

Forward

THE VIEW FROM THE LEFT

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We Say.....

Defuse

Anyone with his ear to the ground knows that the situation to-day resembles in many ways the situation that prevailed just before July 1983.

Any doubts on this score should have been dispelled by the events of Thursday, March 22.

With tensions approaching bursting point once again, it is the clear duty of not only the government but of all who value the unity of Sri Lanka and its peoples to do everything possible to defuse the situation.

The appointment of a new Minister to head the "war against terrorism", and his appeal for peace in the south while he gets on with his job in the north, won't get us very far. Nor will the current attempt to give new teeth to the already sabre-toothed "Prevention of Terrorism" Act.

We have had enough practical experience that state terrorism does not eliminate but only helps to increase private terrorism. A political solution is the only way forward.

Unfortunately, the Round Table Conference, which provided a ray of hope, is deadlocked. One of the main reasons for this is the sharp and unconcealed struggle within the Cabinet, with the Prime Minister not merely assuming leadership of the racist diehards but seeking actively to sabotage implementation of even the meagre consensus that the RTC has produced so far.

If President Jayawardene still has any control of the government, he should put a stop to this. He should also see that the policy of provoking confrontation with India is called off. Otherwise he cannot hope to avoid responsibility for what is happening.

At the same time, the government should start, outside the RTC, to undertake a series of confidence-building measures which will give the Tamil and other minorities not only a greater sense of security but also the feeling that their admitted grievances are being attended to.

The sporadic killings of off-duty service personnel in the north, which has re-started, should be also condemned by Sinhalese and Tamils alike. These senseless killings do not contribute in any way to a solution of the problems of the Tamils and complicate matters for the whole country.

Unless these and other steps are taken now to defuse the situation, we may have another-and even worse-"Black July".



Revenge

The government will only make an ass of itself if it continues with its present attempts to take revenge from the Chief Justice for the latter's forthright speech.

Already the Standing Orders Committee of Parliament is, on instructions from on high, wrestling with the problem of how to hit back. The Special Branch of the CID has also been brought into the act.

There is talk of yet another "trial by Select Committee", to which two other Supreme Court Judges are already exposed.

It is not a question of propriety that is at issue. The real question is whether the Chief Justice is to be punished for speaking the truth and saying what everyone else also says. Such cheap revenge-especially when there are subjective factors involved-is impermissible.

P. M. ON THE RAMPAGE

Prime Minister R. Premadasa is on the rampage.

Donning the mantle of leader of the most chauvinist and reactionary circles in the government and the country, he has started an all-round public campaign to push the aims of these circles.

In doing so, he is snapping his fingers even at President Jayawardene, whom he treats as a has-been.

ITEM. He has taken on himself the leadership of the campaign to abolish political parties, brushing aside the President's protests that such a step would mean the end of democracy in Sri Lanka.

ITEM. He is openly campaigning against the consensus, of the Round Table Conference that grass-root elected bodies like VCs and TCs should be restored in a more viable form.

He is not prepared to give up in any way the non-elected Gramodaya Mandalayas, which he has made the main grass-roots political base of his bid for Presidential succession.

ITEM. He is openly trying to sabotage the consensus recommendation of the RTC that stateless persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka should become citizens.

He has indicated to Parliament that any such proposal should be put to a referendum, although the RTC made no such recommendation.

ITEM. He has emerged as the main leader of the line of confrontation with India, putting even Ministers Cyril Mathew, Gamini Dissanayake, and Anandatissa de Alwis in the shade.

His bellicose tirade against India's government in Parliament last week has soured the friendly relations between the two countries and given encouragement to those campaigning for a "defence treaty" with the US or at least an enhanced US political and military presence in Sri Lanka to "counter the danger of an Indian invasion".

SMARTING

Mr. Premadasa's new interest in fighting drug abuse has not stopped him from "blowing his top" in an anti-Indian, anti-Tamil "trip"

He is clearly annoyed that the votes of his Ministry have been cut to the bone, thereby pulling the rug from under his housing and "Village Re-awakening" campaigns and restricting severely the political patronage on which he has based his rise in the UNP and the government.

His inability to give errant UNP MPs the protection they expect has also weakened his position in the government parliamentary party.

And he is now hopping mad at Lalith Athulathmudali's appointment as Minister of Internal Security, thereby preventing him from issuing orders to the security services even when the President is out of the country.

His present rampage is, therefore, also intended to show that he is still a power in the government and the country, and to make it clear to the J. R. loyalists that he is a man to be reckoned with.

He also wants to show the reactionary and chauvinist forces that he is a better leader than any other, and to convince the Yankees that they should not put all their eggs in J. R.'s basket.

But whatever his intentions, what he is doing is dangerous and must be stopped.

Short Takes

● It is not only the US Navy that is interested in Trincomalee.

Now a World Bank team is here to evaluate a scheme for the "integrated development" of Trincomalee put up by the Ministry of Plan Implementation.

Insiders say it won't be long before Trincomalee becomes "FINCO-malee."

* * *

● In addition to the 5 UNP MPs now on the mat for alleged misconduct, 4 more are under the spotlight for undervaluing the cars they imported.

They include a Deputy Minister, 2 District Ministers, and an MP.



"Let 1984 be Amity Year"
—President

"India Today" Story

A Planned and Planted Provocation?

Opposition spokesmen in Parliament were on the right track, when they raised the question whether the sensational "India To-day" article regarding terrorist activities and training camps in India was a "plant".

For everything indicates that it is a pre-meditated provocation intended to serve several ends.

INDIA TO-DAY is one of 400 odd magazines and newspapers in India. Slickly produced and eminently readable, it is better known for sensationalism than hard fact. It is edited by a Punjabi, Arun Pourie, and the US advertising firm, J. Walter Thompson & Co., is said to have a major financial stake in it.

In July-August 1983, the Sri Lanka government was so annoyed with its reportage of events here that it banned its issue of 31 August 1983 from being imported or sold in Sri Lanka. Now it has placed orders for several thousands of copies, to be distributed abroad through our embassies. And our Prime Minister, claiming to speak "on behalf of the government", now says categorically that "India Today" is "one hundred per cent correct".

Minister Anandatissa de Alwis, briefing newsmen after the Cabinet meeting on March 22, told them "We have been trying to tell the world this and the world has not listened... Now the truth has been revealed by Indian journalism" (CDN, 22/4). The role of Minister de Alwis and his *eminence grise*, Douglas Liyanage, in raising the Soviet bogey in 1982, is still remembered. So, too, are his earlier connections with advertising firms like J. Walter Thompson's.

In fact, the question whether the "India Today" article was

ghost-written in Sri Lanka and planted or whether its material was supplied from this country, is being seriously discussed in political and journalistic circles.

This time Anandatissa de Alwis speaks of terrorists being "trained in India to conquer our island" (ibid), while the Prime Minister exploded:-

"India cannot bully this small country in this manner. We have told India about the terrorist camps on Indian soil. It is up to the Indian government to take suitable action to stop such things. We cannot tolerate this situation any longer. We are prepared to face any challenge that may be thrown at us. This nonsense must stop. We will not allow anyone to bully us". (ISLAND, 23/4).

Moderate

However, certain other Ministers took a more moderate line.

Notable among them were Foreign Minister Hameed and Trade Minister Athulathmudali, both closely associated with President Jayawardene.

They said that the government had bought the article to the notice of India's government, together with certain other information gained through its own sources, and asked that it be investigated and, if possible, jointly.

Mr. Premadasa accused the Leader of the Opposition and other Opposition MPs of talking like "babies" on the matter.

He claimed that the government's own investigators had supplied them with details of terrorist training in India, including the names and addresses of the places.

This drew from the Leader of the Opposition the remark

that not much credibility or capacity could be attributed to these investigators, who had signally failed to detect the whereabouts of two absconding former Presidential candidates, or to make any real progress in their investigations into terrorist activities in Sri Lanka itself!

Brush-off

The government just brushed off the categorical and specific denials of the "India Today" story from responsible sources.

by Our Political Correspondent

India's High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, Shri S. J. S. Chhatwal, told the DAILY NEWS (22/4): "The whole story has no basis whatsoever. It is factually absolutely incorrect". He said he had checked with the authorities in both New Delhi and Madras before making the statement.

