

# TRIBUNE

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## ON MANIOC AND OTHER SUBSTITUTES

*Tribune* fully endorses the plea made by Minister of Trade Illangaratne that people in Sri Lanka should switch to manioc, kurakkan, millet, and all possible kinds of yams —instead of using imported wheat flour for their food. The price of wheat has almost doubled in the world market and supplies are predictably limited with crop failures in many countries. Apart from the foreign exchange involved wheat is something which cannot be grown in this island. In the circumstances Minister Illangaratne did well to insist that people should turn to cereals like kurakkan and also varieties of millet which can be grown here (and which require less water than paddy) and also to the tubers like manioc and also the whole range of sweet and semi-sweet yams, which thrive well on our soil.

It is one thing to ask people to switch to manioc and other yams but it is another matter altogether to grow them. One variety of *Manioc* takes six months and another variety nine months to mature. Yams are harvested from three to six months from planting. In the developed and densely populated parts of the island manioc and yams can be easily grown but there is not much spare land for this. In the rural areas and in the Wannu, manioc and all other yams attract the wild boar, hordes of them. And without guns and SG cartridges the wild boar cannot be kept at bay. Recently in a state plantation, a special VIP operation to exterminate wild boar is said to have cost the authorities as much as 80 cartridges per carcass. If this story is true then one can account for the "leakage" of cartridges which are later sold on the black at Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 each in the rural areas. But all that the cultivator of manioc needs is about 1 to 2 cartridges per carcass. But with the shadow of the insurgency and the imperatives of current security cultivators are only given five number 4s per quarter. A hundred of these 4s pumped into a wild boar will not kill it say the villagers. And as the wild boar population increases, it is now fast multiplying, the quantities of manioc and other yams which can be grown will decrease.

*W. S. S. S. S. S.*

THE NEW ERA?

PM'S APPEAL FOR  
AGRICULTURAL  
REVOLUTION

PLANNED  
ECONOMY AND  
PARENTHOOD

PEKING'S  
SMILING  
DIPLOMACY

A NEW FARM

THIS BUSINESS  
OF CHILDREN

CAMBODIA

# Tribune

## THE NEW ERA ?

THIS IS THE FIRST issue of *Tribune* after the Sri Lanka Press Council law was brought into force, on March 30. We now await the Regulations which will give flesh and blood to the new Press Council and the law that brought it into being. We await the appointment of the personnel who would administer the new law. Until then, the law would be in force, but without the machinery and teeth to give effect to its provisions.

Does the bringing into "force" of the Press Council law, without even the Council being set up, and without the Regulations to make it work, portend anything? Does it mean that the Council when it comes into being will take retrospective action in regard to alleged breaches and violations of the new law as from March 30? In the normal circumstances, a law is not brought into force until the machinery to administer it and enforce its provisions is set up.

**But in this case, the cart has been pushed on to the road without a horse or a bull being found to pull it along? With trepidation we wait to see what all this means,**

AS WE have said very often in the past, we are now in the UF era where the old order has been destroyed—but without knowing what the new order will be like.

Not all the "progressive and radical" pundits in this country put together will be able to tell us what kind of "new order" will emerge from the sweeping legislation adopted by the UF to destroy the old. It is true that capitalism and privileged vested interests have been destroyed or at least crippled. But it is not enough to say that we will have a socialist order soon. People want to measure the new order in terms of food, houses, consumer articles and also freedom, leisure and the like—and they cannot be fopped off any longer by mere slogans. The word *socialism* has lost its magic. For ordinary man, it has so far meant greater austerity, more shortages, queues to buy basic essentials and even bread. And what will crippled capitalism in Sri Lanka do?

THE UNITED FRONT in the years it was in the Opposition between 1966 to 1970 had promised the moon: it would usher in an age of plenty and prosperity, almost overnight, because the UF had the magic of socialism to perform miracles and wonders. But the new world of affluence did not materialise overnight.

The UF, however, had excuses for the delay in bringing in a good and happy life of plenty for the ordinary man. First it was UNP reaction, and when people be-

gan to tire of this, the UF had the April 1971 insurgency of youthful extremists to fall back on to explain the continuing delay. And now two years later, the insurgency excuse has become a dead horse which cannot be flogged any more.

But today we have an even better excuse: the conditions in the world outside over which, we say, we have no control—the currency crisis, drought, crop failures, dwindling prices for our exports and increased prices for everything we import, etc., etc., etc., etc.,


**Now we are told that we have to be self-reliant and depend on ourselves alone. But in the current world of utter inter-dependence, self reliance has a different connotation from what it had several decades ago when self-sufficiency was a virtue which could be preached with confidence because it could be practised successfully.**

WHILST MINISTERS make speeches asking people to work harder, become totally self-reliant and insulate themselves from the storms and economic turbulence of the world around us, people in Sri Lanka have begun to ask questions. *Tribune* in this issue and in forthcoming issues will spotlight the questions which people have begun to ask themselves and others. The Editor, in his *Rambling Notes*, has posed a number of questions which people ask after reading the speeches the Prime Minister has been making recently.

The columnist who now writes *Tribunania* has dealt with the burning question of a *Planned Economy and a Planned Parenthood* whilst *Canax* from his *Easy Chair* has viewed the same matter from his uniquely inimitable angle. We have in this issue a lengthy but interesting piece from *Anatory Bukoba* in his *Shamba* series detailing his efforts to clear one acre of jungle and set up a small farm on land granted to him by Government on the periphery of the Rajangana Scheme.

On foreign affairs we have a revealing piece about developments in Southeast Asia with reference to Indonesia. We have also an article on Cambodia which throws background light on current developments in that troubled country.

*Sherlock Holmes* continues to ask his questions: this time about the tourist trade.



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## RAMBLING NOTES

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

### The Prime Minister's Appeal

— more work for an agricultural revolution

THE PRIME MINISTER has in recent weeks been repeatedly drawing attention to the difficult situation in which this country now finds itself, and she has been appealing to the country and its people to get down to some hard work.

On March 20, she had summoned a meeting of the top SLFP hierarchy represented in the Party's working committee and had urged them to open a dialogue with the youth and the peasantry to pull the country out of its present economic crisis. She said: "You have to educate the masses so that they will understand this crisis which is beyond the control of this government and the country." She stated that the sharp increase in prices of all imported items, especially food, was something they could not determine, nor control. One third of what they earned now went to pay foreign debt. This was a situation forced on them and the only way to meet the crisis was to rely on themselves.

The Premier also said, "I want every party member to explain this fact to the people—especially to the farmer who has come to our assis-

tance by learning the facts of the economic crisis." She said "Don't give false hopes; don't serve out slogans. Our young people are all educated, discuss with them intelligently and objectively the situation in the country and how helpless we are against external forces, unless we achieve self-reliance. The youth can actually lead this movement and ourselves towards economic independence. They must be prepared to change their attitudes, prepare to work for themselves and for the country. We will always give them their due place."

The Prime Minister also stressed the importance of direct communication with the youth. She called on the party leadership to begin at branch level in every constituency a special effort to rally the youth.

She also said that there was no purpose in having party members who hankered after plums of office.

"We need as members responsible men and women who are prepared to carry out any duties entrusted to them and who are there to keep the party organisation going", she added.

She asked party trade unions to organise 'govi peramanas' because the SLFP had at all times derived most of its electoral strength from the rural peasants.

The Government, she explained, had done so much for the govias (farmers) that none should be hesitant to canvass their support and organise them. At the moment the Government was

caught in a whirlpool of increasing world prices in regard to imports, dwindling prices of exports, a severe drought and an international monetary crisis.

In this context, she asserted, the Government's record since it assumed office was by no means unsatisfactory. "We should not run away from the people. All SLFPers should go to the people, take them into our confidence and explain to them the current political and economic problems," she said.

In the prevailing crisis, the only salvation for the country lay in increased production of our basic food requirements until self-sufficiency was achieved. If this could be achieved, she explained, it would be possible to cut down on imports and allocate more monies for the import of raw materials to keep local industries going.

THEN, on March 30 in Kandy she underlined the same facts in slightly different terms. The *Daily News* of March 31, under the heading THIS IS NOW OUR WAR, DECLARES PM. LET US FIGHT IT TOGETHER. ONCE FOUNDATION IS BUILT FOR ECONOMIC FREEDOM, WE CAN GO HOME WITH CLEAR CONSCIENCE...reported her speech: "The Government had not launched the campaign for self-sufficiency in food with an eye on the next elections. Once we build a strong foundation for our national economic liberation the next generation will not depend for loans on other countries. This country can then live in self-respect.

Having done that, we are prepared to go to the polls and even face defeat. For then, we could go home with a clear conscience that we have done our best to serve this country, said the Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike when she addressed the Kandy District Agricultural committee Meeting held at the Trinity College Hall yesterday.

"It was attended by the Kandy District MPs, Agricultural Officers, Irrigation Department officials and members of D.D Cs and Cultivation Committees, Mr. E. L. Senanayake MP for Kandy and Mr. N. Wimalasena, MP for Senkadagala were also present.

