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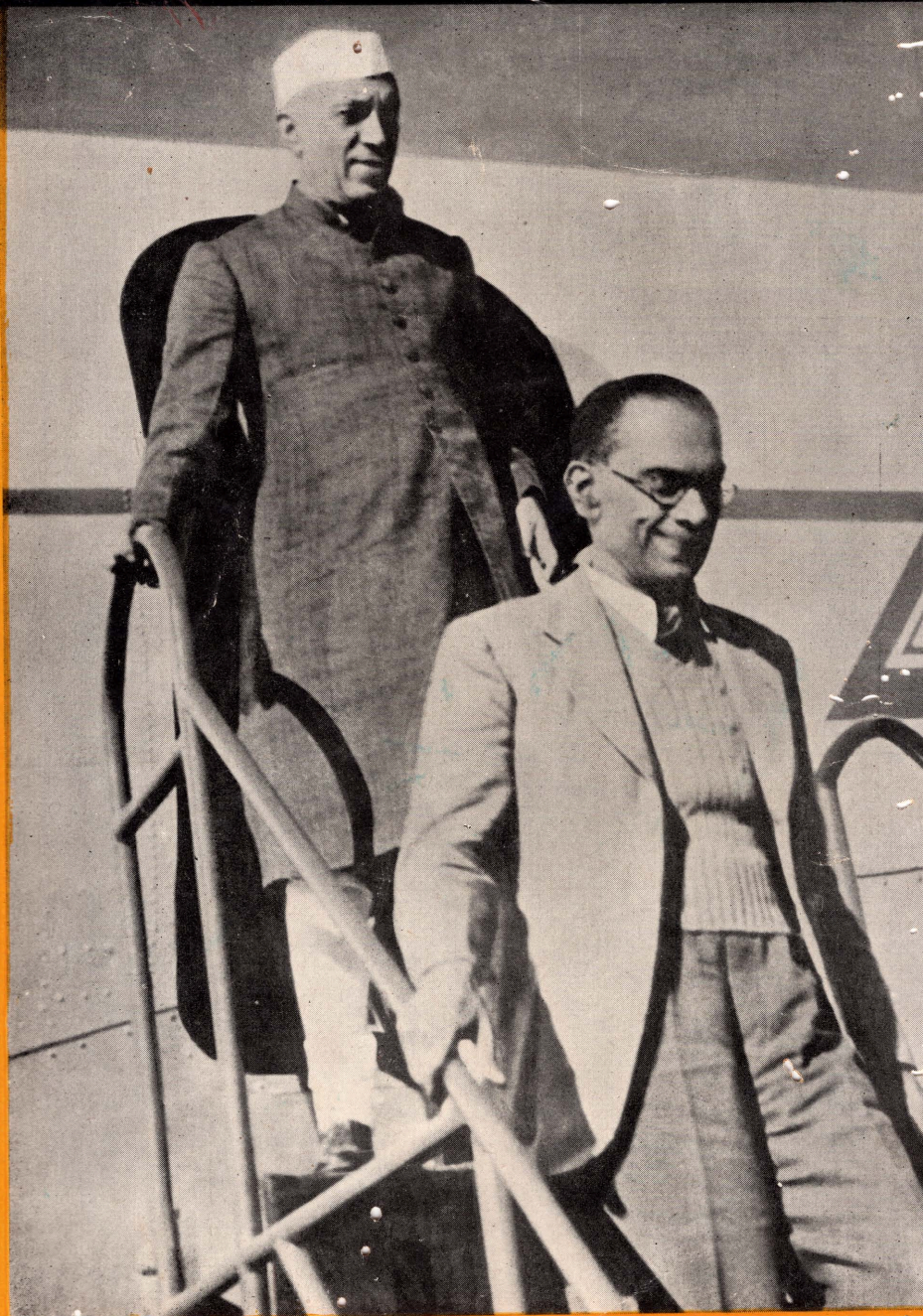
HILAIRE JANSZ

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The Prime Minister in India



JANUARY, 1958

CEYLON TODAY

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The Prime Minister in India

CEYLON, along with India and Pakistan, was joint host to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference which was held in India recently. Two groups of delegates from the Conference visited Ceylon during November and December and spent a few days in this country.

The Prime Minister, the Hon. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, visited India in this connexion to attend the conference and to act as one of the hosts. He was accompanied by the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs. Mr. Bandaranaike left Colombo on Saturday, November 30, 1957, and returned to the Island on December 7 (*Ceylon Today*, December, 1957).

During his stay in India the Prime Minister made several important speeches, including addresses to the conference delegates as well as to the members of the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Mahabodhi Society of India.

We print below the text of his address of welcome to the Parliamentary Commonwealth delegates on the opening day of the conference :—

“It gives me the greatest pleasure to associate myself with the Prime Minister of India and the Representative of Pakistan in

welcoming the delegates from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Associations of Commonwealth Countries, assembled here at Delhi, for this Conference. This is the first occasion when such a Conference has been held in an Asian country and it is only fitting that this Conference should be held in this ancient city of Delhi with all its inspiring memories of the past and glorious hopes for the future. I am also very glad that, although there were many pressing problems facing me in my own country, I have been able to come here myself in order to associate myself with the other hosts in welcoming you to this Conference.

“The question has been asked and answered by both the President and the Prime Minister of India as to what constitutes the content of democracy and also what are the benefits that this association of nations in the Commonwealth confers. I too would like to add a word or two to what has been said. As the Prime Minister of India stated, there are various interpretations of democracy, various meanings given to that word, particularly of late. But, to me, democracy implies, in fact, an agglomeration of freedoms, individual and collective; individually, the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom from arbitrary arrests, freedom of the vote—in



Delegates marching to the inaugural ceremony

short, freedom of human thought. Collectively, the freedoms of democracy, although always inherent in the concept of modern democracy, were first defined in the Atlantic Charter; freedom from want, freedom from ignorance, freedom from fear, freedom to choose the Government that the people wish to have. All these freedoms, individual and collective, really go to form that conception of democracy which, I think, we in the Commonwealth accept.

“The idea of the Commonwealth, this extraordinary association of nations in this manner, is perhaps unique in the history of national associations. The nations or peoples that were brought together involuntarily by colonization and conquest by Britain gradually developed into the Dominion idea. The Dominions were restricted at the start to those who were bound together by

common blood, common traditions. The Statute of Westminster conferred on these Dominions not only equality of status, but complete freedom of action in both internal and external affairs. The Commonwealth has now enlarged its borders to include other peoples with different traditions, of different races, of different ways of thought. One wonders what, then, keeps this Commonwealth together today, or what are, if any, the benefits that this association of nations in this way can confer.

The Commonwealth

“I HAVE thought of these questions myself. There are no legal bonds. Even the one and only legal bond that existed earlier of allegiance to a common Sovereign does not now exist in the case of certain Members of

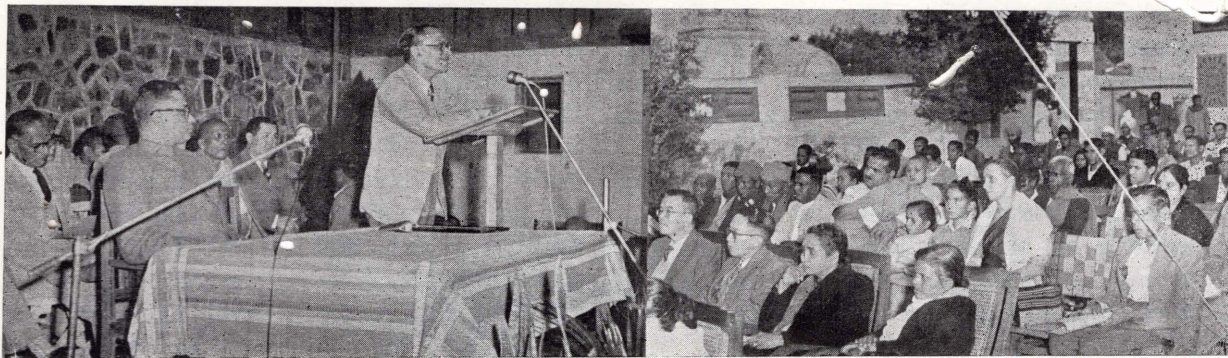
the Commonwealth. There are no formal treaties or agreements, no formal rules whereby a majority decision is binding on the minority; they are entirely free in internal and external affairs, without any legal bonds whatsoever, without any decisions arrived at which it is attempted to enforce on all Members of the Commonwealth, whether they like it or not. What, then, remains of value in this association?

