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Letter From The Editor

THE PICTURE ON THE COVER reflects the peace and calm that generally prevails in this country at all times except when in periods of strife and storm. In the second half of this century, Sri Lanka has witnessed such periods turmoil, unfortunately at increasingly frequent intervals. It is not our purpose to recount the periods of civil commotion which have overtaken this country since the Hartal of August 1953. Nor do we want to hark back to the communal disturbances of May 1958 or August 1977. Besides these, great damage has been done to the economy of this country by the endless resort to strikes especially in the years after 1956 not only to secure economic demands but also to promote political ends (and at times even to subserve personal pique). Whereas governments have tried to go from one election to another on the crest of one tamasha to another tamasha, from one gimmick to another or from one gundu to another, Left parties had sought to gather strength and punch by leapfrogging one strike over another. It was only when the United Front was in power (1970-75) that a serious attempt was made to prevent strikes by freezing the economic demands (the LSSP's famous 21 demands went into permanent deep-freeze) and by seeking to eliminate political strikes under the slogan of liquidating "reactionary conspiracies to topple a progressive government." The United Front of the SLFP, LSSP and CP did succeed in reducing strikes to a minimum, but when the Front disintegrated in 1975 strikes once again became the order of the day. The UNP Government of J. R. Jayewardene whilst granting the right to strike as a fundamental right in the Constitution has rightly pointed out that if the strike weapon was used indiscriminately, especially for political ends like toppling elected governments before their time, it would retard economic growth. The Government has therefore taken up the position that the token general strike scheduled for September 28 (this note is being written on 23/9 whilst the paper will be on the newsstands on 30/9) was a politically-motivated strike intended to de-stabilise the Government. The Joint Trade Union Action Committee (led mainly by the LSSP's CFL) has been at pains to assert that it was an economic strike for higher wages to meet the higher cost of living. The Government's answer is that it has already increased the purchasing power of the people of lower income brackets in a number of ways and that it has already undertaken to effect massive increases in wages in the Budget that will be tabled on November 15. Governmental spokesmen suggest that the Opposition groups want to take the credit for wage increases the Government has promised to introduce in the next Budget by staging this token strike. Whatever anyone may say, the token strike on September 28 has come to be regarded as a political confrontation between the UNP (and its present allies) and the ULF and its former ally, the SLFP. The Jayewardene Government, which has shown a weakness for Overkill Strategy to cope with such problems of confrontation, has issued many threats: that all those who keep off from work on September 28 will ipso facto lose their jobs which would be immediately filled up from the ranks of the unemployed. This is sooner said than done. The Government has mobilised its entire armed and security forces in a massive show of strength. The Government would have done well to play a low-profile role after issuing its ultimatum. work or lose your jobs whether in the public or private sector. The Government has mounted a propaganda onslaught of such over-kill magnitude that it is the JIUAC that has benefited by it—it has received all-island publicity it could not have got otherwise. The ULF and the JIUAC stand to lose as much as the Government (and the economy of the country) by the premature and untimely strike on September 28 (which some Leftists have called adventurist). (POSTSCRIPT The strike was called off on 25/9/78).

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The Strike That Never Was

THE CONCLUDING SENTENCE of this column last week was "the argument of the CFL is defensive and apologetic, quibbling that the September 28th token strike was not political but economic." The CFL statement was cited by us in full. It was in reply to the Government charge that the strike was politically-motivated and that it was intended to be the first of a series of extra-parliamentary steps by the ULF and some trade unions to topple the Government which had been duly elected.

Instead of arguing that the right to strike was absolute, whether it be a political or economic strike, the CFL statement was an anæmic and circumlocutory one to say that the 28th September strike was only in support of the economic demands of the workers. This (CFL's) argument does not seem to have carried weight even with many of the trade unions which the Joint Trade Unions Action Committee (JTUAC) claimed to represent.

In the course of last week, Union after Union issued statements disassociating themselves from the proposed strike. This may have been in some measure due to big stick and powerful overkill measures and propaganda the Government had launched no sooner the JTUAC had announced the proposed strike, but there is also no doubt that the workers in the organised trade unions even under the control of the Opposition Parties and groups—the SLFP, LSSP, CP, CMU and splinter Left groups like Shanmugathasan's, Vasudeva's and Dharmasekera's—were not for

a strike that was undoubtedly 'political'. Economic dissatisfaction and grievances exist in plenty—they were also there when the UF of the SLFP, LSSP and CP were in power between 1970 and 1977—but the situation is such that the bulk of organised workers are not yet ready and willing to start a battle with the Government at this juncture when it has already increased wages in key sectors, had begun to pay a dole to unemployed youth and also hold out promises of more employment and yet higher wages soon.

Moreover, the ULF of the LSSP and CP which took the initiative in calling this token strike does not seem to—as events have shown—command much support in the entire spectrum of trade unions. Even the SLFP Unions were half-hearted with only a section of the SLFP leadership for the strike (remember Mrs. B's quip in Parliament "I will not strike..." which betrayed that she was not fully behind the proposed token strike—she cannot be expected to be enthusiastic about the strike with LSSP and CP leaders sniping at her at every meeting and in every statement). Except for Vasudeva Nanayakkara and a few other leftist extremist hardliners, it is known that all other Left and Opposition groups outside the ULF were opposed to the strike. The JVP had come out strongly against the strike, and this is understandable with the ULF leaders waging a bitter cold war against the JVP (which the ULF leaders do not seem to realise enjoys a large residuary support from all younger elements disillusioned with all established political parties, ranging from the Right to the Left). The DWC of left-leaning Aziz issued a statement that it did not propose to join the strike. The CWC and NUW in the plantations were also totally opposed to the strike.

It is unnecessary to compile a list of trade unions which opposed the strike, but it is clear that the JTUAC had issued the call for a token strike (which was political but under the smokescreen of economic demands) without obtaining the prior grass-roots support of the trade unions that made up the federations which were in the JTUAC. Many trade unionists have privately made the point that the call for a token strike had come from the top and in the past when such adventurist calls for strikes were given trade unions and members had not wanted to let down their leaders and had come out on strike. But this time the majority of workers in the trade unions under nominal ULF leadership did not seem willing to risk venturing on a strike which did not have adequate support.

The array of trade unions on the side of the Government, totally and vehemently opposed to the strike, was also considerable. On the strength of its own trade union support, the Government met the threat from the ULF with all the powers and authority that a Government can mobilise. It called the strike "political". It was not moreover difficult to persuade people that it was political because there was no doubt it was. And the line between a political and economic strike is very thin. Next, the government brought on an over-dose of over-kill propaganda—intimidatory, conciliatory and coupled with a bagful of promises—to stampede the public into an alarmist mood to oppose the strike. THE ULF, CFL, and other pro-strike units grumbled that the government was using the newspaper media and the state radio to damn the strike, but the LSSP, SLFP and CP are the last who can complain about this considering what they had done in the years they were in power in the coal-

Strike "Deferred"

tion from 1970. Even the main Opposition Party in Parliament now, the TULF, with many grievances against the Government opposed the strike on the ground that in the CFL and JIUAC list of demands did not include certain disguised pro-Eelam demands.

In this situation, towards the end of last week it was whispered among knowledgeable political circles in the Left that there were moves afoot to call off the strike and that what was difficult was the effort to devise a face-saving formula before beating what was termed a strategic retreat to be able to fight better at a future date. The formula that seemed to have much support was that the strike should be "postponed" till after the Budget in which the Government had promised pay increases and other measures to provide relief to the workers in the lower income groups. But there seems to have been opposition to any "postponement" to a particular time or date—no doubt because it was felt it was not possible to fix a time for a strike of this nature. Unless the government blunders in a big way, Sri Lanka will not see a general strike (even a token one for a day) for a long long time to come.

After protracted discussions at different levels during the last weekend and a final meeting of the JIUAC in the morning on Monday, September 25, the announcement about the deferring of the strike was made at a rally at Hyde Park in the evening. The *Ceylon Daily News* in a frontpage spread UNIONS CALL OFF TOKEN STRIKE: DECISION FOLLOWS FIRM WARNING BY GOVT. (Premil Ratnayake reporting) reported:

"The Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions yesterday decided to 'defer' the 24-hour token strike planned for Thursday, after a

five-hour discussion at Malay Street. The decision was unanimous. A spokesman for the 17 trade union organisations (a larger trade union outfit than the old JCTUO which has remained dormant ever since the split between the SLFP and its LSSP and CP partners) said the Committee would review trade union action later. The spokesman said that what led the Joint Committee to decide on a temporary cancellation of the work stoppage on September 28 was the 'direct illegal threat' held out by the government.

"The government had earlier warned workers in the public and private sectors that they would be considered to have vacated their posts if they failed to turn up for duty on September 28. Several trade unions had in the last few days pledged support to the government and announced they would not participate in the token strike. Most trade unions which denounced the strike said they were dissociating themselves from trade union action because they did not wish to undermine the government's development efforts. No previous threat of trade union action drew as much public attention as the one which was "deferred" by trade unions yesterday."

The full text of the JIUAC is as follows: "The Joint Trade Union Action Committee (JIUAC) has considered all aspects of the situation that has arisen in relation to the Token General Strike, called for 28th September 1978, by the JIUAC, on the five demands endorsed by the Conference of Delegates of the seventeen organisations represented in the JIUAC, on 17th September 1978. Instead of dealing with the demands in a reasonable manner, the Government has resorted to an unprecedented effort to deter or prevent the organised working class from demonstrating its support for

the demands by participation in the token strike on 28th, September.

"The JIUAC condemns, in particular, the undemocratic and unlawful action of the Government in its efforts. (1) to deter employees in the public services and state corporations from participating in the token strike by the threat to deprive them of their jobs, if they do so. (2) to prevent the trade unions in the state sector from holding meetings in workplaces or even in their vicinity, in pursuance of the strike call, and to prevent union officials and activists from acting in pursuance of the token strike, by transferring them arbitrarily from their workplaces, or interdicting them. (3) to deter employees in the private sector from participating in the token strike, by calling upon their employers to act in the same unlawful manner as the Government has done in relation to its employees in the state sector, and to resort to 'special legislation through Parliament' or even to enact 'emergency regulations, if necessary' to enable or give cover to such action by private employers.

"The JIUAC also condemns the gross abuse of the Government's control of the radio and major newspapers to build up a tremendous barrage of false propaganda in relation to the token strike. This has culminated in the publication of a statement of the President himself on 24th September, to the effect that the token strike is not merely on demands that 'refer to political matters', as the Government first declared on 11th September 1978, but is 'a beginning of an attempt to overthrow illegally, a democratically elected government'. The JIUAC rejects this allegation as being utterly unfounded and absurd. In the situation that has arisen, the JIUAC appreciates that the free participation of substantial sections

of the organised working class, particularly in the state sector, is not possible on 28th September, and that it is difficult for the organisations representing the employees in that sector, especially, to mobilise their members effectively to resist victimisation by way of lockouts or mass dismissals, if they participate in the token strike on that date.

"The JIUAC has accordingly decided to defer the implementation of the decision for a Token General Strike on 28th September, and to prepare the organised working class to meet the threat held out by the Government to the exercise of the fundamental right of workers to strike, in pursuance of demands relating directly to the basic economic needs of the working people and to their democratic and trade union rights."

The JIUAC statement is a further confirmation of the weakness on the part of the ULF which had taken the initiative for the token strike of September 28. It would have been better to have announced the "deferment" of the strike without setting out the reasons listed in the statement. It would have been enough if the statement has simply said that the JIUAC had decided to defer the strike to a more appropriate time. But the excuses given in the form of criticism against the Government makes it amply clear that the JIUAC cannot for a very long time to come think of a general strike—a political or even an economic strike—because the statement is an admission that the Government has been able to employ its political strength and powers to pressurise the trade unions not to back the JIUAC.

The ULF had called a political strike and the Government had used political weapons to outflank the ULF and JIUAC

and compel it into an ignominious retreat. The Government employed every means of propaganda at its command to achieve what it has achieved. The JIUAC should have known what to expect. The LSSP and CP should also have known what to expect after having indulged in some of the threats of intimidation and victimisation the ULF had been responsible for in the years after 1970. Not to have anticipated what took place betrays infantilism on the part of the ULF.

In the final result all that can be said is that the ULF, in its first attempt to test its trade union strength, has lost not merely the first round, but an entire series of preliminary rounds. ULF leaders have to search their hearts and consciences before they formulate new policies, new strategies and new alignments and on the basis of a new image re-dedicate themselves for a new political future. It is futile sniping at Mrs. Bandaranaike, damning Rohana Wijeweera ridiculing the CWC, scolding the Tamils for tolerating the TULF and thereafter expect the entire range of enlightened and unenlightened Left and Opposition opinion to flock to them.

All groups and parties in the Opposition (or even those not in the Opposition but not with the UNP) seem to spend more time in trying to discredit each other than endeavour to find a basis for joint political action against the policies of the Government with which they disagree. The JVP is for ever bashing away at the LSSP, CP and the SLFP. The TULF is satisfied only when it hammers away at everybody and this is universal because no other party or

group has taken kindly to Eelam. The UNP alone is so far spared of inner factionalism which can damage its position—differences may exist but unless such differences boil over into becoming open factional squabbles, a political party has nothing to worry about.

The Government of J. R. Jayewardene has won a major battle against the Left and Left-led trade unions without firing a shot or facing battle across picket lines. All that it used was intimidatory propaganda which every government, whether Right or Left, uses if it should be confronted with a general strike, even if it was only a token one-day strike. The Government did not use any of the punitive powers it could have exercised. It is significant that the mere threat to use them had the results desired by the Government.

The ULF and the Left associated in the JIUAC have suffered a major defeat. By the premature action in calling for an island-wide general strike it has set the trade union movement it leads and sought to lead back by many years. This has political implications of far-reaching consequences.

WHILST THE GOVERNMENT has much to crow about in breaking the token general strike even before the strike began, there is much for the Government to worry about about the affairs of the country. Although the new Constitution was inaugurated on September 7 and a new Cabinet of Ministers was sworn in on the same day (with an additional list of Ministers and Deputy Ministers sworn in on September 14), there seems to be untold confusion about the allocation of departments and functions as between the different Ministries. Up to the time of writ-

ing, (September 26), there been no Gazette setting out the allocation of departments and functions—with the result that chaos seems to prevail in certain key ministries and departments.

There appear to be many bones of contention, but to mention one, the Forest Dept. It was originally under the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, under E. L. Senanayake. But with E. L. being deprived of all the prestigious departments and corporations previously under him, there is confusion about the future of the Forest Department. Minister E. L. is said to be issuing orders on the footing that this Department is still under him, but the bureaucratic firmament around the powerful Ministry of Irrigation Lands and Mahaweli is convinced that Forestry must come under Lands and Mahaweli. It is also not clear where the new department of Environment will ultimately go, and though there was a preliminary attempt to tag it on to Irrigation, Lands and Mahaweli, Prime Minister Premadasa, according to the *Lankadipa*, seems to have made a bid for this department (it is said he had claimed it from a time even before the last general election). It seems to be his contention that Environment should rightly belong to Local Government, Housing and Construction. Environment is a new baby which can wait before its final adoption by a particular ministry, but Forestry is a subject which needs immediate and comprehensive action. At least for the time being, the best thing may be for the President to take it over and get the department to function as it should—this, it has not done for over two decades.