"The Prime Minister said we have no time to wait. The food we need to feed our people must be grown here as soon as possible. It cannot be done by the Government, by this Minister or that Department. It has to be done with the fullest co-operation of the people.

"During the last war our people were forced to bear hardships to help the war effort of Britain and her allies. This is now our war and we have to make sacrifices for our future. We cannot wait, we cannot wait even for the full implementation of the Five Year Plan. We have to produce our food immediately.

"Yams of three, five or six months variety could be grown right away. This was the reason why she had decided to address meetings at District levels in order to bring home to the people

the gravity of the present crisis.

"With the ban on the import of chillies, self-sufficiency has been achieved rapidly. So successful has been this campaign that last week alone the Government purchased chillies from the Anuradhapura district to the value of Rs. 4 million. That money was now in the hands of the people.

"Similarly, if the farming population joined us to fight our economic battle we would be self sufficient in rice and we would save on foreign exchange for development projects and these projects would provide the employment for our educated young people.

"The facts of the economic situation should not be hidden from the people. We do not run away from the truth that we did promise to bring down the cost of living on our election platforms but all our efforts have been undermined by circumstances beyond our control.

"To mention one fact, the price of flour which was £25 per ton is now £60 per ton. Drought in other countries has also affected world prices. Even such a powerful country as Russian has had its difficulties in agriculture and had to buy its flour from the United States.

"This country is fertile, it has a good climate and we have human resources to make it a land green with plenty.

"Let us join together in achieving this."

THIS WAS truly soul-stirring stuff with a faint echo

of the Churchillian pathos at Dunkirk. blood, sweat, and toil stuff mixed with last-ditch fighting on the beaches, on the sand dunes, everywhere. But those who know Ceylon and the Ceylonese, or rather Sri Lanka and Sri Lankians, have doubts, unspoken and unsaid, whether such appeals *per se* can move the people into action—even if famine and starvation were right on the doorstep. A benign government, sustained on adult franchise, has begged, borrowed and even "stolen" to keep the Sri Lankian masses happy with free food and subsidised basic essentials, and the people still seem to think that the UF can do the trick. We beg at the doorstep of every industrialised and rich country, we borrow from the World Bank and we virtually "steal" from the rich and enterprising in this country through specially devised laws to tax and take over.

Now, there are no more rich to "steal" from and no more rich to tax plentifully. Moreover, we find it increasingly harder to borrow from the World Bank or any other international lending organisation, and as for donors of free gifts we seem to have exhausted the list of such countries willing to help Sri Lanka out with outright grants. Though a few are still trickling in, even the most kindly of donors have become a little chary of Sri Lanka which has earned a world-wide reputation as a little island which has persisted in living beyond its means for the last three decades or so.

The Prime Minister's speech in Kandy on March 31 was reported in the *Daily Mirror* with a slightly different emphasis. Under the heading P.M. PREDICTS DOOM IF WE DO NOT GROW MORE FOOD. This is the report:

"The Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike yesterday warned the nation that it would have to face dire consequences if the people did not endeavour even at this juncture to make the country self-sufficient in food crops that could be easily grown locally. The need of the hour, she said, was speedy and successful production by applying themselves to the task ahead with a due sense of urgency and purposefulness.

"Mrs. Bandaranaike made these observations when she addressed a conference of officials of the Ministries and departments of Agriculture and Irrigation, Members of Parliament of the Kandy District, representatives of Agricultural Committees and Government Agents held here at the Trinity College hall.

"This was the second conference on food production addressed by the Prime Minister at district levels. Last week, she addressed a similar conference in Colombo.

"She said that the blame for the present 'frightening situation of acute shortages of essential commodities, should be equally shared by all past governments as well as the present Government.

"She pointed out that these problems had long passed the stage of apportioning blame on any particular gov-

ernment and the immediate task was for the people to work with both dedication and a spirit of self-sacrifice.

"The present food shortages, she explained, had been aggravated by rising prices in the world market and crop failures in other countries like Burma, Russia and Pakistan.

"Crop failures were by no means peculiar to Ceylon only: Russia herself had to depend on America for her requirements of flour. "Sri Lanka too obtained wheat flour from America whose cost can be calculated not in lakhs but in millions of rupees, she added.

Mrs. Bandaranaike said that the foreign exchange position of the country was such that the country could not afford to maintain buffer stocks for three or four months. Money was available to ensure stocks for just one month.

"They would therefore be forced to starve if food shipments were delayed. Such situations should no longer be tolerated from the point of view of national self-respect and sheer survival.

"Such situations could be prevented if the people worked with dedication and honesty to harness all the natural resources available in the country and produce the maximum possible amount of the food crops.

"What was needed in the present context was short-term production programme intended to step up production of rice and substitutes for flour like yams, sweet potatoes, manioc, jak, bread-

fruit etc.—items which had sustained the Ceylonese not so long ago and during World War II.

"She was gratified to note that the good response to the 5-year-Plan and her SOS call at the beginning of the year for intensive production of short-term substitutes.

Mrs. Bandaranaike said unless they imposed restrictions on the import of commodities which could be grown here the country could never achieve self-sufficiency.

"She disclosed that after the ban of chillie imports, chillie purchases in the Anuradhapura district amounted to Rs. 40 million. They should remember that this money would have gone abroad if they had imported chillies.

"A lot of time, she said, had already been spent on mutual recriminations and the net result of this was the country's problems were being neglected. It was time now to remedy these shortcomings.

THE PRIME MINISTER did not mince her words. But people had heard similar predictions of doom from different Prime Ministers during the last two decades, but in the end the Government produced the rabbits out of a Gogia Pasha hat.

Incidentally, it must be noted that whilst the *Daily News* report stated that Rs. 4 million worth of chillies had been purchased from the Anuradhapura district, the *Daily Mirror* (and even its sister paper the *Times of Ceylon* stated that the figure was Rs. 40 million.) And if one adds up the statistics boosted by the SLBC,

the confusion becomes even more astounding.

The PM also made a speech at the inauguration ceremony of Bowatenna Complex of the Mahaveli Project which left no doubts as to what she wanted. The *Daily News* report of the speech read as follows:

"Our land is fertile, our people educated and intelligent and we have all the manpower needed. Our climate is also good. All we need really is a little more effort to bring about an agricultural revolution in this country. For such a revolution, no blood need be shed. It is not blood but sweat that is required to make this land as green and prosperous as it was in the days of the great Sinhala Kings, said Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister, when she inaugurated the Second Part of Stage I of the massive Mahaveli Development Project, the Bowatenna Complex.

"Naula in the Laggala electorate, turned completely blue for this ceremonial occasion as men, women and children in thousands thronged this small town to greet Mrs. Bandaranaike. On her arrival she was received by the Minister of Irrigation, Power and Highways, Mr. Maitripala Senanayake, the Minister of Social Services, Mr. T. B. Tennakoon, Mr. Monty Gopallawa, MP for Laggala, Mr. H. de S. Manamperi, Chairman, Mahaveli Development Board, Mr. Cyril Gamage GA, Matale, and Mr. P Sivabramaniam, Chief Project Manager, Bowatenna Complex.

"The Prime Minister inaugurated the Bowatenna Project by unveiling a commemoration plaque, amidst pirith chanting by the Maha Sangha. Thereafter, to receive the blessings of the gods to assure the successful completion of the project she, offered pirkara to the Sangha. The Prime Minister was conducted in procession by various SLFP organisations in the Laggala electorate to the Sri Naga Maha Vidyalaya, Naula, where she opened the Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition organised by the schools of the Laggala Circuit.

"Addressing a public meeting in Naula sponsored by the Mahaveli Development Board, Mrs. Bandaranaike disclosed that when she inaugurated the Bowatenna Project, she said a silent prayer that the work be successfully completed by 1975, she said Sri Lanka's greatest misfortune had been her inability to produce the food she needed although ample fertile land and manpower to cultivate were available.

"Mrs. Bandaranaike said there were some people who shouted that there was no flour. 'True there is a minor shortage of flour. We need not eat flour—there are other things like yams which we can eat. Did we not eat yams during World War 2, at the time we were under the British? But now some people criticise our government. After having eaten free rice these idlers scold the government, she said. Our critics are mostly those who do not do any work. We spent Rs. 40 million to

import chillies from Pakistan and China. But we have now stopped importing chillies from any country. In this 'kanna' from the NCP alone the government bought Rs. 15 million worth of chillies. All this money now went to the goviyas (cultivators) in this country, and not to goviyas in Pakistan or China as had been hitherto.

"I personally don't buy chillies, green gram and a variety of the foodstuffs because I have grown them. We must cut down our consumption of wheat flour and substitute potatoes and other yams. We have decided to give about six months notice before we stop the import of any item of food so that it may not be said we did not give people enough time to produce here what we need. No more rice will be imported from next year.