“There are, of course, certain benefits, economic and otherwise, of this association. But I do think that the most important bond of the Commonwealth today is this, that even if we are not bound today by the crimson thread of a common blood, we certainly are bound together by the golden thread of a common tradition. What is that tradition? I feel, when history sums up the contribution

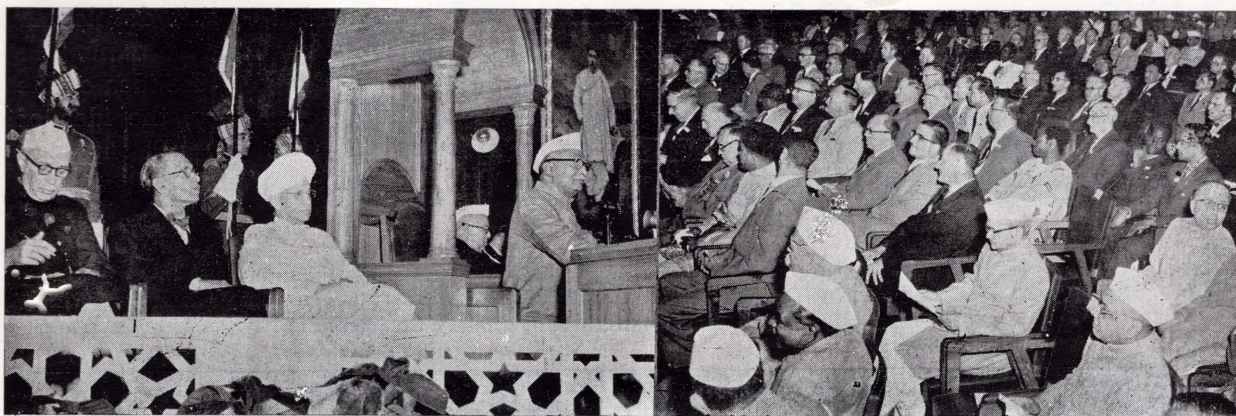
of the British people to civilization and to human welfare, it will say that their chief contribution has been the development of the spirit of democracy, as I have explained it, through the broad forms and machinery which they have devised for the purpose—the parliamentary system of Government. I am not saying that all the forms of the parliamentary democratic system of Government which have been developed in Britain according to the genius of their own people need necessarily continue in those particular forms, either for themselves or for others, in this changing world. But, however the forms may be amended to suit developing conditions, the spirit remains the same. The British idea of free elections, the idea of the independence of the judiciary, the idea of an administration that is efficient and impartial and which is not unduly hampered

The Vice-President of the Indian Republic, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, speaking at a banquet held in honour of the delegates to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi in December





▲ The Ceylon Premier speaking at a reception given in his honour by the Maha Bodhi Society



▲ The President of the Indian Republic, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, inaugurating the Conference. The others in the picture are (left to right) Mr. Nehru, Mr. Bandaranaike and Dr. Radhakrishnan

by interference by the executive, are all ideas that have made valuable contributions to human institutions in the modern world. That, I venture to think, will be the verdict of history on the chief contribution that Britain has made to human welfare.

“We in the Commonwealth—different peoples with different policies internally and externally, sometimes agreeing with each other, sometimes disagreeing with each other—are still held together by this common tradition. It is a tradition that is well worth preserving. In this age of transition—it is obviously an age of transition in which we are living today—with all kinds of experiments in the world, ideological,

political, economic and so on, it is well worth preserving in a manner that is in keeping with the needs of today—this tradition of democratic parliamentary government which, if we do not share many other concepts, certainly I think it can be said substantially, all members of the Commonwealth do share. It is, in fact, almost a way of life. It is in reality the true middle way today between the extremes that we see both of the right and of the left.

Various Meetings

“THE Commonwealth has various meetings. As the Prime Minister of India said, the

Prime Ministers meet. The Finance Ministers discussed economic questions recently in Canada and Mont Tremblant. Now, this is an assembly where Members of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth meet to discuss and exchange views regarding many matters of common interest. I think, therefore, it can be said that remaining in the Commonwealth causes no embarrassment to any of us. The fact that we differ from each other need not in the context I mentioned make us sever connections with each other. We still have certain things of common interest that in my opinion can make a valuable contribution in shaping the civilization of this new age. The old civilization is crumbling; the new is not yet stable. Various experiments have been tried everywhere. The world has not yet achieved stability. I do think that we can make a valuable contribution by preserving things that are valuable to mankind, things that are valuable to ensure the freedom of the human spirit while still being in line with the requirements and needs of this new age.

“I have great pleasure, as I stated, in associating myself with the Prime Minister of India and the representative of Pakistan

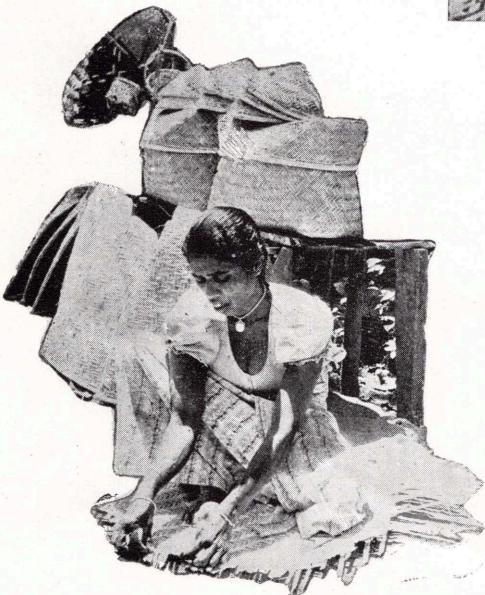
in welcoming all the delegates assembled here today. I observe that in your agenda there are many subjects for discussion of a valuable and important nature, and I trust that this conference here in Delhi on this occasion will add to mutual understanding, and thereby also add to what I also feel very strongly about—the need for peaceful co-existence whether it be in the Commonwealth or outside it, which alone can prevent man from proceeding on a course of mutual hatred, the end of which is the destruction of all mankind and of civilization too. We have to live together, or, surely, we shall perish together. We may not agree with each other, but let us at least understand each other and help all mankind to achieve, let us hope, a better, happier and more prosperous life for all of us in this brave new world. I hesitate to use that term, but I use it for I do believe that with all our difficulties it is indeed a brave new world.

“I wish the delegates all success in their deliberations, and trust that although you may not come to decisions or pass resolutions, your discussions will contribute towards that mutual understanding which is so necessary for us all today.”

Right top —
A "goiya's" hat being woven at Pasyala



Right bottom —
Girl turning out a coconut-milk strainer. Note the other cane articles displayed for sale



▲ A winnow, for sifting, being made

The Cane Workers of Ceylon

C. N. CHRISTIE-DAVID

THE art of the cane workers of Ceylon involves the making of cane furniture such as chairs, tables and drawing-room suites, besides the tea plucker's basket, the "goiya's" or farmer's hat and the policeman's wicker shield. Several other utility articles are also manufactured. This art was introduced into Ceylon from Singapore, Sumatra, Java and Japan where it flourishes at its best. The original cane workers here were Malays and the trade was plied at Slave Island, once the stronghold of the Slave Trade in Ceylon. The cane workers have now commercialised their profession there. The raw material used by them is "Rata Vel", called Singapore Cane. The Ceylon Cane or "Maha Vel" is also used, though it is not as good in quality as its Singapore counterpart.

The "Maha Vel" is a giant variety of cane obtained from Pasyala, Rakwana, Ratnapura and Tamankaduwa, the last named source being mainly the monopoly of the Muslims of the Eastern Province of this Island. This cane grows to a height of 15 ft. to 100 ft. and may fetch a price of 45 cents to 55 cents. It is utilized often for the framework of drawing-room suites.

The "Rata Vel" of Singapore is bleached to a rich yellow tone by the workers, but this process is a trade secret which did not follow the importation of the raw material into Ceylon.

The process of dipping the cane into large jars containing boiling water with a mixture of sulphur is not practised here.

"Rata Vel" is about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick and is split into two for use. A sharp knife is used

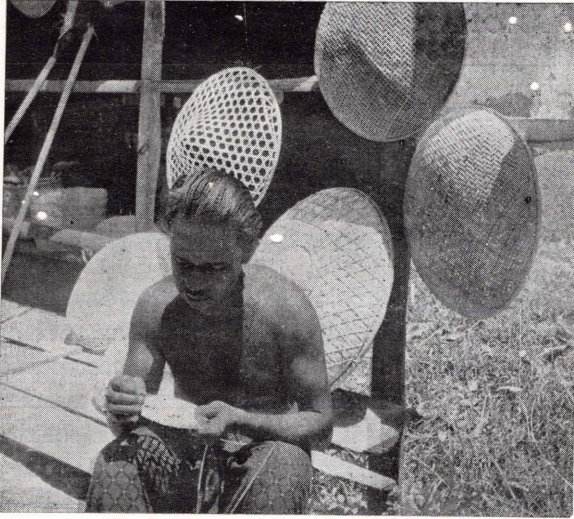
for this purpose. The cane is soaked in water, being thus made flexible and soft for work.

When used for "rattaning" or weaving of chairs, it is split into $\frac{1}{10}$ th inch. The surface of articles made by this cane is sandpapered for a final finish. Some of the utility articles made include flower baskets for bridal parties, babies' cots, waste paper and laundry baskets, and also the mysterious basket used by magicians.

"Buta-lee", another variety of Ceylon cane, for which Bataleeya on the Kandy

Cane being split





"Stringhopper"-tats being made. Stringhoppers are] a favourite item in the Ceylonese Menu

road is famous, is also obtained from Pasyala, Peradeniya and Bandaragama. The art of the cane workers also flourishes at Kandy.

Some of the products of "Buta-lee" are the familiar farmers' and fishermen's hats and household tats. The policemen's wicker shields were mainly made by the cane workers of Pasyala.

It is altogether a cottage industry, and the visitor to Kandy is often treated to an open-air display. The cane workers of Pasyala gather their "buta-lee" from the jungles. They sometimes travel as much as 10 miles to secure their raw material. It is sometimes a risky business altogether, as poisonous snakes often lurk within these clumps of cane trees.

But the specialists for snake-bites are ready for any eventuality in the village, provided the patients are brought to them in time.

Some of their antidotes are secrets handed down from generations, and are jealously

guarded by them. They may be found recorded on ancient "ola" scrolls, musty and yellow with age, and are generally effective.

