

Forward

THE VIEW FROM THE LEFT

IN THIS ISSUE

J. R.'s New Role	p. 8
8 Parties Call	p. 3
More on Anura Bastian	p. 7
Gratuities Bill	p. 2
Mini-Election or Multi-Bluff?	p. 2
Aththa Case	p. 8
Indira's Setback	p. 5
Slanders against Bulgaria	p. 4

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We Say.....

Seventh Summit

The Seventh Non-Aligned Summit, which will be held in New Delhi in March 1983, is of special interest and importance to the peoples of Sri Lanka and this region.

An extremely dangerous situation has been created by US imperialism in the Indian Ocean. Rejecting the desire of the peoples that this ocean should be a zone of peace, as well as the UN effort to hold a IOPZ conference in Colombo, the Reagan administration has pushed ahead with its own plan to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of tension, armed confrontation, and aggression.

Its expansion of the Diego Garcia base; the search for new bases at Trincomalee and elsewhere; the supply of 3.2 billion dollars worth of sophisticated armaments to Pakistan's military dictatorship; the establishment of its "Rapid Deployment Force"; its undeclared war against Afghanistan; its support for Zionist butchery in West Asia; and its escalating threats to the Indo-Chinese states, India and others who pursue an independent and peaceful policy—all these are a major threat to the peace and security of our region. Similar US threats exist in all other continents and oceans.

This is why the peoples of Sri Lanka, as all other peoples of the developing and non-aligned world, look with hope to the coming New Delhi Summit. This will be one of the most representative and authoritative conferences of the movement, which has become a big factor in world politics and in the fight for peace, national liberation, and a new international economic order.

★ ★ ★

What transpired last week at the preliminary meeting of Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers at Managua, Nicaragua, should alert us and other peoples of the region to the fact that imperialism and its Trojan horses within the movement are up to the same old games that they tried before the Sixth Summit in Havana. They have launched a desperate and concerted attempt to derail the movement and deflect it from what the February 1981 Non Aligned Foreign Ministers meeting said is its "quintessence" — namely, the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, apartheid and racism, including zionism.

As before, imperialism's Trojan horses are stridently demanding that criticism of US imperialism and British neo-colonialism should be "toned down", that the thinly disguised Pol Pot genocidists should be accepted as representatives of Kampuchea, and that the fight against the alleged "Soviet threat" and communism should become the movement's main preoccupation.

★ ★ ★

Where does Sri Lanka stand in all this? Its peoples want the traditional non-aligned policies pursued for many years to be continued and improved. The Jayawardene government is steadily moving away from non-alignment towards accommodation and collaboration with its main enemy, imperialism. Its link-up with Singapore and other imperialist stooges within the non-aligned movement to whitewash US imperialism; its attempt to join Asean; its support for British colonialism in the Falklands matter; its shameful secret talks with the US over Trincomalee; and its servile surrender of principles in the dance for dollars, have all made it suspect and one of the odd men out in the movement.

Left to itself, the government will take us further down this slippery slope. The people must therefore stand up and speak out if Sri Lanka's reputation and good name, which this government has dragged in the mud, is to be restored.

National Unity Needs Deeds Not Words

The caution and reserve displayed by non-government parties at last week's government proposal to set up a Parliamentary Committee to seek ways and means to establish national unity is not surprising.

It arises from their strong doubts about the government's intentions, rather than from a failure to appreciate the importance of a political settlement of the problems of the Sri Lanka Tamils and the "stateless" in the hill country.

If this proposal is just another move in the government's devious attempt to set up a so-called "National Government", it will not go far.

But if the government really wants a political settlement that will command national endorsement, it can and should produce a positive response from Opposition parties.

It is up to the government to establish its credibility in this matter if it wants its proposal to be considered seriously.

SORRY RECORD

Neither the Opposition nor the country have forgotten the UNP's sorry record in this matter.

It was the UNP, led by none other than Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, that torpedoed the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1967, and reneged

on even its own Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayagam Agreement of 1965.

The shameful role played by some UNP Ministers and MPs in the anti-Tamil riots of 1977 and 1981 is also not forgotten.

Nor is the UNP's failure to honour its 1977 general election promise to summon an All-Parties Conference on this matter.

SPECIFIC

So, if the government wants its new proposal to get off the ground, it should be more specific.

It should first announce its own proposals for a solution of this problem.

On this basis, it can invite other parties to discuss its suggestions and to make their own proposals.

