

TRIBUNE

CEYLON NEWS REVIEW

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Vol. 17 No. 58

March 1973—2

OURSELVES

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AGE?

SHAMBA

CHARMS FOR
EVERYTHING

SAFARI IN
CEYLON

FROM THE EASY
CHAIR

CRISIS IN THE
COMMUNIST
PARTY

National State Assemblyman Prince Gunasekera's bombshell about Appointed Assemblyman Aziz's Swiss Bank account has stirred up the proverbial hornet's nest. Aziz has stated that two years ago, when it was made incumbent on citizens to declare their foreign assets, with a bait of amnesty thrown in, if the money was brought back to Ceylon, he had disclosed these holdings to the Controller of Exchange and the Speaker. Nevertheless, the Member for Habaraduwa wants the Leader of the Opposition to press for a Select Committee to look into the matter. Many questions arise from the Aziz affair. Was it not a violation of Exchange Control Regulations for a citizen to have an undeclared bank account in a foreign country, especially a numbered one, even before the Amnesty offered in 1971? Was not the Amnesty, not merely a waiver of the penalties under the law—as an inducement to make individuals like Aziz bring to Ceylon foreign exchange they held abroad? While a mere businessman can take refuge behind an amnesty, can a politician, especially a left-winger do that?

These and other questions apart, knowledgeable circles are tempted to demand that in addition to a probe on the Swiss Bank Accounts, the secret Bank Accounts in Hongkong held by Ceylonese should also be investigated. It is not generally known that the (Overseas) Chinese bankers of Hongkong have done much better than the Swiss in regard to secret bank accounts. Whilst the Swiss have specialised in numbered accounts, which by themselves arouse suspicion, the Hongkong boys have gone one better and permit clients to have and operate bank accounts under *nome-de-plumes*. A Sri Lankian can hold and operate an account in Hongkong under an assumed Chinese, Malayasian, French, German, English or American name. He can even use a Russian, Egyptian, Indian or Japanese name. The *nome-de-plume* bank account has many advantages over the Swiss numbered accounts in these days when governments, organisations and even individual crusaders spend time, money and energy on unravelling the undisclosed foreign assets of its citizens. Many who know a great deal about these matters have told *Tribune* that the secret bank accounts in Hongkong and Macao will reveal much more of political significance to Sri Lanka than the Swiss Accounts.

Tribune

OURSELVES

THE LAST ISSUE of *Tribune* was unduly delayed. It was originally scheduled to appear on February 28, but with the delay, it bears no date. It has become one of the issues in March. When this volume of *Tribune* was begun in June 1971, we had not been certain whether we would be a monthly, fortnightly or a weekly, but we finally decided on three issues a month. At the early stages, we often had to combine several issues in one. The next few issues of the paper will, we hope, appear in quick succession to catch up with the schedules, and once we have reached the sixteenth number of this volume (17), we will begin a new volume, Vol. 18. *Tribune*, it will be recalled, began publication in May 1954, and except for two interruptions, in 1958 (May to December), and in 1970—(from October '70 to June 1971), this paper has been in regular publication. Its format has changed many times and right through until this volume began *Tribune* has been published weekly. It has always endeavoured to be an independent and objective paper, and although it has been left-orientated it has never been drawn into partisan party politics. For short per-

iods in the sixties, it had sometimes leaned (or tilted) too heavily on one side or the other, but this was corrected with the new series we began in June 1971.

We have now re-established our original position as a strictly independent political journal. We know we are read. We know we are needed because when we are a little late we are overwhelmed with telephone calls wanting to know when the paper will be out.

From this issue, we have a further change in the cover. We had used art paper for the cover and had printed a topical or striking picture on it. But for sometime now art paper is scarce even in the blackmarket. Today regular supplies are virtually unobtainable. More recently we had experimented with other kinds of paper for the cover, but they have not been satisfactory. The blocks do not print well and we are not certain how long even these stocks will last—they are imported.

We have, therefore, decided to use a somewhat heavy-weight paper produced in Ceylon, and uncertain how it would take the blocks, we will for the start have some printed matter on

the first cover. We will revert to the picture on the cover as soon as we are able to do it. The front page will in future spotlight some burning problem of the day.

IN THIS ISSUE, we have a piece about the Swiss Bank Accounts and the need to pay some attention to secret nominee-plumed accounts in Hongkong, Macao, Singapore and Tokyo. If Sri Lanka was (economically) doing as well as it should (it has the resources to be a really prosperous country), nobody will be worried about secret bank accounts abroad. In fact, Ceylon is geopolitically so well sited that it can easily be the centre of banking in the Indian Ocean—holding secret accounts of many persons in this region.

If our rupee had a good parity rating, our citizens will not want to freeze capital in secret accounts abroad, and if we had adequate foreign exchange reserves (as we easily can have), there will be no hue and cry about hidden assets abroad. In the complex and inter-dependent world of today, an individual should have the right to free travel and its concomitant right to move his money about freely. But owing to the difficulties man has created for himself in the last few decades, this right has become restricted in many countries, and such restrictions are fast enveloping the entire globe.

The basic symptom of this current *malaise* is that the currencies of the richest and economically most developed countries have crumbled, and until these currencies are stabilised in a comprehensive global system, the world, as we know it will be in a tumble. *Tribune* will in its forthcoming issues publish articles on the monetary and currency crisis which has gripped the world.

In this issue, we have *Canax* in his *Easy Chair* at his cynical best. *Alkardi Mugana* is on *Safari* from *Hendala* to *Puttalam* and thence to *Batticaloa*. *Patricia Nelundeniya*, who appears in the *Tribune* for the first time, has a scorching piece on charms and those who sell charms. The second in the series *Shamba* (meaning a farm) appears in this issue. It is a continuing and fascinating story of the efforts of an individual to set up a small one-acre plot on

RAMBLING NOTES

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ANOTHER ICE AGE? Unstable World

WE LIVE in an age of cliches, and one which is repeated most often is that we are living in an age of change. Our late Prime Minister, *SWRDB*, was fond of the cliché that we live "in an age of transition" and he always reminded his audience that "rivers never flowed backwards". Cliches often tend to distract from grim realities, and it is a fact that most people, even thinking people who should know better, do not seem to realise the extent of the change which has overtaken the world, and what is more of the changes which are likely to occur in the immediate future. Apart from what can happen in the next five or ten years, what will happen in the next thousand years is of immediate importance,

the fringe of one of our major colonisation schemes in the *Kala Oya-Rajangane* region. The Editor covers national as well as international matters in his *Rambling Notes* to keep readers of *Tribune* abreast by pointing out the significant events of the current period.

considering the fact that a million years is a small fragment of time in the history of the planet.

One matter which has stirred thought and speculation is *climate*. It has begun to dawn even on the unthinking that the climate of the world is not what it was. In *Ceylon*, the traditional monsoons have not come at the time they had come for countless centuries. In nearly all countries of the world there have been unusual occurrences, and this has prompted many people, including scientists, to surmise that the earth was moving towards another ice age and that before long polar ice would be covering more areas and bring with it many unwelcome consequences.

It is not the unusual floods and droughts, and the long winters, which have given rise to these surmises. Climatologists have been making a study of core samples of sediments from the *Pacific*, the *Atlantic* and the *Caribbean* sea. On the basis of their investigations, geophysicists feel that a new ice age will arrive here between 200 and 2000 years from now against the classical concept of some 90,000 years later. *Dr. Cesare Emiliani*, a noted American scien-

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tist, was more positive and declared recently that the "present episode of amiable climate is coming to an end" and that the ice age was just a few centuries away. He thought that the chain of severe winters in recent years throughout the world could not be isolated happenings; on the other hand they could be part of a global phenomenon indicating a general trend towards earth freezing.

A joint International Atomic Energy Agency - World Meteorological Organisation study some years ago of 1,400 metres of ice core samples - representing an unbroken and detailed climate record of 100,000 years—taken from North Greenland had also indicated a general trend towards colder climate in the next few years. It is possible to form definite conclusions because the concentration of both deuterium (heavy hydrogen) and oxygen 18 (an isotope of oxygen) in snow in high polar regions increases with the temperature of formation of the snow. In areas such as Greenland, or in the Antarctic, successive falls of snow accumulate as ice and build to great thickness. Within practical limits, not only seasonal temperature variations but also longterm cli-

matic patterns can thus be deduced.