Cane workers, both young and old, returning home with their bundles of cane on their heads is a familiar sight.

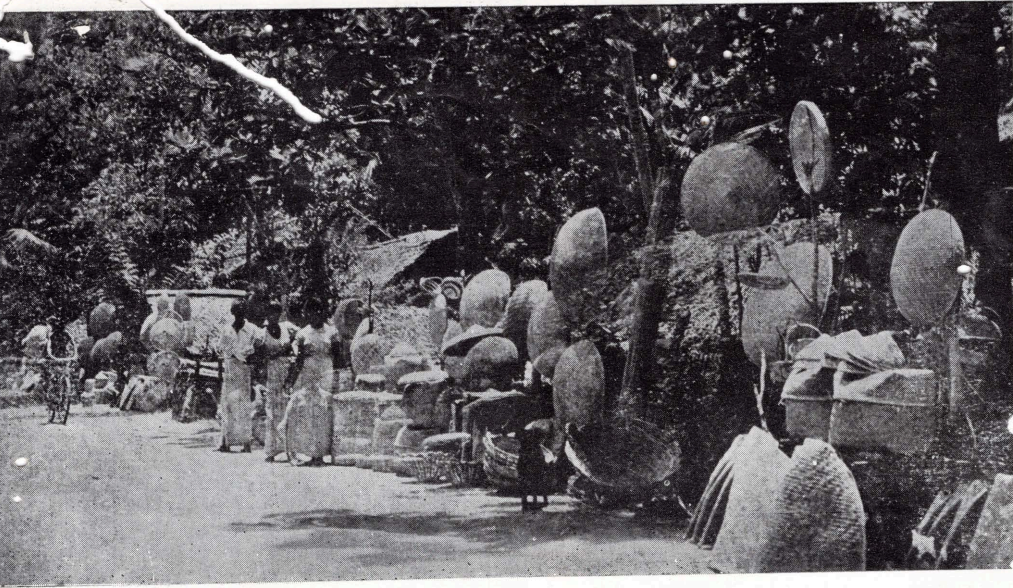
The reeds are left to dry in the village compound. Then they are split with knives made specially for this purpose. The cane is cut into suitable lengths, and is employed to turn out articles for domestic use. Some of these are the coconut milk strainer, the



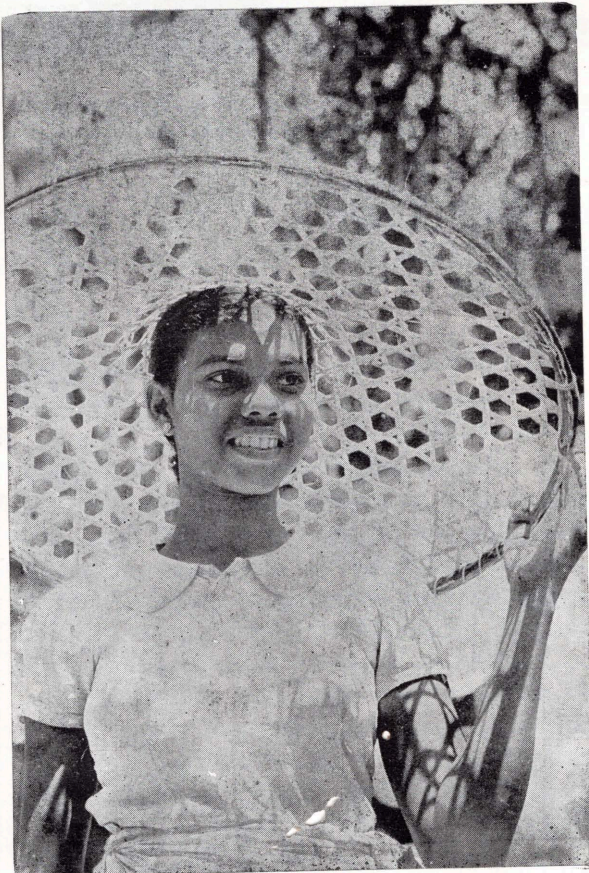
Sales talk

"kulla" or triangular wicker basket used for winnowing rice, and the little stringhopper tat.

The cane cutters of Tamankaduwa who are a sturdy race of Muslims, merit mention here. Unlike the cane workers of Pasyala, who belong to a depressed community living in the villages within easy access of towns, these Muslims live in the remote hinterland of Ceylon, surrounded by dense jungles,



◀ Display of cane-ware at Pasyala, on the Colombo-Kandy road



Girl wearing an artistically-woven farmer's hat

infested with leopards, elephants and wild buffaloes. They hail from Puttalam and Batticaloa, trekking to Tamankaduwa for their seasonal occupation of cane-gathering from January to August. Mannampitiya is the site selected for their operations, and they travel in bullock carts loaded with provisions, utensils and implements. The caravans with the rattle of jingling bells are a picturesque sight as they travel through jungle roads.

On arriving at their destination they make their "vadi" or camp by the side of a river.

These cane cutters set out at dawn and return home at dusk.

The collected cane is left in the open to dry, after which peeling commences. Crude implements are used and their *modus operandi* is rather primitive.

After the peeling is completed, the cane is tied into bundles of various lengths.

On an average a cane cutter cuts 250-300 canes per day, which fetches a sum of Rs. 6 to Rs. 7.50 per lot. The value for 1,000 canes is Rs. 30.



Hawker carrying bunches of attractive paper flowers to add to the glamour of the drawing room

Muslim cloth-weaver exhibiting locally-woven sarees, made especially for the festive season

Ushering in the New Year

S. V. O. SOMANADER

THE advent of the New Year (January 1) is ushered in by many a household with not a little merriment. But perhaps in no other provincial town of Ceylon is the "Puthu-varusham" (New Year) celebrated with so much glamour and festivity as in Batticaloa on the East Coast.

From time immemorial, gala doings had been in evidence, but gone are the days when the birth of a New Year was celebrated with such great ceremonial. Though elaborate enjoyments still exist, they are nothing when compared to the "tamashas" of long ago (say, 50 years back when the writer was a boy). The spread of a new type of education, and the consequent changes, social and economic, in the tastes and attitudes of the

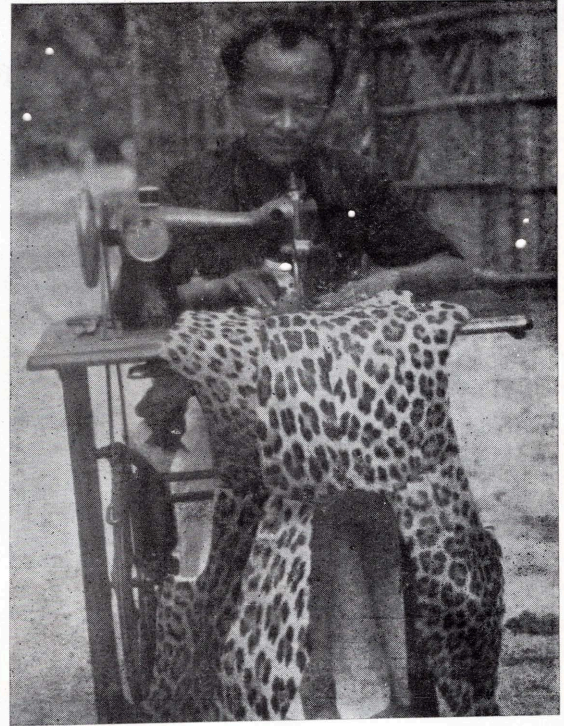
people have resulted in the New Year being celebrated now-a-days in a simpler and more modified form.

It must be noted, first of all, that Batticaloa's new year festivities in the good old days were not a matter of one day. For, plans were so made that the numerous and varied enjoyments lasted for about a week. Preparations to celebrate it everywhere were made on a grand scale, weeks beforehand, so much so, that, by New Year eve, everything was ship-shape and ready. For everybody left no stone unturned to start "Puthu-varusham" well, building their hopes on the principle that "well begun is half done".

A few days before the great day, tailors, who had been overworking themselves for

Christmas the previous week, were again busy. For folks in general (non-Christians included) wish to start the first day of the first month of the new year with new and gay clothes. Nor were the cobblers, goldsmiths, carpenters and other artisans idle. And even the sellers of mats, leaf-boxes, bangles, toys, sweetmeats, cloth and other textiles, meat, fish and other foods, plied a roaring trade in their articles, all of which were in great demand during the joyous season.