"Appealing to the goviyas to cultivate every cultivable inch of land, she said: "If the goviyas can produce that quantity of rice the import of which is going to be stopped I am prepared to consider a further increase in the price paid for a bushel of paddy. If the goviyas increase their production now we will be able to cut the import of rice even this year. Due to lack of exchange our industries are suffering and thereby development is retarded", she said.

Answering the accusation levelled against the government by its critics that it has failed to fulfil its election promise to bring down the cost of living, Mrs. Bandaranaike said that at the

time they gave that promise they never thought that there would be two severe droughts one after another. Neither did they anticipate nor could they know that imports were going to cost more and exports would bring in less.

"The Prime Minister reiterated the necessity to produce food, textiles and everything that can be produced locally and said that before long we will have to stop the import of textiles too.

"If goviyas give their best we will not only be self-sufficient in rice but also be able to make Sri Lanka the granary of the East and export rice to other countries as had been done during the time of Sinhalese Kings, she added.

THE PRIME MINISTER wants the people of Sri Lanka to make the necessary effort to bring about an agricultural revolution. On January 1 this year she proclaimed the beginning of Production Year and wanted the people to grow more food, plant more trees and increase production in every way. (The only sector in which production was to be curtailed was in regard to children—and family planning has now been given official UF blessing too.)

Tribune had pointed out that the UF was seeking to revive the *Grow More Food Drive* of Dudley Senanayake which he had inaugurated during the reign of the UNP between 1965-70. The UF had damned the campaign whilst it was in the Opposition and when it came to power in 1970 had put the

drive into cold storage. It thought that the UNP organised grow more food campaign was a bourgeois capitalist effort and that it should be liquidated. Whatever limited and minimal success the Dudley Senanayake campaign had achieved were destroyed whilst, the basis for what may be termed UF socialism was laid.

Now this has been done. We have a new Constitution (a brand new unique one.) The Land Reform Act and the Agricultural Productivity Act have effected changes in the agricultural sector—changes which are said to be in the direction of "socialism". The ceiling on incomes and houses, the heavy taxation on all those who had been producing wealth so far, the business take-over legislation and a whole series of other regulations under the special powers of the Public Security (Emergency) Act are also claimed to be "progressive" legislation which will induce the common masses to work harder and produce more. And we have been thrust into the era of the Press Council where "truth" may acquire a new connotation.

And because such legislation did not automatically induce greater effort and greater production, the Prime Minister (and some of her enterprising Ministers) have begun to make speeches pointing out that it was time the people started working harder. If they did not work harder and bring about an agricultural revolution, it would be doom and perdition.

The old order has indeed been successfully destroyed by the United Front and its legislation. But, unfortunately, the UF has not yet created something new to replace the productive machinery which has been destroyed. Pragmatically practical people, even though wedded to slogans and particular isms, always make sure that they have some alternative (a better one) before liquidating something which they do not like, or think unsuitable or outdated.

But, in this case, there was no alternative ready to replace what was destroyed. The "radical" legislation taking this country towards "socialism" by itself offer no alternative. With the result production has actually gone down on a national level and blaming external world conditions will not be of any avail. In these circumstances, the Prime Minister has set out to evoke enthusiasm and activity from the people, by telling them that starvation, famine and damnation was round the corner, unless they worked harder.

Can such speeches, however numerous and however vigorous, produce the desired results? Can import bans by themselves bring new and increased production? Are the sections and groups, however numerically large, who are expected to benefit by the UF legislation willing and capable of producing more? Is the capacity to vote in

a particular way at an election a guarantee that such voters, nursed and nourished on free gifts and subsidies, will be able to effect an agricultural revolution? Will a country, without genuine national unity and a cohesive manpower pool, be able to save the nation and the country? Can the Anuradhapura district and the Sinhalese alone bring about a major agricultural revolution? Can this country register any progress if the agricultural proletariat of Indian Tamil origin in the plantations is discarded and thrown away on the dustheap? Will it be enough for our economy if we produce a few more chillies and onions whilst our big foreign exchange earners like tea and coconut go to the dogs?

These are questions people have begun to ask, and there is no getting away from them.

WITH THIS ISSUE WE COMPLETE THE 60-NUMBER VOLUME 17 WE BEGAN ON JUNE 30, 1972.

WITH OUR NEXT ISSUE ON APRIL 20, 1973, WE BEGIN VOLUME 18.

# Tribunania

## Planned Economy and Planned Parenthood

"UNLESS we solve this problem (of the population explosion) we will be reduced to cannibalism in another 30 years," Professor Emeritus Dr. C. C. de Silva has said at a seminar held under the auspices of the Ceylon Medical Association and the Family Planning Association. (Daily Mirror, 28th March)

"Investment in family planning and population policies is certainly bound to yield more substantial results to humanity than organising celestial trips for men and mice," Labour Minister M.P. de Z. Siriwardena has said inaugurating a Labour management seminar on Population and Family Planning jointly sponsored by the Department of Labour and the International Labour Organisation. (Times of Ceylon, 29th March)

Mrs. Siva Obeysekera, Deputy Minister of Health, has declared at the same seminar that "a third child in any family should be considered a luxury, and the fourth and fifth should be considered anti-social acts." (Daily Mirror, 29th March)

IT WOULD appear from all this that the powers that be have at long last realised the need for planned parenthood



as part and parcel of the planned economy about which they so much talk about. Obviously, planned parenthood cannot be a substitute for a planned economy. But, properly implemented, a planned parenthood policy can and must be utilized within the broader scheme of a planned economy to raise living standards of the people and achieve national development.

Ceylon's population has more than doubled within the last 50 years. The indications are that, given the present rate of increase in population, it will double again in the next 25 years. Certain characteristics of the population explosion peculiar to Ceylon have not received the attention it deserves from the authorities concerned.

In the Western countries both the birth and death rates were high before they began their economic development. With economic development, both birth and death rates declined gradually, the former due to social consequences flowing from economic change, the latter due to improvements in transport and communication resulting in more regular food supplies. Thus, the population growth was kept within manageable limits. Whatever increase in population there was, was accompanied by economic growth too. This was consistent with rising living standards.

IN OUR OWN COUNTRY, on the other hand, thanks

to DDT and other developments in the field of medicine, we achieved within a few years a fall in the death rate which the West took many decades to attain. But whereas we achieved a fall in the death rate much faster than the West, we failed to follow the West in achieving a comparable decline in the birth rate, this was due mainly to our functioning within an agrarian system with its deep-rooted customs and traditions and partiality for large families.

The result was a phenomenal growth in the expansion of the population which was unparalleled not only in the West but even in the whole Asian region. Till recently, Sri Lanka trailed only behind Taiwan in the percentage growth of her population.

The highest birth rates, here as in other developing countries, appears to be among the low-income groups. According to a survey made in 1969-70, of the mothers who had 5 or more children, as many as 63 per cent were in families with an income of less than Rs. 200 a month. (Such families constitute 40 per cent of the total). No wonder some wit has cracked that while the rich get richer, the poor get children!

What of the future? It has been calculated that of all births, 76 per cent have been to mothers of the 20-34 age group. Since this group which totalled 1,467,000 in 1971 is expected to rise to 1,991,000 by 1981, given the

existing family patterns, the annual number of births is expected to soar from the present figure of about 370,000 to over 500,000. According to population projections based on these data, Sri Lanka's population is expected to rise to about 20 million by 1981. This is bound to have a tremendous effect on the general pattern of economic development here.

WE CANNOT say that we had not been warned.

The first World Bank Mission which visited the Island as far back as 1952 wrote in their report: "If the present rate of increase is not checked it will be only a few years before the population problem will be felt very keenly and very obviously. The new land available for cultivation, although considerable, is limited; and the development of new resources and means of employment through industrialisation is bound to be slow. The economic developments which are in sight can take care of the natural increase of population for only a very few years, after which continuation of that increase can only be at the expense of the health and the standard of living of the people. Unless serious attention is paid at once to the population problems, the next generation will be living under worse, not better sanitary conditions and will be worse, not better fed than the present."

They recommended that the Government of Ceylon should therefore, boldly dec.

lare in favour of family planning in the interests of both parents and the coming generation and that information on family planning and facilities for it should be made available, in due course, at all government hospitals, dispensaries and centres.

**But, unfortunately, due to opposition from the Catholic Church to whom the Government then in power was much obliged nothing was done to give effect to the recommendations of the World Bank Mission. Family planning was left a matter only for private bodies to pursue.**

Then the "Ten Year Plan" report prepared by the National Planning Council headed by Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the then Prime Minister, also devoted considerable space to this crucial problem. This report said: "Population increases promote fragmentation and a reduction in the size of individual holdings. Quite apart from the possibilities of mechanisation, this factor alone would tend to reduce the advantages hitherto provided by the large agricultural family. The spread of education and literacy would also exert an influence in a similar direction since these promote a greater awareness of higher standards."