But not all scientists think that the ice age was coming back to the earth within a short time. Prof. W. Dansgaard of the H. C. Orsted Institute, University of Copenhagen, who conducted the Greenland ice core study, did not find any indication of earth returning to the ice age. On the other hand he found that the cooling trend would end in the next 10 or 15 years when the process would reverse and start off a warming cycle which would reach its peak period in the first or second decade of the next century. In fact the IAEA-WMO study revealed the existence of some kind of warming and cooling cycles: one regular cycle with a period of about 180 years and a second with a period about 78 years. The cycles are probably related to solar activity because the period (about 11 years) of the sunspot cycle varies also with periods of some 80 years and of some 180 years. The solar activity directly influences the circulation of both the atmosphere and the hydrosphere, and the interaction of the two produces what is called the weather.

YET ANOTHER matter which has aroused considerable interest is the quantum of heat being

generated on the planet. However, climatic changes are not as simple as that to suggest that solar activity alone is determining the warming and cooling cycles. There are many factors involved. The change in the inclination of the earth's axis, location of continents, mountains and oceans, etc. are all relevant. Besides, influences of certain human activities also have a bearing on the climate pattern. But the difficulty is that there are some plus and minus points so that nobody is as yet certain of the direction of their combined effects. For instance, there is the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. As a result of combustion of large quantities of fuel, this carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere is rising rapidly. In the past few decades it is estimated to have gone up by ten to fifteen per cent as compared with the previous level. As carbon dioxide gas transmits to earth shortwave solar radiation completely, but prevents longwave thermal radiation from leaving the earth, it intensifies what is known as the green-house effect—raising of the temperature of the earth's surface air—especially in the higher altitudes. This coupled with the mounting number of industries using coal and fuel oil tend to suffocate earth in this poisonous gas en-

velope. It has been calculated that the burning of coal alone adds 5,000 million tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere every year.

But the heat balance on the earth has been seriously disturbed, and this had caused a great deal of scientific investigation. The earth's heat balance is also upset by the enormous amount of energy man releases into the atmosphere everyday. Almost all forms of energy generated by man are converted into heat which warms the atmosphere. According to Dr. Mikhail Budyko, director of the Voeikov Chief Geological Observatory of the USSR, the present capacity of all man-made sources of power has reached the 1,000 million kw level. Every year this total goes up by five to six per cent. If this growth rate is maintained, the total quantity of power generated 200 years hence will be equal to the amount of solar radiation absorbed by the earth. That means, the threat of overheating the earth is more real than the threat of ice age sweeping the planet. For instance, a mere one per cent increase in the heat budget of the earth will lead to intensive melting of the polar ice cap, endangering all the marine cities of the world.

But the discussions about an Ice Age is a recurring one. The idea of ice age returning

again is nothing new. It has its origin probably in the fact that the earth already had four ice ages—periods during which the continents were partly or largely covered by ice sheets and glaciers. The present-day ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica are relics of the fourth ice age; so much so that properly speaking we are living at the end of the last ice age. There is clear geological evidence to show that the retreat of ice from the last ice age in Europe began only about 25,000 years ago. The four ice ages were separated by inter-glacial periods when the climate was milder. It might be this fact that prompted the earlier surmise that the next ice age was 90,000 years away. Dr. Emiliani's hypothesis only advances this date.

WHILST scientists, climatologists, fundamentalists and ecologists worry about the environmental future of the world, political observers have a whole range of problems on their hands. The currency structure in the capitalist world has been shaken. The Bretton Woods system based on a strong dollar is no more. There have been two devaluations of the dollar, whilst the West German mark and the Japanese yen have been compelled to revalue upwards. The currency problems of the world need careful examination.

Equally careful examination has also to be made of the Vietnam Peace Agreement, to see if the "ceasefire" will work, or whether (as some cynics have put it) it would be a "ceaseless fire" in Vietnam until either Saigon or Hanoi is knocked out. But the Vietnam Agreement has increased the detente between China and the USA. Kissinger has been received by Mao and "missions" of a special nature will be opened in the two capitals, Peking and Washington, to enable the two countries to maintain a dialogue. To show that China seriously wants to normalise its relations with the USA, a call has gone forth from Peking asking the Taiwanese to start a dialogue with a view to ending their dispute.

While a detente in East Asia is growing in scope, in West Asia tensions are being kept alive. Israel, without justification (whatever the excuses) shot down a Libyan airliner carrying nearly 100 passengers in Sinai because it had strayed from the air corridor and had not answered its signals to climb down. But before the world could get over this horror, the Black Septembrists staged a mini-Munich and "captured" the Saudi Arabian embassy in Khartoum with a number of hostages particularly two US diplomats and a Belgian. The

Arab hostages were spared, but the US and Belgian hostages were "executed" in cold blood because the Governments had not secured the release of political prisoners in several countries. The Khartoum murders were meaningless, and they served to divide the Arab world still further and also push the Israel shooting of the airliner into the background.

It is a significant fact that terrorism is on the increase in every part of the world. In London itself, the home of parliamentary democracy, urban guerillas have struck and caused damage. The climate in the UK is presently favourable for terrorism with all the trade unions on the warpath and the token general strike causing major impact on life in that country.

Whilst several countries are slipping into terrorism, other countries (where terrorism and guerillas have existed and continue to exist) went to the polls in the last fortnight—producing the most varied and interesting results. In Bangladesh, Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League, as anticipated, swept the polls. President Makarios in Cyprus had an easy passage although Co. Grivas is in the country and is again

very much on the warpath. Ireland has elected a new Prime Minister and party forces and alignment have undergone drastic changes. In Chile, the elections cannot be considered as conclusive, but in Argentine the President elect has refused to take his oaths unless Juan Peron returned to Argentina. The French elections have retained the Gaullists with a vastly reduced majority. India has many problems of its own, some of them really disturbing: dissension and drought have made matters worse.

INSIDE SRI LANKA too there is a great deal of uncertainty and instability. The UF has a commanding majority in the NSA and this gives the Government a political stability of a parliamentary character which is made an excuse for many actions of the UF. Though the UF still commands this supreme majority, there is no doubt that they will get nowhere with their present strength should there be a general election next week.

But the Parliamentary majority of the Government enabled it to make mince meat of the Opposition which had foolishly set out to move a vote of no-confidence. The Opposition really had no case because they admitted

at the very start that the food crisis, if there was one, was partly due to the upward trend in world food prices.

The United Front continues to remain "united", even though the CP is in the throes of a bitter factional struggle, and all attempts to bring the two groups together have failed. The frictions inside the UNP seem to have been smoothed out.

A new United Front Sinhala weekly *Jana Vegaya* has made its appearance and it is yet too early to say what impact it will make on the youth to whom it seems to be specially directed. The Ministers of the Government had endeavoured to "invade" the Tamil North, no doubt to lay the basis for a campaign in the KKS seat, but the TUF has reacted sharply with black flags, hartals and a hunger strike.

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ON SETTLING DOWN

BY

Anatory Bukoba

THE LAND is near a bathing place, and some workmen elected to leave their bicycles on the land while they had their lunch by the river. I was not there at the time. When they returned, one of the bicycles, a brand new one, only a month old, was missing. No one saw it being removed, but, three facts have come to light. First, a "dark man" was seen sitting on the road near the land by one the group owning the bicycles. Next, while they were at lunch another person saw a bicycle fitting the description of the one lost, on the road but no one in attendance. Third, one of a household on a major pathway that turns off this road saw a dark man pushing this bicycle and sort of running with it, along the path. The village from which this bicycle was lost is out in strength, and it looks as if they will keep watch for it all night.

Today I used a new tool. The slasher that I have been using is only suitable for cutting grass and weeds with either very slender or tender stalks. I have had to leave the tougher weeds in their patches. So when I spied a sickle, the sort used for cutting paddy at reaping time, I asked if I could borrow it, and

I used it to cut some of the tougher weeds that I had had to leave. If the slasher is tough on the hands, the sickle is tough on one's back, for it has a short handle and one has to bend to use it and hold the grass or weed with one hand while one cuts it with the other. I learnt something about the way grass grows by using the sickle. I saw that when grass is allowed to grow rank, so that it seeds and the old grass it never cut away, the earth becomes quite bare in places, because the dead vegetation that the old grass forms will not allow new grass to grow, and so the grass becomes patchy, with much bare earth between one group of grass stalks and another. This brought home to me the adage that "grass improves with grazing."