All India Radio on March 22nd broadcast an official denial of the story by the Indian Government. A spokesman of India's External Affairs Department also denied any knowledge of terrorist training camps in India. (CDN, 23/4)

PLO Ambassador in Sri Lanka, Dr. Abdul Rahman, also denied that the PLO had given military training to the "terrorists", as alleged in the article. The only Sri Lankans who had served with the PLO were two volunteer nurses who had worked at a Palestinian hospital. As to the reported meeting between Umma Maheswaran and George Habash, he said: "George Habash has no official status with the PLO. If Maheswaran met him—so what?" (CDN, 22/4)

Mr. Yogeswaran, former TULF MP for Jaffna, whom the author of the article alleges he interviewed in Madras, also denied having given any interview to "India To-day."

Internal

Apart from these categorical denials, the internal evidence of the article itself is highly contradictory and suspect.

Although the author, Shekar Gupta, writes as though he had personally witnessed the terrorists being trained in certain areas of South India (which he names) a close study of the article reveals that the nearest he got to the action was to visit a so-called "Tamil Information Centre" at (No. 9, Narayanan Street, Madras, where the former editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW, S. Sivanayagam, leads a team of over a dozen men and women, mainly Tamil expatriates, "manning desks and typewriters churning out publicity material for distribution throughout the world".

Mr. Sivanayagam claimed to do propaganda for all the "terrorist" groups, irrespective of their sharp differences with each other.

Shekar Gupta seems to have been served with a whole host of boasts and claims, which he was glib enough to accept as facts.

The aim of such stories is to project the "terrorists" as freedom-fighters and heroic guerrillas.

Such myths and fantasies are common enough among a section of the middle class supporters of the Eelam cause, who like to romanticise while keeping far away from the action.

But can anyone believe that serious clandestine activists, as the leaders of many of the youth groups undoubtedly are, would talk freely to an unknown newspaperman about the places where they train illegally, the arms they possess and expect to receive, who is helping and financing them, the exact number of persons they have under armed training, their tactics and strategy, etc?

Mind you, these are people who are charged with even executing those whom they suspect of giving information to the authorities about themselves and their activities!

It is noteworthy that, while the Sri Lanka authorities claim to have identified three camps, INDIA TODAY speaks of "dozens" set up by Tamil insurgents deep inside Tamilnadu.

Or again, the article speaks of 2,000 trained rebels "armed with Kalashnikov and G-3 rifles", who are "ready for battle" and "keyed up to strike". Another 2000 to 3000 fighters have been trained and only await arms to be sent to them from the "Soviet backed" PLO and guerilla fighters in Zimbabwe.

Comparing this with "the Sri Lanka Army's strength of a meagre 11,000", INDIA TODAY concludes that "only super power intervention could

prevent them from taking Eelam."

It is not difficult to imagine which "super-power" is being suggested as the saviour of Sri Lanka and the Sinhalese!

INDIA TODAY also quotes Dr. A. S. Balasingham, who is described as the "theoretician" of the Liberation Tigers. Dr. Balasingham calculates that 6,000 armed "Tigers" will be enough to vanquish the Sri Lanka army if conditions can be created in the Sinhalese south to pin down a section of the army there. What INDIA TODAY does not mention is that it did not meet Dr. Balasingham but only quotes from a book published by him.

Why?

The question arises: why has such an article, whose clear intention is to provoke a confrontation between India and Sri Lanka, been published at this moment, and played up here in such a major way?

US attempts to use communal forces to destabilise the Indira Gandhi government are now far advanced in many parts of India, including the Punjab, from which the editor of India Today hails.

Provoking confrontation between Sri Lanka and India in this election year, and especially fanning communal fires in Tamilnad and other parts of South India, will be very much in the interests of the US and the reactionary Indian forces that it wants to put back in power.

From the Sri Lanka angle, the story helps to strengthen feelings among the Sinhalese people that they can only be saved by "super-power" (i. e. US) intervention. Published on the eve of President Jayawardene's official visit to the USA, the article points out that the only thing that can be traded for US support is Trincomalee.

It is also worth noting that the "India Today" article has appeared just when the government is to decide on whom to award the Trincomalee "oil tank farm" tender.

In this connections, Minister Athulathmudali, after mentioning that an Indian government institution had also tendered, told Parliament (SUN, 23/84):

"With the recent matters emanating from South India, can the Sri Lanka government go into agreements with the government of India?"

With important government figures now actively engaged in using the article to whip up anti-Indian passions, the situation has become tense and dangerous.

Some may be doing so to create a situation to justify an enhanced US military presence in Sri Lanka. Others may be doing so in order to sabotage implementation of the RTC recommendation to grant citizenship to stateless persons of Indian origin. Still others may be pursuing their long-term plans in regard to political succession. But what they are doing is high dangerous and must be stopped.

Freedom for "Black" Money

The issue of "certificates of deposit" (CDs) by commercial banks, which was introduced in 1980, was suddenly stopped on 2. 2. 1984 by order of the Minister of Finance.

The "CDs" were a principal device through which the government hoped to rope in around Rs. 1 billion of "black" money that it estimated was in circulation due to avoidance and evasion of income and other taxes.

Explaining the reason for stopping the issue of CDs, the Minister of Finance said that the commercial banks had Rs. 600 million of money issued against CDs deposited with them, and any more would make their liquidity problem unmanageable.

However, due to the protests of the foreign commercial banks, the order was withdrawn within a few days. Commercial banks were authorised to accept black money deposited against CDs to a limit of Rs. 1,100 million.

Under the CD system a person can deposit money with a commercial bank without disclosing his name or giving any other clue as to his identity.

He receives a CD, which anyone can cash on presentation to the bank and without record.

It is a foolproof scheme of preventing the Income Tax authorities from getting to know who has money on which he should pay taxes. This was admitted at a recent seminar of Chartered Accountants by the Commissioner of Island Revenue (Investigations) Mr. H. L. Mitrasena.

Unlike anonymous accounts in other countries (e.g. Switzerland) this anonymity is not restricted to non-nationals. CD is available to both nationals and non-nationals of Sri Lanka.

The CD system allows persons to avoid telling the

Income Tax authorities where and how they obtained the money they bank. The interest on their deposits is also not revealed to these authorities.

Under the open economy, the present government devised several other means through which the rich could legally avoid paying taxes. Tax-free investments, rebates, tax-reliefs, lump sum depreciation, and other methods are some of them. In addition to these "legal" means of tax evasion and avoidance, illegal methods were made easier by administrative orders to the Income Tax authorities to stop tax raids on the offices and homes of the rich.

In some other countries where efforts are made to attract black money back into the banking system, governments insist that these monies should only be re-lent by the banks to finance development projects approved by government. But no such rule has been made in Sri Lanka.

Can R. T. C. Stalemate be Broken?

After resuming in plenary session on March 20, the Round Table Conference took only a few minutes to endorse the joint report of its two Committees and, on President Jayawardene's suggestion, to adjourn for six weeks and meet again on May 9.

Even the TULF, which recorded its objection, did so in a strictly formal manner. It did not press its point and agreed to be present on May 9, when the RTC resumes.

The report of the joint Committees has produced what is claimed to be a "consensus" on two matters only. Neither of them, incidentally, were originally subjects before the conference.

"Stateless"

For a variety of often conflicting reasons, nearly all all delegations agreed that "statelessness" among persons of Indian origin resident in Sri Lanka should be ended and that they should be admitted to citizenship of Sri Lanka. Those that did not do so positively (such as the UNP) at least did not object.

The recommendation has, therefore, been adopted. The government's spokesman, Minister Lalith Athulathmudali, has said that the reason for the long adjournment is the need for the government to prepare legislation to give effect to this recommendation. But can the Legal Draftsman's department be so depleted or so slow as to need so long to draft what is a not a very complicated amendment to the Citizenship Acts?

Although the "Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha", as well as other organisations of the Buddhist monks—not to speak of the Mahanayake Theros of Malwatte and Asgiriya—have given their imprimatur to the proposal, it is still not sure whether and, if so, in what form any new legislation will actually see the light of day.

The fact that President Jayawardene had assured the Indian Government (vide the statement of India's Foreign Minister to the Lok Sabha) that he would solve the "stateless" problems in the next few months is no guarantee.

