The purpose of this action was to open slots on the Committee, which had long been dominated Conservatives, to an increased number of liberal Democrats.

"This is good news for those who favour tax reform and National Health Insurance legislation," declared Representative John Brademas, one of the House Democratic leaders, after the caucus action.

The effect of this move coupled with the decision of Representative Wilbur Mills to surrender the Committee Chairmanship—a post he had held since 1958—will be to increase significantly the chances for such liberal legislation emerging from the Committee.

In other actions, the caucus voted to strip Democratic Members of the Ways and Means Committee of their power to make Committee assignments for other Democrats, Transferring that important respon-

sibility to a Committee established by the caucus: voted to increase Democratic majorities on all House Committees to reflect the two-to-one Democratic majority in the full House; and elected an aggressive reformer, Phillip Burton, a six term congressman from California, as its Chairman.

THE CAUCUS is scheduled to meet again during the first week of Congress to continue its move to alter the power structure in the House, giving more authority to the Speaker and the rank-and-file Members at the expense of Committee Chairmen and the seniority system. First item of caucus Business will be to vote on Committee assignments and Committee Chairmen Two years ago the caucus adopted a rule requiring an automatic secret ballot in electing Committee Chairman. None of the senior men or women lost their Chairmanships in the last Congress, but the precedent was set. In this Congress, three old-time chairmen may face challenges from less senior members: Wright Patman of the Banking Committee W. R. Poage of the Agriculture Committee and F. Edward Herbert of the Armed Services Committee.

In an unprecedented move, the 75 freshman Democrats scheduled four days of meetings prior to the caucus session to discuss the Chairmanship question, and several long-entrenched Chairmen have asked to address the group, an unusual move signalling the strength of the freshman force.

Since Committees shape legislation before it reaches the floor of either Chamber—and can in fact withhold it from floor action, changes in Committee composition and leadership could prove extremely important.

WHILE THE DEMOCRATS in the House work on organizing, the same activity is going on in the Senate, although no such far-reaching changes are under contemplation there. However, there will be several important changes to watch in the new Senate, mostly regarding Committee leadership positions. The long-standing Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, J. William Fulbright, who was defeated in the Democratic primary in Arkansas, will not

be among the Senators in the new Congress. His Chairmanship on Foreign Relations is slated to go to John Sparkman, a conservative Democrat from Alabama. In the 93rd Congress Sparkman chaired the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs committee. The Chairmanship of that Committee will probably be filled by senator William Proxmire, a Liberal Democrat.

Senator Hubert Humphrey is slated to become the Chairman of the Joint Economic Committee and undoubtedly will use that position to schedule intensive hearings on the nation's economic problems.

How the new Congress—more democratic, more reform-minded and more youthful—copes with the problems confronting the nation remains to be seen.

House Republican leader John Rhodes, has urged a "consensus type government", to avoid the possibility of a stalemate between a Republican President and a Democratic Congress. In a recent speech he recalled that in 1947, President Truman and the Republican 80th Congress put aside their differences in order to launch the historic Marshall Plan. "This is the type of attitude I hope can prevail in this Chamber," Mr. Rhodes said "never before has it been more important for good men and women of both parties to join together in a common assault on the nation's problems..I hope the majority party, will accept the outstretched hand of the minority.. the American people deserve action on the part of their Federal Government and not two years of political stalemate."

Whether the heavily Democratic 94th Congress will work in co-operation with the Republican White House or attempt to prove that the Democrats can do more for the nation than the Republicans is anyone's guess. The end of this Congress in 1976 coincides with the next presidential election. A number of influential Democrats in Congress have their eye on the White House—a factor that could work both ways, toward co-operation or conflict.

FOOD VALUE

Is Tapioca All Starch?

TAPIOCA which is the second best staple food in Kerala is also popular as a vegetable in other areas. Near Madras, there is already a tapioca belt in Gummidipoondi area which caters to the Madras market supplying this tuber as a vegetable. It is perhaps the only tuber barring potato which has been subjected to intensive research with fruitful results. Some new varieties have been developed by the Central Tuber Research Institute, Sreerayarayam, near Trivandrum with not only higher yields but also better cooking quality.

What is there in tapioca is a common question. Many think it is only starch-filled. But nutrition analysis (data from Farm Information Bureau, Trivandrum) shows that it is not all starch but contains some valuable supplementaries like calcium, phosphorous and iron. It also provides many of the vitamins though in small doses and is thus a more complete food than it is believed to be. In 100 grams of edible portion, tapioca contains: water 59 to 60 gms, carbohydrates 34 to 38 gms, protein 0.7 to 1.2 gms, and fat 0.2 to 0.3 gms. It has 25 to 50 mg of calcium, 40 to 50 mg of phosphorous and 0.5 to 0.9 mg of iron. Though it supplies only traces of vitamin A, it is richer in other vitamins with 0.02 to 0.06 mg of thiamine, 0.01 to 0.07 mg. of riboflavine, 0.03 to 0.06 mg of niacin and 30 to 36 mg of vitamin C.