This confusion about the allocation of functions and departments only adds to the slow take-off of the UNP government into constructive action in many key sec-

tors. It is for the President and the Government to look into this matter and devise ways and means to get work going. It is true that unlike sometime in the past, all officers in government departments report for duty at the correct time, but there is no guarantee that they sit at their desks and do the work they have to do for even two hours of their eight hour day. A test check will show that a large number have departed long before closing time under one excuse or another.

In Colombo, the situation is bad enough, but in many outstation towns, in kachcheries and departmental offices the situation is much worse. Officials are perpetually on leave—French and otherwise. Most officials are only “busy” about lobbying MPs and other VIPs for promotions, transfers, or better jobs. Some are only concerned with getting jobs for their close relations. For example in the Extension Services of the Department of Agriculture, which have a great deal to do with food production, officers have long ceased to visit farms or tender advice. Farms of VIPs are only visited to canvass owners and others for promotions or transfers. The officers have no seed material and have no interest in food production. In the Kobbekaduwa era matters had become bad, but in the E. L. Senanayake regime they had gone from bad to worse. If EL continues to handle this function there seems to be little hope for the future.

It is the same story in a large number of other departments in other ministries as well. Officers seem to think that they are “all-right” if some UNP VIP backs them or they succeed in getting their names at regular intervals into the newspapers (with pictures if possible) as having organised some shramadana work.

The Government will be foolish if it thinks that euphoric stories of great deeds reported in the government sponsored papers—of the Lake House and Times organisations—are an indication that constructive and development work has got off the ground. It will be self-delusion to think that everything is fine and hunky-dory (as the cowboys once said) in the garden only because it is the picture drawn by government newspaper media and the SLBC.

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SRI LANKA CHRONICLE

Sept. 12 – Sept. 16

DIARY OF EVENTS IN SRI LANKA AND THE WORLD COMPILED FROM DAILY NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED IN COLOMBO.

CDN—Ceylon Daily News; CDM—Ceylon Daily Mirror; CO—Ceylon Observer; ST—Sunday Times; DM—Dinamina; LD—Lankadipa; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Aththa; SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JD—Janadina; DP—Dinapathi; SU—Sun; CM—Chintamani; WK—Weekend; RR—Riviresa; EN—Eelanadu; IDPR—Information Dept. Press Release; DK—Dinakara; DV—Davasa.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12:

At the ceremonial sitting of the newly created Supreme Court the Chief Justice Mr. Neville Samarakoon said that there will be justice to all and injustice to none and they had a sacred trust which was not to be trifled with. An Evaluation team which studied the functions of state organisations involved in agricultural activity has drawn attention to the distinct possibility of wasteful duplication and danger of breakdown in the agricultural program as a result of the responsibilities of implementing

agencies not being clearly defined. The first ever Home Science College in Sri Lanka has been sited at the Polytechnic Institute, Dabawala. According to the latest proposal of the Ministry of Education to make the school the centre for village development, Parent Teacher Associations will be replaced by Development Societies. After completion of the preliminary investigation of the CID into the Avro disaster it has been found that the time bomb had been activated to explode when the aircraft was over Colombo on its ferry flight from Ratmalana to Katunayake and if not for a catering delay there would have been a mid air disaster involving the crew—CDN. The Minister of Education addressing parents of fresher students said that any student who harassed or humiliated another student would be expelled from the university—CDM. A massive Rs. 900 million Sugar Development Project—the Sevenagala Project is to be launched before the end of the year with Asian Development Bank assistance. President Jayewardene is expected to visit India next month for talks with PM Morarji Desai and other Indian government leaders. Mr. M. Sivasithamparam, President of the TULF and Acting leader of the Opposition in a statement appealed to Tamil youths in the north to restrain themselves and behave in accordance with the advice given to them by their leaders. The armed services together with special experts on ballistics are still baffled as to the origin of three bullets, similar to .303 rifle bullets, which were picked out of the debris of the Avro wreck; the Assistant Director Department of Civil Aviation was definite that the bomb was a local product and that its make was the job of an amateur—SU. It has been decided that 600

people will be recruited from each electorate for employment in the accelerated Mahaweli Project—DP. The police with the help of the other armed forces is taking steps to curb the outbreak of violence in the northern and eastern province. It has been reported to the government that it was difficult to fill the vacancies created by many experts from government departments resigning and going abroad and it was more difficult to find people to fill the new posts that are being created—VK. The government of Nepal has appointed Mr. Vedanand Jha as Ambassador to Sri Lanka with residence in New Delhi—IDPR No. 174/78. Trade Union leaders of SLFP, LSSP and CP have asked their members in the public sector to participate in the general strike on Sept. 28—DM. PM Morarji Desai suggested that Rs. 6 million fraudulently drawn from the State Bank of India in 1971 belonged to former PM Indira Gandhi. At least 25 people have been killed so far in fighting between security forces and insurgents trying to overthrow President Somoza in Nicaragua—CDN. The Camp David Summit appeared to be entering a critical phase in efforts to break the impasse in M.E. peace talks—CDM. Rhodesia said that Botswana and Zambia had fired on each other's territory in an incident close to Rhodesia's new border on Saturday—CDM. The waters of rivers Ganges and Jamuna which covered wide areas in North India causing damages continued to recede on the weekend. President Carter told the Shah of Iran that he deeply regretted the violent anti-government riots in Iran and he re-affirmed the close alliance between their two countries—SU.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13: A Mini general election involving about a million voters will be held

by the end of this year to elect 10 municipal councils and 33 urban councils that will start functioning from February 4, 1979. Interpol has alerted Sri Lanka that an international smuggler of Japanese origin, at present involved in a project here is the master mind of a massive smuggling operation covering the whole of South Asia. Australian meat at Rs. 60 per lb was imported to Sri Lanka for the non aligned summit by the Sirima government; owing to such callous waste of money by the previous government all development work in the country suffered for want of funds said the PM—CDN. 2469 bags of rice, a consignment from Burma was thrown into the sea in Galle Port because it was found to be unfit even for animal consumption. The Minister of Higher Education will crack down on university dons who do not do sufficient research or who engage themselves in activities outside their normal work for financial gain; the minister will also publicise the research done by university academics. The national flag will fly at halfmast today on all public buildings as a mark of respect to the late Mr. Shelton Javasinghe whose funeral takes place today—CDM. Two different versions of how an attempt was made to seize the passports of the then Leader of the Opposition Mr. J. R. Jayewardene and his wife at the Katunayake Airport were related to the Special Commission of Inquiry yesterday. A major fire broke out in the engine room of the Greek ship MV. 'Sitla Sun' while in dry dock at the Colombo Port yesterday and one fireman died before the fire was brought under control. The persons who planted the bomb in the Avro aircraft are understood to have acknowledged responsibility of this act to some of the embassies in Sri Lanka; they have apparently

circularised to some embassies a roneoed document claiming responsibility for the act. Former PM and leader of the SLFP Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike filed papers in the court of appeal seeking a writ of Prohibition against the Special Presidential Commission of Inquiry now probing the misdeeds of the previous government—SU. The Minister of Education has asked the education ministry to re-adjust the education system to give priority to practical work more than emphasizing on certificates when examinations are passed—DV. Government stenographers have also decided to join the national strike on the 28th—ATH. Nicaragua's national guard and rebels seeking to overthrow President Somoza were still locked in battle overnight with hundreds believed killed in fierce fighting. Three of Portugal's four major parties said they would vote against the independent government of PM Alfredo Nabre Da Costa—CDN. The White House said yesterday it was unable to predict success or failure for the Camp David Summit on the Middle East now entering the second week. The State Prosecutor alleged at the opening of a trial in S. Africa that a group of policemen had suspended six black naked prisoners by chains from a ceiling and subjected them to beatings and electric shock treatment—CDM. The government of Nicaragua suspended constitutional rights in 2 cities for the next 30 days in an apparent effort to restrain the militant opposition which started a guerilla offensive yesterday. More than 450 people have died of jaundice in the past six months in Bombay and the officials say there is little they can do to check the disease. An all party conference to the Rhodesian conflict was ruled out by Zimbabwe African People's ruler Joshua Nkomo—SU.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
Any employee of the state or cor-

poration services who participates in the token strike planned by the Joint Trade Union Action Committee for September 28 will be treated as having vacated office. The Speaker, Mr. Anandatissa de Alwis yesterday resigned his post and will be sworn in this morning as Minister of State at the President's House in Kandy. A second application made by Mr. Nihal Jayawickrema, former Secretary, Ministry of Justice to have the order impounding his passport set aside was refused by the Presidential Commission yesterday. Britain has offered to help Sri Lanka to build prefabricated rice stores before the Maha season is over—CDN. Pakistan Navy Chief Admiral M. Shariff will arrive in Sri Lanka on Sept 26 as a guest of the Sri Lanka Navy. The Police will display photographs of well known and convicted pickpockets at prominent places like railway stations and bus stands in a further bid to arrest this menace—CDM. The PMB and the Fertilizer Corporation are to come under the purview of the President; these two vital state bodies had hitherto remained under the Ministry of Agriculture—SU. The government has decided to grant citizenship to a further one and a half lakhs of 'stateless persons' of Indian origin who are plantation workers—VK. The government has decided to amend laws to inflict severe punishments for crimes such as rape, drug trafficking and hunting protected animals—DM. Over 25,000 railway workers decided to join the proposed general strike on the 28th—JD. More than 30 million people have been affected by the continuing floods in India and the situation remains serious. Israel and Egypt are showing flexibility in Middle East peace talks but there is still no basis for predicting the outcome of the Camp David Summit the White House said. Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko called

on Asian states to resist what he described as China's aggressive designs and expansionist encouragements in this region—CDN. Cuban President Fidel Castro arrived in Ethiopia at the start of a state visit and Ethiopian leader Mengistu Mariam made his first public attack on China—SU. Nicaragua's red cross prepared a desperate attempt to get in to the town of Masaya where hundreds of people are feared to have been killed or wounded in intense fighting between the National Guard and opponents of President Anastasio Somoza—CDM.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
The GCEC has attracted Rs. 691 million worth of foreign exchange on the thirty four projects approved so far; the total investment including the foreign exchange component has reached the 978 million rupee mark. Five ministers and 22 deputy ministers took their oaths before the President in Kandy yesterday. A Tower Hall Trust will be established to promote national theatrical activities and restore and utilise the Tower Hall. Japan under an agreement will provide a grant of yen 1,500,000,000 or approximately Rs. 122.6 million to be used for the purchase of steel billets and small size steel bars to construct 100,000 houses—CDM. Trade Union leaders and other office bearers vigorously campaigning for the proposed strike on Sept 28 are to be identified by the government for replacement the day after the strike. Air Ceylon has lost its insurance claim of Rs. 7.5 million on the AVRO aircraft which was shattered by a bomb at the Ratmalana airport because the insurance policy for this aircraft does not cover the available risk cause in respect of sabotage—SU. About 3000 people have been provided jobs by the new garment manufacturing centres registered at the

Ministry of Textile Industries; with these 360 new centres, the total number of registered garment manufacturing centres in the island now exceeds 1200—IDPR No. 24. The Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs has decided to reduce 45 days from government and corporation workers holidays in 1979 by reducing the number of annual and casual holidays rather than reduce the number of religious holidays—JD. The police suspect that the Avro incident and the two bus incidents in Jaffna and Batticaloa are connected with each other—DK. 11 estate workers Trade unions yesterday decided to join the proposed strike on the 28th—ATH. The Camp David Middle East Summit appeared headed for success after talks which Israeli sources said had brought considerable progress. Government planes yesterday bombarded a central Nicaraguan city but failed to flush out guerilla insurgents in control of most districts—CDN. Japanese PM Takeo Fukuda warned that the world could be caught in a vicious circle involving a depreciating dollar and spiralling oil prices unless the dollar's decline was checked—CDM. Indian Foreign Minister Vajpayee held talks with Soviet President Brezhnev and assured him that his country's relations with China would not affect the close ties with Moscow—SU.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

The President said yesterday that if the courts held that the laws in regard to Special Presidential Commission was bad the government will stop the proceedings. The UNDP will send to Sri Lanka seven of the world's top experts to help in the resettlement scheme under the accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme. The TULF controlled Trade unions will not participate in the proposed one day

token strike of the Opposition trade unions scheduled for Sept. 28. District Ministers will be selected on September 21 at a special meeting of the government parliamentary group—CDN. Air Ceylon one of the oldest carriers in Asia has now been relegated to functions as a mere General Sales Agent for seven international carriers in addition to being the handling agent for other international airlines. The eight campuses of the University of Sri Lanka will be re-named when they become separate autonomous universities next month after the new university legislation is promulgated—CDM. Three state agencies—the Sri Lanka State Engineering Corporation, National Water Supply and Drainage Board and the Colombo Commercial Company have been authorised by the government to collaborate with foreign firms in the execution of major construction projects in the country. The JVP is to testify before the Special Presidential Commission of Inquiry shortly. Hashish oil extract was detected for the first time in Sri Lanka by a police narcotics bureau dog at the Talaimannar pier on Thursday—SU. Three youths out of the 14 who were arrested in connection with the bomb throwing incident and distribution of pamphlets in Batticaloa have been released—VK. People who applied to the Job Banks for employment will be granted employment in November this year—LD. UNESCO has come forward to help in the reconstruction of old temples and dagobas in the island—DM. Tobacco farmers have decided to continue with their decision to boycott the cultivation of tobacco after the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture rejected their request to pay one cent more for a pound of tobacco—JD. Eight machines imported by the National Milk Board at a cost of Rs. 2 million to packet

Lakspray has not been used for more than an year because the board has decided its cheaper to pack lakspray in polythene bags—ATH. President Carter yesterday conferred almost continuously with Egyptian and Israeli officials in an all out effort to end the deadlock over a middle east peace settlement. Pakistan's military ruler General Zia Ul Haq will take over as President on Saturday following the resignation of Elahi Choudhry as Head of State. Portugal's parliament yesterday rejected the country's new non party government—CDN

LETTER

Religious Freedom

Sir,

Legislation has been introduced to disbar from the practice of law persons who commit themselves to certain forms of religious observance.

From the reports in the papers I gather that these persons will be excluded for no other reason except that they profess to undertake certain obligations in accordance with their religion. That is, the way they practice their religion is the only reason alleged for prohibiting them from enrolment in the legal profession.

As a foreigner I have no business telling the Parliament of Sri Lanka what laws they can or cannot make. But anyone, foreign or national, can say this: if they do pass such a law, they cannot talk about religious freedom.

Claude R Daly S J

31, Clifford Place,
Colombo 4.
1978 Sept. 25

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

by Ariel

● Camp David Summit

● China & Vietnam

Nobody had expected anything to come out of President Carter's Camp David Summit. Even the American press which was pro-Carter was most sceptical about its outcome. Not a single paper had predicted that this Summit would find a solution to the Egypt-Israel confrontation or bring peace to the Middle East. Commentators critical of Carter were certain that the Camp David Summit would prove to be another of Carter's damp squibs which have so far marked his Presidency and had plummeted his popularity rating to a point lower than Nixon's just before Watergate.