For he has still been unable—or unwilling—to give effect to the proposals in Annexure C that is before the RTC, even though he was actively involved with the Indian Government, its representative Mr. G. Parthasarthy, the TULF leaders and Mr. S. Thondaman in hammering out this compromise in India.

Groundswell

Despite the consensus at the RTC, a groundswell opposition to giving the stateless citizenship has started.

A section of the SLFP has been trying to persuade the monks to change their mind. The Ven. Walpola Rahula, the self-appointed spokesman for the "Supreme Council of Maha Sangha", was also severely heckled by some young monks at a recent meeting and asked

who authorised him or his fellow delegates to speak in the name of the Maha Sangha.

A section of the government is itself not happy about this development. This may be one reason why the CWC and Minister Thondaman have begun to take a tough line and threaten a plantation strike in April.

Prime Minister Premadasa's apparently unauthorised assurance to Parliament that the "stateless" will only be given citizenship if this is approved

return the formula handed to them by the plenary meeting, namely to recommend that the "causes of ethnic violence and all forms of terrorism in all parts of the country" should be eliminated!

Main

No one, however, seems to be certain how to break the deadlock and stalemate on the main question before the RTC.

It had been agreed to try to solve the problems of the Tamils through the process

There is also no consensus on many important powers that can be devolved—notably, internal security (police) and land alienation in national irrigation schemes falling within the sub-national unit.

Unable to break the stalemate, largely due to the strong opposition from within his own party and government, and also uncertain about how the SLFP will react, President Jayawardene seems to have decided to play for time.

He apparently hopes that he can persuade the TULF and the Tamil organisations to lower their demand and agree to district-level sub-units, as the TULF did earlier.

This is probably why the Maha Sangha delegation has been holding separate discussions with the TULF, the Tamil Congress and the other Tamil organisation.

It is also probably why there is talk of a Maha Sangha delegation to India to ask the Indian authorities to "persuade" the TULF leaders to lower their sights.

The gesture on the stateless issue is seen as part of this strategy. But chances of success seem to be remote.

Insiders say that, despite some of its drum-beating in Tamilnad, the TULF leadership has adopted a conciliatory and co-operative line at the conference itself.

But even if they may be prepared to lower their sights and accept half a loaf instead of one, it is doubtful if they are still powerful enough to sell this to the mass of of Tamils in the North and the East, especially if the militant youth take a different line, as they may be expected to do.

So the RTC goes round and round the table. It is, of course, better that people should keep talking rather than killing each other. But the high expectations that the RTC engendered at the start seem to be evaporating, both here and in India, and unless a breakthrough is made soon what is now impatience and scepticism may turn into something worse.

by Our Special Correspondent

by a referendum is a further sign of opposition within the UNP.

Grassroots

The other question on which "consensus" was reached—other than the UNP—was the need to restore elected local government bodies at sub-District Council levels.

Every delegation other than the UNP had come out strongly in favour of restoring the grass-roots democracy that had functioned earlier through the Village Councils and Town Councils, now abolished.

Prime Minister Premadasa has been the strongest opponent of such a move, fearing that this would supplant the present non-elected Gramodaya Mandalayas, which he has sedulously built up into a private political army.

But even in the UNP itself there seem to be forces who agree that elected grass-roots local bodies should be restored. So a temporary compromise seems to have been worked out within the UNP whereby there can be elected sub-district bodies at the level of AGA's divisions.

Whether anything more than this will eventually emerge, despite the fact that every other delegation, including all the religious ones, are strongly for the restoration of Village Councils and Town Councils in a somewhat more viable form than earlier, is a matter of doubt.

Prime Minister Premadasa has taken his fight into the open and a recent issue of the DAILY NEWS carried on its front page his slashing attack on those who proposed the restoration of the grassroots elected bodies, singling out the CPSL and the LSSP, who had fought hard on this matter. The method of election to these bodies is also in dispute.

Terrorism

Although the UNP, the Maha Sangha delegations and the delegations of the "Sinhala" organisations had loudly proclaimed that the eradication of terrorism should be the No. 1 issue before the RTC, the committees seem to have paid little or no attention to this matter.

All they have done is to repeat, word for word, and to

of the devolution of power to sub-national units.

But the Maha Sangha, the "Sinhala" organisations, the UNP and (apparently) the boycotting SLFP and MEP insist that these sub-national units should not be higher than DISTRICT COUNCILS, while others insist that there should be either REGIONAL COUNCILS or PROVINCIAL COUNCILS.

TRINCO OIL TANK PROPOSALS BEFORE PRESIDENT

A report on the proposed lease of nearly 100 oil tanks and 676 acres around Trincomalee for an "oil tank farm" has been submitted to the President by Foreign Minister A. C. S. Hameed.

This is anticipation of the President's visit to the USA in the middle of this year.

The proposed lease has been the subject of both international and domestic controversy.

Although both the US and Sri Lankan governments have half-heartedly denied that there is any intention to set up a "naval base" at Trincomalee, charges that the so-called "oil tank farm" deal is only a cover for granting the US Sixth Fleet oil and other supply facilities at Trincomalee persist.

The original attempt to do so through leasing these oil tanks to the US firm, COASTAL CORPORATION, was first exposed in ATHTHA and FORWARD. It later became an international scandal.

Origin

In October 1981 the government decided to lease these oil tanks to COASTAL CORPORATION without calling for tenders. In return the government was to receive 35,000 US dollars a year.

In addition, both the company and the US administration began to pressurise the government to allow representatives of the US Navy to be stationed at Trincomalee, on the grounds that this navy would be the biggest customer for the oil stored in these tanks.

This effort was aborted as a result of widespread agitation in Sri Lanka and neighbouring countries, especially India. A number of questions were raised in Parliament.

These questions centred around how the government had decided to lease these oil tanks to a comparatively unknown oil company without calling for tenders. The connections between the company and the US Defence Department were also raised.

Dubious

Subsequent inquiries revealed that this company's capacity and financial reputation were extremely dubious.

It has lost nearly 98 million US dollars in that year alone.

Senior officials of the company confessed in court to having violated energy laws of the USA, and the Chairman and senior Vice-Chairman of the company had each been fined 40,000 dollars for such violations by the US District Court at Houston.

Everything, in fact, pointed to an US company, in difficulties with the US administration and heavily pressed financially, agreeing to act as a dummy for the US Navy.

Dropped

In the face of this adverse publicity, the government backed away from this deal.

In April 1982, it decided to call for "world-wide" tenders, through the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation.

Tenders were received from the following:

- 1 Pacific Resources Inc. (Hawai-based US firm)
- 2 Oil Tanking (West Germany)
- 3 Van Omeran (Holland)
- 4 Trafigura (Switzerland)
- 5 Unitak (British)
- 6 Indian Oil Corporation (India)
- 7 Coastal Corporation (USA)

Showing clearly that the decision will be taken on POLITICAL and not on purely commercial grounds, the Cabinet appointed a high-level committee of senior officials to process the tenders received and advise it.

The committee's chairman was Cabinet Secretary, Mr. G. V. P. Samarasinghe. The other members were Finance Ministry Secretary, Dr. W. M. Tillekeratne; Foreign Ministry Secretary Mr. W. T. Jayasinghe; Industries Ministry Secretary Mr. Justin Dias; Petroleum Corporation Chairman Mr. Daham Wimalasena; and Trade and Shipping Ministry Secretary Mr. Lakshman de Mel.

The committee was asked to recommend to which tenderer a 25 year lease of the Trincomalee oil tank farm should be awarded.

The two-year delay in taking a decision is due to a combination of political and economic factors

From the strictly commercial point of view, it is learnt that the Indian tender is the most favourable.

But the heavy political lobbying is for the award to be given to the US firm Pacific Resources Inc. Coastal Corporation is considered to be too compromised to be favoured again.

Now, of the eve of the President's departure to the USA, the matter has been put up to him for political decision.

It is learnt that one of the main purposes of the present anti-Indian campaign (including the wide publicity given to the provocative "India Today" story) is to tip the balance in favour of the US firm.

L. S. S. P. - C. P. S. L. - M. E. P. - S. L. M. P.

United May Day

Four political parties—the LSSP, the CPSL, the MEP and the SLMP—have decided to hold a joint May Day demonstrations and rally.

They appeal to other organisations that share and support the aims of their United May Day celebrations to join them in this effort.