Where I bathe in the river is a secluded spot, and I counted 8 large kumbuk trees, around me, four to the left and four to the right. No wonder the place or rather the water there, is so cold. There is a great reach of water in front of me, and a little to the right and to the front is what looks like a large island. The whole place is well shaded, and it might almost be a place in the jungle along the Magalavatan river in the Ampara

and Monaragala Districts. I thought of the elephants that would have bathed here before the place was opened up. But this looks like a place where there have always been people, a real old jungle village, but with no signs of the old village left.

MEN from the Survey Department were out in strength this morning, and I took advantage of their presence and of their activities to explore the length of the river below my land, for they had made their own paths through the jungle along the river-side even using a *katha* where necessary to effect a path as is their wont. I found several islands along the river, all with vegetation and even trees. At two places the land opened out, as it were, on to the river, through gaps, in the high bank, and I shall have to guard against soil erosion at these places when I clean the land around them.

Dwellings in these places must be built of cadjans or muddle and wattle or a combination of both or bricks. My first building will have to be of cadjan. We shall need sticks or poles to carry the frame and more sticks to carry the roof; the only place that these can be got is the jungle. We reckon that a hundred cadjans will do for our first building, even with a separate kitchen, because kitchen smoke sends white cloths yellow especially when they are damp. A question we shall have to decide

is whether it should be an open wadia or house, or a closed one.

BOTH have their advantages. A closed house may give one more security at night, but the mosquitoes, if there are any, are harder to control because there is no wind. To keep out heavy rain, the cadjan roof must have a good slope to it. We have decided, I think to build the house four-square, that is, with cadjans facing four ways. We also looked at the land I had cleared for a site for the house. We decided to put our first building in a place, which will be screened partially from the road, down which so many people go on their way to bathe in the river.

Today I had another go at clearing the verge along the road by our property, for as I have said before, it makes a great difference to any property to have a good frontage.

Sunday is a good day for getting to know people or to get to know them better. It is six days since I came here, and I have had to join up with the local people in a way I would not have been able to do if other people had been able to keep their word about getting here to join me. Being alone has had its useful side. I have been able to get a better appreciation of the work to be done and to break myself in more gently to manual work. Haste, it is said, is not speed.

This evening I saw a well whose water level is almost flush with that of the ground, and I was told it never sinks below a foot. Lucky man who has that well. There was a young jak tree growing in that garden and one does not usually see jak in the Wannu. In addition to the coffee trees that I saw I was told that there was also cocoa. I saw plantain trees that have a red skinned plantain, but although the tree looked good I was told that the fruit itself does not develop well.

THERE WAS a time a few years ago when cadjans cost from Rs. 12.50 to Rs 15/- a hundred. We used to think Rs. 15/- exorbitant. Today I would not buy them at Rs. 22/- a hundred, but I have been told that it is the price now. I have been told that Rs. 5/- worth of rope should be enough to build our house and roof and also the beds (*massas*) and tables we shall want. Opening up new land without Government aid has been basically one of a man having the money to set other people to the task of doing the actual opening up by their labour, or of a man being in the position of raising a loan or getting credit to do the same thing.

The idea of Government clearing the land, building a house, and paying people to live in it and do some cultivation, was the idea behind the colonization schemes. If it helped the first generation of such people, it did not quite help

the second and third generations.

Another way is for a man to have a source of income and to develop his land as a paying proposition and as a hobby. It is not a bad idea. Perhaps the best way, which will have to be tried out, is the idea of a community of people coming together to improve themselves, by combining business with agriculture, and at the same time creating, in a way, a new life for themselves.

It will be new in the sense that it will be an experiment, but that does not mean that it need not combine much of the old.

THE DIFFICULTY here is that it requires a certain amount of new thinking on the part of a person. It is natural for a person to think that if he does a day's work he will get Rs. 5/- a day for it, and it is difficult for such a one to be willing to forego this in the interests of a community spirit or project. If he cannot get this money, he would rather stay at home doing nothing. To overcome this, the projected community must have something to offer him at the outset, if for financial reasons, such as a shortage of money, it cannot be money itself at first.

People might come together on equal social terms for a variety of purposes, for there are many ways of earning a living, and it is earning a living that I am thinking of here, but if they are to do so,

others must be at rock bottom, an underlying friendship. Shramadana is not a bad idea, but is rather like a boy scout camp. You cannot go on living in a boy scout camp always. Something other than shramadana is required, if the work done by Shramadana is to be to the advantage of all who do it.

The reader may wonder what all this has to do with a *shamba* or farm. I have only been airing in an impersonal way some of the difficulties I have run into. This difficulty will have to resolve itself in time if the work of this particular *shamba* is to get on.

Today I continued clearing our frontage to the road with the *dhai-ya kotte*, which is the name for the paddy reaper that I have been using—the one that normally breaks one's back with bending over, *konda rithuna*, as they say. One kind woman said, it will all grow again, quickly; and I said, that is just what I hope it will do, but I won't let it grow so long this time, but keep it short.

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IN SRI LANKA TODAY

CHARMS FOR EVERYTHING

— How the racket operates —

By Patricia Nelundeniya

CEYLON'S GROWTH from Independence in 1948 has been a roll downhill.

Two obvious reasons for this stand out. Firstly, the quality of the politicians our elections have spewed out; secondly, the prevalence of charms and astrology against which Pandit Nehru campaigned as a kind of degradation nationally. With his scientific mind, and his sense of history, he fought against confidence tricksters who cheat the people, and strove to establish a scientific, technological approach to solving India's problems.

Every week the public of Sri Lanka is assailed with "Hundred percent guaranteed" charms to "win the heart of your loved one", to "overcome enemies" and to "pass examinations" etc.

The *modus operandi* of these professional Charmers is to set up posh offices in some hole in the wall address, publicise their activities heavily, and wait for the gullible, or those battling with personal problems. The crudest psychological tactics are used. Mothers with grown-up daughters are the most gullible; next come those in real mental distress. Supernatural forces are called on to oblige at the mantrams of the charmer.

One writes, or telephones for an appointment with the Charmer who attempts to add stature to his profession by advertising that he is a Government registered Charmist. Neatly evasive replies are given at first call; the charmer suggests a personal call to discuss problems which is really an opportunity for him to assess the standing of the client and fix his charges.

A CHARMER whom I have met adopts this line. His next move is to say that a feasibility test must be conducted first. He notes your name and address on a scrap of paper, and says; "Think of a flower". You do and tell him. He pretends to make an abstruse calculation on the merit of the flower you have chosen and the time of your arrival, which he says will indicate whether the charm will work or not. In my case he said it would. If a survey were taken of such feasibility tests, there might be a 99 percent positive response depending on your dress and manner.

Next, he proceeds to register your name and address and gives you a number. He bangs a bell. In comes a stupid looking female with a figure that missed Jane Russel's by inches. She wiggles. The torrid zone hits all the

northern points of the compass. While you wonder what the performance is for, the charmer orders: "Porm ekak denna". She wiggles out. In seconds, she returns with a Form letter. It is in three languages, in crude print, with a few blanks. Half way down the form are the operative words: Rs. 835.95. Eight hundred bucks! Charming must be the latest million dollar business.

WHILE YOU try hard to cloak your embarrassment the charmer puts on his patter. He says that offices and staff and telephones cost money: that incense of the delicate blend cost Rs. 60 a pound. If the afflicted want results, they must not stint in their offerings to the gods, says the charmer. While he talks, he bangs his bell angrily. A face peers in. "Who is next?" says the charmer. You sense you are being pressurised to make a decision. Fortunately, the peering face says: "No one". The charmer looks at this diary. "The gentlemen must be late" he says. He also glares at the peering face over your shoulder, for the blunder she has made. He condescends: "I can spare you three more minutes" he says.

While you are still collecting your thoughts about the 800 bucks bombshell, he thaws. He says he looks at an "Anjanam Eliya" at his private devale and finds out exactly how to set about

your problem. Conditioned as we are to Ceylonese village life and "Light Fortune Tellers", one's mental processes go lethargic, but 800 bucks on such a gamble clangs like an express through your brain. Is it worth it, will it work, etc., streak like moon-bound missiles.