Everybody was agreed that Carter was taking a big risk in resorting to personal diplomacy at this level, especially after his mumbo-jumbo about human rights violations in some countries whilst ignoring continuing violations in others had boomeranged on his prestige.

But, to everybody's surprise, and at a time when everybody had thought that the Camp David Summit had flopped, an agreement was reached between Sadat and Israel which had not been thought possible. Easwar Sagar, in a despatch to the *Madras Hindu* from Washington, on September 18 stated:

"The Heads of Government of Egypt, Israel and the United States who had been engaged in intense negotiations for the past 13 days in nearby Camp David in the mountains, behind a veil of secrecy, made a dramatic appearance in the East Room of the White House last night to announce a major breakthrough in attempts to

settle the 30-year conflict between Arab and Jew. After two separate agreements described as 'frameworks' for peace—one covering the future of the West Bank and the Gaza strip and the other covering return of the Sinai to Egypt and relations between Israel and Egypt—had been signed by the Egyptian President, Mr. Sadat and the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Begin and witnessed by President Carter before an assemblage of diplomats, congressional leaders and the press, a jubilant Mr. Carter told the nation of the general terms of the accords. He is to explain them in greater detail when he appears before a joint session of Congress to-night.

"Because the two contending parties are yet to resolve many serious and difficult questions, especially with regard to the disposition of the West Bank, because the accord is yet to be approved by the Israeli Knesset and because its success hinges on the reception it gets from Jordan, the Palestinian residents of the occupied territory, as well as other Arabs with a stake in West Asia, nobody is shouting that peace is actually at hand in West Asia. Mr. Carter who was the moving spirit behind Camp David and who during 80 hours of talks with the two leaders insisted they keep at it until they achieve some agreement and who for an unprecedented 13 days had suspended all other presidential duties, was himself cautious about the results; he noted that three decades of war and bitterness could not be settled overnight and that 'months of difficult negotiations still lie ahead.'

"The achievements nevertheless are being hailed as a major event which will generate an irreversible momentum for peace and nobody has summed it up better than Dr. Kissinger who, as Secretary of State in the Ford Administration,

had had some limited success in making peace in West Asia. Dr. Kissinger said it was a 'very significant and major event'. It had been made possible by Mr. Begin making previously unthought of concessions and agreeing to stop all further Jewish settlements in the West Bank area and also to discuss the future of the West Bank—two things he had sworn he would never do. Dr. Kissinger called Mr. Sadat a man of courage and vision who would undoubtedly come under tremendous pressure from his Arab detractors, but he wanted them to remember that Mr. Sadat was the only Arab who had been able to get Arab lands back from Israel. The former Secretary said that if there was a fragile quality about the accords now signed that was only because there was a fragile quality about everything connected with West Asia. He gave high marks for Mr. Carter's perseverance and courage, and with a tinge of regret (because he was no longer associated with the problem) predicted a high standing for Mr. Carter in the history of West Asia.

"As outlined by US officials, the two frameworks contain the following provisions: On the West Bank and the Gaza Strip now occupied by Israel: A five-year transitional period of civil self-rule for the Palestinian inhabitants; withdrawal of Israeli forces to garrisons in specified locations; negotiations between Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian inhabitants and Jordan to decide the final status of the two areas; no new Israeli settlements to be established during the negotiations; security arrangements which could involve UN forces, special security zones, demilitarised zones etc. to be negotiated; and an exchange of letters on the status of East Jerusalem.

"On the Sinai and Israeli-Egyptian relations: A peace treaty between

the two countries to be signed within three months; phased Israeli pullouts from all of the Sinai to begin within three to nine months after the treaty is signed and to be completed within three years; Israeli airfields to be returned to Egypt; security zones of various kinds to be established in the Sinai; normal relations between the two countries to be established after the bulk of the Israeli forces have pulled out of the Sinai.

"It was said to be understood that the two accords would stand by themselves; in other words the failure of one would not affect the other.

"All the three men—Mr. Begin, Mr. Sadat and Mr. Carter—hugged each other after they had finished signing the agreements—Mr. Begin even suggested that the Camp David conference should henceforth be known as the "Jimmy Carter conference" in honour of the man who had made it possible: the moment was both euphoric and historic.

PRESIDENT CARTER addressed a joint session of Congress on September 18 and his speech set out the achievements of the Summit. The following extracts trace the highlights of his speech: "...it has been more than 2,000 years since there was peace between Egypt and a free Jewish nation. If our present expectations are realized, this year we shall see such peace again. The first thing I would like to do is to give tribute to the two men who made this impossible dream now become a real possibility—the two great leaders with whom I have met for the last two weeks at Camp David—first, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt—and the other, of course, is Prime Minister Menachem Begin of the nation of Israel. At Camp David we sought a peace that is not only of vital importance to their own

two nations, but to all the people of the Middle East—to all the people of the United States—and indeed, to all the world as well.

"I have come to discuss with you tonight what these two leaders have accomplished, and what this means to all of us. The United States has had no choice but to be deeply concerned about the Middle East, and to try to use our influence and our efforts to advance the cause of peace. For the last thirty years, through four wars, the people of this troubled region have paid a terrible price in suffering and division and hatred and bloodshed. No two nations have suffered more than Egypt and Israel. But the dangers and the costs of conflict in this region for our own nation have been great as well. We have long-standing friendships among the nations there and the peoples of the region, and we have profound, moral commitments which are deeply rooted in our values as a people. The strategic location of these countries and the resources that they possess means that events in the Middle East directly affect people everywhere. We and our friends could not be indifferent if a hostile power were to establish domination there. In few areas of the world is there a greater risk that a local conflict could spread among other nations adjacent to them and then perhaps erupt into a tragic conflict between us superpowers ourselves..

"Through the long years of conflict, four main issues have divided the parties involved. One is the nature of peace—whether peace will simply mean that the guns are silenced, that the bombs no longer fall, that the tanks cease to roll, or whether it will mean that the nations of the Middle East can deal with each other as neighbours and as equals and as

friends, with a full range of diplomatic and cultural and economic and human relations between them; that has been the basic question. The Camp David agreement has defined such relationships, I am glad to announce to you, between Israel and Egypt. The second main issue is providing for the security of all the parties involved, including, of course, the Israelis, so that none of them need fear attack or military threats from one another. When implemented, the Camp David agreement, I am glad to announce to you, will provide for such mutual security. Third is the question of agreement on secure and recognized boundaries, the end of military occupation, and the granting of self-government or else the return to other nations of territories which have been occupied by Israel since the 1967 conflict. The Camp David agreement, I am glad to announce to you, provides for the realization of all these goals. And finally, there is the painful human question of the fate of the Palestinians who live or who have lived in these disputed regions. The camp David agreement guarantees that the Palestinian people may participate in the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects, a commitment that Israel has made in writing and which is supported and appreciated, I am sure, by all the world.

"Over the last eighteen months, there has been, of course, some progress on these issues. That progress continued, but at a slower and slower pace through the early part of the year. And by early summer, the negotiations had come to a standstill once again. It was this stalemate and the prospect for an even worse future that prompted me to invite both President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin to join me at Camp David.... When this conference began, I said that the prospects for success,

were remote. Enormous barriers of ancient history and nationalism and suspicion would have to be overcome if we were to meet our objectives. But President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin have overcome these barriers, exceeded our fondest expectations and have signed two agreements that hold out the possibility of resolving issues that history had taught us could not be resolved.

"The first of these documents is entitled 'a framework for peace in the Middle East agreed at Camp David.' It deals with a comprehensive settlement, between Israel and all her neighbours, as well as the difficult question of the Palestinian people and the future of the West Bank and the Gaza area. The agreement provides a basis for the resolution of issues involving the West Bank and Gaza during the next five years. It outlines a process of change which is in keeping with Arab hopes, while also carefully respecting Israel's vital security. The Israeli military government over these areas will be withdrawn and will be replaced with a self-government of the Palestinians who live there. And Israel has committed that this government will have full autonomy. Prime Minister Begin said to me several times, not partial autonomy, but full autonomy. Israeli forces will be withdrawn and re-deployed into specified locations to protect Israel's security. The Palestinians will further participate in determining their own future through talks in which their own elected representatives, the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, will negotiate with Egypt and Israel and Jordan to determine the final status of the West Bank and Gaza.

"Israel has agreed, have committed themselves, that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian

people will be recognized. After the signing of this framework last night, and during the negotiations concerning the establishment of the Palestinian self-government no new Israeli settlements will be established in this areas. The future settlements issue will be decided among the negotiating parties. The final status of the West Bank and Gaza will be decided before the end of the five-year transitional period during which the Palestinian Arabs will have their own government, as part of a negotiation which will produce a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, specifying borders, withdrawal, all those very crucial issues. These negotiations will be based on all the provisions and the principles of Security Council resolution 242, with which you all are so familiar. The agreement on the final status of these areas will then be submitted to a vote by the representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, and they will have the right for the first time in their history, the Palestinian people, to decide how they will govern themselves permanently. We also believe, of course, all of us, that there should be a just settlement of the problems of displaced persons and refugees, which takes into account the appropriate United Nations resolutions. "Finally, his document also outlines a variety of security arrangements to reinforce peace between Israel and her neighbours. This is, indeed, a comprehensive and fair framework for peace in the Middle East, and I am glad to report this to you.

"The second agreement is entitled 'a framework for the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.' It returns to Egypt its full exercise of sovereignty over the Sinai peninsula, and establishes several security zones, recognizing carefully that sovereignty right

for the protection of all parties. It also provides that Egypt will extend full diplomatic recognition to Israel at the time the Israelis complete an interim withdrawal from most of the Sinai, which will take place between three months and nine months after the conclusion of the peace treaty. And the peace treaty is to be fully negotiated and signed no later than three months from last night. I think I should also report that Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat have already challenged each other to conclude the treaty even earlier. And I hope they—this final conclusion of a peace treaty will be completed late in December. And it would be a wonderful Christmas present for the World.

"Final and complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces will take place between two and three years following the conclusion of the peace treaty. While both parties are in total agreement on all the goals that I have just described to you, there is one issue on which agreement has not yet been reached. Egypt states that agreement to remove the Israeli settlements from Egyptian territory is a prerequisite to a peace treaty. Israel says that the issue of the Israeli settlement should be resolved during the peace negotiations themselves.....Now, within two weeks with each member of the Knesset, or the Israeli Parliament acting as individuals, not constrained by party loyalty, the Knesset will decide on the issue of the settlements.

"None of us should underestimate the historic importance of what has already been done. This is the first time that an Arab and an Israeli leader have signed a comprehensive framework for peace.... But we must also not forget the magnitude of the obstacles that still remain. The summit exceeded our highest expectation—but we know that it left many difficult

issues still to be resolved. These issues will require careful negotiation in the months to come. What lies ahead for all of us is to recognize the statesmanship that President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin have shown and to invite others in that region to follow their example. I have already last night invited the other leaders of the Arab world to help sustain progress toward a comprehensive peace.

"We must also join in an effort to bring an end to the conflict and the terrible suffering in Lebanon.... We will want to consult on this matter and on these documents and their meaning with all of the leaders, particularly the Arab leaders. And I am pleased to say to you tonight that just a few minutes ago, King Hussein of Jordan and King Khalid of Saudi Arabia, perhaps other leaders later, but these two have already agreed to receive Secretary Vance, who will be leaving tomorrow to explain to them the terms of the Camp David agreement. And we hope to secure their support for the realization of the new hopes and dreams of the people of the Middle East. This is an important mission, and this responsibility I can tell you, based on my last two weeks with him, could not possibly rest on the shoulders of a more able and dedicated and competent man than Secretary Cyrus Vance..."

Even before Cyrus Vance reached the Middle East, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia had condemned the agreement. Sadat's Foreign Minister Kamel and his ambassador in Washington Gorbhal had tendered their resignation because they disagreed with what had been agreed on at Camp David. Moscow denounced the agreement and said that Sadat had betrayed the Arab cause. The PLO was opposed to the agreement and Arafat vowed to continue guerilla war.

Whether Secretary Vance will be able to persuade King Hussein of Jordan or King Khalid of Saudi Arabia to withdraw their opposition and support the Camp David agreements even in a limited sort of way is not known. The Arab "Front of Steadfastness and Confrontation" consisting of Algeria, Libya, PLO, and South Yemen held a meeting in Damascus on September 20. Efforts were being made to bring back Iraq to the Confrontation Front—Iraq had quit on the ground that Syria was "too soft". King Hassan of Morocco has been silent and Sadat was calling on him on his way from the USA to win his support. Sudan, another supporter of Egypt has been silent. Some of the Gulf States have already criticised the agreement.

Will Vance and Carter (with the support of Kissinger and the Trilateral Commission) succeed in selling the Camp David Agreement even to a small number of Arab States? At the time of writing not a single Arab state has come to the support of Sadat.

WHILST CARTER staked his reputation and risked his future at Camp David, China is on the crest of diplomatic and political offensives to assert her position as a big nuclear power on a global scale. In this she has come up against Vietnam, her closest neighbour. Peking asserts that Hanoi has been set up by Moscow to take up anti-China postures. But, in reality, the bone of contention between the two countries is the question of the status of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam. China wants Vietnam to accept and implement a 1955 agreement with Hanoi by which ethnic Chinese were granted virtual dual nationality. This agreement was never observed in South Vietnam. Furthermore, in South-East countries, it will be recalled Chou En-lai had repudiated

the principle of dual nationality which China had insisted on earlier. China, by wanting to now revive this dual nationality concept in Vietnam has made all South-east Asian countries with large ethnic Chinese populations nervous. Malaysia is the first country to take it up, and the Malaysian Prime Minister has indicated a wish to go to Peking to discuss this matter before the end of the year.

At first one thought that China had only wanted the principle of dual nationality operative in (blood-brother) Vietnam alone. But *Asia-Week* of September 8, in its column *Frontlines* had the following note under the heading CHINA SAYS IT AGAIN: "China last week went as close as it probably ever will in declaring that its policy on overseas Chinese has changed radically. Addressing some 1,600 Chinese residents in Bangkok at a reception organised by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Thailand, Chang Wei-lei, said overseas Chinese are free to take up the nationality of their adopted countries but that China will oppose any moves to force them to change their nationalities. That should give Southeast Asian governments plenty of food for thought. As if to make the digestion harder, the Ambassador added that those who took up local nationalities will still be welcome to maintain friendly relations with the mainland. And those who want to go back to China will be taken care of, he stressed. Peking could hardly put it more bluntly than that. But this newly articulated stance is unlikely to comfort countries struggling against historical odds to achieve a measure of national integrity that transcends ethnic loyalties. We wonder what a Thai Ambassador would like to tell a Thai Chamber of Commerce in Peking."