Within the house, the making of oil-cakes (palakarams) was a duty which no housewife worth the name shirked. On the other



▲ Gay blouse of leopard-skin being made for the New Year

▼
Top—Muslim hawker carrying bundles of palmyra-leaf coloured boxes in which the “eats” are stored

Bottom—Multi-coloured bangles displayed for sale



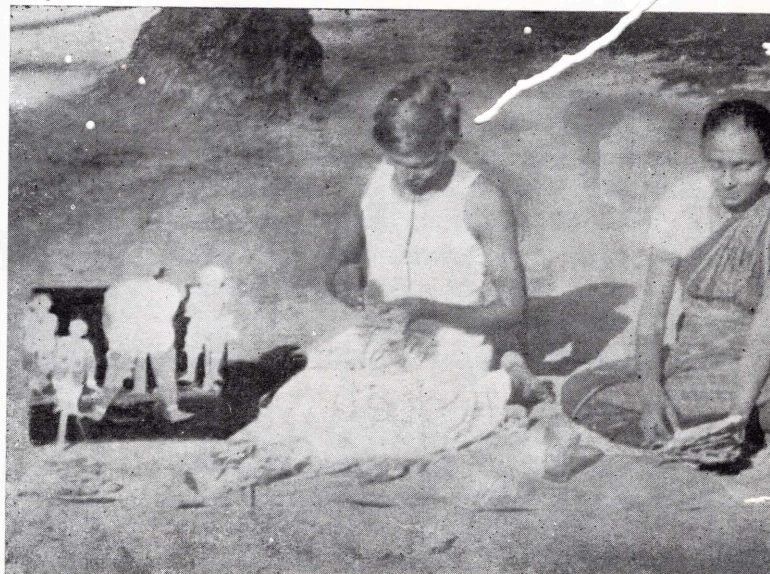
hand, in view of the rush and great hospitality in store, even village women were often employed to pound the rice into flour, which was then kneaded with coconut “milk” to be made into small but dainty oil-cakes. And these delicacies, which were sometimes

▼ Rolls of mats being taken to town for sale during the New Year





▲ Hawker carrying bed linen



▲ A resourceful village couple turning out toys for sale



◀ Rural women pounding flour from which oil-cakes are made

steeped in syrup or coated with sugar, went by various names—"murukku", "thodoo", "ariatharam", "chokee", "cheepoo", "chittoondee", "payatham-palakaram", "palrotty", and what not! The preparation of such dainties are now—alas!—almost no more.

On New Year eve, the Christians of the various churches attended the watch-night service (as they do even now), in fair weather or foul. The multi-coloured sarees of the women, not to mention their glittering trimmings and sparkling jewels—as well as the gay dresses and silk-ribbons of the children—all contributed to the picturesqueness of the congregation. At the close of the service, the joyous bells of the belfry pealed—first to "ring out the old", and then (at the stroke of 12 midnight) to "ring in the new". This was followed, in the church grounds and neighbourhood, by the continual din of ear-splitting crackers and other loud detonations,

and one was left to wonder if all the world had turned crackers—or rather into an earthquake accompanied by thunder. These deafening interruptions continued throughout the town all night, and snatching even a couple of hours of sleep during the small hours of the morning was well nigh impossible.

With the dawn of the New Year, the various "tamashas" began, and there was scarcely time for a leisurely morning meal. The first to arrive were parties of native musicians (Indians included), who came in groups of three or four—their instruments comprising a flute or pipe made of brass or silver, a drum, a pair of brazen cymbals to mark the rhythm, and another kind of pipe which gave a droning, monotonous sound.

▼ The sweet-meat seller going on his rounds



Then troupes of tom-tom beaters from the villages invaded the premises without notice and started a hideous din—the weird notes of their quaint pipes drowned by the loud notes of their drums, which they beat with curved sticks held in both hands. All these entertainers were well rewarded for contributing to the noise and bustle of the New Year. The fakirs, with their jingling tambourines, and



▲ A troupe of rural tom-tom beaters who add to the din of the New Year

old men, with "udoos" (small drums) were the next visitors to entertain the inmates with music and song, if not sensational "stunts". Sometimes, a scheming astrologer, suitably rigged in turban, stepped in, with all his paraphernalia, to tell the family fortune—which was always good, and never bad, for obvious reasons. Barbers, dhobies, old servants and others (including those whom one never knew or heard of, but who introduced themselves as old "family friends" well known to the householder's late father or grandfather) paid visits to various houses, offering lime fruits and "namaskarams" (greetings) as symbols of good favour, and hoping to receive a "santhosam" (cash gift) in return, besides "palakarams" (oil-cakes) and a chew of betel.

The beggars of the town (who are no other than "the poor who are always with us") were the next to call. They came sometimes



Party of musicians, ►
with drums and
flutes

in battalions, shouting, "Aiya! Amma! Pitchai" (Sir! Madam! Alms!). Some of them were healthy-looking and did not seem to deserve any charity, but the genial host, anxious to please everybody on such an auspicious day, doled out a few copper coins to each.

In between were other side-shows and attractions. Blind musicians entertained the inmates by playing the seraphina and singing

▼ A "quartette" of fakirs with their jingling tambourines



▲ A bear-dance.

"Oh!, My darling Clementine" and other songs, before winding up loyally with "God save the King!" There was also the bird-astrologer who, with canary in cage, attracted the children, reading their New-Year fortune off a card which the bird picked up in return for a five-cent piece. There were also other entertainers, like those who



▲ Girls, playing stringed instruments, adding to the New Year merriment

▼ Two fakirs performing. While one plays the tambourine, the other performs a "stunt"



executed bear or tiger dances, and the poorer classes of Portuguese Burghers who, with their violin and other band-instruments, played their national tunes like "Rosa pola ganeng" and "Bathalay bathay".

Village dancers, perhaps, provided the most interesting and colourful attraction of all. Going from house to house, they acted with a certain amount of vividness such Eastern plays like "Ramayana" and "Harischandra", besides other "nadagams" (folk-drama), punctuating their songs and utterances with crude and ambiguous jokes and rural mannerisms, which were particularly liked by the hoi polloi who followed these gay artistes everywhere, Pied-Piper-of-Hamelin fashion. These dancing minstrels comprised the "annavi" with the rum, the man with the cymbals who sang with him, and the performers proper, among whom were one or two men, elaborately rigged in tinsel-covered head-dress, breastplate, saree and jacket (so as to disguise them as females), and wearing tinkling bells around their ankles. They all earned plenty of money before returning to their villages.

These, then, were some of the "tamashas" of Batticaloa's New Year season, and, from the point of view of their variety and grandeur, they are unique in this part of the Island, and hard to beat. And we must not forget the household amusements and enjoyments

▼ Troupe of rural dancers, including two "women"





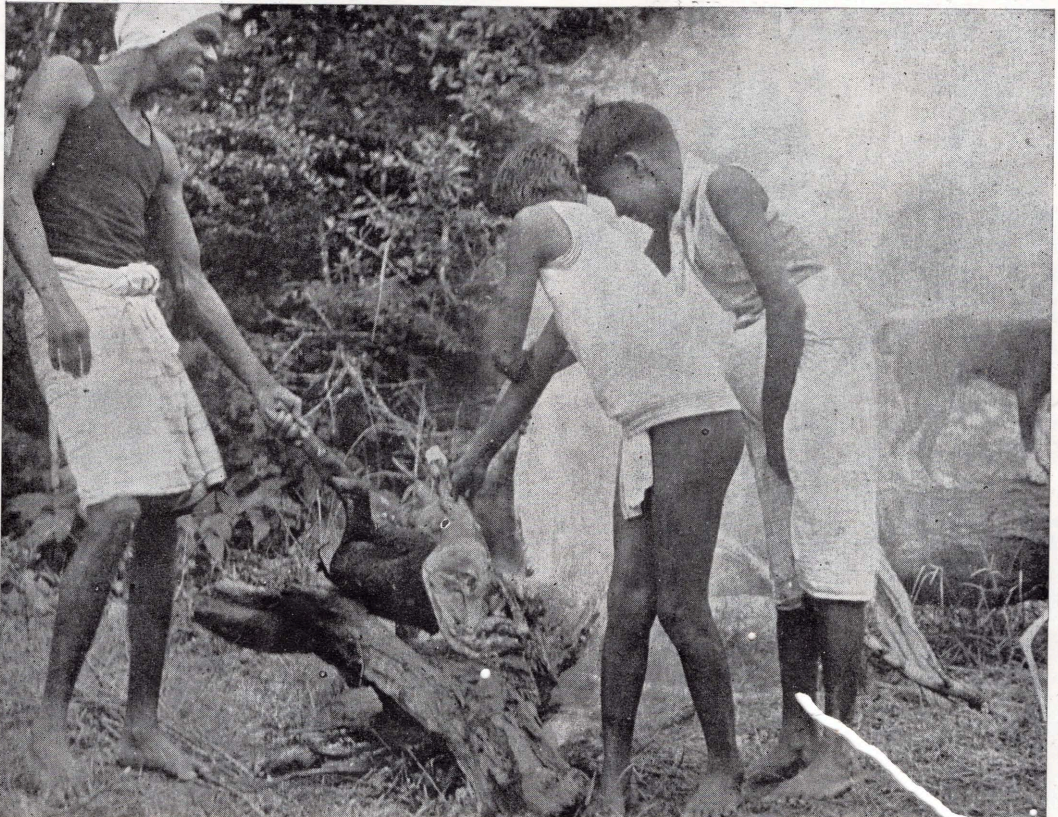
▲ Village damsels enjoy the New Year, riding on the swing

of the local folks—family dinners, firing of crackers, riding on the swing, playing on the “rabana”, accordeon and other instruments, visits to relatives, entertaining friends, exchange of presents (chiefly “palakarams” and plantains sent in trays or “ola”-boxes covered with white cloth) and so forth. These formed the order of the day, or rather of the festive week—and fattening the doctor’s bills the order of the month.

Thus was “Puthu-Varusham” celebrated in Batticaloa in bygone days and as I look back on it with sentiment now, the distance in time “lends enchantment to the view”, and makes me feel sorry that the good, old days have gone, or almost so.

I often wish they would come back again!

▼ Rural hunters smoking flesh, to be sold as New Year fare





Rock Statue, Polonnaruwa

Journalistic Personalities of the Past

HILAIRE JANSZ

THREE gifted Ceylonese writers helped to make the *Examiner* an influential organ of public opinion. They were the great Charles Ambrose Lorenz, Francis Beven and Leopold Ludovici. The last named joined the paper in 1866 and succeeded Lorenz as Editor.