You muster sufficient courage to tell the charmer: "I am ignorant of this and how it works. Please tell me more. And would a down-payment of Rs. 10 and the balance payable after the results are obtained, winning the love of your loved one etc. be satisfactory?" The charmer has heard that before. He is very gentle now. "My profit is only Rs. 50: the rest goes for materials: Silence. 'If you can get your desires fulfilled cheaper, I will not stand in your way', he says. The Chinese saying: "Good things no cheap: cheap things no good" flashes across your mind. "Don't tell me your problem just yet: the Anjanam Eliya will give me the exact details" If this is fast-buck salesmanship, the charmer has nothing on the Ceylonese engineer who beat the English Gas Board with frozen replicas of coins for his gas. You rise to go.

The charmer suggests that you wait awhile in the waiting room until he deals with another client and rings his bell again. This time a Mother and her pretty daughter are escorted in by Jane

Russel. Whether they are part of the establishment or not, you are grateful for a moment to collect your thoughts. You had come there with a real problem which would affect the destinies of your family, and here was filthy lucre—and common sense—standing in the way. "What is 800 bucks if you can save your lovely sister from a fate worse than death?" you ask yourself; but a little voice whispers; "Is the price worth the gamble?"

YOU ARE invited into the Charmer's office in ten minutes. The Mother and daughter come out glowing. The charmer relaxes and tells you he is quite certain of success in settling your problem. With a grandiose air he says he will feed the girl with charmed sweets and make her follow her true lover like a common slut. You wince at his sense of drama.

The girl, he says, is "Hitthuwakkara", independent and stubborn. His intuition makes him interested in the case. Her stubbornness will be overcome. The marriage (which you already know from the astrologer) will be a brilliant success. The girl needs a mature mate, and this is it. She will agree after she is 30 and respond accordingly. She will shine in her profession under his care. You wonder how his generalisations are hitting target. He tells you how he overcame difficulties in a case—he will not divulge names—

and was rewarded by a grateful politico with Rs. 10,000. Charming must be a million dollar business.

As a special favour he will give you another case history of a wilful, stubborn young girl who was converted to proper lines of thinking. You listen intently as the drama is cost-free. The names he says are fictitious.

IT IS a case history of, say, Chandra Pee, Pèrera or Peiris or any Pee. It is rather like the little world of Don Camillo, the little world of Chandra Pee. The girl had come to Colombo to study, was ignored by her relations, and fell into the hands of a crafty, cunning and treacherous Kattadiya's son of low caste, Paduwa he said. Quite early in this association, he fed the girl with charmed sweets. She followed him like a pet poodle. She was growing in years without a beau and could now stand up to her sisters that she had one. Her studies were failure after failure, under the man's influence. He had a Chandra Sani Erastakaya, which coupled with her Marakaya was deadly to the girl and her family.

The evil influence would go on for 18 years, blotting out her career. Her stubbornness and sense of independence made her see him through pink spectacles, or rose-tinted ones. When she broke away from him for a fortnight after her elder sister's demise and her failure, he pretended to leave their common place

of work and seek another job. Meanwhile, he arranged with a peon to introduce charmed sugar into her orange juice and tea. In a few weeks she swung round and followed him again like a pet poodle. The man was the victim of an incurable disease, but his craftiness and his ambition to rise socially and collar her money was paramount. He showed servility to her dominant personality and twisted her round his fingers.

THE MAN'S mother was a sorceress who lived near a cemetery. She used to practice sorcery for gain. The son had had many love affairs and found the innocent, proud girl chicken feed. I wanted to know why the charmer was telling me all this. He replied, "It is a lesson for you". What powers of thought reading he possessed I do not know, but I continued to show interest, for courtesy sake. I was getting used to the terms of necromancy and its jargon as he went on. The man in a hurry seemed to have plenty of time.

The Chandra Sani Erastakaya, coupled with a Marakaya, killed off four members of the girl's family in a year, he said. First, the Father who was struck with paralysis, then the Mother through grief, and next the most brilliant brother who died in a motor accident. The fourth committed suicide, he said. The family was reduced to penury. A scheming sister, straight out of King Lear, and her co-partner, a Hooniyam

specialist who frequented Bellanwila, was anxious to grab the girl's share of the family property, and they subtly encouraged the marriage to a low caste person. The father had died of grief and anguish over the stubbornness and wilfulness of his favourite daughter. Once married, the elder sisters sniffed at her. In one year, the Kattadiya's son assumed a prominent place in the family and ran through the girl's wealth. She was left destitute in a Dematagoda slum, ignored by her relatives and a physical wreck. She was now insane.

"Had the girl listened to me and taken my advice, she would have had a brilliant career and been the main strength of her family," he said. "She was innocent and repeated parrot-like the vile propaganda of her sister who cheated her of her money to give her own daughter in marriage to a rich executive. "Thus, a brilliant career was wrecked, a happy family home destroyed, and disaster brought on a family by the influence of a Kattadiya's son with cruel ambition." He then produced a picture of a lovely girl before her Father's death, one of her real lovers, and one of the Kattadiya's son. "That", he said, "is how families are ruined by a single girl's stubbornness, and her unsolved problems."

The story rang a bell in my mind and I read his short case history avidly.

It seemed convincing enough. I decided to check the facts. He agreed to another date. I wanted time to think.

THE FACTS proved untrue. The first part was true to the letter, up to the deaths of the parents of the girl and her brother. The girl, thanks to some divine guidance, made a sudden decision, and married just the person the elder sister opposed. I discovered that I knew the girl. She had married her eldest sister's husband despite heavy opposition. They had three lovely children, one an engineer and another a doctor, while their daughter took to her mother's profession. The girl reached a real pinnacle of fame, under the loving care her of husband, her family was saved. Her first reaction about marrying an older person was overcome with courage and understanding, and they have had a singularly happy life.

In fact when, she reached menopause her husband who had also distinguished himself in his profession and gained international fame was still a model of good health under her care. She is 54 now, and her husband 81. Their marriage has been singularly happy, her youth having had a therapeutic effect on her husband's mind, and enabling them both to live again the gracious life of her eldest sister, who was one of the noblest women who ever lived in Sri Lanka.

THE FOURTH ESTATE

Just a Matter of Time, Precious Time

By CANAX

IF SOMEONE asks me what our newspapers are particularly good at, I'd say they are unequalled in making people waste precious time. The time spent on reading the papers is, precious enough, but what I have in mind is the chunks and chunks of it wasted 'discussing' what has been read, more so when one party to the dialogue has little inclination and less energy to participate in such cerebral pastimes.

If I appear put out with the Press, it is because I am put out. I invite you now to follow my line, or at least my end of the line, and judge for yourself.

The phone rings....

"Hello....oh, hello! Aunty Lillian...yes, this is your dear boy speaking.. no, no, I am not annoyed to hear you at the other end....I just sound like that because I sound like

I went back to the Charmer in two weeks, having checked and double-checked my facts. I went escorted. I told him what a liar he was, how he had told me the first part of the case history accurately and suppressed the second. It is on gullibility such as this that charmers thrive.

I saved my 800 bucks!

that all the time...well, all right, if you insist, I wasn't exactly dying to hear from you....

"...you thought of dropping me a line?... why didn't you?...I didn't catch that....no, how silly! You really thought I'd throw away your letter without even reading it?... the last time was a mistake, I promise, because I usually throw away only silly letters, and I hadn't even opened yours....to be quite honest, I didn't like the looks of your envelope..yes, yes.. a pity you can't get Basildon Bond anymore.....

"...It was an important letter, you say?...ah ha, more interesting than important....it was about Kissinger....that's interesting all right....go ahead and tell me, I promise I won't say anything naughty ..oh, so you think he's a handsome devil?...that's very interesting..no, I don't think he'll come to Ceylon just now, and even if he did, he's in his element in the company of actresses who are familiar with such delicate topics as initiatives, diplomatic and otherwise.. mm..mm..you can say that again..he's quite a boy....

"..you think Kissinger got more than he gave Hanoi?...yes, he got his

boys back, for one thing.. why not drop Nixon a line and tell him that, he'll be thrilled to hear from you..no, I don't think he'll throw away your letter without opening it..well, I can't be certain, but he does look a decent chap and can't possibly mistake your handwriting for McGovern's....