Batuk Gathani, in a despatch from London on September 9 to the *Madras Hindu* discussing current developments said: "...Slowly and steadily, there is also mounting concern about the ripple of unease through South East Asia, against the background of the fast deteriorating relations between Peking and Hanoi. Indian observers find this development pregnant with catastrophic consequences for peace in Asia. 'One way or the other, whether we like it or not, we will be sucked into this Peking-Hanoi business—if we don't live by our wits'—quipped a senior Indian diplomat the other day. Everybody is aware that the latest round of diplomatic talks between China and Vietnam has so far failed to produce any agreement on contentious bilateral issues, including the problem of the mass exodus of ethnic Chinese residents from Vietnam, which has brought the two Asian communist powers close to a state of war on their border. Peking accuses Hanoi of forcibly booting out the ethnic Chinese minority and now it all looks like a seemingly never-ending slanging match between the two. Hanoi is determined to stamp out private trade in its earnest desire to build up socialism in the post-war unified Vietnam. Then there are issues concerning Vietnam's border conflict with Cambodia which amounts to a struggle for regional hegemony between the Chinese and Vietnamese people. Vietnam is also wooing the ASEAN members who also have the 'problem' of powerful trading and prosperous ethnic Chinese minorities. The problem is of varying degree but it is bad business in their individual bilateral relations with Peking. In Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, overtures from Hanoi have had some response because Indonesia and Malaysia have sizable trading and prosperous Chinese minorities. Hanoi has suggested that Peking's

policies towards Vietnamese of Chinese origin are tantamount to using them as a 'fifth column' to advance Chinese political ends in South-East Asia. There are some 14 million overseas Chinese in the ASEAN countries and, obviously, Hanoi finds it advantageous to capitalise on what is termed as 'traditional fears' about the Chinese.....".

This comment Gathani made in the following context: "Chairman Hua has emerged as a world statesman after his highly successful tour through the Balkans and Iran. As China's relations with the Western and NATO Powers become more cordial and business like, one senses a new freeze in the politics of East-West detente, as the Carter Administration's pinpricking antics under the umbrella of the 'human rights issue' infuriate Moscow. The Soviets feel that the American pre-occupation with the politics and activities of Soviet dissidents amounts to direct interference in Soviet internal affairs. Moreover, as the communists both in the West and East argue, what human rights is Mr. Carter talking about? What about the racial discrimination against coloured minorities in Western countries or the Western support of white minority regimes all these years in southern Africa? Perhaps, the Western clamour for more respect for basic human rights, could have more credibility if the West put its own house in order first. The Negroes in the United States, the coloureds in Britain, the Turks in West Germany or the African and Algerians in France—are they better off than say the Jews or the dissidents in the Soviet Union? China interprets this as a Third World problem. Many West European intellectuals who dream of the far-reaching horizons of the politics of detente feel deeply perturbed by what one of them described the other day as 'this

amateurish obsession in the White House? And now, apart from the 'human rights issue', the China factor further complicates the perspectives of the Western world's relations with the two communist giants. Seasoned Indian diplomats one talks to about India's role in all this, also find themselves in a state of quandary, if not downright confusion."

And, though Indian Foreign Minister Vajpayee is going to Peking soon, there does not seem to be any chance of a real rapprochement until China is willing to meet Indian demands on the dispute about boundaries at least halfway.

China is doing its best to win friends in Southeast Asia whilst reaching out to strategic areas in South Asia by roads like the Karakoram Highway.

What next?

THE WORLD TODAY

India, Bangladesh

INDIA: FLOOD FURY

While it is too early to estimate the current floods, preliminary reports suggest that the damage will be substantial. Severe floods have been reported from Punjab in the north to Madhya Pradesh in south and Gujarat in the west to West Bengal in the east. In Ambala, Kurukshetra, Karnal and Sonapat districts more than 70 villages have been fully marooned. Sutlej river is threatening several areas in Punjab. However round-the-clock work on embankments and weak points have so far been effective. In Moradabad in UP, Ramganga is threatening 200 villages. Some of them are already under water. About 20,000 houses have

collapsed in different parts of Murafarnager district and 50,000 people had to be evacuated. Over 15,500 marooned people have been rescued from 412 flood-hit areas in West Bengal so far. So far 30 deaths have been officially reported. Total loss in the second round of floods this year is estimated at Rs. 25.6 crores. Standing crop in 6.5 lakh acres were totally lost. In Orissa, Subarnarekha river in Balasore district has submerged 1.6 lakh hectares. This has affected two lakh people.

Devastating floods have been an annual feature of most big rivers in India right from the pre-historic days. Though no dependable statistics of the flood loss is still available, a rough estimate is around Rs. 1,500 crores every year. During the past two years floods caused considerable damage in Haryana, UP, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Assam. In Haryana, nearly 500 villages with a population of one million had to suffer badly in 1976. Several parts of these States are at present reeling under the flood fury.

The crippling effect of floods on Indian economy was acknowledged even by the British rulers. Annual visitation of floods, makes India's budget an undependable exercise. Yet no serious steps were taken in this regard until the devastating floods in 1954. In fact, the credit for initiating the National Flood Control Programme goes to Jawaharlal Nehru. Under this programme by the end of the fourth Plan 7.0 million hectares were given "reasonable" protection from floods. According to the latest assessment, in all 25 million hectares are "liable" to floods. Flood protection schemes for 20 million hectares are considered by the experts to be economically feasible. During the four years of the Fifth Plan two million hectares have been protected against

floods. Of the total of Rs. 287 crores spent on these schemes, Rs. 247 crores came from the States, and the rest from the Centre. The total spending on these flood control schemes during the 24 years after 1954 has been Rs. 445 crores.

So far the flood control measures have been confined to flood moderation, storage reservoirs, embankments, diversions, town protection, river improvement and anti-erosion and drainage improvement. The approach has been to concentrate on multipurpose and optimum development of waters of various river systems. This included flood control. This is expected to improve the cost effectiveness of the projects and their smooth implementation. An area so far neglected is the protection of the forest areas in catchment areas from devastation. Such mindless deforestation lead to heavy soil erosion and the consequent run off. In some dam areas silt control has been partially attended to for the past 15 years. The sixth Plan, therefore, emphasises the need for a better system of forest protection and soil conservation which must be extended to the catchment areas of all river systems that are flood prone. It is now officially claimed that a start has been made two years back in this respect.....

—Link, New Delhi,
September, 10, 1978

INDIA: THE CAPITAL SHOCKED

The Capital faced its worst ever flood crisis in memory last week. Hundreds of Delhi citizens cowered in the face of the rampaging Yamuna—which in a three-day spell, burst its banks, breached bunds and overflowed into the suburban areas after inundating scores of low-lying areas. Not since the

days of the Mughals, several centuries ago, have the waters of the Yamuna lapped at the outer walls of the Red Fort as they did last week. Officially fifty people were drowned in panic stricken evacuations; unofficial sources put the toll at many hundreds more as desperate citizens tried to swim the turbulent waters to safety. Over a thousand army personnel and 121 boats were busy rescuing 350,000 beleaguered people and strengthening the last marginal bundh on the east side of Yamuna to save the teeming suburban colony of Shahdara.

The city's tale of woe began last Sunday when the Central Flood Forecasting Division of the Central Water and Power Commission broadcast a warning of a catastrophic flood in the river. It was the sequel to record rainfall that had lashed northern India the previous two days (12 cms. in the Capital itself). It filled up the headworks of the Yamuna at Tajewala from where the water is released periodically into the river that flows past Delhi. The forecast said that a flood of extraordinary magnitude unknown in the history of the river had passed the headworks early on Sunday morning and in the 36 hours that it took to reach the Capital, it made a mockery of all the anti-flood control measures that an unprepared Delhi administration took. It swept over bunds with awesome ease, cut the main G.T. road to Panipat at several places, inundated a vast stretch of land up to the vicinity of Delhi University—swallowing enroute the teeming resettlement colony of Jahangirpuri, whose residents had been pushed out of their homes during the emergency.

In two days, all the four bridges across the Yamuna even the centuries old railway road bridge were

declared to be in danger. Experts feared that they would not be able to withstand the pressure of the waters. The inadequate waterway at the bridge could obstruct the free flow of water it was said, and the authorities promptly closed all of them to vehicular traffic and a day later, to pedestrian traffic also. People of the thickly populated trans-Yamuna colony of Shahdara and its neighbouring areas, battered by the floods every year, were totally cut off, spending a night of terror as army jawans worked to strengthen the left marginal bund between the old railway bridge and the Indraprastha bridge. The army put 1,000 personnel on the job, as the Capital's last line of defence on the northern extremity, the Shah Alam bund collapsed, letting the gushing waters into Adarsh Nagar, Model Town, Kingsway Camp, Mukherjee Nagar and the outer colleges of the University campus. Waters reached the first floors of houses, inundated shops, petrol pumps, police stations, the AIR Transmitters were flooded causing the AIR to go off the air on three popular frequencies. There were not enough boats to move people to safety from flooded areas. Most people made their own arrangements, using inflated tubes of cars, little plastic contraptions normally used for bathing babies or just swimming across to safety. There were casualties too—over 50 persons including an army sapper lost their lives as boats over-turned, mostly because of panic among the passengers.

The army faced unexpected problems too. Residents of areas like Model Town, Hakikat Nagar, Mukherjee Nagar and other areas refused to be evacuated. As the waters rose they took their belongings and families on to upper floors, afraid of the uncertainties of the relief camps. They were not far wrong; a massive relief

camp set up at the Model Town stadium turned into a vast lake as the waters swept in and the refugees were homeless again. And army men found that the residents wanted to use boats in a shuttle service to and from their homes, to get food and medical relief—rather than as a means of escape. To add to it all were the hordes of sightseers who drove in on cars, scooters and motorcycles to see the river rise. The police had to issue a warning that any loiterers would be penalised and their vehicles impounded. It was not as if the more exclusive residential areas where the affluent lived escaped the flood fury. Kalindi Colony, New Friends Colony, and Maharani Bagh, where businessmen and others built palatial mansions, suddenly found themselves in deep waters as the Yamuna moved in menacingly across the Okhla region. Water started entering the basements of these houses.

The mullahs leading into the city near Tilak Bridge, near Nizamuddin and further on began to rise also. It looked as if the residential colonies and office blocks in these areas would be threatened for the first time ever, and warnings to evacuate basements were issued. By noon on Wednesday, however it looked as if the river had begun to recede, slowly but surely. The bridges had held and the city breathed a sign of relief. Before then, however, the prices of vegetables shot up, milk and bread were in short supply and there seemed to be no sign of early relief as all the rail and road links to Uttar Pradesh were snapped following the heavy downpour and floods upstream. Even candles and matches were in short supply. Fruits, brought out from cold storage turned out to be cheaper than vegetables. There was silence in the temples. The Buddhist pagoda and the various shrines

along Ring Road were flooded, and priests and monks in their distinctive costumes trooped out to join the faithful crowding the streets. Even the samadhi of Nehru and Shastri were under water—though Rajghat was luckier. There seemed no place to cremate the dead either as Nigambodh Ghat was engulfed by the Yamuna and waters lapped the electric crematorium a mile downstream.

—Link, New Delhi,
September 10, 1978

INDIA: THREAT POSED BY KHARAKORAM HIGHWAY

The Kashmir Chief Minister, Sheikh Abdullah, has called upon people to make a united endeavour and muster their strength to face 'the potential threat posed to the country's integrity, solidarity and sovereignty by the construction of the Karakoram national highway adjacent to our borders by China and Pakistan.' Replying to a discussion in the Assembly on an adjournment motion moved by a Congress member, Mr. Bhimsingh, regarding threats posed by the highway, Mr. Abdullah said the Government of India had lodged its protests to the quarters concerned.

The problem was no longer to prevent construction of the highway, which had been built despite protest from India. What was important now was how to overcome the "dangerous situation arising out of its construction, particularly when China was leaning towards Pakistan", Mr. Abdullah said.

Mr. Abdullah denied he had told the former US Ambassador, Mr. Lov. Henderson, when the two met here in 1952, that he favoured independence for the State. Referring to the Ambassador's claim, reportedly made in the classified documents released by the American State Department, the Chief Minister said the fact was that it was

Mr. Henderson who had wanted to know why Jammu and Kashmir could not remain independent.

Mr. Abdullah said he had told the Ambassador in reply that independence for the State was not possible.

"Whatever Mr. Henderson may have told his Government are not my views, but constitute the projection of his own views."

—PTI, Srinagar,
September, 10, 1978

ANTI-INDIA FEELINGS IN BANGLADESH

An Indian arriving in Dacca will at once get the impression of being in an unfriendly country if the writings on the wall and posters are any indication. Although abrasive slogans such as "Boycott Indian goods and boycott our enemy—India" are no longer to be seen in Dacca as in Mujib's days, anti-India wall writings are far more numerous than before. "Down with Indian Imperialism and expansionism" and "We shall never let Bangladesh turn into a vassal state of India" and similar slogans are splattered across Dacca's walls. "Since the creation of Bangladesh we have been so thoroughly conditioned in thought and action against India that we are now more anti-India than during the Pakistani days. Mistakes committed by India are largely to blame for this", a senior bureaucrat of Bangladesh said. He sought shelter in India during the 1971 liberation war. Meetings at Dacca's Paltan Maidan are still the popular forum to politicians for campaigns against India. At the election meetings India was the target of attack by President Ziaur Rahman's Jatiyatabadi Front. The front alleged that the Indian Border Security Force had urged the Bangladesh voters over loudspeakers to vote for General Osmany. It alleged that hundreds of miniature plastic boats, the

election symbol of General Osmany, were sent down the Gomati from the Indian borders to influence the voters. It was significant that the allegations were being made at a time when President Zia himself was telling the people that with the "new, friendly Indian Government in power Bangladesh's relations with India has vastly improved" and that in the past one year the 3,000 km. border with India was "peaceful and free of incidents", the smuggling of essential goods from Bangladesh had been checked and a solution to the Farakka dispute had been found.

"If we have to buy sophisticated stuff why should we buy it from India against hard currency when we can buy it from West Germany, Japan or the UK. We shall preferably buy Indian goods against Indian rupee credit", a senior Bangladesh Bank official said. Many Indian businessmen and firms, including Government undertakings, are to blame themselves for queering the pitch for Indian goods and services in Bangladesh. The behaviour of Indian officials seems to have made a large section of Bangladesh bureaucrats hostile. Bangladesh officials say: "Our turning more and more towards the Arab and the Islamic world should not cause any misunderstanding in India." Mr. Tobarak Hossain, Foreign Secretary said: "For us it has proved a good source of economic assistance and jobs for both skilled and unskilled workers. In 1976, Saudi Arabia promised us \$ 200 million—\$ 150 million for our projects, \$ 50 million as cash grant and \$ 20 million to buy fertilizer. In the past three years, about 30,000 Bangladesh nationals have found jobs in the Arab countries, Iran has signed an agreement with us and in the next three years it will recruit 24,000 people. Unemployment and shortage of funds for our

projects have been our most pressing problems. We hope to attract good investment from the Arab world because the situation has stabilized here and we are offering good opportunity for private investment."

—Manash Ghosh in *The Statesman* Bombay.