And the invitation should not be confined to parties re-

presented in the present unrepresentative Parliament. All recognised political parties should be invited.

Only in this way can any really profitable discussion take place.

BENEFIT

A political, and mutually acceptable, settlement of the problems of the Sri Lanka Tamils and the "stateless" will benefit the whole country and all parties concerned about its welfare.

It is infinitely preferable to the ill-will, riots and terrorism, not to speak of separatist and secessionist demands, that failure to reach such a settlement has produced.

Failure to solve this problem has also led to an almost permanent military occupation of the north of our country, while all citizens are periodically deprived of their democratic rights through states of emergency or the enforcement of so-called anti-terrorist laws.

At the Presidential election and the referendum, the Sri Lanka Tamils have passed a massive vote of no confidence in the policies that the UNP government has pursued towards them.

If this has made some sections in the government think afresh, so much to the good.

CO-OPERATION

The Sri Lanka Tamils have also demonstrated that a real basis exists for cooperation for mutual benefit with progressive forces among the Sinhalese.

Opposition parties, too, should not let slip the opportunity that this provides for a political settlement of outstanding problems through the processes of dialogue.

If the right of the Sri Lanka Tamils to self-determination is accepted in principle, the way is open, through discussion, to construct a lasting edifice of national unity which will exclude coercion, force and discrimination, and instead make voluntary co-operation and mutual respect and trust the real alternative to hostility and separation.

Together with this should go a determined effort to end the "statelessness" of nearly a million Up-country Tamils. All of them who wish to become Sri Lanka citizens should be given the opportunity to do so.

"Open" Economy Closes

Last week's ban on the import of textiles for 1983 is the second step the government has been compelled to take in closing doors in its much vaunted 'open' economy.

The "open" (free imports) economy was initiated in 1977 by the government on the World Bank's advice. Although industrialised Western and Far Eastern industrialised countries adopted protectionist measures to support their own industries, they were allowed free imports into Sri Lanka. Such imports were liberally financed by the commercial banks.

The first curtailment came when our foreign debt became unmanageable, our shortage of foreign exchange acute, and the domestic market flooded with shoddy and often unsaleable goods.

At this stage the government was compelled to introduce a "credit squeeze", which was its first attempt to shut doors in the "open" economy.

In taking the second step (the ban on textile imports), the government claims that local production (157 million metres) has almost reached local demand (166 million metres).

But in fact such a position had begun to be reached by 1977, when the "open" economy was started. To create a market for the import

of 70 million metres of textiles in that year, the government closed down handloom production, severely restricted power loom production, and allowed the production in the state sector textile mills to drop.

Local textile industrialists and manufacturers, especially the smaller ones, were badly affected by the "open" economy. Many went to the wall. Even though a section of the UNP, led by Mr. Esmond Wickremasinghe, argued their case, it was ignored.

The government's claim that it has stepped up local production to such an extent that only 10 million metres a year have to be imported now is misleading. Both the credit squeeze and the glut of unsold textiles on the market have played a big part in this drop. So, too, have large-scale smuggling (especially of garments) and the fact that textile manufacturers in the FTZ have been allowed to unload part of their production (which they cannot get rid of owing to protectionist quotas abroad, especially in the USA and the EEC countries) on the local markets.

A recent speech of the Prime Minister has indicated that, due to the shortage of foreign exchange available, further bans or control on imports may become necessary.

Gratuities Bill postponed again

One of the most postponed pieces of legislation in Sri Lanka, the Gratuities Bill was postponed by the present UNP government once again just before Parliament prorogued.

Communist MP Sarath Muttetuwegama complained to Parliament about this postponement. He said that this was the third postponement under the present government.

The Bill had been re-introduced with a flourish at the time of Presidential elections and the referendum. It was widely claimed as a bonanza for the workers, who were asked by the pro-government newspapers to vote for Mr. J. R. Jayawardene and, later, the Lamp to show their appreciation.

But once these two events were over, the Bill has been put off. When - and if - it will appear again on Parliament's Order Paper remains to be seen.

Long history

Actually, the fight for a Gratuities Bill has a long history. The Communist Party and the Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions (CFTU) have been in the forefront of this struggle.

The demand that workers in the private and estate sectors should be paid a gratuity or pension in respect of their past services, and thus put on a par with workers in the public sector, was first raised by the late Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe at the time of the first State Council.

It was taken up more concretely by the CFTU in the mass field after the end of the second world war.