Much has been written of the brilliance, versatility and patriotic ardour of Lorenz as a lawyer, legislator, humorist and leader of popular movements. His achievements as a journalist have been an inspiration to other Ceylonese who made their mark in the profession. His "Christmas Debates", written in prose and verse with equal exuberance, are an entertaining contribution to the history of his time. He was much more than a journalist, and will always be remembered as one of the greatest Ceylonese patriots and leaders.

Francis Beven became Chief Editor of the *Examiner* when Ludovici had to be demoted and resigned as the result of a mischievous and improper article he wrote, directed against the *Observer*. As a leader-writer Beven had a vigorous style and a command of invective that made him a match for A. M. Ferguson. Hard verbal blows were sometimes exchanged between the rival editors. Long after his retirement from active journalism, Beven used to write weighty and trenchant letters to the Press, under the familiar initials F.B., which were interpreted by some of his critics as "Fire Brand".

"Lep" Ludovici

IN a pamphlet on Leopold Ludovici and his times, J. R. Toussaint has expressed the view that as a writer Ludovici was only slightly

inferior to Lorenz and "deserves to be gratefully remembered as one of those who helped to keep the torch burning brightly in that golden age in Ceylon literature".

When the *Examiner* had fallen on evil days, the editorship was again offered to "Lep" Ludovici, who took vigorous steps to increase its circulation. He later became sole proprietor as well as Editor of the paper. His combative and virile style, combined with a high sense of justice and fairplay, which made him take up every cause that called for redress, sometimes made him go too far. In the end he had to plead guilty to a charge of criminal libel committed against a high Government official.

Armand de Souza

THE outstanding personality in Ceylon journalism in the first two decades of the present century was Armand de Souza. He came to Colombo from Goa as a boy who knew little or no English. His gift for languages and keen intelligence were such that within ten years he was becoming one of the best writers of English in Ceylon at the time. After a brief spell as a railway clerk, he took to more congenial work in a newspaper office. Receiving his training on the staff of the *Times of Ceylon*, he later joined the newly started *Ceylon Morning Leader* and soon became its Editor.

Described by friends and foes alike as being every inch a journalist, Souza's success was phenomenal. A forceful writer and uncompromising critic of colonial autocracy, he made the people conscious of their rights and alive to the need for reforms that would ultimately lead to complete self-government.

In 1913 he received the unprecedented honour of a public presentation in recognition of his service to the people of Ceylon in the first five years of his editorship. Speaking on that occasion, Francis Beven said of Souza that he had infused a new soul into public life in Ceylon and liberated a spirit of independence and national self-respect among the people of the country. He had made them study public questions with interest and intelligence. One result of this was that for the first time in their history the Ceylonese had obtained the right to elect four of their representatives in the Legislative Council.

In the following year, Souza's courageous criticism of the way in which justice was being administered by a British Civil Servant as District Judge of Nuwara Eliya led to his being sentenced to a month's simple imprisonment for contempt of court. He was

regarded by friends and foes alike as a martyr in the cause of the freedom of the Press to criticize public officers.

A public outcry was raised against the law that permitted his conviction without giving him the opportunity of calling evidence to disprove his guilt. A new Governor of Ceylon arrived when this agitation for the amendment of the law was at its height, and one of his first acts was to order the release of Armand de Souza, who had then been in prison for only six days.

Souza died at the age of 47, and it was felt that his life had been shortened by his strenuous devotion to duty. Even his severest critics admired his brilliance and resourcefulness; his wide and deep knowledge of public affairs; and his indomitable courage in exposing and condemning official incompetence, arrogance and injustice.

POPULATION OF CEYLON

CEYLON'S population at the end of last year has been estimated at 9,040,000 as compared with 8,821,000 at the commencement of the year.

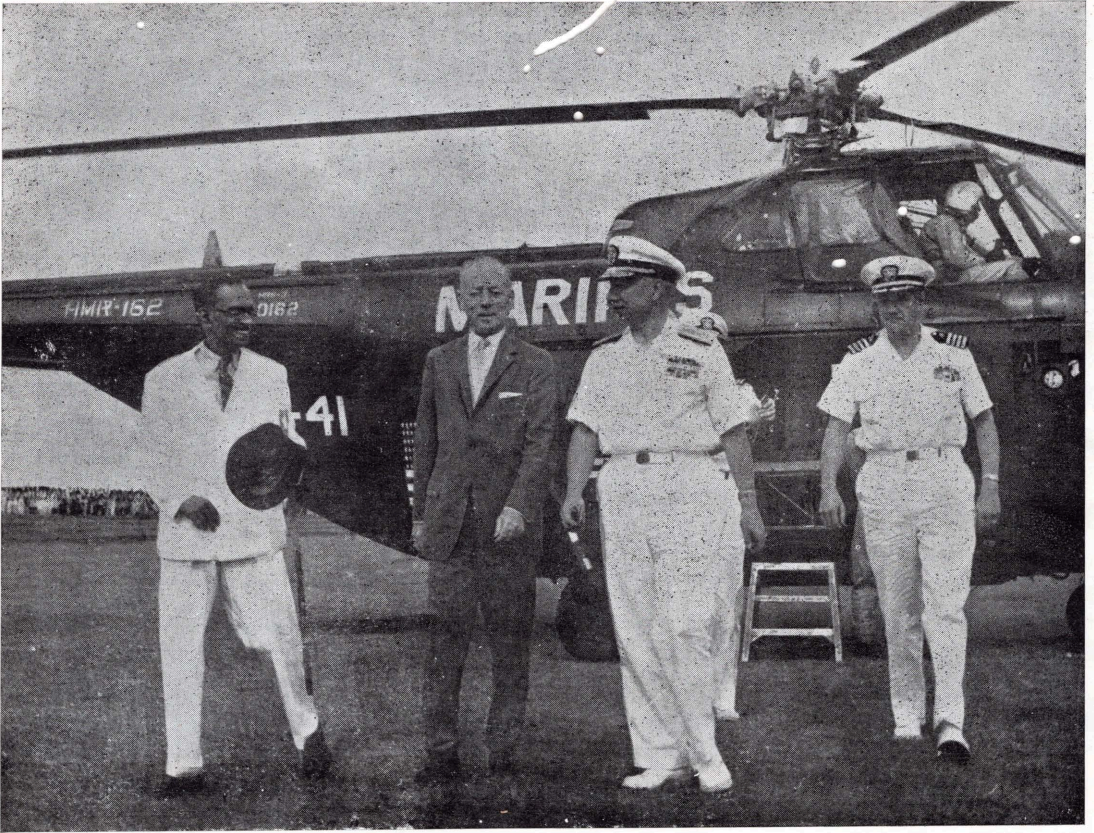
This is revealed in the annual Report of the Registrar-General on Vital Statistics, which has just been released.

The actual increase in population during the year 1956 has been 219,000 as compared with 207,000 in 1955. But the percentage increase for the two years has remained at the same level of 2.5 per cent.

The density of the Island's population has risen from 349 in 1955 to 357 persons per square mile in 1956.

At mid-year 1956, the Sinhalese population was estimated at 6,262,000 with a total percentage of 70.13. The Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils, who numbered 1,002,000 and 959,000 respectively, accounted for 11.22 and 10.74 per cent. of the Island's population. Ceylon Moors came next in order with 521,000 (5.83 per cent.) whilst Burghers and Eurasians numbered 48,000 (0.54 per cent.). There were also 43,000 Indian Moors (0.48 per cent.), 32,000 Malays (0.36 per cent.) and 7,000 Europeans (0.08 per cent.).

The Report also reveals that there are still 3,000 Veddas in the Island.



The Prime Minister (left) leaving a U. S. Navy helicopter, accompanied by Mr. Maxwell H. Gluck, U. S. Ambassador in Ceylon

Flood Havoc in Ceylon

CEYLON suffered the worst disaster caused by floods in her recent history during the tail-end of last year. Rainfall over the whole of Ceylon had been unusually high between October and December last. There was a spell of widespread rain in mid-December but the heaviest rainfall was experienced on two days December 24 and 25. This, as it were, gave the final push to the already full tanks and reservoirs.

Although nearly a month has passed since the event it has not been possible to make a final estimate of the material damage done. But there is no doubt that it will be in the

region of hundreds of millions of rupees. Several tanks in the Northern, North-Central, North-Western and Eastern Provinces breached their bunds causing loss of lives and damage to paddy lands. Among the important tanks thus rendered useless for a time are the Iranaimaddu, Huruluwewa, Kalawewa, Unichchai and Nachchaduwa tanks. The railway lines to Jaffna, Talaimannar, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, were washed away in several places for hundreds of yards. So were the bridges and the P. W. D. arterial roads. In the hill country earthslips caused the loss of several lives as well as damage to



▲ The Ceylon Premier watching the air and parachute-jumping display by Indian Air Force personnel

▼ The Ceylon Premier and the Minister of Lands aboard a U. S. Navy helicopter

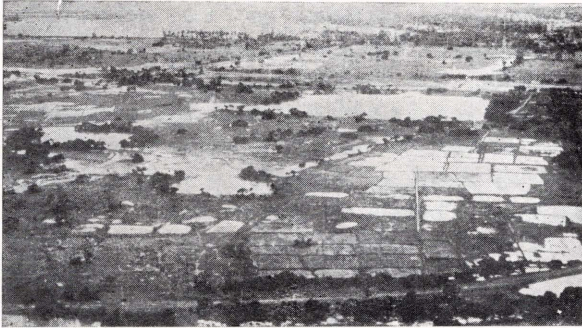
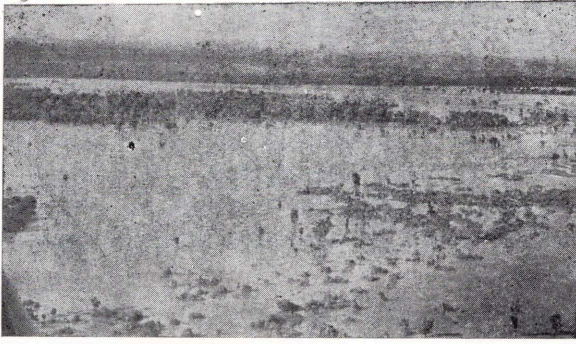


rail, road and bridges. Telecommunication and postal services were interrupted for weeks.