THE REPORT went on to say that "the purpose of a family planning campaign should be to encourage and aid attitudes and outlooks that may otherwise be slow in emerging. The course of the birth rate could in this

way be made different to what it may otherwise be."

Remarking that "a beginning has already been made in Ceylon in this direction", the report came to the conclusion that "the time is opportune for tackling the problem on a far bigger scale ... it is desirable that the whole question of population policy in all its aspects be made the subject of nationwide discussion perhaps through the medium of a competent Committee of Inquiry. Such a committee should receive evidence from the public, undertake statistical studies, analyse the economic implications of population growth and present the details of a future programme of action."

Such a programme of action, needless to say, has still to see the light of day.

The latest to join the Jeremiahs who predict doom if we do not purposefully control our population growth is the Ministry of Planning and Employment in their "Five Year Plan" report for 1972-76. Says this report: "The rate of population growth has important implications for development policy ... Even the present level of births has led to heavy strain on the country's resources. In the circumstances the importance of family planning work cannot be over emphasised...."

"Activities connected with family planning have been carried out in Ceylon by the Family Planning Association from 1953 and by the Ministry of Health from 1965. But what has been done so far

in this field appears to be insignificant in relation to the magnitude of the problem."

It recommended that facilities for family planning should be made available to all groups in the population and "not be confined to the privileged sections of society."

If the Ministerial and Deputy Ministerial utterances at the recent seminar are any indication that the Government is now alive to the magnitude of the problem and is set to tackle it in dead earnest, that is a matter that will be welcomed by all those who have the interests of the nation at heart.

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SHAMBA

## Building the Hut:

### Clearing and Planting

FEBRUARY 17 - 28

By ANATORY BUKOBA

February 17,

TODAY I continued clearing the long grass and the weeds, which included a few thorny bushes, and I must say that what I cleared looked nice after I had done it. The land, as it adjoins the road, is in two parts, one has trees, big thorns and almost impenetrable shrub; the other has grass and weeds and a few thorny bushes. It is this latter part that has the dhiul (wood-apple) trees. The other part I have not explored properly yet, although I have walked all round the land.

As an afterthought, before I left, I turned back the grass and the rubbish which I had cut before, and rolled it back with the *Katha*, away from the road thus leaving the shorter grass underneath exposed. This grass protected as it has been, the last few days by the cut grass on the top of it, looks quite green now, in spite of the hot sun during the day and the complete lack of rain. The grass before I cut it, had certainly not looked as green as that. The total effect has been to make the road, much wider, and someone even suggested that it would be logical if I did the other side of the road, too, even though the vegetation on that side is much thicker.

From a purely aesthetic point of view, I think it is a good idea, although it is not my land, and as the clearing would only entail an edge, a few feet deep from the road itself, I cannot see anybody objecting. I hope to put up the house tomorrow, and I widened the space where the house is to stand. This morning I was able to buy a further forty cadjans.

February 20,

Someone, in my absence, tried setting fire to the grass verge just short of my land, and a few feet short of the point where I had started clearing it myself. Fortunately to my way of thinking, the fire had not spread very far, but, in a way, I am glad whoever it was who had done it, had tried it because it showed the difference, at a glance between our two methods of clearing, between his, the traditional farmer's way, and mine which I would call, the gardener's way. His looked an awful mess and it will continue to look this until there have been several showers of rain and the grass has grown again, a sort of scorched earth policy while the effects of my way look nice, no black marks or scorched earth, the grass still there, the short grass green all ready to sprout or grow again at the first shower of rain.

A word here may not be amiss about the Government structure for controlling land in the country parts. At the top of the hierarchy with direct access to the Government Agent of the district, in ours, at any rate, is the Divisional Land Officer, the D.L.O. as he is always known. He is usually to be found in his division. Under him there are Colonization Officers, the C.O. as he is called and I once interpreted this, on mis-information I think, as Cultivation Officer, which perhaps, would more describe his duties. Under the C.O. there may be some Land Development Officers, the L.D.O. There are other people, the D.R.O. and Grama Sevaka, who have different functions. D.R.O. stands for Divisional Revenue Officer and he would, I think, come under the Assistant Government Agent.

February 21:

THIS AFTERNOON I noticed smoke coming from what must surely be the farm, and hurried in to see the damage. There was a fire all right, and I went to the nearest house to fetch a *katha* to beat out the flames and to cut what dry vegetation I could to stop the fire from spreading. The wind had control and the fire was spreading merrily before it. It did not take me long, once I had the *katha*, to put it out. The fire must have started just before I had first seen it, and although I did not see anyone around when I had first arrived on the scene.

I met two men coming from that direction when I

was returning with the *katha* to put it out. I had only the time to ask them the briefest of questions, and it was only later that I became fully convinced that they must have been responsible. It appears from information I gathered from other people that there was a large bee hive in a tree close to the place, which I could tell from the wind's direction, the fire must have been first kindled. The men must have lit a fire to smoke the bees away and to collect the hive, and they must have then thrown the fire away on the dry grass. They were probably in hiding when I first came, and then returned by the road with the hive all wrapped up in a cloth.

February 22:

Two of us started at about five p. m. last evening to build a house and we finished up by building something that looks more like a wigwam, but covered with *pol athu*. We cut three forked sticks of varying thickness and another long pole, which came in useful. It was not long before it was dark and most of the tying of the *cadjans* had to be done by torchlight, the moon not having risen yet.

The 'house' completed, we retired to a boutique for a cup of tea, and we came back armed with a *kalla geddi*, which we filled up on the way, a lamp, a box of matches and some of our luggage. We had a clay cup between the two of us. When I saw the apex of the house this morning, I was glad it had not rained. St. Patrick warded off the serpents. Here am I writing

these notes, while our numbers, swelled by two more, are busy outside the wigwam in construction of a more comfortable house, I hope.

Our meals at the moment are plantains and bread and water as there is no sugar to be had almost anywhere for tea. We might get sugar at a co-operative, though that is by no means certain, but I have no intention of doing the walk there. It is too far away. In collecting the wood for a house one is torn between what wood to take and what trees to leave. I would rather leave nearly all that could be suitable for us, but then there would be no house.

SENT AWAY was I to get some nails, and I got some more bread and plantains, too, some tea, and someone with whom I am a favourite spared me some sugar. We shall be able to brew our own tea now instead of getting it all at the *kadday* or doing without. Some *kaddays* here no longer serve tea because of the shortage of sugar. I also got an *attili* and cover to brew the tea.

When I got back I found that no work had been done. I had collected someone else on the way and two of the 'casuals' were missing. I started to get things going. One of the others came back. The house, as I said some time back, was to consist of a room and a verandah. We hoped to get one or the other built tonight. Six posts were up, and a seventh post had still to be cut, plus about five more sticks of wood.

Then came a shower of rain as made us stop, and the four of us, no five, as we were for a short time, got wet in the house I slept in last night—the wigwam. The rain stopped enough for us to get going again and with the threat of another heavy shower, we worked very fast to make something to sleep in for tonight, and it is in that I am writing this now. It is a nice little affair and we have made use of two of the six standing posts to construct it. One end has been shut up, which will not help with the mosquitoes.

Well, it has started raining. Good for the crops perhaps and we are snug. The earth was so hard when we dug holes to take the posts this morning, that we had to pour water on the six places, after scooping away a little earth, to make the rest more pliable.

It must be dull work for a person who does not write. I have at least this to do when I have nothing else to occupy me. Our temporary house has come in useful, too. Someone has come in to shelter from the rain. He was on his way to bathe.

February 23:

Today we summoned our *baas* and the *baas'* mate and with the four of us we got started fairly early on making our *cadjan* house. The one we slept in last night was rapidly dismantled. After we had carried our things outside and left them in the sun, we worked with an eye on the clock, that is, on the rain and that about which

## The New Farm

we were so sure, failed to materialize.

THE STYLE of the house changed slightly and two new posts went up instead of one. There were three beams or *yata laes* to go up, and six *paralas* and these took time and then the *cadjans* went up, really fast. The walls went up too, and our verandah was partially made into a one-roomed house. It is rather small, but there is enough head-room which was not the case with our house last night.

Tired after our work, we did not give ourselves enough time to put up *massas* to sleep on, and we are still on the floor. Our 'boss' or critique came round tonight, and he thought the taller posts not tall enough, and he wants higher ones to go up tomorrow. If we do that it will mean taking the roof down again. Our room has to be done tomorrow. The make-shift kitchen or fire place took no time and it is an outdoor one. Tea was what we had first.

The mosquitoes are a nuisance. Once we clear back the scrub, so as to have an open space round the house they may not be so bad. Two *dhiul* trees and one *myla* tree give us shade during the morning. A little long brown snake and I were on a collision course, but it turned and made off very rapidly. The neighbours seem actually pleased that our house has gone up.

February 24.

Well, it has been three shirts torn in three days, the first I know not how, but it was probably

done crawling through thorns looking for timber for the house; the second seems to have been done by hanging the shirt to dry on a thorn bush, and you can judge how vicious the thorn, because barbed-wire never does this. The third time I nearly tore myself, too, because the shirt and my shoulder came up against the pointed rafter of our house.