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BANGLADESH: REFUGE OF THE DESPERATE

No news from Bangladesh is usually good news because any news from Bangladesh is usually bad. Thus, this weekend, the political scene in East Bengal, nine days after a tumultuous presidential election, seems remarkably tranquil which is surprising and good. But the flow of refugees from Burma continues amid mounting efforts at mediation: and the flow is wholly bad. Clearly though, something very nasty has been happening. You do not lightly flee penniless to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the poorest, most crowded, least appetising refuge in the world. Inside the country itself, though, the refugee challenge and the presidential election have come to be linked emotionally. We say Bengalis, live under a military dictatorship. General Zia-ur Rahman has pushed national spending on the armed forces from 13 to 30 per cent in his short tenure of choice. Our army has swelled. And yet, unlike the Indians, we cannot seal our border. We cannot even control Burmese seeking safety. What, then, is the point of the Bangladesh army? Sheikh Mujib, long ago and grandiloquently, saw as the Switzerland of Asia. Now we spend money on guns rather than rice; but for all that we are pitifully weak. We can use our soldiers only to keep our

own people in subservience. This, indeed, has been a heavy shadow over Dacca during General Zia's regime. He has offered Bangladesh some stability and some efficiency—both virtues direly needed. But the emphasis on military strength, the persecution of political opponents and the specific cold war alignments that have come in train have moved Bangladesh rather closer to a conventional third world autocracy than seems either prudent or desirable. Bangladesh's main enemy is its endlessly burgeoning population—a population that the World Bank reckons may reach 134 million by the end of the century. Famine and utter disaster overlay such statistics, and General Zia's administration has done little to lighten the appalling prospect. His main aim in recent weeks has been to re-establish his place at the top of the "international basket case" league by adding a gloss of democratic legitimacy to his image. That the presidential elections certainly did: though their suspicious haste and ever more suspicious outlay of funds leave many questions unanswered.

—The Guardian, London.
12 June 78.

BANGLADESH: CABINET OF CONCESSIONS

Having acquired a patina of legitimacy from the people in the elections on June 3, President Ziaur Rahman announced on June 29 a new Cabinet of 29. It is heavily weighted in favour of bureaucrats and technocrats despite the backing he had from a coalition of political parties, the Jagodal (National Democratic Front). Zia's bias towards the bureaucracy seems to stem from his repeated declaration that the main purpose of politics in Bangladesh is the economic emancipation of the people, and his apparent conviction that

the technocrats, not the politicians, can lead the country to that goal. Zia has not joined the Jagodal, though he has said it was created on his inspiration. And the politicians have had to yield the senior positions in the Cabinet to retired bureaucrats such as Quzai Anwarul Huq, a senior member of the Indian Police Service (before the partitioning of the Subcontinent); Shafiqul Azam, the most senior member of the Pakistan Civil Service before the break-up in 1971; Abdul Momen Khan, a senior member of the Bengal Civil Service and Azizul Huq, a former educationalist and bureaucrat. The preponderance of bureaucrats would also suggest that the induction of politicians into the Cabinet was not much more than giving them the "pound of flesh" they had asked for helping Zia ward off the challenge in the elections.....

Zia has made some concessions to latent rivalries within the Front, a collation of disparate political parties. Although the Constitution demands that there should be a prime minister, Zia has decided to do without one. The post was expected to go to Mashiur Rahman, leader of the left-inclined National Awami Party, the main architect of the Front. Presumably yielding to protests from the rightist Muslim League, another constituent of the multi-party Front, Zia named Mashiur Rahman senior Minister. Not only has Mashiur Rahman been denied the post of premier, but the Muslim League is very much a part of the Cabinet, with as many members in it as there are from Mashiur Rahman's NAP. At the same time the United People's Party, representing the young Left, seems to have done equally well. While this political "coat of many hues" served Zia well in the election campaign, it is difficult to envisage how it will wear now that Zia is operating a

new Government. Cabinet members belonging to the Jagodal may not always see eye to eye with one another on most vital issues. One such point of disagreement among them may be the question of nationalisation of industries. Enayetullah Khan, Minister for Industry, are both members of the Jagodal central convening committee, but while Enayetullah Khan is a great advocate of state capitalism, Ahmed's support for the private sector is fairly well known.....

—Daud Majlis in the Far Eastern
Economic Review. 21 July 1978.

BANGLADESH: YAWNING TRADE GAP

The projections under the new import and export policies indicate that the country's foreign trade sector would continue to remain under heavy pressure during the current fiscal year. The value of total imports will be almost three times the value of exports in 1978-79 as in the preceding fiscal year. And this will mean a staggering deficit of Taka 17920 million with total imports (including all categories of imports such as consumption goods, raw materials, spares, foodgrains, capital goods, transport items, defence equipment etc) projected at Taka 26920 million and total exports at Taka 9000 million during the current fiscal year. The related unfavourable balances of trade, to be mentioned here, amounted to Taka 12145 million and Taka 7180 million in 1977-78 and 1976-77 respectively. Like in the previous years, the deficit in the balance of trade is to be met by substantially larger volume of foreign aid (grants plus loans), and private transfer receipts (imports under Wage Earners Scheme). In view of the projected huge trade deficit for the current fiscal year, a further draw-down of the country's foreign exchange reserves is also expected. Mean-

while, debt servicing including payments of principal plus interest will amount to Taka 1530 million in 1978-79. This means that about 17 per cent of the country's export earnings will be needed for meeting her debt-servicing liabilities for the current year. In addition, payments to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on account of repurchase of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) would involve a substantial amount of transactions in the IMF account. According to an earlier projection, payments to IMF will amount to Taka 850 million as against balance of payments assistance from it to the tune of Taka 217 million in 1978-79, reflecting a net deficit of Taka 579 million on the related account.

The widening gap in the country's balance of trade points out a distressing economic situation. And, this is more so in view of the fact that the gap has been widening every year at an accelerated pace. Notwithstanding "laudable growth" in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the economy has simply not been able to meet increasingly its current liabilities in the foreign trade sector out of own resources and earnings. Cautious observers commenting on this aspect of dependence of the national economy on foreign capital inflow note that the country is probably incurring disproportionately large long-term liabilities for short-term expediency and thereby the present ruling elite is exploiting the productive potential of the future generation." One particular cause of concern in this context relates to the deteriorating terms of trade. While the prices of imported commodities for the country have gone up several times during the last six years, those of her export commodities have failed to register any significant rise.....

—The New Nation, Dacca.

BANGLADESH: DISINTEGRATION IN STAGES

The split in the parties and disintegration of the political forces coupled with massive let down of the people by the political leaders has triggered off a new process of political and economic chaos and confusion in the country. The total impact of it is not being felt because of the presence of Martial Law. The strange political phenomenon that had gripped the nation since the government went for licensing of the political parties has gained momentum of late. Amidst slogans of "national unity" the political forces are fast disintegrating and the parties splitting into small groups and subgroups.. The process of disintegration of political forces and split in the parties started right from the moment the government decided to grant licences to those who wanted to have a political party. Overnight, 52 political parties were born. The government in its "infinite wisdom" allowed about two dozen parties to function. Most of these parties were a one-man show. Everybody seemed anxious to pass himself off as a party leader. The second stage of the disintegration started with the formation of the establishment-backed Jagodal. The emergence of the new party was hardly noticed by the people. This unnerved the sponsors of the party who later made all efforts to recruit from various other parties. In the hope of getting "loaves and fishes" a good number of members from various parties including Muslim League, Bhashani NAP, United People's Party some Awami Leaguers, hurriedly enlisted themselves as loyal members of the new party. Even the leaders of the parties banned by the President rushed to join the bandwagon. The process of disintegration has resulted in three Muslim Leagues instead of one, three Bhashani NAP's

in place of one. The United Peoples Party is divided with splinter group forming a Revolutionary Party. The Islamic Democratic League has split into three groups. Even a small party like Peoples Party is divided into two. The former ruling party—Awami League—which had retained the facade of unity till recently is faced with the threat of a definite break in next few days. Worst of all, the initiators of the disintegration move are the worst sufferers now. The Jagodal which was formed with consent and help from the President himself is busy in bitter and at times nasty in-group fighting. The party is divided on the question of National Unity.. the call given by the President after his election in the polls.. The country is under Martial Law even after three years and a presidential poll. The controversial Fourth Amendment in the Constitution remains with small adjustments suited to the establishment. The fact remains that in the presence of Martial Law no institutions can grow no system can function. The will of an individual or a group is above the nation and the state. There is no accountability.

—The New Nation, Dacca.
30, July 78.

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NXET WEEK

- ① PRESS IN SRI LANKA
- ① ULF AT CROSS ROADS
- ① QUIDNUNCNS—MORE SCANDALS, ADA etc.
- ① NICARAGUA, MIDDLE EAST
- ① NARCOTICS & LOCAL POLITICS

SPOTLIGHT ON

The New Constitution

The author of this article, Dr. A. J. Wilson, was for many years on the staff of the University of Ceylon and occupied the chair of Professor of Political Science.

Professor Wilson in 1955 won the Leverhulme Research Scholarship at the London School of Economics and in 1964 a Research Fellowship in Politics at the University of Leicester.

Two of Dr. Wilson's latest books are "Politics of Ceylon" and "Electoral Politics in an Emergent State" which analysed the elections of May 1970. Dr. Wilson is the son-in-law of the late Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam.

THE SECTION ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS in the Constitution, when taken with the provisions for an Ombudsman, the independence of the Judiciary, and the restrictions on the exercise of emergency powers, is by far the most extensive charter of freedom that Sri Lanka has had in all its history.

The 1978 Constitution marks a watershed in the history of constitutional development. Whilst we have retained and modernised the parliamentary legacies inherited through the years, we have discarded some of the outmoded features that were impositions more suited to the needs of an expanding stable imperialism such as Britain, a country which has at present found some equilibrium as a declining medium-sized power. But even Britain has modified the West-minister model to suit the

changing situation. There is an inner cabinet, and what is more, a still more confined inner circle of advisers.

At the top of the pyramid is the Prime Minister, no longer *primus inter pares* but a virtual President in the American and Gaullist style. Eden, Macmillan, Heath and Wilson are the examples of the recent past and general elections in Britain have tended to become presidential contests between the leading contenders—the question at issue being whether the voters preferred to be governed by one leader as against another. The British have even adopted the referendum to determine the views of the electors as for example on the Common Market question.

We have in our new constitution endeavoured to adopt a style of government that suits a crisis-laden society that is in danger of going off balance. It incorporates some of the functional aspects of our own past as well as those of the British, American and French systems of government. But it is unique in that it has been framed to meet our own requirements and cannot therefore be described as imbibing to a great extent the major principles of any one of the systems mentioned. It is a presidential-parliamentary type of political experiment that will ensure stability, popular involvement through elections and referenda, and conformity with democratic practices made possible by a charter of liberties and provisions for an independent judiciary.

Adequate provision for a stable executive presidency is ensured in three ways. The President is elected by an absolute majority of the voters participating in his/her election. He is likely to emerge as a national figure drawing support not from one segment of society but from a broad spectrum of the whole. He would strive towards

consensus politics because proportional representation is likely to result in no one party obtaining an absolute majority of seats in the legislature.

Secondly, the President will necessarily enjoy a greater quantum of authority and prestige and will therefore be in a better position to initiate and implement governmental policy. Under our discarded system, prime ministers with one or two exceptions tended to be chairmen of cabinets involved in a vain search for coherence and continuity in policy and having to contend against the Donoughmore tradition of strong individualism on the part of ministers. They functioned more in the style of their nineteenth century British counterparts not realising that conventions had brought about significant changes in Britain itself.

Thirdly, the President as acknowledged leader will have a maximum of authority to handle the problems of a society in disequilibrium. The Constitution, in effect, intends him to be a crisis leader. Much-needed economic regeneration, social change and the reconciliation of alienated groups into the body politic can be effected with speed and decision by an acknowledged leader invested with the maximum confidence available.

VIEWS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED that (1) the present President may work the new system but what of his successors? (2) there can be deadlock and conflicts between the President and the legislature if the latter body has a majority hostile to the President and (3) the system could give rise to dictatorship. These arguments need examination since they are based on genuine though unfounded fears.

It is true that the present President has been in the mainstream of democratic politics for over forty years and that his world-view is

coloured by a desire to maintain constitutional government. The underlying fear is that the succeeding incumbent might be spurred on with visions of Bonapartism, Castroite designs etc. The argument is really tied up with that of the potentialities for dictatorship.

We will come to this question but suffice it to say at this point that a half-century of electoral experience, an over-pluralised social structure and a militant trade union movement are, apart from the safeguards against abuse of power, written into the Constitution of the Second Republic, adequate built-in checks against subversion of the democratic processes. Besides the hour can produce the man. It used to be said that the Fifth Republic was tailor-made for De Gaulle and would not outlast him. But Pompidou and D'Estaing proved capable in their own way and the Fifth Republic has shown ability to adapt itself to the stresses and strains of the volatility of French political life.

A hostile majority in the legislature need not cause problems. We had it in our constitutional past (the Donoughmore period) when ministers implemented policies that they did not approve of. And the Swiss Council of Ministers is the best example of a fixed executive that at times does the bidding of the Legislature. In the French Fourth Republic, ministers had to accept amendments from the legislative committees of the Chamber of Deputies which mangled their original proposals. American Presidents have had to go along with hostile majorities in one or both houses of Congress.

There are two alternatives that will become available to our President under the Second Republic. He can either carry out the wishes of the legislative majority as defined by the cabinet of ministers. Or he can revert to the role of a

constitutional head of state. Commentators on the Fifth Republic have indicated that this course is available to French presidents faced with a hostile majority. The Constitution is therefore workable and need not cause paralysis in the nerve-centres of government.

THE CONSTITUTION of the Second Republic is the least prone to dictatorship of all systems. For one thing there are entrenched provisions which stipulate extremely difficult conditions for the extension of the life of Parliament and the term of the President. In either instance a two-thirds majority is not in itself adequate. The approval of the people must, in addition, be sought in a referendum.

The American and French systems are less democratic. The President of the United States enjoys extensive veto powers over Congress. The French President can, in certain given circumstances in terms of Article 16 of the Constitution, rule by decree without the consent of the legislature. Even in Britain, C. F. Strong has remarked that the cabinet "is much more the rule of one man than that of a committee" (Modern Political Constitutions, 1975 edition, P. 216). So have other writers like R. M. Punnett, S. E. Finner and J. P. Mackintosh. African presidential systems bear no resemblances whatsoever. Their presidents rule in the context of one-party states. Their cabinets are mere bodies of advisers. Their legislatures only possess residual authority. Our Parliament has the Prime Minister and Cabinet sitting in it and the legislative consultative committees ensure a correspondence between government and executive.

The inequitable system of weightage to backward and sparsely-populated areas has been dropped. Nor can there any longer be perverse landslide majorities which

have little relation to the actual number of votes polled under the outmoded Anglo-Saxon first-past-the-post single-member constituency system. Proportional representation will ensure in the legislature a fairly accurate mirror of opinion in the country. The business of forming a stable government will devolve on the President as well as on political brokers and amalgamators. There will be a move in the direction of consensus politics and national governments rather than the bitterness of party strife that has characterised government since independence.