The bright part in this dark picture was the way the people and the Government of the country faced the situation and the aid and succour they received from foreign countries. Helicopters, planes, dinghies and food parcels, clothes, medical supplies, etc., were dropped by Indian, British and United States planes, whilst almost all the countries of the world sent aid in money and kind.

The Minister of Lands and Land Development, the Hon. C. P. de Silva, made a statement in the House of Representatives immediately after several visits to the flood-stricken areas. We print below extracts from his speech to give a picture of the damage done and the way, he said, the Government proposed to tackle the situation:—

I thought of speaking very early in the Debate before other hon. members on both



sides got up to speak because I wished to have an opportunity of stating exactly on what lines the Ministry of Lands was proposing to work so that I would have the benefit of their advice and observations on the proposals.

What took place during the last week or so was something that does not normally happen according to the rainfall figures. We cannot trace a year when such a thing on such a scale had happened. What happened was this. Rainfall had been pretty high for about four or five weeks or more. Tanks had reached spilling point and the surface of the ground was fully soaked. Tanks were filled. Water reached the level of 12 feet in about the same number of hours. There was rainfall

▲ Floods in the North-Central Province

◀ Floods in the Mannar District



◀ The Trincomalee area under water

right throughout the area. An inch of rain involves 100 tons of water per acre of land. At 640 acres to a square mile it means 64,000 tons of water on one square mile. Some of the tanks have a background of many square miles of catchment and as the ground was fully soaked every drop of water that fell in the catchment area found its way to the tank. The tanks were already full and one can imagine the result. This sort of thing does not normally happen. . . .

No irrigation system was ever devised to face such a situation. I have in fact examined plans and designs of some of the most important major tanks in the country. Kalawewa has been designed to meet an optimum flood situation—the worst that could be foreseen—but what happened recently was worse than the worst that could have been anticipated. . . .

Future Safeguards

AS an insurance against similar occurrences in the future steps are being taken to provide in each tank, big or small, what is called a breach section of the bund. We cannot afford to construct new spillways four or five feet above the present ones or to raise the bunds of tanks four or five feet more because all this will involve a colossal sum of money. Another point is that if such construction is undertaken they may serve a useful purpose only once in so many decades. Instead of this we are proposing to provide breach sections at levels where the ground level is above the spill level of the tank—what is called the “high flood level”, nearly 2 feet above the spill level. Lengths are to be marked out sufficient to meet any situation. These places are to be marked by means of concrete signs on the bund. Instructions will be included in the maintenance instructions issued to persons in charge of tanks to the effect that when the water reaches a certain height or if the rainfall has exceeded so many inches during a monsoon, every breach section must be cut open immediately without further orders from anybody. Officers on the spot are

to do that immediately without any further reference to anybody. This system is being worked in the case of every major tank and also in the case of the smaller ones. In the case of very small village tanks what is normally called the natural spill could be widened quite easily by workers and villagers and the bulk of the water could be drawn off. . . .

But there are a few obvious cases where we think that this spill accommodation is unnecessary because of the subsequent development in the catchment area. For example, the Minneriya tank has to be restored but we find that with the subsequent development of the valley above it, with the Elahera canal, an additional new spill will be required. There are a few tanks for which we have sent out gunny bags at the very start to save the water. For instance, in the case of some of these tanks we have been able, and we are still attempting, to save sufficient water in the tank to safeguard the growing crop. Some portions of the crop have been lost but a good part of it is still there.

January and February are dry months; we do not expect any rain till March. A good part of the cultivation has been saved from the floods, and if we are not careful this paddy will die as a result of drought and what will die as a result of the drought will be much greater than—I am talking of the tanks which have been fully breached—what has been destroyed by the floods.

I went to the Giants Tank and saw for myself that a very large section of the bund has been breached; colossal damage has been done to it. But that bund is not so high as the Kalawewa bund which has to be consolidated and that can only be done with machinery. The Giants Tank bund is not so big as that.

In the case of all these tanks we are now employing labour in very large numbers, both men and women, to close the breaches. We are, as I said, using labour in the case of village tanks and even in the case of some

major tanks where the bunds are not very high, like the Giants Tank in the Mannar District and the Allai Tank in the Trincomalee District, because that is the fastest way of getting work done. We cannot take heavy machinery for some time on account of the bad roads. But, however, this will also give employment to a large number of people who would otherwise have to be kept on the dole.

My Department, the Department of Irrigation, expects to get practically all the village tanks completely restored—I am not talking of the temporary coffer dams and stick dams to save sufficient water to safeguard the present crop—to close all the breaches in the village tanks in time for the *Yala* rains, that means in March, so that if there is satisfactory *Yala* rains the tanks will be ready to store that water for the *Yala* cultivation.

Major Tanks

IN the case of the major tanks like Kalawewa, Nachchaduwa, Pavatkulam, Giants Tank, Iranaimadu, and so on, we would attempt to close them before March.

Of cases where the work can be done within the time at our disposal because if we do undertake to close a breach we must complete the work before the rains. The breach at Huruluwewa, I understand, is of such magnitude that I do not think we can possibly close it by March before the *Yala* rains. Therefore, it would be a waste of effort and time to attempt it now.

We are going to start work on them. The necessary machinery has been ordered to be put on the job and we hope to close the dams, not the coffer dams, in a month's time. The breaches at Kalawewa, Nachchaduwa, Giants Tank and Pavatkulam are such that there is a possibility of doing the work and completing it before the south-west monsoon rains. Those are tanks which can benefit from the south-west monsoon rains.

But there are certain tanks like Unnichai and Vakaneri where my departmental officers

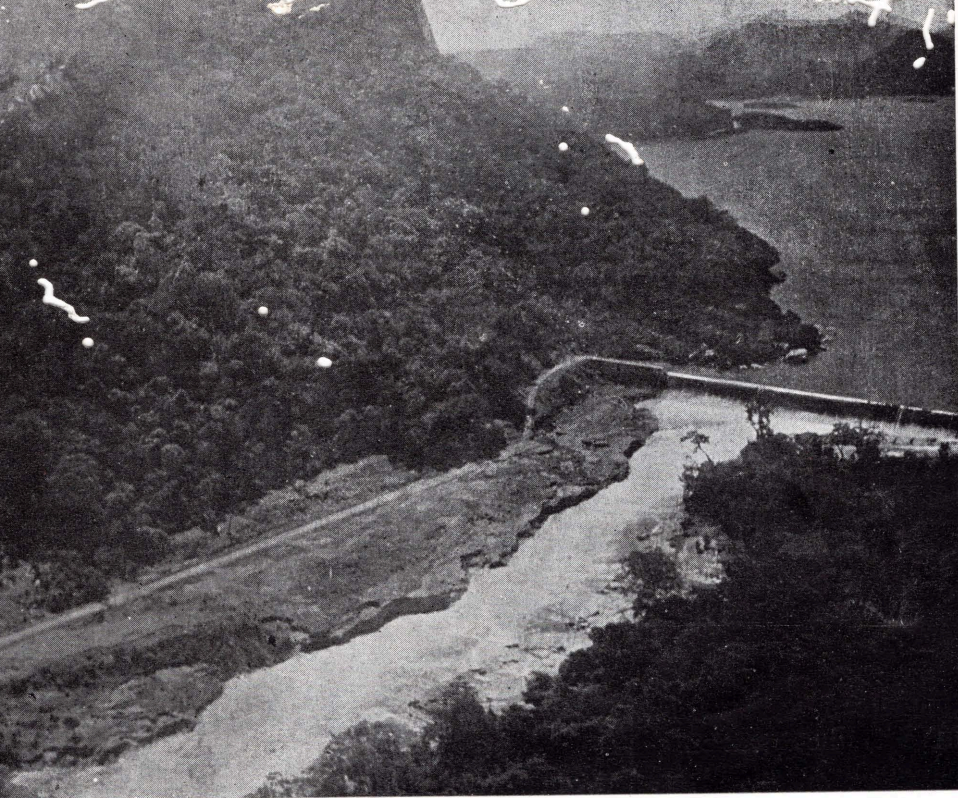
think that there is no use of making a start on them now. We shall start work on them in about May when the south-west monsoon rains are over. We shall concentrate all the machinery we have on them because they must be closed with heavy machinery. As soon as we have finished with tanks like the Kalawewa and the minor tanks, and the channel system on the Elahera, we shall concentrate all the machinery and try to finish all these tanks by the end of September or early October so that they can benefit from the north-east monsoon. That is the only line on which we can work.