Their united statement reads:-

"The 'open economy' of the present UNP government has produced a most profound and dangerous crisis.

"This crisis is not merely economic and financial. It affects the state structure and political system itself. It has aggravated the crisis in inter-community relations that has developed under UNP rule. It threatens democratic processes and institutions that have evolved over the past half century.

Opposite

"In less than seven years all the government's boasts and promises have turned into their opposite.

"Those who promised continuous economic development have now frozen future development activity. They are busily cutting down even the development projects started earlier.

"Those who promised to lower the prices of foodstuffs and other essential goods now admit that these prices have increased several times and are still rising!

"Those who promised more jobs dismissed over a lakh of workers in July 1980 for striking for higher wages. They are now laying off thousands more in the name of 'financial discipline'.

"Those who spoke lyrically about the peasants had no difficulty in withdrawing the fertilizer subsidy and raising irrigation rates.

"Those who promised to work for the poor and underprivileged have only helped a handful to become millionaires, while the vast majority find it difficult to make ends meet, keep out of debt, or feed and clothe their children.

"Those who promised to uphold the freedom of the press have monopolised and misused the mass media for their own purposes, while closing down and attacking newspapers and journals critical of the government.

Elections

"Those who promised in 1977 that general elections would not be put off even by a single day have had no difficulty in putting them off until the end of the 1980s through a spurious 'referendum'. They have devalued the vote through a fraudulent 'proportional representation' system and by creating a 'chit' Parliament, by virtually abolishing by-elections, and by destroying grass-root democratic bodies like the Village and Town Councils.

"Those who promised to do away with the need to rule through emergency powers have resorted to such powers during most of their term of office. They have also made emergency powers part of the ordinary law of the land.

"Those who promised to improve inter-community relations have presided over three of the most devastating examples of ethnic violence in recent times.

Those who spoke about ushering in a 'dharma' society have created a situation where bribery and corruption flourish, where social morality is eroded, and where national cultures are debased.

"Law and Order"

"Those who promised to uphold 'law and order' now concede that lawlessness and violent crimes have swollen to such proportions that even the elementary security and protection to which every citizen is entitled cannot be guaranteed.

"Those who promised to defend and extend democracy have subjected democratic and trade union rights, as well as civil and fundamental rights, to constant and severe attack. The private hooligan armies of important governmental personalities threaten and assault trade unionists, and even the clergy, distinguished academics and judges. Such private armies are now to be legalised under the name of 'Home Guards'.

"In the past seven years, the government has moved steadily from authoritarian to more openly dictatorial and terroristic forms of rule. The economic bankruptcy and social

chaos it has created has provided an opportunity for important circles of the ruling class to agitate for the abolition of political parties as a further step in their drive for a more fascistic dictatorship or for military rule.

External Threat

"The government's almost total dependence on the imperialist powers in its desperate search for financial aid threatens to compromise the traditional non-aligned policy of this country in external affairs.

In the United Nations and the non-aligned movement, Sri Lanka is coming to be viewed with suspicion and mistrust and regarded as a mere appendage of imperialist policy.

"In addition to giving the transnational corporations and foreign banks an open field in Sri Lanka, the government is allowing the imperialists, especially the US imperialists, to expand their political and military presence in this country.

The 'Voice of America' has already been given new facilities to expand its propaganda war against our neighbours and other friendly countries and to augment US naval communications in the Indian Ocean. The US Peace Corps and Asia Foundation, which were earlier expelled for subversive activities, have been allowed to return.

"The government's attempts to give the United States naval facilities at Trincomalee have already provoked international and domestic concern. A stream of high-level representatives of the US Departments of State and Defence are now visiting Sri Lanka in an attempt to obtain maximum concessions before President Jayawardene's visit to the USA in mid-1984.

"These efforts to involve Sri Lanka in the global and regional war strategies of US imperialism are a real threat to our people. US imperialism is already recklessly pushing the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust. Its military and nuclear build-up in the Indian Ocean makes a mockery of the wish of the United Nations and the non-aligned movement that this ocean should be a zone of peace. This has brought to our doorstep the danger of involvement in nuclear war.

Four Parties

"The UNP government has been able to get away with all this owing to the disunity that prevails among its opponents.

"It has further fostered this disunity by rudely interfering in the internal affairs of some Opposition parties, often with the connivance and assistance of right-wing forces within these parties.

"Unfortunately the Left and progressive forces, who constitute the uncompromising opponents of the UNP and its policies, have not been able to close their ranks up till now and provide united leadership to the evergrowing anti-UNP opinion in the country.

Considering all this, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Communist Party of Sri Lanka, the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, and the Sri Lanka Mahajana Paksaya have decided to celebrate May Day 1984 unitedly.

"The main themes of our united MAY DAY demonstration and rally will be:-

1. Defend the living standards and vital interests of the working people against the disastrous consequences of the government's 'open economy' policies.

Increase wages and salaries to meet the rise in living costs!

Grant the other demands of the trade unions!

Restore the fertiliser subsidy and cancel the increased irrigation rates imposed on the peasantry!

Reduce the prices of essential fares, postage, medicines, and children!

Re-instate with full rights strikers who have still no

Compensate and find work places were destroyed in the or who were otherwise innoc

Stop retrenchment and lay-off the unemployed!

Stop the attacks on health, education services!

Equal pay for equal work! Stop the discrimination of female workers in who seek employment abroa

Withdraw the unjust 'rehab

2. Defend democratic rights and processes against the government to erode or destroy them.

Lift the ban on the JVP and detainees! End the prolon

Repeal anti-democratic and regulations! Wind up pri

discontinue the 'Home C rights, homes, jobs and political revenge!

Restore civilian authority all parts of the country! political parties!

Hold the general elections!

3. Uphold Sri Lanka's sovereignty and Independence! Oppose attempts to barter them for crippling loans from imperialist states!

Reject the IMF and World economic development and welfare measures!

Stop closing down public co ring them to private mana

Stop the servile and shameful

4. Resist US imperialism! Stop Sri Lanka in its global strategies!

Repudiate the agreements the Peace Corps, and Asia F subversive imperialist agenc

No facilities for the US na enforce the prohibition on a nuclear weapons entering or airfields! Stop provoca authority against friendly c

Strengthen the fight to make peace! Hold the UN Cor Colombo without further dismantle Diego Garcia an bases in this ocean!

Express solidarity with all for peace, for nuclear an national and social liberation against imperialism, neo-co other forms of exploitation

In order to strengthen the above-mentioned objectives, the Rally will emphasise the need for class unity, the unity of all communities, and co-operation between communities.

We invite other organisations to share and support these aims to and rally on MAY DAY 1984

for
L. S. S. P.

Colvin R. de Silva
Bernard Soysa

for
M. E. P.

Dinesh Gunewardena
Anthony Perera

P. Call

essential foodstuffs, bus and train medicines, and equipment for school-

rights the thousands of July 1980 still not been re-employed!

work for employees whose work-oyed in the July 1983 disturbances wise innocent victims of the events! and lay-offs! Work or relief for

health, education and social welfare

work! Stop the shameful exploita-workers in the Free Trade Zone or sent abroad!

st "rehabilitation" and water taxes!

atic rights, institutions and the government's attempts to them.

JVP and NSSP! Release political he prolonged state of emergency!

atic and anti-trade union laws and d up private hooligan armies and Home Guards"! Restore the lost os and belongings of victims of

thority and elected institutions in ountry! Rebuff agitation to abolish

ections!

ka's sovereignty and National Oppose the government's er them away for still more from foreign banks and ,!

nd World Bank demand to freeze ment and to cut back social services ures!

public corporations! Stop transfer-te management or ownership!

shameful devaluation of the rupee!

rialism's attempts to involve its global and regional war

ements with the Voice of America, d Asia Foundation! Wind up other t agencies!

US navy at Trincomalee! Strictly on on any vessel or aircraft carrying atering or using Sri Lanka's ports provocative utterance by those in endly countries!

o make the Indian Ocean a zone of N Conference on the IOPZ in urther delay! Support the fight to rcia and similar foreign offensive

with all peoples and states fighting ear and general disarmament, for iberation throughout the world, and neo-colonialism and capitalist and itation;

rengthen the fight for the ectives, our United May Day the need to promote working of all prograssive forces, and -operation among different

isations of the working people who ims to join our united demonstration Y 1984.

for
C. P. S. L.