Many workers' rallies were held in support of this demand. CFTU unions, especially its two main unions in the engineering and the tea and rubber export sectors, often downed tools to win this demand.

In Parliament between 1947 and 1956, the Communist Party group, and especially

its spokesman Pieter Keuneman, raised the issue on several occasions.

Breakthrough

The first breakthrough came, however, in the mass rather than the parliamentary field. Here, too, the CFTU was in the forefront.

In the Collective Agreement of 1971, which the Employers Federation of Ceylon signed with the trade unions of manual workers in the private sector, a clause accepting the

opposition from the employers and from capitalist sections in the SLFP - never placed before Parliament.

On the mass front, however, the battle continued. Following the initiative of the CFTU, large numbers of applications by employees claiming gratuities for past services were filed before Labour Tribunals in terms of Section 31B of the Industrial Disputes Act.

The fact that the number of such applications was so great that cases could not be

by

W. L. Fernando

(General Secretary, Industrial & General Workers Union (C.F.T.U.))

payment of gratuities for past services was included for the first time.

This was done on the initiative of the CFTU which spearheaded the fight for this collective agreement.

Provision for the payment of gratuities in improved forms were also included in subsequent collective agreements. It was also included in bilateral agreements that CFTU unions signed with certain employers.

After 1970

Matters were carried a step further after the United Front government came to power in 1970.

That government appointed a Committee to update labour legislation and draw up a Charter of Workers' Rights. The CFTU representative, its General Secretary L. W. Panditha, played a leading part in the work of this committee.

In addition to other contributions, he proposed in 1971 that a Gratuities Bill should be drafted to make the payment of gratuities general in the private sector and enforceable under the law.

Although such a Bill was in fact drafted, it was - through

concluded within a reasonable time once again raised the need for a Gratuities Bill.

Another factor making some legal provision necessary was the government's undertaking under the Indo-Sri Lanka agreements, to ensure that estate workers of Indian origin who returned home were paid gratuities.

1978

As a result, Act No. 34 of 1978 was passed. But this was in every way inadequate.

It confined the payment of gratuities to expatriates. And, as the quantum of gratuity was fixed, its real value was continuously depreciated by the rise in prices.

The fight for a comprehensive Gratuities law, however, continued.

Realisation of the need for this became even sharper in 1981 when, at the bidding of the present UNP government, many private sector bosses sacked a large number of their workers for joining the general strike of that year.

None of these dismissed workers were entitled to gratuities for their past services, even though such services covered several years.

It should be pointed out that one of the defects of the Bill now before Parliament is that it does not make any provision to remedy this situation.

Quantum

Another major defect in the present Gratuities Bill is the quantum of the gratuity.

Almost every trade union in the country has agreed that the gratuity payable should be one month's salary or wages for each year of service, without deducting the employer's

contribution to the EPF and Trust Fund. But the draft Bill does not meet this universal demand of the workers.

The way in which gratuities are computed is also not uniform, and striking discrepancies exist between Part I and Part II of the Bill in this respect. A section of the workers is thus discriminated against.

Without prejudice to their continuing demand for the re-instatement of all workers sacked for taking part in the 1981 general strike, the unions should insist that any relief granted to this category of employees should take the date provided in Section I of the Bill as the date of implementation.

Special problems of estate workers whose estates were taken over, in mid-service, by the Land Reform Communist should also be adjusted.

The important thing is that this long-delayed Bill should not be delayed any further.

Its defects should be speedily rectified in line with the universal demands of all the trade unions, and it should be passed into law with at least the speed that laws favouring the bosses are.

MINI-ELECTIONS OR MULTI-BLUFF ?

Political observers generally discount as a bluff the government's current talk about two sets of mini-general elections this year.

The difficulties in holding elections to an additional 28 seats in Parliament are, they say, too formidable to be lightly undertaken.

The proposal was originally made as a result of lobbying by Minister Thondaman and the CWC for extra seats.

CWC leaders pointed out that their support, especially in vital electoral districts in the hill country, was decisive in the UNP's fortunes, in both the Presidential elections and the referendum.

In view of this, the CWC leaders claim that it is "unfair" and "unrealistic" that they should have only one seat in Parliament for the next six years. They have asked for two or three more seats, especially for Mr. Thondaman's ambitious deputy, Mr. Sellaamy.

The idea of 28 more seats gathered support as a means of accommodating new UNP aspirants and helping to make Mr. Maithripala Senanayake the UNP-approved Leader of the Opposition.