National Task

WE are doing our best to carry out this programme of reconstruction as quickly as possible. I am convinced that the officers of the Irrigation Department look upon this work as a national endeavour. In most of the places I went to, officers of the Irrigation Department are taking tremendous risks to see that this work is done. On the 24th and 25th, under the most difficult conditions, they have gone to these places at the risk of their lives. I am very grateful to them and I am sure this honourable House is deeply grateful to them for all they are doing.

Officers of the Irrigation Department and the Land Ministry are aware of the great responsibility they are faced with. They know the magnitude of the work they are undertaking. I know that officers of the Survey Department, Irrigation Department, Land Development Department, Land Commissioner's Department and every Department in the Land Ministry have had to work very hard and are doing their utmost to carry out the work of reconstruction.

I can here and now state that every man in these Departments, from the highest to the lowest, will in the months to come work very hard without considering their own benefits and conveniences, without trying to gain some advantage out of a national emergency, in order to see that a really good job of work is done.



The Gal Oya reservoir spilling. At the height of the floods the water was spilling at a level of $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the level of the spillway dam, which is 70 feet high and 170 feet long

It is true that there were labour troubles, but in this grave national emergency all officers are working as one team, irrespective of any personal advantages, in order to complete this work. I feel confident that there is every chance of completing this repair work by the end of this year. That is something I never expected because I saw for myself the damage that has been caused. It is a tremendous task. . . .

We are tremendously short of cadjan just now. In areas where cadjans are normally produced, in the temples in these areas, I have been told by the priests there that the poor people who make a dozen cadjans bring them to the temples, and there are hundreds of thousands of cadjans brought by the people which are collected, in *bana maduwas* in all these temples in the coconut-growing areas. They are kept in these places to prevent them from being attacked by white ants. We are now despatching them to the dry zone and I am glad that before long all the requirements of the dry zone in this regard will be met. They are now being sent to all the places where they are needed.

The other item we are short of is baskets for carrying earth. The Irrigation Department needs about 200,000 baskets made of cane or *bata* with which workmen can carry earth on their heads and fill the breaches, and so on. Hon. members may have heard of "bataleeya" baskets. They are so called after a village in the constituency of the Hon. Minister of Health, which is also famous for cadju. We need a couple of hundred thousands of these baskets but today people are using anything they can get hold of; they are using buckets for their work. . . .

Medical Aid

THE Hon. Leader of the Opposition made certain points about medicines. On the 27th I saw the Head of the Department, the Director of Health Services, sending practically all the drugs we could get hold of; ordinary drugs such as those needed in cases of fever, stomach trouble, and also antibiotics and so on. I was at Ratmalana and saw large parcels and packets being airlifted to every place where there was a landing

ground. On the following day we sent out a radio message requesting the doctors in the hospitals in those areas to collect their requirements from central places where stocks were being built up. Wherever transport facilities were available drugs were sent in as large a quantity as possible. Conditions were such that drugs had to be stocked in certain central spots and wherever transport facilities were available doctors were requested to get their requirements. I am prepared to say that because I know that a large quantity of drugs were sent.

Medical teams were also sent out and they are now getting on with the job of attending to the needs of the people. . . .

Earlier I was speaking about the manner in which we were going to deal with the restoration of the tanks. I must say that such reconstruction can only be undertaken at a terrific price.

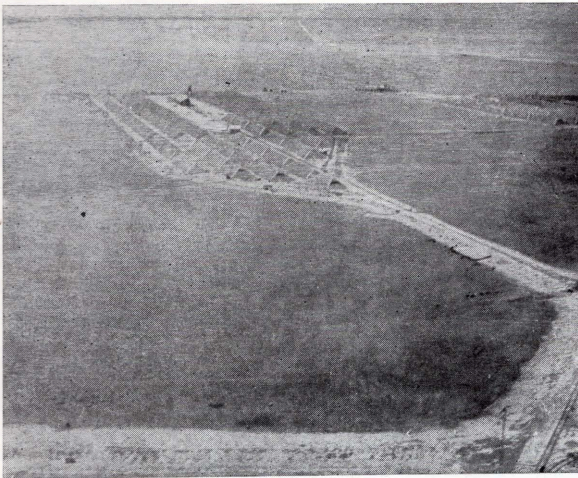
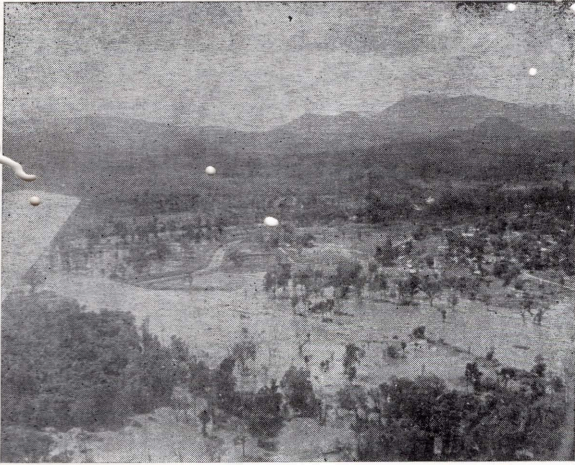
The first casualty will be the national development programme which we are undertaking. We have to stop work on all the new schemes for which funds have been

provided in the current Estimates—at least most of that work—draw the machines from them and use those machines for reconstruction. That does not mean that we will be totally abandoning the new schemes. We will go on with them, but on a very restricted scale, using labour as much as possible and a few machines where they are essential.

The Irrigation Department has prepared a list of extra machines and heavy equipment which will be needed if we are to undertake the job of reconstructing the damaged irrigation schemes, while at the same time going ahead with new irrigation schemes which are so vital for the increased production of foodstuffs, and providing land for the landless and employment for those who need it. I believe the cost of the equipment required—a list of which has been prepared—is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 10 to 15 million rupees. **If we can get that equipment, say, within the next three months, then it will be possible for us to undertake the job of reconstruction while not abandoning the land development programme which**



Road and railway track washed off by floods in the Eastern Province



Top—The Gal Oya area under water

Bottom—The salterns at Elephant Pass (North Ceylon) under water

we are going to undertake during this financial year, according to our plans prepared before the floods.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about those people in Anuradhapura town who were living in rented houses and leading, more or less, a slum life. As you are aware the Government has already issued instructions that a certain section of the new town of Anuradhapura, which has not yet been allotted in that area, should be allotted to these people so that they can build new houses in a safe area. Similar instructions have gone through the Land

Commissioner to all the Government Agents to the effect that no houses—even with the money provided by the Hon. Minister of Labour, Housing and Social Services—should be erected in dangerous areas, in areas which are periodically subject to floods, but that these people should be resettled in safer and more suitable areas. We have asked the Government Agents to use whatever Crown land, if any, is available for such purpose and in areas where no Crown land is available to select suitable private lands and take possession of them immediately under section 36 of the Land Acquisition Act and re-settle the flood victims on such lands.

This is most important, especially in the up-country areas where, as you are aware, a large number of people have suffered as a result of earth-slips and, to a lesser extent, as a result of floods. There is no use rebuilding houses for them on the edges of hills where earth-slips are likely to occur or on land subject to floods. We will have to acquire safe lands in areas which are acceptable to these people and settle them there, in which case they will be settled on land which will be alienated to them under the Land Development Ordinance. Whether it is Crown land or private land that is given to them, such land will be alienated under the Land Development Ordinance. Also, in the normal way, they will get a certain amount of assistance from the Land Commissioner's Department for building houses plus, of course, a certain amount of temporary accommodation which will immediately be required for housing them. That is the procedure we propose to adopt both in the town areas and in the rural areas. . . .

Squatters

WE have one very big problem, namely, the large body of squatters in the dry zone. There are thousands of them. As you are aware, the last Government considered the squatters a public menace but I personally consider them as one of the most virile

sections of our country's population. Most of our colonists are given everything; yet they find it difficult to make ends meet. But all that the squatters ask of the Government is the right to be left alone. They do not ask for employment or for relief. They do not come round either to this House or any other equally touchy place and make a public nuisance of themselves. Although they undergo enormous suffering they increase the productivity of this country, the wealth of this country, earn their own living and make homes for themselves and their families out of the jungle. Such men were considered a menace by the last Government but this Government does not look upon them in that light. I for one have the greatest regard for such men, and I hope there are others in this country who will attempt to earn a living for themselves without depending on somebody else. As my hon. Friend the Minister of Finance says, they are voluntary colonists, very persevering and a good type too. There are thousands of them in the dry zone and other parts—even in Allai.

In regard to the question of the supply of foodstuffs, we have no difficulty; but the question of rehabilitating these people is, in my humble opinion, going to be a most difficult problem for the present. Even if a village is wiped out it is easy to build a new village expansion scheme. In fact, I have ordered entirely new villages to be built in suitable places with wells, access roads, and so on. We are attempting to do this on a fairly large scale because I feel we will have to deal with at least 10,000 families. I know under the Minipe scheme, there are about 1,500 squatters in that part of the extension which falls into the Kandy District, between the Heen-Ganga and the present colonies. There are one or two tanks which have been fully investigated and which we are prepared to restore. But there are no engineering surveys for the irrigable areas and therefore we are unable to locate exactly what is paddy land and what is highland. We want

to make some departures in our colonization methods through sheer necessity because no engineering survey plans are available and no blocking-out plans have been made. There are many such schemes. . . .