"..don't be silly, Aunty, how can I tell you what to write to him..ask Uncle Leo, will you? Oh, so he told you?..I think that's good for a start..something about the handsome devil of his..then congratulate him on his wise decision to give Hanoi something else..I know, it's not everybody who can get to like American bombs..yes, like Coca Cola it's an acquired taste, and Nixon gave too much of it too soon, so they never got to like it..but they won't have any problem getting to like American money..I mean to say, everything has its place and it was a pity the bombs Nixon gave often got to the wrong place..well, no, that's not quite right, I suppose..they got to the right place but landed on the wrong things, like gun emplacements, or maybe it was the other way around..anyway, you can tell him you doubt that happening with what he's going to give now, for dollars are much lighter than bombs and can't damage any dykes even by design....

"..what was that, Aunty? that's not all?..you phoned about something else..I

see..no, no, you're not wasting my time..I think you're only wasting yours, but then, it's your time, so don't let me take your time..away, I mean..don't blame yourself for not getting to the point for so long..you can't help it, I know, some people never can....

"..did I see the Times?... last week?..no, but I passed that way the week before and it was still there..six storeys is a bit much to be condemned as a shanty, so I don't think it would have been demolished by the Municipality..you're not interested in the building?..I didn't know you were, but what did you want it for in the first place?..I think this country needs more houses than hotels..I see, I see, you never wanted it at all..sorry, I got it all mixed up..

"..what about Angoda?.. forty-three patients at large?..cant's be, Aunty.. I know the Times said so, but my own feeling is there are more lunatics at large in Sri Lanka than the Press will admit to.. why?..because they are scared, that's why..of you-know-who, no?..I am as bad as Uncle Leo?..says if he didn't end up in Angoda it's no thanks to you?..says it's only fair enough, ah?..yes, yes, prisoners escape regularly, and so do insurgents, but I don't see..oh, he said that?..you know, Uncle is a little batty himself, but he's pretty close when he says this is a free country..so even a nut can

bolt, he said,?..never mind that's his idea of a joke.. don't tell me about that I know..doesn't exactly, laugh..as though his bark is worse than his joke..

"..no, I don't think it's a terrible thing those patients should be at large..the important thing is they should know the search is on for them.. I don't know if the doctors agree, but letting Angoda patients escape should be considered an essential part of the therapy..but I am being serious, Aunty..because, more than prisoners and insurgents—much, much more in fact—they need to feel wanted....

"..I know the hospital authorities said all attempts so far to trace them have failed..you're asking me what to do next?..I don't really know, the little experience I have is my frequent attempts to trace chillies which don't actually hide from you of their own free will like the patients do...you asked Uncle, too?..of course, I'd like to know what he said..ah ha, that you should enlist the help of the Press..good idea.. start what?..I see, a regular feature on the lines of what was done before for sporting giants of the past..Uncle suggested the title too?..that's great.. I think 'Where Are They Now?' is just right..yes, I know, that was the title of the earlier series...

"..those forty three were last month alone, I see..well, I don't know how many slipped out the previous month..nor the

one before that..honestly, Aunt, why do you think I'd have such crazy information?..no, I'm not interested..why, are you trying to organise a get-together or something?..what do you mean, why not?..for goodness sake don't try to make out to Uncle that I suggested it..

"..well, people go nutty or so many reasons..you remember what Uncle Leo says, don't you?..no, no, not that you can drive a whole army up the wall.. what I mean is, a woman can drive a man nuts..ah, yes, that's possible, I'm not saying no..you also get the odd man who can drive a woman wonky, but that takes a lot of doing, and they don't make men like that anymore....

"..am I tired?..no, merely exhausted..you have so many things to talk about?..a pity..er, I mean, a pity you didn't put it all down in a letter..did I read what who said?.. who she?.. I get you, I get you..I know you don't want to be more specific on the phone..yes, I read that..well, Uncle can guffaw as much as he wants, but it's pretty obvious that troubles have been created, and are being created, to make our Government unpopular.. okay, let Uncle just answer me this—why did JFK send his boys all the way to Vietnam?..and to the Bay of Pigs?..to defend democracy, I suppose?.. so Nixon has now brought his boys back for the same reason, ah?..no, don't say

the international situation is more complicated than you thought..it's just that you have to learn to think straight, and the first thing you have to recognise is that the whole world is against you, not just your friends and relatives..after that everything fits into place and is easily understood..


"..you mentioned the devaluation to Uncle?..he says it was meant as a shock to Japan?..but doesn't he realise it was really meant to land us in the boaku?..well, Nixon did it twice in quick succession, how does Uncle explain that?..what? because they think we have lots and lots of dollars hidden in our Treasury?..ah ha, you're saying that, not Uncle..he went off at a tangent, did he?..he says we may have lots and lots of dollars, but in Swiss Banks..well, he has a point there, but that is another story, no?

"..you tried for a whole week before you got through to me on the phone?.. that's good..er, I mean, that's bad, very bad..yes, I read about the earth satellite station here..yes, you can dial anybody from home..just imagine you can say 'Hi, there!' to Nixon...you don't want to ring Nixon?..how about that handsome devil of his, then?..WHAT?..you only want to ring me every day?..CLICK—"

That's when the phone went dead, just like

that. Well, I was about ready to drop dead myself, so I'm grateful the phone decided to go before me. It was almost providential, in a sense, and all I can think of is that our telecommunications service also works in mysterious ways.

It's not always I have a kind thought for him, but I want Mr. Kumarasuriar to know I had one for him then.



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ON AN OLD TRAIL

Hendala to Puttalam: Then on to Batticaloa

By
ALKARDI MUGANA

February 4,

A well-worn trail this, at least to the reader of *Safari*.

Seeing the Pegasus Reef Hotel board at Wattala reminded me of a little adventure I had at Hendala a short time ago. I was returning from Prithipura—if any body wants to see Batiks, that is the place to see them—and was walking along the canal edge to Ellakande, when someone hailed me excitedly from a boat. Blow me if it was not a very old friend from Negombo; but what was he doing going up the canal at Hendala?

I did not at once appreciate one reason why he was being towed. To let him pass by was unthinkable, and in a few minutes I was aboard his boat but not as I thought, to be landed on the other side of the canal. Instead he went on up. Little by little the story came out. My friend and his diminutive brother-in-law, quite a young lad, had had the engine of their fibre-glass fishing boat break down after leaving Negombo and they had drifted all the way to near Colombo and they had been lucky to be picked up and towed by the larger wooden fishing boat that

was now pulling them along. Their rescuers lived but a few hundred yards on, and that was where we were going.

Both boats were tied up and an earnest conversation took place as to what should be done next. My fisherman friend's first thought was to send a telegram to his wife to say that he was safe, as they were already overdue at Negombo by some hours. In the end it was decided that I should send the telegram. I would not take money as I thought he would need it all.

Meanwhile the *baas* or engineer they had contacted on the way had arrived, and it did not take him long to find that there was no question of a quick repair being done on the engine. So he went away. It took three men and the lad to lift each fishing net ashore to a place of safety. There were two nets and wet as they were they were very heavy. It was when this was done that I left. Bets were almost laid that my friends would arrive home before the telegram but I sent it just the same.

The fibre-glass boat was one of a standard make out of which you could not possibly fall overboard. The wooden boat which

had rescued it was larger and it had a cabin but it was one from which you could fall overboard because the cabin superstructure took up much of the deck space, and it had a proper engine as opposed to the outboard motor that the other had. The larger boat was also of a standard size.

WHY did not the fibre glass boat carry a sail? My friend had been lucky so far; this, I think, was the first time he had not been able to get this engine restarted while at sea. He said it would take him a week to sew a sail up, and the materials would cost him Rs. 100—a lot of money and a lot of time. His old sail had disintegrated.

It was at Puttalam that someone told me of a case where five men had drifted for several days, and the only one who had survived was the one who had the presence of mind to throw himself over the vessel's side, so that his body was immersed in the sea. The idea, it seems, was that you can starve of hunger longer this way. This is supposed to have happened some years ago.

The wooden vessel, like the fibre glass one, carried only two men. I was told that the sea is rough again. Strange that it should be so, as it is only January and it is still the N-E monsoon.

There were several ferries I was told, that ply from Kalpitiya. Kalpitiya is beyond St. Anne's Talawila. I gathered that one of

the boats calls at three places and the round journey costs not more than Rs. 1.65 or so.