But the complications in putting through a fifth amendment to the Constitution for this purpose are considered to be too great and too risky. Especially as another referendum cannot be avoided - irrespective of whether the additional seats are filled by nomination or election.

Although the proposal for a fifth amendment has been virtually abandoned by the government, its newspapers are

encouraged to keep the matter alive. For in addition to keeping the CWC and the SLFP(M) in a position of responsive anticipation, it helps to dispel impressions both here and abroad that the UNP is not anxious to hold elections.

To keep the CWC happy, President Jayawardene has, instead, opened negotiations with Mr. Thondaman on the "stateless" and Tamil issues.

The backlash within the UNP against any attempts to give Mr. Maithripala Senanayake any special consideration (the first shot being fired by Minister E. L. B. Hurulle in a speech at Kahatagasdigiya where he pooh-poohed Maitri's claim to have tipped the balance for the UNP in the NCP during the referendum) has also made any "mini" general election of this type improbable.

P. M.

Prime Minister Premadasa's statement to Parliament that elections to 50 local bodies may be held in May 1983 has also aroused sniggers in government ranks.

The most common view is that this is merely an attempt by the PM to rehabilitate himself, especially in Colombo, where he took a big fall at the referendum.

Even in his own constituency of Colombo Central, with the other two M.P.s and Mr. Sellaamy working for him, Mr. Premadasa dropped 17,000 votes and the Opposition vote went up by 10,000. This happened despite a massive publicity campaign to boost Mr. Premadasa per-

sonally, as well as terror, impersonation and bribery organised by his "Mudalali Mafia".

The P.M.'s vicious attack in Parliament on the Communist Party, which he called "the most dishonest party" and obviously regards as mainly responsible for the slap in the face he received in Colombo, shows how much he smarts under the loss of prestige he has suffered. It was also seen in the tongue-lashing he gave his supporters who went to see him, armed with betel and greetings, for the New Year.

The P. M. has challenged the CPSL to come out and contest him in Colombo Central in May. Apparently he hopes that an escalated effort by the "Mudalali Mafia" may help him to save face.

But already strong sections within the government, including many leading Jayawardene loyalists, have started to question the wisdom of such a move.

They point to the fact that elections in May will have to be held in the aftermath of a budget which will inevitably have to contain many "unpopular" measures and, with the sales tax, send up prices still higher.

They also say that it is time to "get down to work" and not to have an expensive and time-consuming third round of elections, which no one had yet asked for, merely to satisfy the P.M.'s wounded vanity.

So the betting is, at the moment, that talk about mini general elections this year will remain at that level.

VIETNAM VICTIMS REMEMBERED

December 31 was observed in Hanoi as a day of remembrance of the many thousands of Vietnamese killed by US bombing in America's criminal war against Vietnam.

It was the 10th anniversary of a strategic bombing attack by US aircraft on one of Vietnam's oldest hospitals. Many patients, doctors, nurses and hospital staff were killed in the attack, which reduced the hospital to ruins.

During the 1964 to 1973 period, when this criminal war was conducted, US aircraft dropped two and a half million tonnes of bombs on Vietnam's liberated areas alone.

This amounted to 10 tonnes of bombs per every Vietnamese citizen in these areas.

Napalm bombing turned vast areas of fertile land into lifeless deserts.

In 1961, the US launched the "ranch-hand" operation, as it called its chemical warfare. 43 per cent of the cultivated and woodland area of South Vietnam was subjected to this treatment, which caused irreparable damage to the environment.

The US Defence Department has admitted officially that between 1961 and 1971, it dropped over 70,000 tonnes of toxic chemicals over Vietnam. Even today many hectares of rice, fruit and vegetable cultivations are still affected by the chemicals dropped then.

This is only a foretaste of what life will be like to many countries if the Pentagon strategists are allowed to have their way.

Eight Parties Call for General Election

(The following statement was issued by the 8 political parties which formed a National Committee to oppose the proposal, made in the referendum, to put off the General Election to Parliament).

"What took place on 22nd December 1982 cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as a genuine referendum.

"Instead, it was an extended fraud, in which the UNP resorted to a cynical abuse of state power, blatant deceit, widespread intimidation and physical violence against opponents, and massive impersonation in order to obtain endorsement for its anti-democratic proposal to carry on, until almost the end of the 1980s, without holding the general elections due in mid-1983.

"All that has happened has confirmed the charge made by our parties that the government sought to avoid holding the general election because the results of the Presidential election of October 1982 showed that, if such an election was held, the UNP could not hope to win a two-third majority, let alone the five-sixths majority it has now, and might even have not obtained a majority at all.