THE MORNING was fairly inactive, and I did some clearing up, making various piles of what I had cut before, the thorns in one place, the really sharp thorn, not the rubbish because I think this sharp thorn might be used to protect the vegetables; we set fire to one of the heaps tonight and watched it for awhile in case the fire spread too much. The place looked much tidier after I had done, and we shall have to wait till tomorrow to see what it looks like after the fire.

When most of the heat of the afternoon had gone off we got started on the house again, the same four people. Firstly, the temporary wall had to come down. Four beams or rafters went up. *Cadjan* was tied on, facing three ways, the first time I have seen it done. Then the wall connecting the newly constructed room and the verandah went up again, this time in two sections, leaving space for a door. The final stages were rather chaotic. We had seven people, an addition of three more, often in a confined space and the two youngest I kept sending out. Then the last and sixth bundle of

*cadjans* contained a live mouse and it escaped into the house, and fortunately one of our members was able to prise it out. It does not need saying, it was killed or we would have ended up by having many mice.

February 25:

It was bitterly cold last night, and it remained so until the sun came up. We took it easy this morning as we should, it being a day when people bathe in the morning rather than in the evening, and I swept up the mess outside, made by our house building. WE SEEM to have an economy which though it gives us no luxuries can expand in a moment to take in double our number for a meal. I do not know how we do it, but our doing it shows it can be done. I do not think well to do houses can do it at all.

This evening I bought four large fish for Rs. 1/-. For the first time we needed a plate and the chatty lid of the pot we cooked the fish in did us for one—so gathered round the inverted lid we all put our fingers into the same dish. Three of us ate, and the fourth, I thought was too finicky or horrified to join us. When we were again alone, I discovered that it was not the absence of plates that worried him but the fact that the fish was cooked in salt and not with chillies.

We ate as Moslems do in North Africa, at least on ceremonial occasions, as during Ramazan. We, however, because of the very bony nature of our meal, were taking almost as much food

out of our mouths as we were putting in, but we did not hesitate to put our hands back in the dish, nor did we mind anybody else doing so. The food we took out the reader will be glad to know went into another receptacle and not on to the floor. This was a refinement that I insisted on, and it was so.

February 26:

Our work has really begun, it seems one of the first things I did this morning was to fetch two young plantain trees, of the kind that produces fruit that is used only to cook. They will be sown tomorrow.

LATE in the morning I fetched two even younger plants, also plantains, of the kind that is called *ambul*. For each of these four shoots I paid twenty five cents. One of the people involved in the transaction threw in a jak plant for good measure and also a young plant of another fruit which I shall name later. The holes for both jak and this other have been dug and watered.

Clearing has gone on apace and much faster and with the clearing the mosquitoes have retreated. One of us clears and the other gathers up what has been cut into peaks, for burning. It is only in this way that we can save the little pallas mostly of *dhiul* from being burnt. Of course, what has been gathered is still green. It would have been better if it had been left to dry in the sun for a day or two first, and some of the heaps may have to be spread out a little again to dry before it can be burnt. This way,

however, we got more comfort from the work done. We see not only the progress we make, but it gives the man clearing more room to manoeuvre, His working bare foot on vert thorny ground-made more thorny after the thorns have been cut. People say it is only soles made of Sambur hide that can resist these thorns and I can well believe them.

February 27:

Another cold nights. Night can be very cold in the Dry Zone. Rivers steam in the early morning cold.

Clearing went on apace. We cut round several young *dhiul* plants, not yet big enough to be called tree, and we tried, to pile the weeds, the grass and the thorns to be burnt far enough from them to save them from the heat of the fires. The heaps were burnt tonight, and we shall have to wait till tomorrow to know if there is any damage. The person who clears, works barefoot among all the thorns. He does this to save his sandals from damage.

We have been existing on plantains and bread for a week. Bread is forty-five cents a pound, and plantains seldom cost less than fifteen cents each if they are *koli-kutu* which they nearly always are. *Ambul* plantains may cost only seven or eight cents if you are lucky. It seems we have no authorised dealers in rice in our neighbourhood because there is no rice to be had.

Dung I collected straight from where two cattle were tied up, and there was enough to fill up a broken *attili*. I had to pick up the stuff

with my hand, which is the only way to pick it up if one is not to be too finicky. The dung went into the holes prepared for our two trees. The jak plant is a tiny one, and after the two trees were planted the soil around both were covered with straw or rather the dried grass I had saved for just this purpose. We marked the two spots out with stones.

February 28:

*Lawulu* is the name of the fruit tree that we planted yesterday with the jak. The fruit of this tree is yellow, and my recollection is that it has a sweet rather sickly taste, and that therefore, you cannot eat too much of it at a time.

TODAY our four plantain trees went in. Two are *allu kessel* the kind that was to be cooked before it can be eaten, and the other two are *ambul*. We planted them fairly close together, among the *dhiul* bushes. One idea is to let them give each other as much protection from the sun as possible. We planted them this evening, and it was about dark by the time we watered them. So our place looks like a farm at least, exactly twenty two days after I just took the land over. I had hoped to sow paddy on my second day here, but there is not much one can do alone, and at the moment we are concentrating more on fruit.

A friend brought us a mango plant today, some *murunga* saplings and some papaw plants. These will have to go in tomorrow. Now that we have some trees

(Continued on Page 16)

## THIS BUSINESS OF CHILDREN

## Minus into Minus is Plus, But Don't Ask Why

By CANAX.

PROFESSOR C. C. de SILVA, our distinguished paediatrician, is suddenly the Hero of the Hour, quite possibly even the Man of the Year. He has become some sort of instant celebrity in the land after roundly denouncing the concept of examinations, private tuition and homework for school children. True, there haven't been any public celebrations yet, but that's probably because parents are not normally given to acting like children.

The kids too have taken it pretty cool, I must say—but that again is probably because children these days don't behave like children, either. Precisely what they behave like is a moot point, and there are as many opinions as there are over—40s. And under-20s.

In the absence of any obvious signs it's difficult to know if children are delighted or not with the Professor's suggestions. But at the risk of appearing to go out on a limb, I'd say that parents are positively delirious with joyful anticipation—if our house is anything to go by. The consensus among Sri Lanka's old folks at home would seem to be that the Professor has come out solidly on the side of the parents and struck a long-overdue blow for sanity.

It's too early to say yet, but the fervent hope is that

the Professor isn't too late to save the institution of marriage and the concept of family life as we have come to know, love and cherish. If not, it's worse than useless NM frittering away his old age trying to give this country a strong economy. This country derives its strength primarily from the rural masses, as the Government keeps reminding one and all, itself, included and it's families who make up the masses.

Goodness knows, even if our Education Ministry doesn't, that parents have enough problems as it is (relating to each other, for instance, and to the realities of a life beset with shortages) without the kids having to add to them with their homework.

THE PROFESSOR (bless him) has given voice to something parents have known all along but were afraid to talk about or place on record. The point he made was that examinations do not assess a child's knowledge or intelligence. Only parents who have sweated while their children sat for exams will appreciate the full significance of that deceptively simple point. A child sits for an exam only so the authorities can assess the knowledge and intelligence of its parents. It has got so that most children now know it is not they who are on trial, and nume-

rous terrifying instances have come to light of kids using this knowledge to effectively hold parents to ransom. Legal circles say the law is helpless, since most parents prefer to suffer in silence.

Malay Street will no doubt dismiss this as pure conjecture (and one disproved by its own achievements) but I'm certain it's not possible to fool all the parents all the time. Some of us simply don't bother to show we've cottoned on. The real purpose of exams, Dr. Mahmud notwithstanding, is to show up parents who should never have become parents in the first place if they had any love for their country and its future. Said one parent, who begged to remain anonymous: "My wife and I have made a conscious effort to be alive to our responsibilities as parents. We have tried to give all twelve of our children a loving home, a good school and adequate pocket money, so that they can grow up into useful, responsible citizens. We do all this, and are still found wanting—because we can't do their homework as well."

A leading psychiatrist, who welcomed the Professor's observations, was quite emphatic about the grave dangers inherent in our current educational modus operandi. Examinations and homework were the monstrous inventions of sick minds, he said, and would cause lasting personality defects. "Parents will grow into second childhood with a deep sense of insecurity that could have disastrous consequences for a

developing nation such as ours," he added.

Another well-known figure, well-known for two-timing as a sociologist - cum - political scientist, took it from there. His evaluation of the situation was a disturbing one, for the way he sees it, the type of old people this country will be saddled with in the next decade or two will be vastly inferior to what we are now fortunate to boast of. The old of the future will be nowhere near the same calibre as our leaders of today and won't have any hang-ups about Marx or Lenin, or even Trotsky. They'll have the same common-or-garden hang-ups as everybody else, he feels, so it'll mean goodbye to leadership.