We made our usual detour from the main road at Marawila. No one could tell me what was a particularly fine tree with light green leaves that had been planted along the fence, bordering the road of several gardens in these parts. By hedging about their answers, they stopped me from asking others who might have known. One man said it was "Weed", and he was from an estate too, but hailed from Dehiwala. No wonder he thought he could get away with that answer.

MAHAWEWA, which is beyond Marawila has a wewa which can be seen on the right-hand side of the road. It looks a fine tank. Buses usually make a stop at Mundel where the cakes in the eating-places are expensive. From the first *kadday* I went on to two others in search of cheaper food, but as they were even more expensive I broke my resolution and went back to the first.

From Puttalam onward after leaving the teak behind I went on to passing chenas, where *abba* was being grown extensively. On previous trips I had not noticed this, perhaps because the *abba* was still small, but now it looked fine.

Abbas is being harvested now. It is being carried into the house in large bundles, and threshed by

hand by rubbing the stalks and the heads between the palms. The winnowing which has been done showed that it is a poor crop, very disappointing and heart-breaking, and the cause has been attributed to the drought. This is near Anuradhapura, and the poor results belie what I saw in the fields on the way here.

Cowpea has also been harvested. It does not seem to have a Sinhalese name. The peas are collected by breaking the pods, and like the *abba* it is all for the house.

Coffee is being grown here, so near Anuradhapura and as I can see the berries on the bushes, I know it does well. I have not connected Anuradhapura with coffee, and I must say it surprises me.

As cowpea is cooked rather like *Kaddalai*, I was reminded that the *kaddalai* man in Puttalam was doing a roaring trade when I came through. The *kaddalai* was piping hot and steaming, it was well spiced and served with pieces of coconut. People were coming up for their ten cents worth of *kaddalai* and no sooner did a customer go than there was another there in his place.

WE PASSED a coconut research station on the coast road, and the foliage of the coconut trees provided more shade than coconut trees usually do and the trees looked as if they were bearing nuts well. It may well be that trees of a certain age have a better foliage than when

they reach their full growth, but it is obvious that the more shade the trees provide, the better they will preserve and use moisture there is in the soil in the dry season. It should therefore be more important that this shade is provided than that the roots of each tree should have more "elbow room".

This seems to be borne out by the fact that plantain trees thrive more when the leaves actually growing on the tree provide this cover for the ground which they can only do when the trees are planted close together. Many East Africans rely on plantains in the same way that our people rely on rice, and each farm house is surrounded by an almost impenetrable tangle of plantain trees. It is only in a few places that the sun's rays get through.

Yet the East African gets all the food he wants during the year from his own land, whatever FAO (UNO) may think of its nutritional value and indeed there seems to be some discrepancy between the physique of the East African and the UNO FAO nutritional charts. In a case like this, I would rather trust the evidence before my eyes, than someone else's facts and figures for the evidence is not about the inner man about whom one can hardly presume to judge.

WHETHER a tendency, which I am about to describe, is a good one, I

would not be sure, and it is that the M.P. or member of the State Assembly seems to be almost assuming the function of a Government servant and arbiter or judge, rolled into one, so that he decides for instance, whether a man should or should not be given land in his constituency, and in many cases it would appear that this role is being forced on the member.

I would have thought that the function of an M.P. or member of the State Assembly was a dual one of passing laws, and at the same time acting as every man's watch dog, friend and help. If his function in the future is going to be more executive than legislative would it not be more effective to have him as a governor of his constituency than as a member of a body which has its seat or meeting ground far away in the capital city? If this were so, then the Prime Minister or Head of Government for the whole land could be his own legislature and please, for only two years, not six.

Kurukkan is also being harvested as I see from a bundle of it that has just been brought in. It will be made into a roti, probably for tomorrow's breakfast. Kurukkan is apparently pronounced kurukkam. With it there was brought in some kekkiri with its yellow and orange skin.

No rain yet though there was some drizzle, the lightest of drizzle for the shortest of possible times, this morning.

There is no doubt that life in the countryside is an art. The work must go on, but although there is much variety in the work to be done, or the work that can be done, it is for the most part dull work, and the boredom has to be relieved by a rhythm that includes spells of apparently "doing nothing". If the work became too mechanical, in the sense of an engine that never stops it would become intolerable.

Thank goodness there is a good wind for the most part in this dry zone.

The Puttalam—Batticaloa road is an old trail for readers of these notes. It was no loss for the reader perhaps, that this writer missed much of it, overpowered as he was by fatigue and loss of sleep.

IN MOST places it was not yet time for the harvest. In some places, notably between Maradan-kadawala and Habarana there were fields that have not yet been cultivated, and which looked as if they would have to be given a miss or that it was not their time. Between Habarana and Batticaloa, harvesting had started in a few places, and at one place I saw threshing going on with buffaloes.

A boy was carried into the bus. He had been bitten on the leg by a mad dog, and he had just had vederala treatment. He acted peculiarly and looked strange and I expected him, from the way he behaved, to start showing signs, at any moment, of Hydrophobia. I suggested to his father that he take his son to Anuradhapura or to one of the other hospitals; but neither of his parents seemed unduly worried, and I gathered that the effect of the treatment was to make him temporarily "mad" as it were. Hitte Naer they said. He would get better with the evening and, I supposed, would remain so until his next treatment. It did not surprise me that so serious an accident—for such is a dog bite—should need a remedy with such drastic effects. The boy looked as if he would attack those around him and he did hit out at those near him. We did not mind. I wished he could have had Western Treatment, but his parents seemed confident about his progress.

AFTER Polonnaruwa and Kaduruwela, at a long stop for refreshment, I saw a man being helped to his feet in a peculiar way. Something was obviously wrong, but it was worse than I feared. The man had been bitten by a polonga at two o'clock at a place nine miles away on a chena, and nearly four hours had gone by without his being given any treatment whatsoever.

I gathered that he had already travelled with us in the bus. He was very brave, and he exhibited none of those signs of panic and hysteria that most people who have been bitten show. He got into the bus and rested his head on the back of the seat in front. Meanwhile I had gone round to the driver of the bus, and after explaining the situation—he could speak no Sinhalese or English—I suggested we get a move on. After that we only stopped twice for people. The bus was full anyway. The first time we stopped, there was a chorus of cries to get on, and the driver heeded it by stopping no more, until we stopped to let some people off. We had a long way to go. The man's village was miles away. If I had brought my snake stone, I could have treated him at once.

THE ROUTE from Habarana to Batticaloa is long and dull, relieved of its monotony at only a few places. As I have said before, the Giritala tank is the only piece of water that arrests the eye. The little that we can see, from the main road, of the sea of Parakrama is dull. The Mahaveli is good and at two places, as far as I remember the road follows the actual tracks of the rail road, thus eliminating the need for either two bridges or a broad one. This monotony is maintained right up to Eravur, and then beyond that there are some really nice pieces of water, all

the way up to nearly Batticaloa. From Valachchenai onwards, of course, there are houses nearly all the way.

This trip was undertaken without much forethought, on the spur of the moment and it led to an interesting result. In the town at night, I hailed someone across a wall, to enquire after someone. The person I spoke to was much distracted because of someone's death, the death of one of his community. It did not occur to me to enquire as to who had died, but I did so of people on the road a little way on. The person who had died I had known, and was, I reckon, one of the best farmers in Ceylon. Very few people have probably heard of him, he lived so quietly and worked so industriously. On my way back I saw his body. It was supple, although he had been dead more than twenty four hours, and he had not been embalmed.

Coming back over the causeway soon after eleven at night, I saw quite a number of people on the banks of the lagoon by the causeway, all working, none idle, it seemed. Some had nets in their hands, and it took me but a few moments to discover that they were catching prawns with these nets, and one of them showed me his prawns. He was just standing in the water catching them, a yard or two from the bank. No one was there when I passed by at five thirty in the morning.

IT WAS after eleven at night that victuallers, or should I call them cooks were still plying their trade of supplying food, hot if you wanted it, from their fires or stoves on the pavement. The C.M.C. might be horrified, but I think the whole idea and the service is a very civilized one. The food looked good and clean. I have had occasion to mention this before in these notes, and I think it can do without repetition. I am sure the food was cleaner than that sold in some, at least, of the *kaddays*. At night you have no flies.