Pieter Keuneman
K. P. Silva

for
S. L. M. P.

dena T. B. Illangaratne
Vijaya Kumaranatunga

PENTAGON's NEW ROLE FOR ASEAN

Foreign Minister A. C. S. Hameed recently told Parliament that the government has not withdrawn its application to join ASEAN. He also said that the application was not rejected. He dodged a follow-up question from Mr. Lakshman Jayakody MP whether the government was now seeking "observer" status in this body.

All this indicates that, despite the snub it has received from ASEAN, the government has not abandoned the attempt to link up in some way with this alliance.

This move, which has been strongly condemned by all Opposition parties and by wider circles concerned with defending Sri Lanka's traditional non-aligned policies in external affairs, comes at a time when the Pentagon is pushing to turn ASEAN, at present mainly an economic and cultural alliance, more and more into a military sub-bloc of Washington.

VISITORS

High level representatives of the US Defence and State Department are now visiting the ASEAN countries with a similar regularity and succession as they have been visiting Sri Lanka.

Among the most recent are Admiral S. R. FOLEY, Commander of the US Pacific Fleet, General JEROME O'MALLEY, Commander of the US Air Force in the Pacific, and Admiral WILLIAM CROWE, Commander of the US Fleet in the Indian Ocean.

Both General O'Malley and Admiral Foley visited Thailand recently. They discussed with

Thai brasshats how the US could give Thailand military assistance to repel external "communist invasion". This assistance is said to include, among other modern armaments, a squadron of the latest nuclear-capable F-16 fighter-bombers with a range exceeding 1,000 km.

Admiral Crowe, who also recently visited Singapore and other ASEAN states, said that the Pentagon is actively working out plans for deploying Cruise missiles and chemical weapons in the ASEAN countries.

EXERCISES

Washington has already recommended the holding of joint military exercises by the six ASEAN states as a major step forward along the way of, first, turning ASEAN into a kind of "second echelon" of the US armed forces in the Asian-Pacific region, and then to link them, under the aegis of the US, with other countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand which the US has already drawn into its strategic set-up in this region.

An immediate aim of Washington is to push ASEAN into a political and military confrontation with the socialist countries of Indo-China, especially Vietnam, and frighten them with the bogey of a threat of "Soviet expansion" in the region.

For this purpose, Washington used the so-called "Kampuchean problem" and encourages POL POT gangs, now in Thailand, to use the territory of this state to attack the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

But not all ASEAN countries are falling for this trap.

Commander of Indonesia's armed forces, General BENNY MURDANI, has said publicly that "Vietnam is no threat to South East Asia" and that the entry of Vietnamese troops into Kampuchea at the request of Kampuchean patriots fighting the genocidal POL POT gangs was not the result of "territorial ambition" but rather "a question of survival".

Meanwhile, high-ranking statesmen from Vietnam have

been visiting several ASEAN states, as well as other countries of the region, to impress on them that Vietnam is not seeking confrontation with the ASEAN states and is ever ready to solve any outstanding differences with them through the processes of peaceful discussion.

Many ASEAN countries are also suspicious of the role played by China in trying to assist the US to push them into an anti-Vietnam confrontation.

Security Threat

The question whether the new agreement that the government of Sri Lanka has concluded with the Voice of America is a threat to the security of India was raised in India's LOK SABHA on May 15.

Mr. Braj Mohan Monhantry MP, who raised the issue, was emphatic that it was.

Several other Indian MPs, who intervened in the debate, agreed.

Mr. K. K. Tawari MP was of the view that the VOA was blatantly carrying on subversive propaganda against India from Sri Lanka.

External Affairs Minister P. V. Narasinha Rao said that India's government was examining a copy of the new agreement which had been supplied by the government of Sri Lanka (N. B. It has still not been tabled in Sri Lanka's Parliament, although promised) and "would duly take up the disagreeable points with the Sri Lanka government". (ISLAND, 19/3)

Under the new agreement, the Minister added, VOA will have six powerful transmitters—four of 500 KW each, and two of 250 KW each.

"With this power, broadcasts can be beamed to the whole of Asia", he said.

U. S. Hand Behind Sikh Separatists

More and more evidence is accumulating of US involvement in the religious and communal clashes, sabotage on the railways, bomb explosions and burning of buses in India's north-western states of Punjab and Haryana.

The latest round of these communal clashes in February 1984 were timed to disrupt the political talks in New Delhi between the Indira Gandhi government and the Akali Dal and other Sikh political parties in order to

normalise the troubled situation in Punjab over the past one and a half years.

Political circles in India see these disturbances in the Punjab and Haryana as part and parcel of a major plan, master-minded by the CIA, to exploit unresolved problems of the Sikhs and minority nationalities in other parts of India.

They are intended to destabilise the situation in India, whose independent political course the US does not like, and to help the most reactionary

forces of that country at a time when general elections are drawing near.

The responsibility for the violence in Punjab and Haryana lies with right-extremist religious and communal organisations, especially the banned DAL KHALSA, which unites the Punjab separatists and the religious fanatics and seeks to separate Punjab from India and establish a so-called "independent Sikh state of Khalistan" there.

The bosses of DAL KHALSA and the other reactionary separatist Sikh circles now reside in and operate from the USA, which, incidentally, was the first to put forward the idea of an "independent" Khalistan.

The CIA has provided the money to establish so-called "Khalistan consulates", in New York, Houston, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto. These "consulates" issue currency, postage stamps and passports in the name of the non-existent "Khalistan" state, which continues to function on US and Canadian soil. All this is intended to give a fake lawful state existence to Sikh extremism.

The self-styled "President" of the non-existent Sikh state, SINGH JAGJIT CHAUKHAN, who lost his Indian passport for subversion, lives and operates in the US, where he is the welcome

guest of some US politicians. He has broad contacts with US Senators and was even received by President Reagan.

Many important persons in the US head a lobby to demand that the "Khalistan fighters" should be given observer status at the United Nations and be treated as a 'national liberation movement'.

INFILTRATE

Militants of the underground DAL KHALSA have been instructed to infiltrate the AKALI DAL political party, which advocates greater Sikh autonomy within a united India, and block the efforts of a moderate and patriotic wing within this party to work out a settlement on these lines.

It is not only the US which is aiding the Sikh separatists. Indian newspapers have published instructions sent from London to the DAL KHALSA underground to intensify violence and subversion. Weapons, money and foreign-trained saboteurs are also being sent in from Pakistan.

The subversion in Punjab and Haryana had been preceded by subversion elsewhere in India and in some other countries of the region.

The Congress (I) governments' mishandling of the situation has also helped the reactionary separatist forces to make headway.

Reagan Expands Rapid Deployment Force

The Reagan administration has started to increase the US Rapid Deployment Force from its present strength of 230,000 troops.

Two new divisions of the RDF will be set up, Pentagon officials recently told the press.

The first will be ready in summer 1984 and the second at the end of the year, or early in 1985.

The purpose for these new divisions is to give the US government 'new options for rapid intervention' in countries and regions far from the shores of the USA.

Explaining the reasons for augmenting the RDF, Pentagon officials say that it could be ready for combat in an area—"say in Asia"—in four days as opposed to the 12 days needed for a normal force to be deployed.

Special weapons and equipment ensuring "high mobility and successful operation in infra-structurally less developed regions" are also to be manufactured.

The new forces are clearly intended to improve the US, capacity to intervene rapidly in Third World countries where the US may consider that its "vital" or "strategic" interests are endangered.

The Chief Justice's Block-Buster

Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon's frank and down-to-earth speech to a recent prize-giving ceremony in Colombo has very rightly become the talk of the town.

Nearly everything he said is true and widely known. But few thought that they would ever hear such sentiments expressed so forcefully by a person of such eminence.

I can't agree with his views on the basic causes of the July 1983 riots. They seem to me to be not merely oversimplistic but tending to give a new twist to the notion that they were a "spontaneous" outburst by a section of the Sinhalese people. In his view, the riots were not specifically "ethnic" or "anti-Tamil" but because "resentment was building up not only against terrorists but against the establishment itself"—and "especially one man in the establishment"—at the failure to take action to put down terrorism.