The type of future non-leader this country is producing today can be observed from what is happening in one, typical Sri Lanka home. Mine. The way things are going, I'm lucky I still have a family to call my own. Now read on.....

OUR DAUGHTER comes home from school one evening and announces, "Teacher wants to see you."

"That's the most direct invitation I've ever had from a woman," I say to my wife, trying to make light of the summons. "I can't believe it, so she must be wanting to see you."

"Why me?" cries my wife, "I don't even know her!"

"Probably wants to talk about the child's clothes," I suggest.

"What's wrong with her clothes?" she demands. "She's as dirty as the next child, isn't she?" Then turning to the girl she asks hopefully, "Teacher really wanted to see daddy, no?"

With such assistance the child can't help but recollect with frightening clarity. "Yes," she answers with total recall, "she told to tell daddy."

"Look, darling," I say, assuming my most down-to-earth tone, "we're in this together for better for worse, remember? So why don't we both see her?"

"I could have remained unmarried," she says bitterly. "And have a child? Well, it's been done before."

There seems nothing else to do but face up to the problem like the man I was, or the one my wife knew me to be, though the difference may be hardly worth mentioning. In her view, that is.

"So the teacher wants to see me, huh?" I say defiantly. "If that's what she wants, that's what she's gonna get." "Don't go making a fool of me," says my wife apprehensively.

I assure her on that point. "Don't worry," I say, "I'll only make a fool of myself, so she can draw her own conclusion about anybody else."

My wife starts to cry, which I think is a foolish thing to do, though I don't

tell her so. Instead I ask the kid, "Why does your teacher want to see me?"

"Because you don't do my homework." You could have knocked me down with a feather (but I know you won't because feathers are so hard to come by.) Why, it was only the day before I was trying, but without the same degree of success as NM, to do a bit of deficit budgeting at home when my daughter asks for help.

"That's right," I remember saying without wasting another, "minus into minus equals plus."

But that's not good enough for her. She wants to know why.

"Because that's what my teacher taught me!" I shout.

"That's no answer," my wife rebukes me. "In any case you don't have to yell. Just explain why minus into minus equals plus."

"I would if I could, but I can't," I protest, adding in an attempt to wrest the initiative, "You know I'm forty now and I still haven't asked myself or anybody else a silly question like that. So why can't she be like me?"

"You mean you actually don't know?"

"All right, so our daughter has the village idiot for a father. Now why don't you give her a helping hand?"

Continued on page 22



## Peking's Smiling Diplomacy and ASEAN Countries.

from  
A Special Correspondent

Singapore,

THERE is a great deal of undertone speculation and talk in Government circles here about the impact of the new China of the post Lin Piao era on the countries in this region. An article in the *Financial Times*, reproduced in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of March 19 has been discussed in important circles. The article was by Michael Kalinski, and was specially written to review the relations between China and Hongkong under the title AFFABLE PEKING AND 1997 —when the lease for the New Territories adjoining Hongkong will end.

### The New Farm

(Continued from page 13)

planted and it is the dry season we are going to have our time cut out watering them, until their roots take a hold. All the water has to be lugged up from the river, and we are using an *attili* to do it. Fortunately we are right beside the river.

With all this, clearing will still have to go on. The wood-apple tree that somebody burnt or rather scorched when he threw the firewood away that he had used to collect honey by scaring off the bees, looks an awful sight. The tree is so big we shall allow it to remain.

This is how he began his piece:

"The new smiling diplomatic face of Peking became one of the favourite journalistic cliches of 1972. And like most cliches there was a measure of truth in it. China had, for some time past, been re-adjusting her approach towards the outside world but President Nixon's visit to Peking in February, followed in September by the establishing of diplomatic relations with Japan, were dramatic events which attracted world wide attention and had equally far-reaching repercussions. In the course of 1972 a further nineteen countries either established or resumed diplomatic relations with China, bringing the total at the end of the year to 85. And in a dispatch on September 30, issued just before National Day, the New China News Agency gave a head count for the first nine months of the year to 500 delegations from over 90 countries.

"But there is more to China's new lease of diplomatic life than a crude counting of heads. The efforts Peking has put in to receive and cultivate these people are tangible evidence of the Chinese wish to play a more active role in world affairs. China is now committed to

a degree of diplomatic, economic and cultural involvement with other countries, which successive administrations will not find easy to disrupt lightly."

After surveying the historical background of Hongkong's relations with China, the writer draws attention to Hongkong's usefulness to Peking. "In spite of their very local ideological disapproval of the situation, the Chinese Government in Peking finds many advantages in operating from Hongkong under the present arrangements. It provides a convenient base from which it can reap the benefits of capitalism while preserving the rest of China from contamination. Hongkong has always been the major source of foreign exchange for the Chinese Government. The political climate has changed beyond recognition from the days of confrontation during the Cultural Revolution. The communists in Hongkong are now once more smiling and shaking hands with everyone, and no longer seek every opportunity to revile and obstruct the Hongkong Government. This tactical change of style is viewed with suspicion by many, but is nonetheless welcome."

THERE IS no doubt that there is a widespread trend in the South-eastern region for countries to normalise relations with China. At the recent ASEAN meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia took the initiative in wanting member countries to normalise relations with Hanoi and Peking. Although there was

some consensus about ties with Hanoi, there was no agreement about relations with China.

Singapore was the main stumbling block to a common ASEAN approach to ties with Peking. The Indonesians, whose generals until recently opposed thawing its frozen relations with Peking, have softened their stand, according to authoritative sources. President Suharto in early March said, in the course of his formal address to the Indonesian Congress, that his government was willing to resume diplomatic relations with China provided Peking stopped giving aid to former Indonesian Communist Party leaders involved in the 1965 coup. *But there is no evidence of such re-thinking in Singapore.*

Senior Singapore officials have told Malaysia of their general reluctance to follow the trend. They feel that ASEAN nations have not considered fully the security implications of the move which could give the largely communist underground a propaganda fillip even if Peking withdraws its moral and material aid—a move they feel it may not be able to make.

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has publicly reversed his earlier stand that his government would recognise Peking as soon as either Malaysia or Indonesia did. But during his recent European tour, he said it might not do so even if the other four ASEAN countries did. One Singapore official said the three factors governing ties with China are: a)

whether Singaporeans regard themselves as an extension of China; b) whether the neighbouring countries, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, regard the republic in that light, and c) whether China regards the island as an extension of itself. With the island's population overwhelmingly (74%) Chinese, the Government does not want to be tagged a 'Third China,' he said.

IT MUST, however, be noted that what happens in Indonesia is of great importance in this region. Reference has already been made to President Suharto's references to ties with China in his speech in the newly constituted Congress in Jakarta.

While the President noted that detente between the great powers was one of several factors requiring "speedy assessment and actions lest we lag behind in the further conduct of our international relations," obviously speed will not characterise the normalisation of relations between China and Indonesia, Asia's third largest country.

"With the People's Republic of China, which manifestly supported the September 30 PKI rebellion," Suharto said, "we are willing to resume diplomatic relations provided it really demonstrates a friendly attitude towards us, is not hostile to us, and ceases to render assistance and facilities to former PKI leaders who were positively involved in the rebellion."

The conditions are not, of course, new, but the significant thing appeared to be

that it was Suharto re-stressing them (along with a re-iteration that the banning of the PKI was an internal affair) so soon after America had mended its Peking fences; Australia's Gough Whitlam had visited Jakarta preaching a new era of Asian sweetness and light; and when Malaysia, at least, is pressing for quicker normalisation.

The Presidential conservatism on this issue was of a piece with his frank admission that Indonesian development is still without enough momentum to quieten massive social and economic discontent—and his lengthy itemising of the continuing capacity of scattered PKI remnants to take advantage of that fact.

IT IS RELEVANT to recall that after the visits of President R. Nixon and Premier Tanaka to Peking certain political and public figures in many ASEAN countries, including Indonesia, began to urge their governments to reconsider the policies with regard to China. These persons feel that with the end of the cultural revolution in China and the so-called Red Guard's diplomacy, the beating up of diplomats, setting fire to and demolition of the buildings of foreign missions has become a thing of the past. Under the circumstances, they believe, the establishment of diplomatic relations with China will do no harm since the Chinese leadership has abandoned its intention "to hoist over the world the red banners of Mao Tse-tung's ideas by the year of 2000".

Unfortunately, there are lurking suspicions about China's

new "diplomacy of smiles. Indonesia has many bitter memories and even today they have grounds to suspect Peking. In Borneo, real military operations are still going on between President's Suharto's troops on the one hand and the so-called People's Army of Kalimantan and the People's Guerilla Army of North Borneo, on the other. Some of the soldiers of those two armies are said to be recruited from the local Chinese community while the commanders, are alleged to come to the island from continental China upon graduating the special military school on the island of Hainan. Indonesian officers who had to deal with the prisoners of war of those two armies have stated that these "dare-devils do not hesitate in sacrificing their lives so as to fulfill a task—to blow up a port installation, burn down a police-station, destroy a railway track."