On the way back, I noticed a sign saying Ceylon Paper Corporation on the other side of the Mahaveli. I also saw one that said Government Bull Calf Farm, and I wondered what it portended. You mention bull calf to me, and I would think of a cow, the cow that bore it. Has this farm no cows then? If it has then what happens to the heifer calves? Are they booted off the farm as soon as they are born? If the farm has no cows, then the bull calves must have been brought there. This could happen for only two reasons. Either to be given special treatment, in their feeding, what else? As potential stud bulls, or to while away their time to be sold afterwards as Steers, or to be fattened as steers. In either of the two last cases they are hardly likely to be left as bulls but converted

into bullocks or oxen. Then why bull calves farm and not bullock farm? And why bull calf farm and not stud Bull Farm?

Yes, bull calf farm made me think. I have heard of poultry farms, cattle farms, turkey farms, but never quite bull calf. Some miles further on there was a very large notice that said, Animal Breeding Establishment, or cattle breeding or something to that effect; the word used might have been rearing. Then a tiny notice beside it said, Ranch. I would like to visit this dry zone cattle breeding Establishment, for cattle is my speciality.

Later, I saw the usual very large notice which said, Milk Collecting Centre. No one about, but then one would only expect a milk collecting centre to function at certain times of the day, even if it is only for an hour. Condensed milk, I understand, is made near Polonnaruwa, by the Milk Board, I think.

Very fine looking paddy was growing between Kaduruwela and Polonnaruwa. Fine curd is sold at Kaduruwela. The Mni-neriya Tank, so famous a name, does not look at all impressive from the road. There were car loads of tourists at Habarana, people who appeared interested only in themselves.

POINT OF VIEW

CRISIS IN THE C. P.

By KUBERA

THE CRISIS that has rocked the local Communist Party ever since the conclusion of their Eighth Congress in August last year appears to have reached a new stage with the publication of the findings of the Control Commission regarding the expulsions of Messrs. V. A. Samarawickrema and L. W. Panditha from the Party.

Mr. Samarawickrema was the National Organiser of the CP right up till the Eighth Congress. Mr. Panditha was (and still is) the Deputy General Secretary of the Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions, which is the trade union centre directly under the control of the CP. Its President is Pieter Keuneman, Minister of Housing and till the Eighth Congress the General Secretary of the CP. The General Secretary of the CFTU is, M. G. Mendis, MP for Ratgama.

From what one learns from conversations with leading Communists (both 'hard-liners' and 'soft-liners') the differences that have surfaced in the CP originated long before the Eighth Congress. The 'hard-liners' say that they originated due to the

CP losing its identity and almost becoming merged with the United Front. The 'soft-liners' on the other hand, say that these differences can be traced directly to and find their root causes in the uprising of April 1971.

These differences resulted in two different political reports being prepared for approval by the Eighth Congress. One (soft-line) prepared by Keuneman supported the line of continuing within the Government and the United Front and taking the "anti-imperialist and democratic revolution" forward. The other (hard-line) was a line of all-out attack on the UF and the Government as indulged in by Aththa with a view to creating a "third-force" distinct both from the UNP and the UF to take the country towards socialism.

Anyway, for reasons that seem none too clear (although the soft-liners attribute it to deliberate cunning), the 'hard-liners' withdrew their report at the last moment and helped to get passed unanimously the 'soft-line' report presented to the Eighth Congress by outgoing General Secretary Pieter Keuneman. But, having

done that, in the elections that followed, they packed the new Central Committee with their own men, reducing the 'soft-liners' to an insignificant minority.

It is to this procedure that the 'soft-liners' led by Samarawickrema and Panditha, no doubt with the approval of Keuneman, Mendis etc. reacted in quite a sharp manner. They revived a defunct CFTU organ named *Satanmaga* and used it to launch scathing attacks on the new CP leadership. They begun to form their own youth leagues in rivalry with the official CP-sponsored ones.

WHAT is more, the Samarawickrema — Panditha group not only succeeded in getting Keuneman and Mendis to address their recent youth leaguer's conference, they even succeeded in getting spokesmen of the other two parties in the UF-the SLFP and the LSSP on their rostrum.

As a measure of their success, the 'soft-liners' claim that the conference of the official Federation of Communist Youth Leagues that followed was not honoured even with a message of fraternal greetings leave alone a guest speaker, from either the SLFP or the LSSP.

For their activities by-passing and often di-

rected against the new leadership of the CP, Messrs. Samarawickrema and Panditha—and after them many other lesser-known minor CP functionaries—have been expelled and denounced with all the familiar crimes in the Communist catalogue like "violation of party discipline", "promoting factionalism", "splitting and disrupting the party" etc. etc.

The CP today seems widely split right down the middle. Of the 6 CP MPs, 3 are reported to be 'soft' and the other 3 'hard'. The 'hard-soft' division has even spread from the party and the youth leagues to the women's associations and even the few peasant organisations that the CP has formed in recent years. (Mr. Samarawickrema, by the way, is the Vice-President of the CP's Peasant Front of which Dr. Wickremasinghe is the President).

IT WAS when an irreversible split was becoming almost inevitable, due to the activities of hawks on both sides, that some 'doves' in the CP have had second thoughts and tried to find a way out of the impasse by arriving at a mutually-acceptable compromise settlement.

The *Daily News* recently published Mr. Keuneman's terms for such a settlement. They inclu-

ded the abandonment of the present *Aththa* line and the enlargement of the present CC to include more 'soft-liners'.

Now when a settlement was on the agenda a new spanner in the works would appear to have been thrown by the report of the Control Commission to which Messrs. Panditha and Samarawickrema appealed after their expulsions. The Control Commission is the highest disciplinary body in the CP set-up and is said to be composed of five senior and highly-respected party men (including two lawyers) elected at the last Congress. It had been they who supervised the elections to the Central Committee at this Congress after the 'soft-liners' and 'hard-liners' failed to agree on a single slate of candidates for election.

The Control Commission had held that the expulsions of Messrs. Panditha and Samarawickrema are "null and void" as they were made in violation of the provisions of the constitution and offend the norms of democratic centralism. It has recommended that they "be placed in the same positions they held in the party and associated organisations before the expulsions."

The Control Commission has quoted section 12 (b) of the CP constitution according to which the "punishment of a Party member is a matter for the organisation to which he belongs". Since Messrs. Panditha and Samarawickrema are no longer members of the Central Committee, the Control Commission has held that it is not the Central Committee but the party branches to which they now belong that are constitutionally empowered to take any disciplinary action against them.

THERE HAD also been a little tussle between the Central Committee and the Control Commission before the latter could proceed with its inquiry into the validity of the expulsions in question. The Central Committee it is learnt, took up the position that the Control Commission could only inquire into matters referred to it by the Central Committee. Based on this ground, Dr. Wickremasinghe, the present General Secretary of the CP, had refused to attend the sittings of the Control Commission although summoned to do so.

The report of the Control Commission, while expressing 'pain and sorrow' at Dr. Wickremasinghe's behaviour, has quoted a section of the constitution which enables any party member to appeal to the Control Commission direct and also another section which places an obligation on the "punishing organisation" (in this case, the Central Committee) to "furnish the Control Commission of the Party with a full report on each punishment inflicted."

The Control Commission has also drawn the attention of the Central Committee to the fact that they (the Control Commission) are bound by the constitution to "dispose of such appeals as early as possible," and made some sharp observations on the way that the Central Committee tried to stultify the work of the Commission by unduly delaying their report on the punishments inflicted on the two comrades. Shades of the tussle between the National Assembly and the Constitutional Court!

ONE QUESTION now worries CP circles. That is whether the Control Commission report will

make things difficult for the 'doves' who are trying to heal the rift. One section seems to think that this report is a slap in the face of the Central Committee that will further harden the 'hard-liners', drive the Keuneman-Mendis group further to the side of Panditha and Samarawickrema and make inevitable the formation of a second Communist Party.

Another section seems to think that the report of the Control Commission should help to bring about a settlement. They think that this report provides the Central Committee with a way out of their dilemma if only they accept its recommendations gracefully. They argue that such an acceptance would pave the way for a compromise settlement based on the Keuneman formula or any other formula.