Long years ago, even in Britain a liberal historian of repute Ramsay Muir, in a book, **How Britain is Governed**, which he published in the nineteen thirties, advocated proportional representation as a way of ending the monopoly of politics by the two major parties and as a step in the direction of ending dictatorship by the cabinet. Proportional Representation however, has its defects which we deal with below.

Articles 10 and 11 of the Constitution relating to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom from torture are entrenched, while the other freedoms are subject to the usual requirements of national economy, national security, national harmony and public morality. The state does not, however, have a blanket right to curtail these freedoms on the grounds stated. The state's decision will be subject to interpretation and adjudication by the Supreme Court.

MORE SIGNIFICANT than all this is the provision contained in Article 17. Under it a citizen is entitled to seek the protection of the Supreme Court when there is an imminent threat to his rights by executive or administrative action. It might be recalled that

Section 29 of the 1947-72 Constitution safeguarded the citizen only against legislative discrimination. While the Constitution of the First Republic (1972-77) left out the ordinary courts and permitted only limited jurisdiction to a specially constituted Constitutional Court.

Certain sections in the Constitution are more entrenched than others, requiring, in addition to the usual two thirds majority of the total membership approval by the people in a referendum. The Constitution, in a sense, becomes more rigid than previous ones because proportional representation would make it difficult for any one party to obtain a two-thirds majority. However, parties can combine for the purpose of effecting amendment. The attempt of the SLFP to negotiate with the TULF at the tail-end of the last Parliament is a pointer. And it should not be forgotten that even without proportional representation, change was difficult during the period of the 1947-72 constitution.

Only once before the major overhaul of 1972, did a government secure a two-thirds majority (at the general election of 1952) but it did not on that occasion attempt to bring about significant alterations. The new system, therefore, in effect, seeks to achieve consensus or maximum agreement in this vital area of government as well. Constitutional change can no longer be affected on a unilateral basis.

The fact that the President's term is fixed, while that of the Cabinet and the Legislature is likely to be different, need not detain us. If the legislative majority is hostile to the President, the odds are that we will return to Prime Ministerial government. The President may dissolve the Legislature once but no Consti-

tution can stand a diet of dissolutions.

The President is made responsible to the legislature, but the Constitution is silent as to how that responsibility can be enforced. The Prime Minister will presumably answer for the President. Besides Parliament can, if it so desires, amend the statement of government policy or the annual appropriation Bill in order to bring the President in line.

Ultimately, the Constitution, by implication, makes it indispensable for the President, the Cabinet and the legislative majority to work in harmony and co-operation. The possible fragmentation of parties under proportional representation will make the President's task somewhat easier. The rationale of course is to strive towards consensus politics.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION brings about the fragmentation and splintering of parties. But it might as well be noted that despite the existence of two rival major coalitions which call themselves political parties (the UNP and SLFP) they are themselves federations of group interests. These interests are sometimes in conflict with each other and can be parties in their own right.

The new system also does away with by-elections which can, at times, help governments to gauge the state of public opinion while enabling the Opposition to record its protest. This can be an advantage which proportional representation destroys. But do by-elections truly reflect the mood and temper of the electors? MulKirigala and the SLFP's victory there in 1976 disproves such a view. Nor is it advantageous for the whole machinery of government to be mobilised to fight a byelection when its energies and resources are needed for more urgent purposes.

Proportional representation will, however, promote the dictatorship, of the party machine. The candidate becomes dependent on the party to have his name entered in the list. When this is coupled with the anti-defection clauses (Article 99, sub-sections 13 (a) and (b) under which a party has the right to expel and replace Members of Parliament, the dictatorship of party becomes truly dangerous. The size of the electoral district which will be the same in most cases as that of an administrative district will help to some extent to counteract the rigid control of parties. Members will develop and cultivate their own local bases within the electoral district. This will provide them with a certain amount of leverage when lists of candidates are being formulated by political parties.

It is doubtful as to whether the referendum can be a useful device. The Constitution, however, stipulates that only questions of national importance and certain fundamental matters of constitutional significance should be referred to the electors. There are some disadvantages here. An excessive politicization of an already over-politicized electorate can be one outcome. Secondly powerful vested interests can mobilize sections of voters and persuade them to vote while the general mass may be apathetic. Lastly legislature and Executive might shelve their responsibilities by transferring the burden of decision-making to the electors.

Finally, the Constitution makes the Supreme Court almost a third chamber of government. The Court is vested with a certain preeminence. It enjoys fairly extensive powers of judicial review, the right to render advisory opinions, and in defined cases to intervene in the operation of the Constitution. Judicial review of ex

ecutive, legislative and administrative acts is no doubt a safeguard of individual liberties. But the Court can also hold up the work of government. The working of the Constitution in the next few years will indicate whether the Court will be helpful or obstructionist.

Sunday Observer, 10/9/78

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IN THE TUB

by Diogenes

The Rule Of Law

In the period 1955 to 1960, this column had appeared in the Tribune regularly, practically every week. Between 1960 & 1970 it had appeared more occasionally. After 1970, the had column gone into hibernation. It is being revived again because Diogenes is once again with us, and we are certain that our readers—old and new—will enjoy the reflections of a modern philosopher.

DIOGNESS, after a brief sojourn in the Council of Elders, has come back to where he belongs after he came to grief at the hands of the powerful ones in the State. He was in deep contemplation reviewing with great detachment and compassion the ways of men and the nature of things. Being a great lover of the City and its Men, he hoped that his expulsion will bring benefits not only to himself but to the citizens and the powerful ones as well. He refused to say he was wronged but he had been heard to say to his many friends "whom am I to deny these mighty little ones, in Samsara, whom am I to deny them their little sport

in which they indulged to cause me what they thought was pain?"

Diogenes recalled the words of Great Teacher "the man who conquers himself is greater than a conqueror of a thousand men". The Master relaxed in his Tub more than ever conscious of his greatness and his intellectual superiority over the powerful ones. The Master was prone to this human frailty. He was intellectually arrogant and when his friends rebuked him for it, the Master with good humour would reply "I am really not arrogant. It is the strength of my Inner Self. It sees everything and it cannot suffer fools. In the words of the poet 'I count Religion but a childish toy and there is no sin but Ignorance.' It was when he was in one of his deep contemplative moods that his Friend entered the room and began questioning the philosopher.

"Master, have you anything to say of the Rule of Law?"

"I am unable to answer your question, my friend, till you tell me who are the rulers and what are the laws. I am only concerned with the everlasting rule, the indestructible rule which is the Rule over one's own self. There was, there is, and there will be no man so powerful in this world or in all the worlds to destroy that Rule over one's own Self."

"I asked you not about that Rule but about the Rule of Law."

"I told you that any rule that is transient perisheth and I am concerned only with that Rule that perisheth not and its years have no end. The Perennial Rule is the one over one's Self and the Perennial Law is the Karmic Law. There are no judges to interpret this Law there are no Courts or Pleaders to plead on one side or the other. There are no armed forces to enforce this law. It is unobtrusive and works itself out

without any pomp or pageantry. It works in silent splendour. It is within human comprehension and yet beyond it. Pain and pleasure, praise and censure, life and death are all unreal. The Reality is the Intelligence, the awareness of things and the Rule of one's own Self which carries us through the ocean of life and death to Supreme Happiness. This is the only Rule of the only Law I can see from this Tub."

So saying the Master turned to a side and relapsed again into deep contemplation.

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ACID BOMB EXPLOSION — 16

Chapter Sixteen Police Inquiries

By James Goonewardene

That night Deva lay reading in bed. The day's events, however, continued to worry him, especially the staff meeting that had to end so abruptly and in so disturbing a fashion. It continued to surface and give him the odd feeling that this was only a prelude to more dramatic and terrifying events. He could foresee it ending in disaster; it could not end any other way.

After a time he gave up the struggle, rested the book on his belly—the petromax lamp continuing to burn on the table by his bed—and let his thoughts take their course. It was easier to do that than struggle against them. It was close on nine o'clock but there was still activity he could hear in the rest of the house—the land-lady, her husband and their woman servant, an old woman from a distant village, were preparing to go to bed. Otherwise it was perfectly still everywhere;

the road, outside, lay buried in darkness and the stillness disturbed only by a single passing car, and by the rumbling of a bullock cart advancing slowly from a distance. The sea continued to pound the beach.

Suddenly, then, he heard the sound of a car stopping outside the house—not a frequent occurrence at anytime, but in the night a most unusual thing—a moment later he heard the front gate being unlatched, and then came the knock on his door.

"Open the door", he heard Ariya's voice call urgently. "It's me"—Deva went to the door and opened it and Ariya pushed his way in, his face distraught, and going to the chair he flopped into it. "Its old Piyyaratne—we've got to take him to hospital".

Deva didn't do a thing for a moment. He stood there looking flummoxed.

"What's happened?"

"He's seriously ill."

Deva continued to stand and stare at Ariya.

"Get dressed—I'll tell you all about it," said Ariya.

"All right—go ahead and tell me while I change."

"It will delay us."

"It won't—you can tell me while I dress."

"He's drunk himself into a coma; been unconscious since evening. His wife managed, at last, to get a message across to me. He had started to drink soon after he returned from school, and stuck to the bottle until he dropped unconscious."

"Its that staff meeting," said Deva. "Oh my god..." Deva held his head in his hands.

"What staff meeting?"

"Let's get him to hospital."

Deva was soon ready, and locking the door they went out. The

two men sat in the back seat of the beat-up old chevrolet coupe, which Ariya had hired at the bazaar, and started out on the dark, deserted road.

"What happened at the staff meeting?"

Deva briefly explained what happened, and ending his story he said:

"I thought at the time, by the way he fought back—at the way he rallied himself, that the old man had still got some life in him; and there was this thing, at the end of the meeting, when he just got up and strode off, with such contempt and dignity—I thought he would come back the next day and continue the fight against this bunch of hoodlums. He did seem to have that much fight in him—obviously he was feeling more beaten than his face or his manner revealed."

"Its the way with him—never to show defeat; takes challenges whatever the odds, but even to that, perhaps, there is a limit. When the world's tumbling round your ears you would be foolish to try to prop it up alone."

"In a way I feel responsible for all this. It was I who suggested that we should hold this exhibition of Gunapala's painting; but afterwards, its true, I did everything possible to talk him out of it—when I realised what we were up against, but he wouldn't hear of it." "Its again that stubborn streak in him. Once he is onto something he goes to the end with it."

They reached Piyyaratne's house a few moments later and found it shrouded in darkness but for a single electric lamp burning in the sitting room that could be seen through the open doorway. They were met by the old man's plump and over-wrought wife.

"How's he now?" asked Ariya.

"The same. He has not moved."

"We'll get him to the hospital straight away. I tried to get through to the local doctor—he was gone. Apparently each evening he goes back home, some distance away from here. So this is the next best thing—the hospital'.

"A neighbour tried to get him earlier, with the same result", said the wife.

Five minutes later they were on their way to the hospital in the next town, twelve miles away, the civil hospital, and nearly twenty minutes later they reached it.

Night in a busy civil hospital presented so great a contrast to what it was in the day time—gone were the crowds, the noise, the bustle and the smell of medicine and the rush around of nurses and attendants. Now it had the air of a morgue. It was a while before they were able to find an attendant who, after some coaxing, was persuaded to fetch a stretcher, and into this they transferred the inert body of the Principal. It took them a little while longer before they were able to find the admitting house surgeon.

When told the patient was the Principal of the school in the neighbouring town he took a sudden new interest.

"Not he, surely," said the doctor, "How did it happen—you are both from the staff of the school?"

"Only I am," replied Deva. "Ariya is a friend of Piyyaratne." The doctor bent over the unconscious old man and started his examination. He checked his heart, his pulse, his pressure, and looked under the eye-lids, and then he straightened up. "He's breathing normally—that's a relief. He's taken quite a bit of drink to get into that condition—what drove him to it?"

"It's a long story, doctor," said Deva.

"I'll have to get the story. We'll get him into the ward at once."

A moment later the stretcher was wheeled down the corridor with the doctor following in its wake. Deva and Ariya sat on one of the benches in the dimly lit waiting room and waited until they had news of his condition. Deva looked at his watch. It was getting onto ten thirty; all activity had ceased in the hospital. There was not a sign of a nurse or an attendant. A cat came round a pillar, soft-padded along and looking about it with a rather quiet, philosophical air like a tired surgeon going off duty. They both sat there and watched it go. Deva lit his third cigar.

"Wonder whether there is some where we can get a coffee?" said Ariya.

"Should be an all-night place somewhere—a boutique or an eating house."

"Let's go and have a look."

They strolled out into the main road—walked a short distance. It was dark—not a man or a dog to be seen. A single street lamp burned on the street, but there was no sign of an all-night eating place. There were a couple of shuttered boutiques, ordinary grocery stores, but no eating place. There would be one at the junction, a mile away; they were in no mood to walk that far. It was nearly eleven thirty when they returned from the fruitless trip. They returned to their bench and Ariya lit himself a cigarette and Deva a cigar. Ariya stretched out his legs and closed his eyes for a catnap. Deva continued to sit up and think.

It was close on twelve when the young doctor came round again. "He's coming round," he said. "It was a bit of a struggle, but we have managed to do something for him, but we can't send him home. Its best you go back now and return in the morning."

"Will he be all-right by morning? "He should be—he'll have to go slow for a while—a week's absolute rest is certainly indicated, and, of course, he'll have to keep off drink for a time—he's had a close shave."

"Whether he'll take the rest he needs is another matter," said Ariya.

"He'll have to rest, I am afraid. His constitution can't take too many shocks. What's made him take to drink? One of the nurses who comes from the area tells me things are bad at the school; is this true?"

"Quite grim," said Deva.

"I'll tell you what—he's all right for the moment—he's asleep; why don't you come with me to the quarters and have a cup of tea—we can talk better there."

"Yes, it should be all right by me. How about you Ariya?" Ariya nodded.

They arose and went down the corridor and through the grounds to the doctor's quarters.

After his adventure Piyaatne decided to go off liquor! For a week or two he was not seen outside his house, apart from his daily trip to the school! He was not seen at the resthouse during this time! At the end of the two weeks an old habit, sometimes, dragged him along there but he would make his visit brief! He would talk to Ariya for awhile and then drag himself back, his stride less assured, his head drooping and his shoulders hunched!

In the weeks that followed an unaccountable, yet ominous quiet descended on the town and its suburbs! The school appeared to have fallen into a desultory routine within which both staff and students went about their tasks with a noticeable lack of interest, but underneath it all there was present an indefinable tension! Every-

one felt its presence and knew it was there building up to something!

Then one day the Inspector in charge of the local police station called on Piyaatne! The old man was resting after school! When the Inspector was announced by the middle-aged cook who had gone to the door, Piyaatne sat in his chair looking quite puzzled! There was nothing he knew of that could warrant the visit of a police Inspector! What could a police Inspector want with him!

"I've come to make some inquiries," said the Inspector, a well set man with slightly greying hair, in response to Piyaatne's stare!