I fully agree with the views of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition when he said that we must not restrict ourselves to restoring the old irrigation schemes and follow the old order but that we must build an entirely new set-up. That is our aim. We must use this calamity not merely to get back to where we were but also to go ahead because, with all the suffering, with all the inconvenience undergone, a new spirit of adventure, a spirit of courage and boldness, I should say, has been created in our people to go ahead and not only regain what we have lost but also obtain more. That is why the Hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned that those families who were rescued take the first opportunity to go back to their lands. I have seen that in Polonnaruwa and in most other areas. It is so in Allai, where, for instance, as the water comes down they go back to their land and try to re-build that place. There is that courage among our people in all districts and it shall be our endeavour to give them every encouragement not only to regain what they have lost but also to use that new spirit to develop our country more. . . .

Naturally, it is the Government that has to foot the bill. It is far too much for a private capitalist to do that. **But whatever the means or limits were, there was the will of the people all over in all districts to rise in this crisis and come to the aid of those stricken by the disaster.** We ought to be grateful for that and, I am sure, with the new spirit prevailing, it will be possible for us to overcome all our difficulties if all groups that were divided collect together in the normal times and face this serious situation not only to reconstruct and regain what we have lost but also go ahead in a way that our national development problem will ultimately lead us to prosperity.



Cultural agreement being signed in Colombo between the U. S. S. R. and Ceylon

Foreign Affairs

Agreement on Cultural Co-operation

AN Agreement was reached on January 15 between the U. S. S. R. Trade and Cultural delegation now in the Island and the Ceylon Government delegation on the establishment of a Joint Commission on cultural co-operation between the Soviet Union and Ceylon.

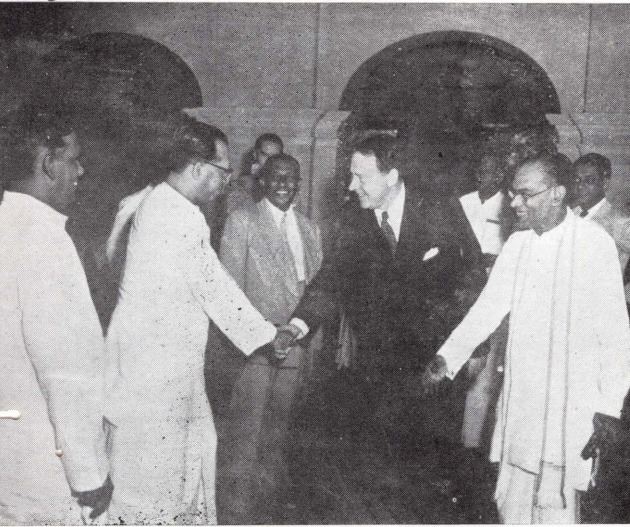
The following participated in the negotiations for the Government of the U. S. S. R. :—

Mr. M. D. Yakovlov—Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries under the Council of the Ministries of the U. S. S. R. (Leader of the Delegation), Mr. I. I. Kovalenko—Chief of the Department of South-East Asia and Far East countries of the State Committee, Mr. P. P. Kabanov—the Member

of the Board of the Ministry of Culture of the U. S. S. R., Mr. B. M. Sakovitch—Senior official of the State Committee.

Following the principle of peaceful co-existence and guided by the desire to promote cultural relations with a view to the further development and strengthening of friendship and co-operation between the Soviet Union and Ceylon, the two Parties agreed, in accordance with understanding reached in 1956 between the delegations of the Governments of the U. S. S. R. and Ceylon, to strengthen and develop cultural co-operation between the two countries in the fields of literature, arts, sciences, education, health, radio-broadcasting, films, sports and tourism.

The two Parties agreed on the establishment of Joint Commission on Cultural Co-operation, the



Top—The Ceylon Premier introducing Mr. Hugh Gaitskell, Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, to Ministers of the Ceylon Cabinet

Bottom—The Rumanian cultural delegation photographed on arrival in Colombo

task of which will be the co-operation of annual plans on cultural co-operation between the two countries,

It has been announced in Colombo that the Government of Canada has, with the concurrence of the Government of Ceylon, decided to appoint Mr. N. Cavell as High Commissioner for Canada in Ceylon, in succession to Mr. J. J. Hurley.

Mr. Cavell who was born in Hampshire, England, emigrated to Canada in 1934 after spending some time in South Africa, and the Far East, where he was engaged in various business enterprises.

From 1934 until 1951 he was a Senior Executive with two large Canadian manufacturing organizations.

Mr. Cavell has also been active in journalism and is a former Chairman of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and President of the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs.

In 1951, Mr. Cavell was appointed the first Administrator of the Colombo Plan Administration in Canada, in the Department of Trade and Commerce. As such he was responsible for the administration of Canada's Colombo Plan Programme. In connection with these duties Mr. Cavell has travelled extensively in South-East Asia and has visited Ceylon several times.

Cardinal Spellman's Visit

CARDINAL Spellman, Archbishop of New York and Catholic Primate of the United States, arrived in Ceylon in January on a short visit. Among those who greeted him at the airport was the Archbishop of Colombo, Dr. Thomas Cooray.

Speaking to pressmen shortly after his arrival, Cardinal Spellman said that American Catholics had been very sorry to hear of Ceylon's flood disaster and had contributed 500 tons of food to be sent here. He himself would make a personal contribution to the Flood Relief Fund, he added.

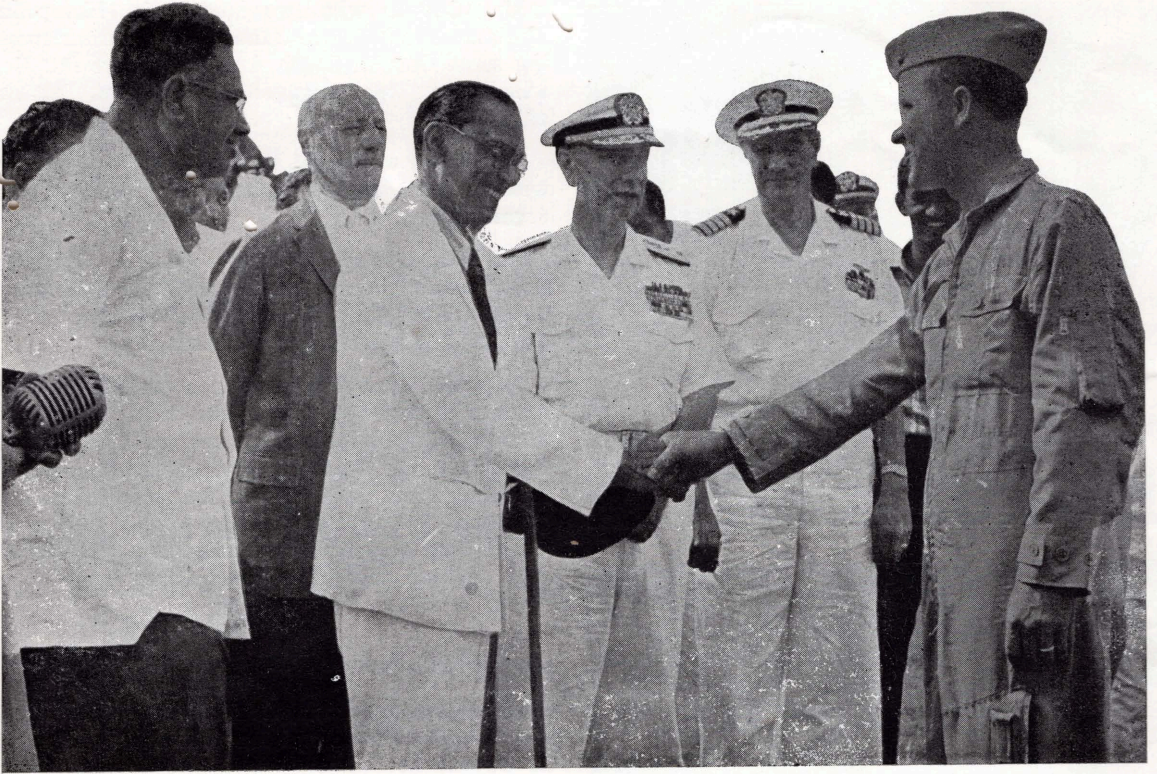
Subsequently Cardinal Spellman made a donation of Rs. 50,000 to the Prime Minister for use in flood relief work.

Ceylon's Minister in Paris

THE Government of Ceylon has, with the concurrence of the French Government, decided to appoint Mr. P. R. Gunasekera as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for Ceylon in Paris in succession to His Excellency Sir Claude Corea, K.B.E. Mr. P. R. Gunasekera will be resident in Paris.

Minister in Thailand

THE Government of Ceylon has, with the concurrence of the Government of Thailand, decided



The Ceylon Premier greeting airmen of the U. S. S. Princeton soon after they flew over Colombo in a salute to Ceylon. This followed rescue work during the floods in Ceylon

to appoint His Excellency Mr. W. D. Gunaratna, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for Ceylon in Rangoon, concurrently as Ceylon's first Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Bangkok.

Trade and Goodwill Mission from Ghana

A Trade and Goodwill Mission from Ghana led by the Honourable Mr. A. E. Inkumsah, Minister of Housing, arrived in Ceylon last Friday. The objects of the Mission are :

1. To carry a message of goodwill to Ceylon.

2. To explore the possibilities of promoting reciprocal trade between Ghana and Ceylon.
3. To study our problems on establishing small-scale or cottage industries in rural areas.

Since their arrival the Mission has called on His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, and the Honourable the Prime Minister, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. They also attended a conference at the Ministry of Commerce and Trade presided over by the Honourable Mr. R. G. Senanayake, Minister of Commerce and Trade. At this conference the possibility of promoting trade between Ghana and Ceylon was discussed.

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