There is no doubt that such resentment was a contributory factor. But Chief Justice Samarakoon seems to overlook the highly organised nature of the July 1983 violence, the political support and direction it received from high personalities in the "establishment" itself, and the role played in the violence by the "goonda" organisations associated with certain UNP bigwigs.

Apart from this drawback, the rest of his speech was very much to the point.

He is 100 per cent correct when he says: "The Job Bank is a fraud on the youth of this country". Equally so when he says bluntly: "The cost of living to-day is not merely rising but is galloping. Galloping like a horse that has thrown its rider. And such a horse with no rider is out of control. That is what is happening to-day".

The examples he gives to prove these two conclusions are based on his own factual experience and therefore very striking.

As a government employee, I am especially indebted to him for bringing out so forcibly the dire straits in which the lower and middle rungs of the public service exist to-day, as well as for pointing out that it is the miserable wages and salaries they receive that is driving several of them to bribery and theft.

What was especially memorable was his comment on President Jayawardene's public defence of having recently increased his own salary by saying that what he received was a pauper's salary. After referring to the many "perks" that the President receives in addition to his enhanced salary, the Chief Justice made the laconic observation that the people of this country are "paying a hell of a lot of money to keep him in poverty".

So I wish to say to Chief Justice Samarakoon: "Thank

you, sir, for thinking about and speaking up for people like us".

A. S. Nanayakkara
Galle.

Press Freedom

Speaking at Udugampola last week, President Jayawardene said that "Even though earlier governments took over newspapers, this government would not do so" (SUN, 17/3).

Has he forgotten that his government took over the newspapers of the Times of Ceylon Ltd.?

He also said: "I will not gag the press" (ISLAND, 17/3).

Has he forgotten the bans he imposed on ATHTHA (several times) and DINAKARA, as well as on several journals like FORWARD, SATURDAY REVIEW, SUTHANTIRAN etc?

If he has forgotten, we haven't.

Asoka Pitigedera
Polonnaruwa.

Confidence

No one can say just now what the outcome of the Round Table Conference will be.

But while the RTC tries to work out a settlement, the government cannot wash its hands of the need to take steps, outside the Conference, to lessen ethnic tensions and to make a more lasting settlement of ethnic differences easier to obtain.

This is all the more necessary because no less a person than President Jayawardene has said that, even if the RTC works out a settlement of the "Tamil problem", it may not help to eradicate what he calls "terrorism" in the North and East.

It should also be noted, incidentally, that Prime Minister Premadasa says that Sri Lanka must prepare for a war—but he does not say who the enemy is. But he does say that South India is responsible for the "ethnic troubles" in Sri Lanka.

All this underlines the need for confidence-restoring measures NOW and outside the conference, unless the whole exercise of the RTC is to prove futile.

One of the first of such measures is for President Jayawardene to ensure that neither his Ministers nor his MPs indulge in irresponsible or provocative public statements.

Secondly, making Tamil a national language should not be confined to a clause in the Constitution, but should be translated into life.

Thirdly, the problems of the "displaced" Tamils must be satisfactorily solved.

Fourthly, The practice of appointing non-Tamils to administer basically Tamil areas should be discontinued.

Fifthly, harassment of the Tamils in the north and east, most of whom have nothing to do with what the government calls "terroristic activities", should cease, while Tamils in the south should be given convincing guarantees that they will not be insulted, harassed or attacked.

Many other confidence-creating measures are possible; but these are some of the most urgent ones.

The government should remember that it is not only the Sinhalese, but also the Tamils who should agree with any settlement that the RTC may reach.

A. Vaidialingam
College Street,
Jaffna.

Questions

Two questions arise from the fact that Dr. Walpola Rahula Thero, secretary of the "Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha", has conveyed to the Round Table Conference and the newspapers that both the SLFP and the MEP are opposed to any settlement of ethnic issues at

levels higher than those of District Councils.

QUESTION ONE. If this is the view of the two parties, why do they not attend the RTC and state them (despite several invitations to do so) instead of sending messages in this way to a conference they have officially boycotted?

QUESTION TWO. Is such an eminent Buddhist scholar as Walpola Rahula Thero unaware that the Buddhist vinaya forbids monks from carrying messages for others?

Channa Samarawickrema
Pita Kotte.

Closure

Your last issue draws attention to the way in which the government helped the Singapore based firm, PRIMA, to make colossal profits by closing down the State Flour Mill.

The way things are now shaping makes it possible that its next move will be to close down the Milk Board and give NESTLES a monopoly.

After that the Cement Corporation will be closed or sold to give the new private cement company, with Japanese participation, that is now starting in Trincomalee, another monopoly.

And yet we are supposed to be a Democratic "SOCIALIST" Republic?

Surath Almeida

Smuggling

Smuggling has become one of the major and most lucrative industries in our country under the "open economy".

It is especially widespread in the textile trade.

Textiles, as opposed to garments, can only be legally imported by the CWE. But dozens of varieties of textiles, other than those imported by the CWE, are freely available in the market.

These have been imported on the grounds that they are to be manufactured into garments for re-export. Thus they pay no, or reduced, duty. But they are landed on the local market without being manufactured as required. This makes it very difficult for the local producers of textiles.

The head of a firm notorious for such activities recently bought a house in Colombo for nearly Rs. 3.5 million. He imported a suit worth Rs. 40,000 from London for his son's wedding.

has happened in the Uda-palatha Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society.

The President and Vice-President elected democratically by the Board of Directors were not allowed to function. Instead, on the prompting of a powerful politico in good standing with the government, two others were appointed by the commissioner of Co-operative Development.

As a result, the administration of the MPCS got into a mess.

At new elections on the 26th of last month, the progressive group scored a big victory over the candidates of the politico concerned. The Board of Directors elected to office have chosen Mr. Bandara Bandanage as President and Mr. T. B. Wijekoon as Vice-President. Now the politico, who is dissatisfied with the smashing victory scored by the progressive group, is again trying to get the Co-operative authorities to appoint two outsiders in their place.

How can anyone who respects democracy put up with this sort of unconstitutional and unprincipled practice?

T. Ramanayake
Kandy.

Ban

The government's 8-month ban on the JVP and the NSSP is most unreasonable and unjust.

It has not brought a single specific charge against either of these parties. It has released their officials whom it had taken into custody. Then why continue the proscription?

In Parliament on February 23, the Prime Minister said that some leaders of these parties are absconding and: "They must come and meet certain statements made against them. So let them come and make their position clear, and we will not keep them any longer".

He did not mention any charge against the parties as such. All he refers to is the need for some leaders of these parties to appear and make statements—apparently only to get the Police records straight. For, after they have done so, "we will not keep them any longer".

It looks to me as though the only reason why these two parties continue to proscribed is that the Security Council which, the Prime Minister admitted, advises the government in this matter, is upset that it has not been able to apprehend the absconding leaders. Considering that two of them were Presidential candidates, this does not speak very highly for the security authorities.

We are entitled to ask whether the proscription of these parties is allowed to continue merely because the Security Council and its officials want to save face?

Harsha Senaratne
Rajagiriya.



What is the good of the government talking big about fighting corruption and law-breaking if smuggling is allowed to flourish in this way?

M. M. Saleem
Colombo 9.

Rowdyism

When alleged terrorists attack People's Bank branches, post offices, police stations, CTB buses and trains in the North, the government's answer is to close down the institutions and suspend the services.

Now that hooligans have begun to attack cricket matches (e.g. Royal-Thomian, the Sri Lanka-New Zealand Test match at Asgiriya, and the St. Sebastian-Prince of Wales match at Moratuwa), will the government follow suit and ban cricket?

S. Asiriwathan
Jaffna.

Co-op Democracy

An example of the sort of democracy practised in the co-operative movement under the present government is what

C. P. S. L. Opens its Unity Campaign

"We Communists will always defend Sri Lanka's sovereignty against external attack, but we condemn the present attempts by reactionary forces, including powerful forces within the government itself, to raise the bogey of an imminent Indian invasion in order to assist the US imperialists to strengthen their political and military presence in Sri Lanka".

So said General Secretary, K. P. SILVA, addressing a CPSL public meeting called at Colombo's New Town Hall on March 27. W. A. DHARMA-DASA, secretary of the Colombo District Committee of the CPSL presided.