"Yes, sit down please," said Piyaatne taking a chair himself! "Yes, Inspector, what is it you want to know?"

"You have a teacher by the name of Hemapala?"

The Inspector spoke English—his accent rather broad and heavy he spoke the language correctly, if a little hesitantly!

"Yes, I have a teacher by that name!"

"Piyaatne showed a momentary interest! He wanted to add some comments to his statement but restrained himself; he screwed his eyes reflectively for a moment, and then suddenly he leaned back in his chair, clasped his hands and waited!

"There are two other names—I am just checking; Peiris—Vimal Peiris and K. Munidasa—they are also members of your staff?"

Piyaatne looked up at the Inspector and hesitated; the Inspector seated on the edge of his chair, kept his eyes fixed on his notebook which he had been consulting from time to time.

"Yes, they are members of my staff!"

The Inspector paused a moment and then sitting back in his chair he glanced at Piyaratne. He had a rough, down-to-earth manner, but he was doing his best, one could see, not to upset the old man; then suddenly he asked him the next question.

"You have trouble from these people?"

"It depends on what you mean by trouble, Inspector. The three of them have been friends and are members of a union—a teacher's union; and usually the management does have difficulties from union members."

"Yes, that's right—my reports say they have been creating difficulties for you—obstructing you, setting up the students—and recently they have been away a lot from school....."

"I have had occasion to pull up one or the other of them at some time or other."

"Their attendance—what about their attendance—they have been away from school a lot."

"I am sorry, Inspector...these are matters purely of discipline; I cannot see how it can interest the police! There is no crime they have committed—not, at least, under the law!"

"I am coming to it, Mr. Piyaratne. I should have explained—all this has connection with what we are investigating. I don't think I am in a position to divulge anything at the moment; I am only permitted to say that all this is connected with an outside matter. I don't want to seem secretive, but my orders—you see...could I just ask you these questions?"

"Yes go on, Inspector; all this seems to me like an attempt to shut the gate after the horse has bolted. All this has gone on for sometime—these men are extremists—they believe in violence as

a way to achieving power for a minority; they are fanatical and they are blind to reason."

"We are trying to do what we can Sir. I agree something should have been done earlier—but we've got to act on orders—can't do as we please."

"I understand that, Inspector, but I don't see how you can help me in the school; I have enough trouble as it is—but I prefer not to discuss school matters—I have orders too you see."

The Inspector waited a moment before he asked the next question; he seemed determined to complete his inquiry without letting up. He suddenly said: "You had trouble at your staff meeting—the recent staff meeting?"

Piyaratne glanced sharply at the Inspector. "How did you know about that?"

"We have our sources of information—if you could just tell me what happened."

In this manner the Inspector continued to prod the old man for answers and slowly Piyaratne began to show impatience. When asked if he had any views about all this he suddenly flared up.

"Do not press me for such answers," he cried. "I can describe something to you as it happened, but I cannot also give opinions. After what has taken place I don't think anymore. I am an old man. I know my time's run out. All I wish now is to pass out of the scene quietly, go into retirement shortly and live the rest of my life in peace."

"But what's happening is serious. We need help. Educated people must help us to understand what is behind all this. It is becoming a big movement."

"This I have known. Its serious, more serious than even you think, but we are trying to deal with

one little segment of a problem. What's serious is this attempt of theirs to bring the mental and intellectual life of the country to manageable levels and quantities—I hope you can understand what I am saying. This has been one of the most frightening things about all this—these ideas they have borrowed from these modern dictatorships. I am an old man and sometimes I feel glad that I am old. I shall not live, I think, to see such things attempted in this country as part of a political theory, but lots of things have happened round the country that make me feel this is not mere fanciful thinking."

"Don't you want to prevent such things taking place here?"

"I do, Inspector, I do want to help. Everyone knows what I have done to help prevent this sort of thing; then comes the time one must learn to distinguish fact from illusion. I have, at last, learned the wisdom to try to withdraw and live in peace."

"This may be another name for weakness," said the Inspector. "This wisdom may be your reason for running away."

"Inspector, I don't want to disillusion you, but it may have occurred to you that you may just be a pawn in this game. You are being moved around for the convenience of certain people, and you may think that is bravery and courage to be waiting until you receive orders in order to act. Your delay in acting may be the chance these people have been waiting for, and if they come into power you might be the instrument by which they will inflict these terrible ideas on the people."

The Inspector gave a nod of agreement, and there was, suddenly, this desperate look in his eyes. It became clear to Piyaratne that the Inspector had no illusion about his own predicament. He, after

all, was a man himself and had children of his own. Piyaratne rose and held his hand out which the Inspector took.

"I hope what I told you has made things clearer to you," said Piyaratne.

"You have been of a great help Sir," said the Inspector.

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HIGH COST OF LOVING--2

Suicide Or.....?

by R. C. Thavarajah

I was Officer-in-Charge of Bibile Police Station. Over thirty years ago, some rural Police Stations did not have the modern facilities and amenities such as Government Jeeps, Electricity, telephone or Radio communication. Drinking water was a precious commodity. A monthly sum of Rs. 55/- was paid to the contractor for the supply of drinking water. The only mode of transport was my motor cycle C.E. 7951, good old faithful "ARIEL" Red hunter which had certainly seen better days. It had quirks common to old age and, quite often, the contraption was temperamental. It needed much coaxing and persuasion both mechanical and manual to get it started. The men who worked with me shared a joke among themselves that PT (Physical Training) was superfluous in the mornings as they derived sufficient exercise pushing the reluctant machine sometimes even to the nearest petrol filling station which was quite some distance away.

On being informed of the death, I rushed to the scene of the incident. Preliminary inquiries revealed "ex-facie" that the young man

had entered the Dispensary after dinner and decided to end it all. He did not use the gun. The servant related the facts and impressed me as being truthful in his narrative. In the morning, finding the master unusually late in getting out of the room, he had called out to him. On receiving no reply and finding the room locked from inside, he forced the door open and found that life's little day had ebbed out.

I was a fledgeling of a Recruit Sub-Inspector hopelessly inexperienced in investigation having done a stint of only a few months of field work after being passed out of the Police Training School which was then at Bambalapitiya. The words of our Chief Lecturer, the late MR. LAMBERT N. WIJESKERA who later functioned most admirably as Superintendent of Police, Badulla came flashing vividly to my mind. He always used to re-iterate that, in investigating cases of suicide, we should treat them as suspected cases of homicide, eliminate by thorough investigation the possibility of murder and look for motive. The great mentor 'par excellence' did not believe in the vacuously superficial trivialities of MERE THEORY. He was a practical Policeman who indubitably graduated with honours in the School of EXPERIENCE which according to BYRON is that "cill touchstone whose sad proof reduces all things from their false hue". He believed in the full growth of a student's personality by helping him to build confidence, self-reliance and initiative. He paid attention to every single student inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies with the ultimate aim of enabling the young Police recruit to make his contribution to the State—a unique dynamism which he infused into us all! When he used to speak to us of the Law of God and the

Law of Man, we did not, at that stage, appreciate that he was trying to activate a positive interest in the study of Law by instilling into our minds the rudiments of Jurisprudence which has so great a relevance in the training of Police Recruits today. A Law enforcement officer should not only familiarise himself with statutes, Acts, Enactments and Ordinances but should also understand something of the relations of Man to Society and to his fellow men in so far as those relations are regulated by Law.

He used to arrange with most meticulous attention to the minutest detail SIMULATED SITUATIONS in serious Crime such as Murder, Gang Robbery, Burglary and even fatal motor accidents. The trainees had to first learn the correct method of interrogating the complainant, the witnesses, suspect, most carefully examine the scene for clues, make precise and accurate observations and record in detail everything of evidential value. Having personally checked our efforts, he used to correct us whenever we made mistakes or omissions.

Investigations were completed with whatever ability I could muster. The couple denied association or friendship with the deceased. The "Lady" in particular was most emphatic on that point. There were no shortages of Government property. There was no motive for anyone in the village to put an end to the young man's life. The Inquest proceedings, however, took an unusual and curious turn. The deceased's brother who claimed to be a Medical expert who graduated from the Medical College appealed to me not to insist on a post-mortem examination on the body of the deceased! He assured me that he was satisfied that his brother had committed suicide and pleaded that the holding of a post-

mortem examination would result in delay and inconvenience. The morticians had to embalm the remains which had to be taken to their hometown for the funeral rites. Foolishly, in a moment of misguided sympathy, I considered this a reasonable request as it was rather late in the evening and they had to travel a long distance. I had the sense, however, to inform him that the decision was left entirely to the Inquirer into Sudden Deaths to whom he made the same request. The latter recorded 'inter alia' the brother's evidence of his observations and opinion as to the cause of death. In his report to the Magistrate, Badulla, the Inquirer gave his verdict as SUICIDE. The toxicologist of the Government Analyst's Department reported that the poison used was a lethal corrosive sublimate. About a month later, much to my surprise and dismay, a petition was addressed to the Inspector-General of Police alleging that I had been negligent in my investigation, that foul play was suspected and a post-mortem examination was NOT held to ascertain the cause of death. How much I blamed myself for not insisting on an autopsy by the DMO of the area! The Superintendent of Police in charge of Uva Province perused my notes of investigation with hawk-eyed assiduity. Facts pointed inexorably to suicide. No foul play was suspected or established. The main factor that pointed to suicide was that the finger-prints found on the glass tumbler were ONLY those of the deceased. In retrospection and in the light of subsequent experiences, I realised that the value of this system of identification can never be over-emphasised. There is a tremendous contribution in this field by Scientific Research Institutes of advanced Countries. The Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell is en-

gaged in carrying out research for the Police Scientific Development Branch on the use of radio active substances for developing LATENT finger prints on paper and clothing materials. It has been found that radio active Sulphur dioxide can bring out latent finger prints on surfaces such as currency notes and fabrics.

That was the end of the sad episode. Moral of the Story?—who cares about morals or ideological imperatives these days? Philosophers of old and Great thinkers might have extolled this virtue with justification and sanctification. Today, in the insane FURY of reckless speed for Power, the delirious paroxysm of the megalomaniacal rat race and the savagely cruel cut throat competition for supremacy, morality may soon become a ludicrously outmoded anachronism.

For my part—I learnt my lesson. In the exercise of one's duties, there is no place for the worthless "mush" of sentimentality. Rules and regulations have to be strictly observed without fear or favour—irrespective of any extraneous considerations. The deceased—a promising young man who might have made his contribution to our Country by healing the sick in rural areas, paid a very high price for his folly with his own precious life. As for DELILAH, the callous "QUEEN" of sirens, who for reasons best known to her, did not even care to pay her last respects to the departed, I cannot resist the piquant pronouncement of Henry Wordsworth Longfellow so vibrantly appropriate when he wrote:—"The ADORATION of his heart had been to her ONLY as the perfume a WILD flower which SHE HAD CARELESSLY CRUSHED WITH HER FEET IN PASSING."

Concluded.

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REVIEW

American Film Festival

The International Communication Agency of the Embassy of the United States of America held a special film festival from August 24 to September 5 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Academy Awards, featuring ten of the films that have won an Academy Award since the awards were presented in 1928.

The choice of films was good and one could see the progress and development of the film industry through the years. Besides it was a good opportunity for a whole generation of film goers to see these films (or ones like them) for the first time.

'WINGS' (1927) the only silent film, was a touching and sensitively done film, and the script was especially good. One realizes the greater burden placed on the actor in a silent film because he has to express everything without the help of words. It is the story of two World War I Army Air Corps pilots who love the same girl. Rivalry in turn gives way to friendship but the film has a very sad and touching ending. There was a remarkable display of stunt flying.

'IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT' was a delightful movie full of wit and interesting episodes with Clark Gable in the lead role. The film keeps one enthralled right to the end when with much fanfare the 'Wall of Jericho'—the blanket which separated the out-of-work newspaperman and the runaway heiress played by Vivien Leigh falls. Bing Crosby, looking young and debonair in the film 'GOING MY WAY' (1944) plays the role of priest in a poor community re-

markably well. Barry Fitzgerald does a good supporting role. There is subtle humor as well as witty dialogue in this movie, yet it is full of warmth, and understanding of human problems specially by Bing Crosby when he trains the kids in the neighbourhood to sing in the choir or when he writes a song to help raise funds for the church. He sings his famous song 'Going My Way' in this film which ends on a sentimental note with the old priest being re-united with his ninety year old mother due to the efforts of the young priest. (Bing Crosby)

'GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT' (1947) based on Laura Z. Hobson's novel of the same name brings out clearly many features of anti-semitism. Trying to find a new angle for an article on the subject, Gregory Peck hits upon the idea of posing as a Jew to observe first hand the various problems that beset the Jewish community. The movie depicts not only the outward manifestations but also the inbuilt prejudices of many who claim not to have any. This very thing brings him into conflict with his girl but everything ends on a happy note.

What struck one after seeing these films was the underlying sentimentality and the "true love conquers all" theme which certainly belongs to another era and which is rare in recent films.

'STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE' (1951) is the movie version of Tennessee Williams' play. It was a brilliant portrayal by Vivien Leigh of Blac du Bois who tries valiantly but hopelessly to cling to her gentility against the badgering of her 'uncultured' brother in law. Her performance was truly commendable for it brought out so well the various conflicts experienced by a woman who is lonely, realizes she is ageing and can do nothing

about it and which leads ultimately to insanity. 'HIGH NOON' is a movie about a small town marshal, Gary Cooper, who finds that he is left high and dry by the townsfolk when he has to face a man who has vowed to take revenge by killing him. Gary Cooper conveys pretty well how a man who has a date with destiny at noon, specially on his wedding day feels when the very people he has helped, his friends, refuse him help. No one understands why he wants to stay especially when scheduled for retirement but, alone, he sticks to his decision and triumphs in the end. A film which keeps one in suspense and also has a haunting theme.

ON THE WATERFRONT (1954) portrays the terroristic rule of a gangster-controlled New York longshorman's Union over its members. Marlon Brando plays the guy who ultimately exposes the corruption at the risk of his own neck helped by the priest and a girl who's brother he unwittingly helped to kill. Though the film is shot mostly in the rough and tough docks of New York, it is not without its tender and touching moments—the pigeons he rears for example and the love between him and the girl Eva Marie Saint who also gives a good performance.

One was glad of the opportunity to view these (specially the older) films for the first time. But there is one complaint—the choice of venue. If they had been screened at one of the theatres instead of the American centre auditorium a much wider audience would have benefited as one can be sure that a large number of people who could have appreciated these films did not get the chance due to the limited accommodation.

V. A.

LETTERS

To The President

102/3, Barnes Place
Colombo 7.
12.9.78

The Editor, Tribune
Sir,

I enclose a copy of a letter addressed to H.E. The President. You may find it worthwhile to print in your columns.
Dr. B. Mahendra

* * *

His Excellency President

J. R. Jayewardene,

Dear Sir,

Let me first congratulate you on assuming the office of the first President of the Second Republic of Sri Lanka.

It appears to me that for the first time, certainly in my generation, there has emerged a Government with a plan to unite this country. For thirty years since Independence this nation has gone nowhere except downhill and at the end of the third decade it was a moot point as to whether a single nation existed.