The fact that the Central Committee itself has asked Mr. Keunaman to approach them direct with his formula, these persons say, is an indication that the 'hard-liners' too are ready for a settlement that will prevent the break-up of a party which they have built up together and which will be celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

ON FOOD

You May Be Wise to Eat Less

EXPERIMENTS disclosed at a scientific conference show that some mice live longer and are less likely to get cancer if their lifetime food intake is reduced sharply.

Evidence suggests that these puzzling effects are related to changes in the animals' immunologic systems. The widespread influences of the immunologic system on health and diseases were discussed at the first International Congress of Immunology here recently.

Dr. Roy L. Walford, of the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Medicine told the conference that the lifetime of fish had been extended substantially by keeping them, throughout their lives, at temperatures several degrees lower than they would normally experience.

THIS APPEARS not to reflect simply a slowed pace of life, because the fish grow faster and larger. But the treatment does appear to have some suppressive effect on their immunologic systems.

In some breeds of mice and rat, greatly prolonged life-spans can be achieved by feeding the animals nutritious but sharply restricted diets

from weaning onward, Dr. Walford said. The diets are balanced, but the caloric total is restricted to about one-third of normal.

In some cancer susceptible mice, this restriction also results in such lowered tendency to develop cancer, Dr. Walford said.

THE ANIMALS grow more slowly, but ultimately seem to achieve normal adult size with no obvious loss of health.

Asked whether this implied that humans might be wise to eat less.

Dr. Walford said, "Yes, it does, but you should start when you are very young."

He also emphasised that the diet would have to be nutritious and balanced, and that no such restriction should begin before normal weaning age. Infant malnutrition has been blamed for serious ill effects on the brain and the central nervous system.

The scientists said that there seemed to be a paradox in the results of the experiments. Aging is accompanied by a decrease in the vigour of the body's immun-

logic defences, and cancer development is widely believed to reflect a failure of one particular aspect of the defence system. Yet dietary restriction or, temperature reduction in a cold blooded animal such as a fish, appears to have a suppressing effect on the immunologic system—Times New York.

FLOWERS HAVE EMOTIONS

Soviet scientists think flowers may "feel" fear, joy, pain and other human emotions, the newspaper, "Socialist Industry," said yesterday. "Scientists at different times have voiced assumptions about the sensitivity of plants," a psychologist, Mr. V. M. Pushkin, told the newspaper. "In our experiments we used hypnosis to switch human emotions on and off and received definitely positive answers as to the ability of plants to get emotionally involved." During the tests, Mr. Pushkin said, a hypnotist put a human subject to sleep and told the subject pleasant or unpleasant things "which aroused emotions of joy or sorrow." An encephalograph attached to the subject and to a leaf of a plant some distance away "recorded similar emotions."

When the subject smiled, Mr. Pushkin said, the plant flourished its petals. When the subject was told he was cold and began shivering, the plant began to shiver.

Indians Spend a Crore a Day on 5.5m Beggars

INDIANS spend Rs. 1.1 crores per day on beggars. This amount includes cash as well as the value of the foodstuffs that beggars receive as alms.

This has been revealed in a survey on Indian beggars—their habits, conjugal life and past history.

According to the survey, there are about 5.5 million beggars in India. Of them, 1,15,500 are below 14 years and 12,90,000 are above 50 years. A total of 1,50,000 are lepers, 85,000 hijras (eunuchs), 8,00,000 blind, 3,00,000 deaf-mutes and 1,00,000 are mentally deranged.

On an average, an Indian beggar earns Rs. 2 a day. According to a sample survey conducted in some big cities, suburban towns and a few villages, a beggar on an average earns 75 paise in cash and Rs. 1.25 in kind.

But though the average comes to Rs. 2 only, individual earnings of beggars vary from place to place and time to time.

The average earnings of a Calcutta or Madras beggar comes to Rs. 8 a day. If he is blind or visibly disabled or crippled, his earnings cross Rs. 20 a day (in cash and kind).

BEGGARS can broadly be categorised in four different categories: child beggars, disabled (typical) beggars (including lepers, blind and insane), professional beggars (who by showing their "skill" such as the "bhanta" of Bihar or the "singers" of Bengal

earn money), and the story-telling beggars (who give stories of personal tragedy to appeal to human emotions).

West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Mysore, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have the largest number of beggars.

According to the survey there are 30,000 "typical" beggars in Calcutta, while Bombay has 54,000 of this category, followed by Madras with 25,000 and Delhi with 12,000.

THE SURVEY points out that following the 1967 drought which affected almost all the States in eastern India, 219 families became paupers and subsequently beggars in the State of Bihar only.

In Orissa, the devastating cyclones, which strike with clock-work regularity every year, have forced many to become beggars.

To these in recent years have been added another group—the professional beggars, who have chosen beggary as a profession, because the earnings can be attractive, provided one has mastered the art, the survey adds.

A sample survey has shown that 3,000 persons are becoming beggars every year in India because of natural calamities and misfortunes.

ACCORDING to the survey 51.3 per cent people became beggars because of various diseases, 13.9 per cent because they were physically handicapped, 56

per cent because of death of parents, 3 per cent death of husband, 1.5 per cent—alcoholism, 7.2 per cent—loss of profession and so on.

A sample survey of "ghompris" (where beggars live) has revealed that 75 per cent of the beggars live with some one of their opposite sex. Though in most of the cases they never knew each other, they lead an interesting conjugal life.

The research study also points out that homosexuality is rather common among beggars above 40, presumably because the jungle laws that prevail in the kingdom of beggars prevent the older ones from acquiring a girl mate. There are 14 different laws in India which prohibit beggary or vagrancy.

Section 109 of the Indian Criminal Procedure prohibits vagrancy. Section 133 of the code also penalises any one making a public nuisance. The Indian Railways Act prohibits beggary on the railway platform and inside the trains.

Other anti-beggary laws include: the Bihar Prevention of Beggary Act of 1962, Madhya Pradesh Beggary Act of 1969, the Punjab Prevention of Beggary Act 1971, Bombay Prevention of Beggary Act 1945, Uttar Pradesh Municipality Act, Bhopal Prevention of Beggary Act 1971, Mysore Prevention of Beggary Act of 1944, the Bengal Vagrancy Act 1943, Travancore Prohibition of Beggary Act 1945, Madras Prevention of Beggary Act 1945 and Haryana Prevention of Beggary Act of 1971.

IS IT TRUE?

Sherlock Holmes

* Condensed Milk Factory Collapses

* Printing Equipment

IS IT TRUE that the building put up at great cost to manufacture condensed milk at a place near Polonnaruwa has "collapsed"? That this collapse is literal and not metaphorical? That before the three-story building came down on the heads of those who work there the place was evacuated of all human beings? That the danger signals were noted in time and operation evacuation had been carried out with all speed? That from the end of the first week of March, the condensed milk factory has not been working? That cracks in the walls were later to be found something more serious? That structural defects of a fundamental character were detected? That a postmortem about the building is of little help today? That the more serious problem is about what should be done next?

That during the second weekend of March, the Board of Directors of the Milk Board were in emergency sessions

for 48 hours? That they did not know what should be done with the 45,000 pints of milk which had been used by the condensary? That there was no milk centre which could take all the milk for processing? That even if Colombo could handle it there were not enough bottles to market the milk so processed? That this is only one of the lesser problems facing the Board?

Is it not a fact that the civil engineering works for putting up the condensed milk factory was done by the State Engineering Corporation? That the machinery was erected by Walkers? That the whole outfit was said to be one of the showpieces of Sri Lanka's economic development effort? That the collapse has shocked a number of top bureaucrats and corporation chiefs into paralytic seizure of their tongues?

* * *

IS IT TRUE that the Aththa has reported that

the Special Branch of the Police had discovered printing equipment, either lost or stolen from the Government Press, in one of the biggest printeries in the island? That the Police were still investigating the matter? That the equipment in question could not have been imported during the last three or four years? That there was a very big shortage of this kind of equipment in the island?

Could it be a fact that these pieces of printing equipment were planted in the printery by enemies or dismissed employees? That this would be a line of defence which would be normally put forward? That there is big speculation what would happen next? That if it was established that the equipment which had strayed into this private printery really belonged to the Government Press, the Police would find it difficult to agree to an operation whitewash?

That whatever the explanations of the printery disclaiming knowledge about the earlier ownership of the equipment or of how the equipment had found its way into their premises, the Police will find it difficult to accept explanations that the stuff had been planted on them by employees or ex-employees who wanted to get the management into trouble?