The Exhibition in the Museum of the small Indonesian city of Sintang situated 160 miles eastward from Pontianak was held to show the close contact between the two insurgent armies and China. Everything the guerrillas had beginning from armaments and ending with hardware and banners, is said to be China-made. In the museum there are Chinese grenades, mortars, rifles, uniforms, instruments for assembling home-made arms, medicines, dental equipment, rotaprints, in short, everything that a well equipped guerrilla army may need. The fact that guerrilla armies are well equipped testifies to the ex-

istence of constant channels of communication.

The documents seized by Indonesian troops show that pro-Chinese PKI plan to intensify the "struggle" of the guerrillas in the next two or three years. One document is alleged that the commanders of guerrilla detachments were recommended to select the most able young men from among the population of the local Chinese community and send them to the special training school on the island of Hainan.

THERE ARE still many powerful circles in Indonesia which feel that the "local" Chinese in that country have always endeavoured to subvert the economy. They point out that with smuggling, profiteering and hoarding, they were able to make sizable dents into Indonesia's economy; and also that with gold, opium and counterfeit dollars and rupiahs they did even greater harm. It has been stated that Indonesian authorities have withdrawn from circulation counterfeit rupiahs and dollars totalling a sum of over 700 million dollars. The counterfeiting is said to be done partly in Indonesia and partly smuggled in from Singapore.

Detailed stories of how "operations" were carried out in trades like the rice business to make blackmarket profits have been published, and though some of them sound like fairy tales there are people who insist that they are true. Speculation in rice and other food-stuffs is said to be done thr-

ough counterfeit currency already in abundant circulation. And such profiteering naturally tends to weaken the economy.

*For these reasons, there is a powerful group in Indonesia which is opposed to the re-opening of diplomatic ties with China. They say that Suharto should not invite trouble for himself and help the pro-China minded PKI to get on its feet again.*

President Suharto himself is taking a pragmatic view of the problem. He wants to make the best use of such local Chinese as were willing to assist Indonesia to develop economically. In his speech to the Congress, he had stressed that it was necessary not to discriminate against the Chinese who had become citizens of Indonesia. Indonesian Chinese are no longer officially such, but have (like non-Malaysia) attained the status of "non-indigenous."

Perhaps with frequent press criticism (here as elsewhere) of the non-indigenous role in mind, Suharto drew the Congress' attention "to the persistent practices which aggravate the differences between fellow citizens of different descent, namely the indigenous and non-indigenous groups." He defended the non-indigenous groups' rights as "Indonesian citizens to have "protection and the right to economic enterprise like (other) citizens."

But since the Chinese "generally enjoy greater wealth and a better econo-

## CAMBODIA

## Is Thailand Taking over US'Ss Responsibilities?

mic position" Suharto had pointed out they should give indigenous Indonesians opportunities and "the possibility to participate in their enterprises and share the gain."

What, the Government wants Suharto stressed, is to stimulate "social solidarity" which will "level off the economic capabilities of the two groups," thereby making the indigenous more prone to welcome the non-indigenous "right to live and right to economic enterprise."

There were many other high points in a speech which while it was not delivered in such a way as to secure even a single interruption for applause, was "new in that Suharto put it all together in one go," as a local resident put it.

The President denied that the stress on looming threats from the communists was "an excuse for the armed forces to stay in power"—although he did hint that such allegations might be communist inspired. While the armed forces had been willy-nilly thrust into politics and government ever since independence, they had to adjust to a New Order situation in which they obtained "less than 3% of the annual development budget."

The generals in Indonesia have softened towards China but will the ultra-conservative political anti-China lobby be able to prevent or delay Jakarta's desire to recognise Peking?

### Hongkong.

A *Hsinhua* despatch from Peking focussed attention on the fact that "the United States has continued its barbarous and massive bombing of Cambodia's liberated zone and the Cambodian People's Liberation Armed Forces. According to Western News Agency reports, in the past 20 days or more, the US has despatched large numbers of aircraft, B-52s included, to conduct the heaviest 'bombing raids' against these areas along Highways, 1, 4, and 5 as well as areas surrounding Phnompenh and Svay Rieng. A US government official clamoured that they will continue such barbarous bombing. White House Press Secretary Zielger alleged on March 27 that the US bombing of Cambodia will be without 'any time limit'. US Defence Secretary Richardson tries in every way to justify the war action of the US. He said on March 28 that as long as there is no cease-fire in Cambodia, the United States is justified in continuing the bombing campaign.

"Even a western news agency" continued the *Hsinhua* despatch, "said in a despatch that American aircraft have carried out fierce bombing in order to support Lon Nol's troops. The US cannot save itself from continuous defeats. UPI reported that the Cambodian People's

National Liberation Armed Forces recently 'intensified their offensive operations around the capital and that it overran Trapeang Thnot, a town about 20 kilometres northwest of Phnompenh. Along highway 1, the C.P.N. L.A.F. continued its heavy attacks on the enemy." Such was the *Hsinhua* report, but read between the lines it was a grim reminder to the US that they should not continue the bombing of Cambodia.

THOUGH there is a cease-fire of sorts in Vietnam and though US ground troops have quit Vietnam, there is deep suspicion in political and journalistic circles here that the Nixon doctrine of *indigenisation* of the fighting will lead to a new kind of war in the region. Local troops will continue the fighting to sustain the objective which the Pentagon and warmahacs in Washington have wanted: that is, to contain China from expanding into the Indo-China peninsula and thereafter into Southeast Asia.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that there is whisper going round newspaper offices here that in February a secret agreement had been signed between Thailand and Lon Nol's Cambodia? In regard to military co-operation. It is said that Thailand would extend to

the present Phompenh regime the kind of military assistance which the USA had given Cambodia. So far as Thailand is concerned it will mean excellent business on increased US subsidies especially at a time when it was faced with a financial depression as a result of the withdrawal of US troops from the region.

JOURNALISTS are now on the scent wanting to pull off a scoop about this "agreement" between Thailand and Cambodia which, if true, portends a new phase in US strategy in this region. It will also be tantamount to a re-grouping of all the anti-Peking forces in this region.

In the meantime, Lon Nol is having a difficult time even with the aerial assistance the US is providing him from bases in Thailand. The extent of his difficulties can be gauged by the fact he had even arrested over a hundred astrologers because they had predicted that the Lon Nol regime was in for a bad time because of the transit of particular planets. He is also said to be angry that his favourite astrologers had failed to warn him that his Presidential palace would come under direct attack.

The military situation in Cambodia was summed by Elizabeth Becker in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19/3/73, thus: "...Reversing its earlier stand, the US Command has dramatically increased tactical air forces over Cambodia. Government troops are countering the

present communist offensive with saturation bombing missions by American fighters. The result is that devastation of the countryside and the movement of refugees have reached unprecedented proportions. Following the January 27 peace accords in Paris, the US had begun phrasing all statements regarding its military activities in Cambodia with marked restraint. Mostly, they expressed hopes of an all-Indochina peace agreement, or at least a de facto ceasefire in Cambodia. However,

there was no announcement of any official policy change that would call for a scaling down of the US military presence. Gradually, spokesmen for the Lon Nol regime as well as for American activities began revealing that the US had no intention of reducing its involvement in the Cambodian war... The fighting continues to accelerate and US air support has followed the peace. Highway 2 has been the scene of the heaviest combat action recently and also received the heaviest concentration of bombing. Diplomats report that the US plans to provide air support to the government troops until an official ceasefire is signed here. 'They used to say that they would intervene only if the situation was extremely critical,' remarked one. 'Now with daily air raids, the Americans aren't predicting when the bombing will end.

And with the top Cambodian astrologers rotting in Lon Nol's gaols, there is no one else also who can make a prediction.

## BANGLADESH

### Mandate for Mujib

—tasks of nation building

New Delhi,

SHEIKH Mujibur Rahman's phenomenal triumph at the first General Election of *Sonar Bangla* is an occasion both for joy and introspection.

For the people of India, Sheikh Mujib's victory is largely the vindication of what our Government and our people did in 1971 in helping Bangabandhu's people to stand up against the barbarities of the Pak military junta and ultimately bring about its overthrow. The emergence of independent Bangladesh pledged by the youth of Dacca two years ago on the very day that last week's election took place, March 7, is one of the glorious landmarks in India's policy of extending support and assistance to people struggling to be free; and in the case of Bangladesh, it has proved to the hilt the validity of India's refusal to accept the two-nation theory.

What had been achieved on December 16, 1971, with the surrender of the Pak military commander in Dacca received the imprimatur of history on March 7, 1973, when the people of Bangladesh in their millions voted Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party into absolute power.

**This has been no ordinary victory: it has proclaimed the correctness of India's**

stand in the crisis of 1971 that no puppet of Islamabad nor any nominee of Peking, but the Bangabandhu has been the undisputed leader of the people of Bangladesh.