The crisis of the "open economy" policy, K. P. Silva said, had pervaded all aspects of political and social life. It had produced a political crisis, a crisis of state structures, a crisis in external

policy, and a crisis in ethnic relations. The government was unable to rule without resort to an even more dictatorial form of government.

The CPSL, he said, was trying to build a fighting unity of Left and radical forces to spearhead opposition to these dangerous policies.

CPSL Chairman PIETER KEUNEMAN said that Sri Lanka was experiencing one of the most dangerous and critical situations in its recent history, when a grave threat to its sovereignty, political independence, democratic processes and institutions, communal amity, living standards, and traditional peaceful policy in external affairs was developing at great momentum.

The USA, he said, was trying to involve us in its global and regional war strategies. It had brought the threat of nuclear war to our doorstep through its efforts to militarise and nuclearise the Indian Ocean and obtain naval facilities at Trincomalee. The CPSL, he said, demanded that no such facilities should be given to the US at Trincomalee, that the Voice of America agreement should be scrapped, that organisations like the Peace Corps and Asia Foundation should be expelled.

He condemned the campaign led by the the Prime Minister to provoke a confrontation

with India. The real threat to Sri Lanka came from US imperialism, he said.

Referring to the "India Today" article, he said that it was more than possible that the material for it was supplied by sources in Sri Lanka anxious to promote a confrontation with India.

He called for the lifting on the ban on the JVP and LSSP, the release of political prisoners, and an end to the state of emergency.

SARATH MUTTETUWEGAMA said that nearly 30 per cent of governmental expenditure was now devoted to the so-called "suppression of terrorism". A political solution of the problem of the Tamils could make this expenditure unnecessary and allow these funds to be used for constructive purposes.

P. KUMARASAMY and WALWYN DIAS also spoke.

Price tag to become U. S. President

In earlier times, it was said that only a millionaire could become President of the USA.

But times change. Now it is more common that, if you are an ordinary millionaire, you may only stand a chance of becoming a US Congressman.

In the elections to the US Congress in 1982, for instance, more than half the candidates to the US Senate were millionaires. In 27 cases winners outdid losers by spending more on their campaigns—e. g. one and a half million as against one million dollars.

Nowdays, you must be a multi-millionaire if you hope to be elected as President of the USA.

The price tag keeps rising. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln spent a mere 100,000 dollars to become President. In 1908, William Taft spent 1.7 million dollars. In 1972, Richard Nixon spent 61.4 million dollars.

Subsequent individual figures are not yet made public. But it is known that in 1980, the overall amount spent by candidates for election as President was in the region of 1.2 billion dollars.

It will even more in 1984.

Please Note

There will be no issue of FORWARD on April 15th.

This is due to the holidays for Sinhala and Tamil New Year.

We shall next appear with a special issue for MAY DAY.

Workers Rally for Rights & Demands

The rally of 21 trade union organisations in defence of democratic and trade union rights, for higher wages and lower prices, and the cancellation of unjust taxes attracted a large crowd on Thursday March 22.

Despite the fact that the rally was held on "Panic Thursday", when rumours of a new round of communal

disturbances caused schools, shops, factories, offices and even the courts to adjourn early and sent thousands rushing for home and safety, Hyde Park was filled with thousands of workers who defied the panic to answer the call of their unions.

CFTU General Secretary L. W. Panditha, who presided, outlined the aims of the rally and said that it was the start of a more comprehensive struggle of the organised workers and other employees to defend their rights and win their demands. He appealed to the CFL, the GCSU, and the Bank Employees' Union, which has still not joined the campaign, to do so.

He also called on all sections of the workers to close ranks and fight back the attempts of racists to divide them.

CMU Secretary Bala Tampoe said that, despite the so-called Prevention of Terrorism Law, the government had failed to eliminate what it called "terrorism". This law was aimed at the class struggles of the workers and not at terrorism in any form. The

state terrorism of the government was the worst type of terrorism in the country. He called for the release of persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The demand for the de-proscription of the JVP and the NSSP was made by all speakers.

Speaking on behalf of the SLFTUF, Alavi Moulana criticised the sharp rise in the prices of essential goods and the relative freeze of wages and salaries.

Leader of the PSTUF, J. A. K. Perera called for the reinstatement with full rights of the workers dismissed for taking part in the general strike of 1980 who had not yet been reinstated.

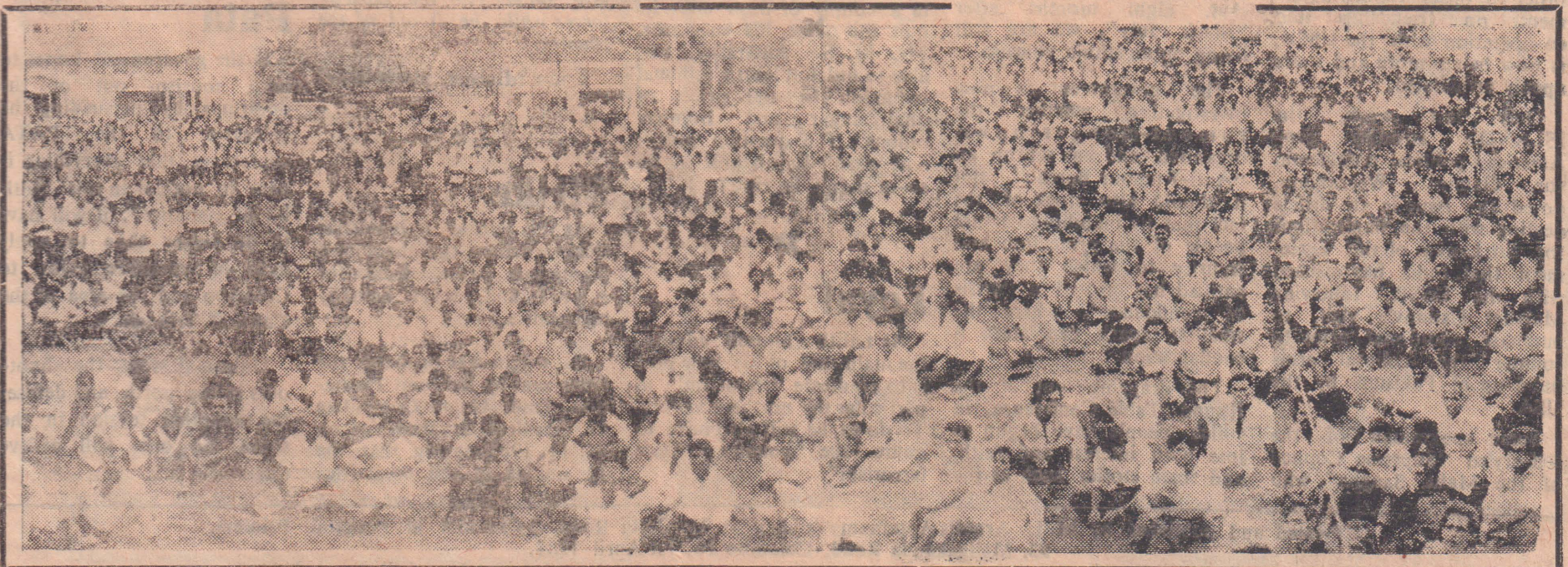
Speaking on behalf the organisations of the Corporation workers, D K. Dayasena demanded the withdrawal of the unjust "rehabilitation" tax.

General Secretary of the UCMEU, Percy Wickremasekera, stressed the need to strengthen the unity of the organised working class still further.

Among the other speakers were A. Ramiah, Ronnie Perera, N. Sanmugathan, R. H. Jayasekera and P. M. Podi Appuhamy.



L. W. Panditha (Chair) Alavi Moulana and JAK Perera on the platform (above) and a section of the TU rally (below)



Why the Anti-Indian Campaign?

The anti-Indian campaign is now being carefully orchestrated to a crescendo.

The furore over the "India To-day" article, as blatant a piece of mischievous provocation as sensational journalism can produce, is an example of this.

While the primary purpose of the article is to create another front of destabilisation for Indira Gandhi in her election year, it has also helped to pour fuel on fires that were simmering locally.

What is the crux of the objectionable features of the article? It is not its "revelation" that many TULF leaders and "terrorists" have sought refuge in south India and are doing pro-Eelam propaganda there. This is well-known.