"Without at least a two-third majority in Parliament, the UNP government felt that it could not honour the undertakings given to the World Bank, the transnational corporations and certain western governments. It would also be difficult to enforce the further attacks on democratic rights and living standards that it had in mind. It would become impossible for it, as it has done in the past five years, to chop and change the Constitution at will whenever it ran into trouble and difficulties.

UNPRECEDENTED

"The UNP government's sudden decision to substitute a referendum for a general election is unprecedented in history.

"Under the pretext of consulting the people on a question of policy, it actually asked them to surrender one of the most basic of their fundamental rights—namely, that of choosing, at regular intervals, who should represent them and rule in their name.

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"The so-called 'referendum' marked one more step in the UNP's regression from Parliamentary democracy towards dictatorship.

"The violence against opponents, which started after the Presidential elections, was continued by the UNP without any attempt to curb it, despite Opposition protests.

"This was followed, again in defiance of Opposition protests, by the decision to continue the state of emergency during the entire period of the referendum.

"Emergency powers were abused to ban Opposition newspapers, seal printing establishments available to it, harass and detain without charge large numbers of officials, referendum agents, canvassers, and speakers of Opposition parties urging a 'No' vote, or to have others remanded without bail on trumped up charges.

"This was sought to be justified through the misuse of the mass media, owned by the government or sympathetic to its aims, to create confusion and diversions about an alleged 'Naxalite' plot to assassinate leading government personalities. Not a single person has, however, yet been indicted on any such charge although 'investigations' have been conducted for nearly two months.

SHAMEFUL

"A shameful attempt to arouse communalism was also made by the UNP at the last moment through its claim that 'vote for the POT is a vote for Eelam'.

"The government and the UNP also made a mockery of the referendum laws, not to speak of its much-vaunted 'rule of law' itself.

"Despite the orders of the Commissioner of Elections and the IGP, subordinate Police officers of all ranks were unable to remove illegal displays of the 'Lamp' symbol out of fear of punishment or discriminatory treatment at the hands of Ministers or government MP's. The few police officers who sought to uphold the law were summarily dealt with.

"By such illegal means, which were proliferated as the referendum campaign progressed, the government sought to add to the physical intimidation of its opponents the psychological intimidation of the voters, to whom it was made clear that no protection from the law or the Police could be expected if they showed any open opposition to the government's proposal.

"Even the few facilities available under the law to Opposition parties to state their case to the people were severely restricted. Fees for radio and T.V. broadcasts were almost doubled, thus making it impossible for

many Opposition parties to make full use of this facility. Opposition meetings were often disturbed and attacked by hooligans, led by government MP's or prominent supporters. In many instances, Opposition parties were denied the use of traditional venues of public meeting by the UNP—controlled local authorities.

EVE OF POLL

"On the eve of the poll, when it became clear to the UNP that even these tactics of deceit and intimidation may not ensure victory, a new dimension was added to its campaign of violence and fraud.

In a large number of areas throughout the country, referendum observers, whom the Opposition parties had appointed to be present at polling stations and supervise the poll, were visited by UNP terror gangs and threatened with physical violence to themselves, their families, their homes and/or their personal property if they dared to appear at the polling stations on referendum day.

"As a result, a large number of polling stations in many parts of the country were without referendum observers from Opposition parties on December 22.

Where referendum observers defied these threats, they were often waylaid and assaulted en route to the polling stations or else forcibly driven out of many polling stations by green-shirted thugs, sometimes led by UNP MP's. At some booths agents were driven out at gun-point. A mass of hard evidence to this effect already exists, and more evidence comes in every day.

"The threats and assaults on Opposition observers was a prelude to clearing the way for mass impersonation by the UNP for the Lamp.

EXTENT

"The massiveness and extent of the impersonation carried out are confirmed both in the direct evidence of eye-witnesses at many polling stations throughout the country, and in the results themselves.

"Nothing else can explain the sharp rise in the vote for the 'Lamp' in certain polling stations and electoral districts, when the votes in the surrounding stations and districts register a drop consistent with the district-wise average fall in the vote as compared with October 1982.

"Nor can it be explained how districts like Matale, large parts of which had been marooned by floods, earthslips and landslides, have nevertheless been able to register the highest percentage of votes cast in the whole country.