Tapioca is good as a vegetable and some varieties have a flavour like potato. According to some housewives in Kerala there are varieties with a flavour of the Nendram plantain, which is a delicacy from this State. It has also been widely demonstrated in Tamil Nadu that a number of edible preparations, snacks and sweets can be prepared out of this tuber which deserves a more prominent place as a food, vegetable and raw material for industries on a wider scale in the country.

—Hindu

IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

• LSSP & Anura • Nonaligned Summit

IS IT NOT TRUE that a mini-cold war is hotting up within the United Front? That this is a cold war in which the UNP is taking more-than-ordinary interest? That this cold war had started over a year ago when Anura Bandaranaike burst into local politics with a big bang? That Anura has now become a sizable political force within the SLFP and that it is true that he has succeeded in reaching out to political elements outside the SLFP which are attracted by the "centrist views" he espouses? That Anura has (unnecessarily, many think) put forward his centrist views with a great deal of polemical lashing out at the "extreme right" and the "extreme left"? That, more often than not, he concentrates his attacks on what he calls the "extreme left"? That this has naturally evoked counter-attacks from the groups he had classed as "extreme left"? That in recent weeks this cold war has become more severe? That matters are also coming out into the open? That *The (UNP) Journal* of March 21 focussed the spotlight on one aspect of this cold war in a front page news item? That this what the report stated:

"The LSSP has begun a campaign to oust Anura Bandaranaike from the leadership of the SLFP Youth League. This appears to be the culmination of a bitter quarrel that has been going on between the LSSP and Anura's ADA. The ADA in two of the earlier editions of the paper carried articles on the leadership of the LSSP were Whisky-drinking-Trotskyites. The attacks were total and overwhelming. The LSSP has now made an open call to the SLFP youths to assess the role that Anura Bandaranaike and his ADA are playing. In the latest issue of its weekly JANASATIYA the LSSP has taken up cudgels against Anura on a report that ADA carried on the fall of Mervyn de Silva, editor-in-chief of Lake House. The ADA had called Mervyn de Silva a supporter of the socialist movement. The LSSP

has picked on this remark to launch its attack on Anura. The LSSP's JANASATIYA has posed this question to SLFP youths: 'We ask one direct question from the SLFP youth organisation. The ADA since its inception has appeared on behalf of reaction. When the chief organiser of the youth organisation and his paper are playing this role is not your silence an act of betrayal of the UF and the forward march of the people of this country..?'"

IS IT NOT SIGNIFICANT that Anura has taken up the challenge, on his return from North Korea and China by asking the question whether he would have chosen to go to these two socialist countries if he was a reactionary? That this argument that he was a Leftist because he had gone to these two countries and met Kim Ill Sung, Chou En-lai, Sihanouk and others will not carry much conviction if he does not back it with appropriate actions and statements in Sri Lanka? That whilst it is true that the usual Leftwing formula in Sri Lanka to damn anyone who is disliked is to call him (or her) a 'reactionary', Anura cannot get away from the charge that has been made that he was tilting heavily on to the Right by merely proclaiming that he was a Socialist and also through the oblique logic that he had met revolutionaries like Kim Ill Sung and Chou En-lai? That Sihanouk is a different kettle of fish about whom the less said the better? That it will be interesting to watch developments in the coming weeks?

IS THERE NOT A GREAT DEAL OF CURIOSITY about the news report that some Arab countries had indicated that the period so far set apart for the nonaligned summit may not suit the Muslims because it falls within the period of the Ramazan? That Ramazan fell between August 24 to September 24 in 1976? That as the UN General Assembly sessions would start immediately after that it would not be

possible to have the Summit later in that year? That with regard to having it before August 24 it was necessary to consult all the countries concerned? That this consultation can take place only from Algiers where the Secretariat of the continuing Bureau still functions? That many people are surprised why the secretarial Bureau of the continuing committee has not yet been shifted to Colombo which has been chosen as the venue of the next non-aligned summit? That many see in this request to change the date of the summit a lever to post-poner the Summit because even if a small group of countries say that some date immediately before August 24, 1976, does not suit them then the Summit must be put off sine die? That only at Lima at the end of this year can this question about dates be finalised and if no finality is reached there will be no alternative but to push the Summit into 1977 or thereafter? That 1977 is election year in Sri Lanka? That those who are aware that some Arab countries think that Sri Lanka cannot handle a summit of this magnitude, at least not in the year 1976, have a shrewd suspicion that this difficulty about the Ramazan has been pulled out of the bag in order to secure a postponement? That Sri Lanka would do well to get the Secretariat of the continuing committee transferred forthwith from Algiers to Colombo—as this should have been done a long time ago? That only if the Secretariat is set up in Colombo will it possible for Sri Lanka to consult with the different non-aligned countries regarding dates or any other matter? That if the Secretariat has already been moved to Colombo nobody seems to be aware of it? That what is known is that the Committee now functioning here has not yet got the Secretariat files from Algiers? That some authoritative information on this matter would be helpful? That in the meantime press reports indicate that the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, has written to the Heads of the Nonaligned Nations to find out whether early August would be a suitable date for the Summit meeting? That Asia (and Sri Lanka) had been deprived of the opportunity of hosting the summit on the last occasion owing to the determination of the African and Arab states to have the summit on their continent which had hosted the Summit before?