But what India's government is accused of is something quite different from that of giving political asylum to persons whom the government of Sri Lanka does not like. From that point of view, India has always been a place of refuge for Sri Lankan politicians who were being hunted, as was the case with the LSSP leaders in the old days.

But what is now being asserted is that the government of India is either assisting or turning a deliberately blind eye to the fact that an Eelam army is being trained in south India by retired members of India's defence forces, supplied with arms from sources which are pro-Soviet, and readied for an armed attack on, or armed conflict in, Sri Lanka.

When this grave charge is given support by important members of our Cabinet, like Prime Minister Premadasa and Anandattisa de Alwis, a highly dangerous situation is certainly being created.

Aims

Those who are pushing the anti-Indian line in Sri Lanka have clear and undisguised aims.

And nearly all of them are targetted towards increasing America's political and military presence in this country, using President Jayawardene's impending visit to the USA as a focal point.

The demand that Sri Lanka should conclude a "defence" agreement with the US, in order to offset India's agreement on friendship and co-operation with the USSR, is now being more and more openly articulated.

Only last week, the ISLAND's strongly pro-American political commentator, Gamini Weerakoon, posed the issue in an article dealing with the implications for Sri Lanka of the agreement that India has reached with the USSR, following Marshal Ustinov's visit, to purchase additional arms to counter the colossal arms build-up of Pakistan by the USA.

Some spokesman of the self-styled "Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha", who

speak more like war leaders than monks, have also raised the issue. A so-called "Sri Lanka Federation of Buddhist Associations" has also (again according to the ISLAND of March 26th) written to President Jayawardene urging such a step, although they are prepared to settle for "defence agreement" with China, which they regard as only second to the USA in anti-Indianism.

Trinco

Two other aims of the anti-Indian campaign are equally obvious.

First, knowing that both the government and the US are anxious to finalise the "oil tank farm" tender at Trincomalee before the President's pilgrimage to Washington, the anti-Indian campaigners hope that the hullabaloo about an imminent Indian invasion will create a suitable political climate to ensure that the tender goes to the US tenderer and not to India's Oil Corporation, whose tender is regarded as the most favourable commercially.

Secondly, sections within the government and the UNP (again, spearheaded by the

planted INDIA TO-DAY article which was highlighted by the ISLAND newspapers, have helped to make the situation extremely dicey.

One of the most moving human incidents of "Panic Thursday", which illustrated the traumas that still persist after July 1983, was a bewildered and anguished little girl, waiting amidst pandemonium to be evacuated from her school, and wailing amidst tears: "Please take me home before they burn my mother".

The obstructionists at the Round Table Conference should have seen that little girl, and ponder on what their tactics are doing to people like her.

Lalith

Lalith Athulathmudali's sudden appointment to the new post of Minister of Internal Security took most people by surprise.

In his six year tenure as Minister of Trade and Shipping, Lalith has shown that he has a ready and glib tongue and is always ready to shoot from the lip. But when it came to performance, he was definitely poor.

The main reason why President Jayawardene picked him for the job is that he trusts him more than several others who are higher in the Cabinet's order of precedence.

The appointment is also intended to defuse the swelling criticism in pro-government circles that the President is "too old" and "too half-hearted" to conduct the fight against terrorism effectively, and that a younger and more vigorous man should be entrusted with this job.

Lalith has assumed his new mantle with characteristic self-drama. His first announcements show that he thinks of himself as a major political and military strategist who will outwit and defeat Dr. A. S. Balasingham, whom he describes as the main "theoretician" and strategist of Prabhakaran's LTTE and who, Lalith concedes, has a "first class brain".

This column has also read Dr. Balasingham's book, which made no such impression. A mish-mash of ill-digested ideas cribbed from Marxism-Leninism (but only on the national question, which is also distorted) and from guerrilla "theorists" of recent vintage, it seems to have the same Walter Mitty character that Lalith now displays.

What has apparently impressed Lalith is the not so new idea of a "two-front" war against the Sri Lanka army, combining confrontation in the north with diversions in the southern rear. He has used this to appeal to the Sinhalese people of the south not to get into the act, but to leave the eradication of terrorism to him, rather than play Balasingham's game.

Only time will tell whether Lalith will have any more success playing at soldiers than he had as Minister of Trade. All attempts so far to wipe out private terrorism by counter state terrorism have failed. If Lalith is really anxious to eradicate terrorism, the best battlefield is the Round Table Conference, whose official spokesman he continues to be.

Meanwhile, he should ponder on the fact that the main reason why President Jayawardene has given him the new post, as well as that as Deputy Minister of Defence, is that he wants to be sure that only a reliable and trustworthy man will be able to give orders to the security forces while he is out of the country.

Prime Minister, please note!

Strike

At this writing, it is not yet clear whether the threatened plantation strike, fixed for April 2nd, will actually materialise.

Its origin was probably the letter sent by the Joint Plantation Trade Union Committee to President Jayawardene on 24. 11. 1983, saying that the 12 unions in the committee

would be compelled to take "trade union action" unless the government took meaningful action on five demands.

These demands were (a) a wage increase of Rs 100 a month; (2) cost-of-living allowance of Rs. 2 per point increase in the cost-of-living index, as sanctioned for other workers in previous budgets; (3) guaranteed monthly wages; (4) equal pay for equal work for men and women workers; and (5) withdrawal of the "Rehabilitation" tax.

When these unions began campaigning for these demands, the CWC (and later Minister Gamini Dissanayake's LJEJU) woke up and started their own campaigns.

Although a "government" trade union, the CWC announced a strike on April 2 if its demands were not granted. The LJEJU, not to be outdone, said that it would also strike. So did the unions of the Joint Committee.

In an effort to avoid a total strike on the plantations at a time when tea prices are at an all-time high (bringing in Rs. 9 billion in the first 3 months of 1984), a backstairs discussion was held with the LJEJU alone. After which the government announced (1) a wage increase of Rs. 2.50 a day, (2) acceptance of the principle of equal pay for equal work, and (3) a Rs. 200 increase in the festival allowance.

The LJEJU has therefore pulled out. But the CWC still insists that it is going ahead. It awaits Mr. Thondaman's return from India to see whether it can get anything extra out of the two plantation corporations through talks with President Jayawardene, who is also the Minister in charge of plantations.

The demands of the plantation workers are just and long overdue. The government should concede them in the national interest.

But the plantation unions should also consider whether so sectional a strike in today's explosive ethnic situation is politically wise.

Pata

If the government hopes to take tourism out of the doldrums by persuading the delegates to the PATA conference that everything is back to normal in this "little bit of paradise", it will have to do better than to apply dabs of cosmetic paint to Colombo and the area of the Cultural Triangle.

Unless it stops the shoot-outs in the north and defuses the mounting tension in the south, no one will believe this.

LAST
PAGE

by
Gamini

Prime Minister) seem determined to sabotage the Round Conference's consensus recommendation that the "stateless" people of Indian origin should be made citizens of Sri Lanka. Legislation to this effect is now being prepared, and these forces feel that unless they act now, it may be too late.

"Panic Thursday"

If "Panic Thursday" (May 22) established anything, it is that, eight months after "Black July", we are still living on an ethnic volcano.

The government is now investigating whether the rumour-mongering was organised and has set up an "Anti-Rumour Bureau". But it should also stock of the fact that its inability to assure people of the protection and security to which they are entitled has created a "crisis of confidence", where the smallest spark can start a conflagration.

The dragging out of the Round Table Conference, in which people have begun to lose both interest and faith, and scare stories such as the

His voters in Dehiwela and Ratmalana speak bitterly of how that area has been neglected and has deteriorated since they elected him in 1977. The "Mahapola Lottery" scheme, through which he tried to build an all-island mass base, is only kept going by arm-twisting businessmen to buy blocks of tickets for sums running into lakhs of rupees.

Lalith's biggest failure was his inability to hold the price line. His excuse that this is due to factors outside his control is unconvincing. For in a couple of days after he quit this office, his successor, Mr. M. S. Amarasiri, was able to order at least a minimal reduction in the prices of dhal, sugar and Bombay onions. The question arises: why wasn't Lalith able to do so—or didn't he care?

Loyal

As Lalith himself admits, the main task of his new post is to eradicate "terrorism", in particular the northern variety. To do so, he will also have to guide the counter "state terrorism".