THE ELECTION campaign itself has proved that friendship with India continues to be the sheet-anchor of democratic Bangladesh. One recurring theme maintained by Sheikh Mujibur throughout his whirlwind electioneering was his unwavering assertion of friendship with India. **The fact that with such a stand he could sweep the poll in an unprecedented upsurge of support from his own people, has proved that friendship with India could not be an electoral liability, despite all the unworthy fulminations poured by Maulana Bhasani in his senility.**

Many a press correspondent, both Indian and foreign, moving in the periphery of Dacca's Hotel Intercontinental, predicted how mounting had been the anti-Indian feelings. The election results have proved that these so-called operators of mass media confined themselves to the narrow grooves of urban Dacca and did not care to feel the pulse of the millions in the wide expanse of the green and pleasant fields of Bangladesh.

The second point of significance in the Bangladesh election results, so far as this country is concerned, is that Sheikh Mujib's popularity as the liberator of his country, is unchallenged in the eyes of his people. Despite the economic hardships that the

people have been facing, they are undoubtedly prepared to give him an absolute mandate to build the country into a real *Sonar Bangla*.

THE EUPHORIA of liberation has been symbolised in the personal triumph of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and this is the reality which most of the Opposition parties missed. They might be complaining today of electoral irregularities here and there, but if the maximum limit of their complaints are conceded, even then there is no escape from their acknowledging the clear verdict of the electorate. In the eyes of the common humanity of Bangladesh, there is no other leader of the stature, competence and perspicacity that can lead the nation.

*The poor assessment on the part of the Opposition parties about the mood of their own people was evident from the extravagant manner in which some of them put up candidates in a huge number of constituencies.* Barring the sober and modest stand of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, all other Opposition parties had pipe dreams about their own strength and popularity. Perhaps the most pathetic has been the performance of the National Awami Party under Professor Muzaffar Ahmed, since it made fatuous claims about its own importance: the result has been that it has drawn a blank, while it might have won a dozen or so seats had it adhered to its original position of friendly understanding with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Professor Muzaffar Ahmed has brought discredit

to his own reputation as a political figure by his quixotic sectarianism.

WHAT IS yet to be realised by the Left forces in Bangladesh is that in the wake of a nation's independence, the masses generally pin their hopes for a better deal on the very leadership in whom they reposed their confidence in the struggle for freedom. Unless and until the people's confidence in that leadership is totally worn out, other parties, however dedicated and self-sacrificing, have to work in co-operation—and not through confrontation—with the party installed in national leadership. This was the asset which the Congress enjoyed for exactly twenty years in India; that is, until the 1967 General Election. Certainly, Sheikh Mujib would be entitled to this claim for at least five years; and that is precisely what the people of Bangladesh have given him in this election.

The election victory has thus brought a new challenge for Sheikh Mujib, perhaps a greater challenge than the one he had to face against the jackboot of the Pak military junta. The rebuilding of the nation on the four pillars of independence, democracy, secularism and socialism, is an uphill task; and he will require the unstinted co-operation of all sections of the people—even of those whom he has fought and defeated at the polls. The masses when going to the polling booths did not take into account the charges of corruption against Sheikh Mujib's

party members, nor of incompetence against his administration. Because, the overpowering consideration that led the voter to the poll was to demonstrate before the world that the millions in Bangladesh solidly stood behind the leader who ushered independence. This does not mean that now after the election, the masses will tolerate either corruption or incompetence.

THE TWIN TASKS before the Bangabandhu therefore is to rebuild the Awami League with the help of dedicated workers, mainly drawn from among the youth; and to refashion the administration with committed personnel. On both these counts, Sheikh Mujib has tremendous advantages. Every successful candidate of the Awami League knows that he could win at the poll largely because the people took it that a vote for the Awami League would be a vote for Sheikh Mujib. In this situation, Sheikh Mujib today can drastically re-organise his party organisation and put it in the hands of dedicated cadres.

In the administration, there are officials who have so far been following a policy of wait-and watch. Brought up in the norms and traditions of Pak Civil Service, many of them were sulking and perhaps expecting that the election results might not strengthen the authority of the Prime Minister. The landslide victory of the Prime Minister and his party will dispel all such illusions on their part. The massive poll victory is bound to ensure

firm loyalty from the bureaucracy to the new Cabinet.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, now about to embark on the task of national reconstruction, will have to bear in mind that the economic independence of Bangladesh has to be guarded like the apple of his eye. The history of his antagonism with the Pak rulers began with his concern for the economic uplift of his own people. Now, on the morrow of his electoral victory, having been firmly installed in power through democratic process, Sheikh Mujib will have to defend the economic independence of Bangladesh.

THIS HAS to be the touchstone of his foreign policy. Generous offers of massive economic aid are bound to come to him from many quarters; the criterion for their acceptance and utilisation has to be whether these will further the objective of self-reliance for his *Sonar Bangla*.

Mr. Sisco's testimony in support of arms aid to Pakistan and openly hinting at new style of US intervention through economic assistance underlines the need for guarding the economic independence of both India and Bangladesh.

In this task, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman can count upon all sections of patriotic opinion in this country, to extend a helping hand to him, as they did unreservedly when his people struggled through the agonising night of oppression on to the dawn of freedom. The Indian people will be looking forward to a strong

and independent Bangladesh, which will not only be friendly but a comrade-in-arms in the common struggle for the building of a new social order. —Mainstream

### From the Easy Chair

Continued from page 15

"Don't come picking on me!" she cries. "Bad enough having to be wife, mother, washer-woman, servant and dustbin, for all the leftovers. I have enough housework, thank you, I don't want to do any homework."

IT WAS my turn to sound aghast. "You mean you actually don't know?" You should have seen her cry, or you'd never think such a performance possible.

After all that sound and fury our home experienced a peace and quiet it had never experienced before. Quite enjoyable after a fashion, when nobody talks to nobody though it may take a bit of getting used to initially.

I was just doing that when my wife disturbed the peace with, "Did you see today's papers?"

Of course I had, and I knew then that our union was saved. (Thinks, thanks to Professor, to paraphrase an old ad.) Reading him helped us realise there's more to marriage than being able to do the children's homework. Now I can say with confidence that minus into minus equals plus and if anybody is fool enough to ask why, it's because I say so.

Sorry, we. I think my wife joins me in that because I just heard her whisper, "Anything you say."



# IS IT TRUE?

## Sherlock Holmes

### \* On Coconut \* On Tourism

IS IT NOT TRUE that the comments in this column on the coconut muddle in the last issue has evoked widespread interest? That many readers have telephoned us to say that we have understated the case? That the mistakes made by the Government-Appointed Commissar to run the coconut business are enough to justify a Commission of Inquiry? That it was not 5000 tons of poonac which was sold to foreign buyers? That it was nearer 20,00 tons? That a mere 5000 tons would not have hit the cattle and poultry food supplies so badly? That the present crisis in poultry and cattle food was due to the unbelievably large quantities of poonac that had been exported? That no man who knew the elementary facts about the coconut industry would have ventured to sell anything like 20,000 tons of poonac even at the best of times where production of nuts was soaring to dizzy heights? That Sherlock Holmes has now put his sleuths on the job and more revelations about the coconut muddle will soon come to light in this column? That the belated Government ban on the export of coconut oil, copra and other coconut products is akin to the old

fable about shutting the stable doors after the horses had fled? That it would be interesting to find out who or what had induced the Commissar to make forward contracts for colossal quantities of coconut products?

IS IT NOT TRUE that a hysteria about the wonders of the tourist industry is being built up in this country? That if one took the speeches of Government spokesmen and the writings of apologists for the travel agencies who get unlimited columnage in our daily papers, Sri Lanka was on the verge of a tourist boom? That there is no doubt that certain travel agencies are bringing more and more packaged charters to swell the numbers who cross our customs barriers? That based on these statistics more and more five star hotels and other accommodation for low-budget visitors are being put up at suitable places? That the private trade has been given tax incentives and other inducements to invest in the tourist trade.

That Tribune has in the past raised questions about the economics of a tourist industry? That we have to import a major part

of the goods and facilities essential to attract the tourists? That what this country got was no more than a compradore commission on the whole business? That in this connection it is interesting to refer to a West German Ministry for Economic Co-operation study on the tourist business? That this investigation revealed that tourism was really a burden on the economy of developing countries? That Heinz G. Schmidt, a sociologist and author of the study, said that only 30 percent of the money spent by tourists in developing countries stayed in these countries?

That Tunisia is estimated to spend 30% of the money received from tourists on importing hotel equipment? That the study also showed that each job in the tourist industry required investments three times as high as a job in agriculture? That even a job in secondary industries needed only half the amount invested? That another drawback of the tourist industry was its sensitivity to all kinds of crisis? That the author stressed that developing countries relying on tourism became economically dependent on industrial nations?

That Sri Lanka is building its tourist hopes on the en masse package tour organised by travel agencies which are interlocked with business houses which think that their employees should have a holiday in the sun once in a lifetime? That these hopes may fade away like soap bubbles?