You have had the courage, the wisdom and good judgement to bring forth this constitution which seeks to re-unite a divided land—riven by considerations of language, religion, caste and politics.

Already your government has demonstrated by both word and deed that it is prepared to put the need of the country uppermost. Much remains to be done and you will have the good wishes of every rational person in your endeavours.

You will almost certainly find yourself obstructed—by those operating underground as well as by black flags, boycotts, bombings

and burnings. I trust that with the uniquely wide powers that have been granted to you by the democratic charter, the promulgation of which we celebrated on the 7th of this month, you will have the capacity to deal with saboteurs of every description because all your good intentions are in danger of being undone by a handful of scheming individuals. You will have the vast majority of your countrymen supporting you if you decide to deal as firmly with these elements as is compatible with the law.

As I have said, you now have the capacity to deal with them and I hope you will exercise fully the powers that we as the citizens of this country have granted you and your party at the last general elections.

I have taken the liberty of releasing a copy of this letter to an independent weekly journal as I believe you will have no objections to our fellow citizens sharing our thoughts and I am certain many of them will join me in assuring you of our fullest co-operation.

(Dr) B. Mahendra.

Landlordism

Sir,

The tenant, until almost the end of last year felt protected, but now, suddenly this seems no longer true. It is now as if the Rent Restriction Act itself has been substantially altered. There is some real anxiety in the minds of tenants that, behind his back, this has actually taken place, so blatantly do landlords defy the act, almost as if the act itself did not any longer exist; every kind of subterfuge and ruse was adopted earlier to get round the act—the standard practice being the non-issue of receipts for

rents paid; but even this is being dispensed with now, such contempt do landlords have for the Rent act.

I have met numerous tenants who have suddenly, without the least warning, been plunged into the predicament of having to trek the streets looking for a home, so powerless are they to defend themselves against landlords. The tragic and incontrovertible fact is that tenants so placed are invariably wage earners who, unable to move too far from their work places without adding to an already high cost of living, are compelled to agree to the impossible terms placed before them by their landlords; the alternative to this being the equally terrifying one of being forced to resort to expensive and lengthy litigation against rich and powerful landlords.

The landlords, attracted by soaring rents and house prices offered by gem dealers, foreigners and other big-time money bags have begun, where a vacant annexa or house exists, to ask for impossibly high rents and advances in blatant contravention of the rent act contemptuously dismissing any one else as an upstart. It seems they have misread the government's intention in bringing in an open market economy as a licence for gorging themselves fat in the current business boom, a boom that appears only to have given extra grinding power to the landlord's jackboots.

It will be a relief to a host of tenants if the government, at this stage, declares that it never, at any time, intended to abandon the wage earner to the mercies of a landlord. The silence of the government on this question while conveying the notion that a tacit approval has been given to the landlord's greed has, at the same time, driven a great many people

to the astonishing belief that, in fact, the rent act has been jettisoned. If the contrary is true then obviously the landlords are acting in a manner that is hostile to the intentions and objectives of the government.

A Victim Tenant

Colombo 4.
29.8.78

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Planters' Grouse

Sir,

In your issue of August 5th 1978 You have *Confidentially* described some of the grouses purported to have been described by the planters (Periya Dorais and Sinna Dorais).

It is a surprise that the planters are unsatisfied with the new salary scales given by the UNP government which is an increase over what they got during the last regime. Further the present system of uniform salary scale to all planters is an outcome of the Weerakody Commission report on plantations published as far back as in August 1976. The old system of salaries according to the acreage of estate is unjustifiable as this led to serious disparities between persons having equal qualifications and experience working in different estates of varying acreage. This might have been justifiable in olden days when a planter once recruited to a company estate was kept in employment in the same estate until his retirement or discontinuance, but in the present context of transferable state service this is thoroughly unjustifiable.

It is the consensus of the working class in this country that the salaries paid to planters are far in excess of their qualifications and aptitude. Even young and inexperienced planters today are paid

four figure salaries in the region of two to three thousand rupees with various added prerequisites for a lush life—a few to mention are the rent free palatial bungalows, three servants at state expenses, official conveyance which they are entitled to use for their private runs as well. The rent free bungalows are carpetted, fully furnished with modern suite and even fitted with sconces all at state expenses juxtaposed to the leaking and unlit shacks given as official quarters to some of the govt. staff officers. Then what about the incentives for house keeping such as fridges, ovens, cookers, Cutlery, crockery etc all provided by the state. It is untrue that these incentives and perks, thought unjustifiable, are taken away. With all these facilities for a posh life, if a planter's wife cannot live with her husband on the estate, then the government cannot help it.

Regarding the loneliness in estates one can only think of the saying that every body cannot get every thing in life. What about those govt. servants such as DROs, Medical Officers and agricultural officers who too have to live in very remote areas and put up with all attendant difficulties—in many instances unable to get a decent house to live in. The trouble with our Planters is they still try to live in clovers as their predecessors—white sahibs, at the expense of the country at large.

Aaren

Chilaw.
7.8.1978

Promises

Sir,

Harassed consumers, whose patience has been taxed to the utmost since last November, are surely entitled to ask whether it is

on the insistence of the IMF that the price of PERAKUM has been upped recently—it is now Rs. 4/- per tin—and whether, as rumour has it, the price of Lakspray (which has been in short supply for quite some time) is also to be increased at its behest, which obviously the government is powerless to resist, in the near future.

I wonder whether HE the first President of the New Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka—how nicely it sounds!—should this letter appear in print and it catches his eye, will take umbrage at my impudence in asking him whether he can recall the memorable speech he made as the President of the UNP at the well-attended propaganda meeting of the party held near the Kotahena market on or about 4th June 1977 in support of Mr. Vincent Perera's candidature for the Colombo North Seat, that when his party returns to power the price of Lakspray would be reduced to Rs. 2/75, Rs. 3/- and Rs. 6/- per one pound carton, one pound tin and two and half pound tin respectively, and that the price of PERAKUM would be reduced to Rs. 1/63 per tin—(vide *Thinakaran* of 6.6.77). Or, has he like every politico in this once thrice-blessed Isle, conveniently forgotten it?

Would it be rank impertinence to ask HE whether he is aware that 15 months after his most welcome assurance (which would certainly have evoked tumultuous cheering from the large crowd present who however, must now be asking themselves whether it was not their misfortune to have attended this meeting) that there has not only been a serious shortage of both Lakspray and PERAKUM since, but also that the price of the latter has recently been upped by .75 cents to the utter consternation of consumers, without prior intimation or plausible explanation of the reason for this sudden in-

crease. Or, is it that a midnight gazette notification (of which the public are blissfully unaware) had been issued in this regard, reminiscent of the infamous and irksome gazette notices of the UF/SLFP Government, which the UNP exploited fully to their advantage in its Election campaign, but which it appears to have forgotten? Surely Sir, in the light of recent events which have certainly left a bitter taste in the mouths of even staunch UNP supporters—I say so from personal knowledge—which is bound to stick like glue, one must be pardoned if one is constrained to ask whether UNP promises, by whomsoever made, are worth even a thuttu, leave alone two.

C. E. J. Alles

113, Anagarika Dharmapala
Mawatha, Dehiwala.
7.9.78

Water For Lower Uva

Sir,

In two past issues of *Tribune* (Vol. 23/8 and 23/10), the *Grama Sastra* column by Gamiya had mentioned just a little of a very serious problem of the "rural poor" in lower Uva. As one living in this part of the province I wish to add a little more depth to what Gamiya had said.

There is no life without water. Almost all cities and urban areas are provided with purified water through a tap system, not only for drinking but also to water the gardens, lawns, fill ponds, and even to wash vehicles of the town folk. It's good and an easy thing in the city, one opens the tap gets the water and many forget to close the tap, that gave the water, and so this precious water flows down the drain unused. Some make a big noise of water cuts in the city

but the fact that water is provided right into one's bathroom, kitchen and garden is a privilege, compared to what the people have to undergo in lower Uva villages. A few big towns like Moneragala and Wellawaya are provided with tap water and mostly the residents in these towns are businessmen, government officials, teachers, clergy and the members of parliament, who are mainly from the urbanized, affluent and middle classes employed in those areas.

The majority of the people involved in production, viz, cultivation, agricultural workers etc, are residents in the surrounding villages. Mostly well water issued for drinking and in a village there may be one or two public wells (some villages do not have a single) a few private wells, 30-40-50 or even 60 feet deep sometimes and with just a few feet of water. One is lucky to be close to a well or tank otherwise it's a long long way to water. At present there are only a few tanks in the area, which provide water for cultivation and bathing but many use water from them for drinking too. It should be also mentioned that the women are burdened with the responsibility of providing the requirements of water for domestic use.

Gamiya talks of young deaths in these rural areas while in search of water. People have not only drowned in the tanks but there have been cases of death by falling into deep wells as all wells are not built and many are deep. There was an instance a few years ago in Anapallama where a father and two small sons were cutting a road to a well which was interior from the road into the thick jungle. The father led the way and the two sons followed. The youngest was at the tail end. A lone elephant which had killed about 15 people in the district happened to cross their path at this time and seeing

the youngest child away from the other two attacked him. And that was a young death while in search of water.

Three weeks ago at Horabokka (a village 4 miles off Uva Palwatta along Passara road) a middle aged man who had an early appointment that fatal day had gone to the river for a wash very early in the morning. Before he could get into the water an elephant had attacked him and trampled him to death. A young girl who had also come to the river at this time seeing this incident left her "kale" at the river and ran home never to come again for water. Up to this day she is reluctant to come to the river even for a bath. It's not only the distance, depth, weight and labour that relates to this search for water in these areas but also fear of unexpected death.

The people of these areas have pleaded with all governments that have been in power so far to provide them with facilities of drinking water but very little or no action has been taken. At an inauguration meeting of a gramasangwardena samiti in a village in lower Uva the Grama Sevaka promised the people that he will somehow get govt. approval for a public well system to provide the villagers with drinking water. This was in December 1977 and no signs of wells being dug—only a promise that was. Another Rural Society from a village close to Wellawaya has requested the Special Commissioner and AGA both to provide the village with public wells for drinking purposes. It is six months since and not even an acknowledgement from those government officials regarding this grievance of the people. Most probably the govt. officials who are supposed to look into the areas are stationed in the towns mentioned above where all facilities

are provided and as a result they do not feel the gravity of the immediate need of the rural poor.

The other day when the Prime Minister visited Moneragala on the 17th of August 1978, at a meeting in Moneragala the MP for Bibile pointed out that there are six rivers in the district and all the water from them are taken out into other districts such as Batticaloa and Hambantota. It is a great crime to take the little water available in this district to feed the others while we are faced with a major threat to existence without water for drinking, bathing and cultivation. The MP for Bibile further stated that the govt. is very grateful to the people of this district for their patience to undergo the many difficulties faced with for existence. The patience of the people—the disorganised rural poor—should not be taken for granted by the govt. Members of Parliament of the district and the govt. officials. The rural people of Lower Uva expect much relief from the present govt. and are with great hope—Unless they are satisfied with these basic requirements like pure drinking water the people may not be patient for long. Water for drinking is needed today and it must be given today. **GIVE PURE DRINKING WATER TO THE VILLAGES OF LOWER UVA!**

Loghead

Lower Uva.
10.9.78



Confidentially

Sugar-cane Loans—2

IS IT NOT A FACT that Amparai MPCS which had handed out over Rs. 3 million in sugar cane cultivation loans did not have a Loan Committee as required by law to approve and or reject applications? That the Directors on the Board of Management are also expected to examine every single application after it has been processed—from the Subjects' Clerk level to the Loan Committee—and approve or reject the applications individually? That this was not done? That the Board had thought it sufficient to approve only the total amount of funds that had to be obtained from the Peoples' Bank for distribution among members? That the Report stated in categorical terms that this procedure was irregular and that it was also found that the same irregular procedures had been followed in the case of paddy cultivation loans as well? That the Committee then examined the procedures adopted at the next stage of the loan granting process—at the offices of (a) the Assistant Commissioner of Co-operative Development (ACCD), (b) the Manager, Peoples' Bank and (c) the Manager of the Amparai, Co-operative Rural Bank (CRB)? That so far as the ACCD was concerned, he relied on a 10% random test on a sample of loan applications processed by a Co-operative Inspector? That the Co-operative Inspector had to certify that the applications approved by the MPCS were in order? That the Committee found that in respect of these sugar cane loans the Inspector had given this certificate when not even a single loan application form had been properly filled? That the Committee

was compelled to conclude that this particular Inspector was either not familiar with the work he is expected to do or had deliberately given a false certificate and misled the ACCD to approve the loan applications of the Society? That for this reason it was found that the control exercised by the ACCD was ineffective? That once the loans were okayed by the ACCD, the main responsibility fell on the officers of the Co-operative Rural Bank organisation (CRB)? That detailed circulars had been issued to help the officials of the CRB as to how they should maintain the checks that were essential? That in this case, it was found that the requirements of the circulars were not complied with? That, in the final analysis, the Committee came to the conclusion that in the Amparai District the laid-down procedures and systems were not observed even minimally? What the excuse given was that there was an acute shortage of staff? That was even more staggering was that the Manager of the Peoples Bank at Amparai had released the loans without the approval of the Head Office—as required under the departmental orders?

IS IT NOT A DISTURBING FACT that the CRB, released the loans without the security documents being duly completed and the loan registers being written up as required? That these violations of vital procedures relating to loan approvals and disbursements resulted in gross abuse of the loans by employees of the Society? That not only some of the employees but also some of their wives had been given loans in spite of the fact that almost all of them had not satisfied the eligibility criteria to borrow under the scheme? That the Society had also allowed a few individuals, their friends and relations to take ad-

vantage of the weaknesses in the manner of implementation of the loans scheme? That this was seen in the case of the Digavapi Branch of the MPCS where the total number of five loans granted were shared by the Manager of the Branch, the Grama Sevaka, his wife and relations? That in most instances the Co-op Society had given the maximum credit limit permissible (Rs. 10,000/-) to the borrower without even inquiring whether he possessed land to the extent of $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres or whether the borrower had the ability to cultivate such land? That since the amount of the loan depended on the number of acres to be cultivated, the acreage seems to have been adjusted to suit the limit of Rs. 10,000/-? That certain borrowers had the brazenness to declare that they expected to cultivate crown land even on an unauthorised basis in the hope of obtaining permits later on? That in the case of crown land permits are issued only for an extent of 3 acres—a fact that all institutions associated with agricultural credit should have been aware of? That in conclusion, the Committee stated some of the officers and the management of the Amparai MPCS failed to take even the elementary precautions necessary to prevent the abuse of the New Agricultural Credit Scheme? That this abuse was further compounded by some of the officers approving loans for themselves, their wives, relations and friends? That there were times when this abuse was even extended to help the MPCS temporarily with its own problems of liquidity? That there is no doubt that this Report should be made a handbook for those involved in Agricultural Credit to know how rackets operate and to see how they can be avoided by enforcing the basic regulations without getting bogged down in red tape?

(Concluded)

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