The fact, that so well-known a personality as Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa,

the runner-up Presidential Candidate last October who polled 2.5 million votes, was impersonated speaks volumes for the utter recklessness and assurance of official protection of those who organised impersonation for the UNP at the referendum.

VAST

"Our parties have no hesitation in saying that, in the past half century of adult franchise in Sri Lanka, on no occasion has intimidation, impersonation and violation of the law been practised on so vast a scale as it was by the UNP in connection with this so-called referendum of December 22.

"Earlier warnings that what the Government and the UNP did at the DDC elections at Jaffna in 1981 was only a dress rehearsal for an all-island performance have been fully confirmed.

"But despite all this, the results of the referendum show that the majority of the registered voters have NOT endorsed the governments' proposals to put off the general elections to Parliament until 1989.

"Inclusive of massive impersonation, only 3.1 million out of 8.1 million registered voters have endorsed this proposal. Nearly 5 million have not endorsed the proposal, including 2.6 million who voted positively against it.

"No amount of equivocation by the leaders of the government and the UNP can hide this inescapable fact.

FEEBLE

"President Jayawardene's feeble attempt to explain this fact away by saying that the 2.3 million voters who did not go to the polls refrained from doing so because they were confident that the 'Lamp' could win without their support, is too ridiculous to take seriously. For if support for the government was so widespread as the President claims, what was the need for the illegal and intimidatory tactics in which the government indulged, or for the organisation of impersonation on such a mass scale?

THANKS

"Our parties thank the 2.6 million voters who, despite the deceit and intimidation practised by the government, had the courage to go to the polls and vote against this proposal.

"What has happened in this referendum has shattered many myths that the present UNP Government has tried to spread about itself.

"Its claim to be guided by devotion to democracy and dharmista principles has been exposed.

"So, too, has been the myth it had sedulously sought to spread abroad in order to win

support for its claim for economic and financial assistance—namely, that it is one of the few pro-western governments in the Third World that rules as a result of the people's choice in free and fair elections.

"If the UNP goes ahead with its proposal to extend the present Parliament elected in 1977 beyond the due date, it will be clearly ruling without the approval or consent of the majority of the registered voters.

"It will be making a mockery of elected government, and perpetrating a fraud.

"The Government will be using 38 per cent of the registered voters (including impersonators) to disfranchise 62 per cent.

This is why our parties demand that the fact that 62 per cent of the registered have not approved the Government proposal should be respected, and that the general elections due in mid 1983 should be held on or before the due date.

Sri Lanka Freedom Party

Communist Party of Sri Lanka

Mahajana Eksath Peramuna

Sri Lanka Sama Samaja Party

Lanka Sama Samaja Party

Democratic National Front

Democratic Worker's Congress (Political Wing)

Lanka Jathika Peramuna

Two C.P.S.L. Anniversaries

The CPSL will celebrate two important events this year.

3 July 1983 will be the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the party, Sri Lanka's second oldest political party.

Arrangements are already in hand to celebrate this anniversary throughout the country.

The second major event for the CPSL this year will be the holding of its 12th National Congress.

This is also scheduled to be held in July-August 1983, shortly after the 40th anniversary celebrations.

What's behind the anti-Bulgarian slanders?

Many of Sri Lanka's bourgeois newspapers have re-published, on more than one occasion, reports from US and other imperialist news agencies that accuse socialist Bulgaria and, by implication, the Soviet Union and the entire socialist community, of being behind the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II on 13 May 1981.

Although these slanderous reports have been flatly contradicted by both Bulgaria and the Soviet Union, they continue to appear.

The purposes of this slander campaign are clear. Its authors want to incite Catholics throughout the world, large numbers of whom are coming out openly in the fight for peace and friendship among nations, against the Soviet Union and the socialist community.

Since the Pope is a Pole, the authors of the campaign also hope to use these canards to incite the Catholics of Poland against the communist regime in that country and thus disrupt the process of normalisation that is making big strides forward in Poland and has already led to the suspension of martial law.

Tenuous

The "proof" that has been produced to substantiate this fantastic charge is even more tenuous than what the government of Sri Lanka had produced to support its own false charge of a "Naxalite" assassination plot.

As is well known, communism has always rejected individual terrorism. Neither Bulgaria, the Soviet Union or any other communist country will have anything to do with terrorism, which is repugnant to communist principles.

MEHMAD ALI AGCA, who was arrested, for his attempt to kill the Pope, is a notorious Turkish criminal. A member of a neo-fascist movement in Turkey, and especially of its terroristic wing "The Grey Wolves", he had earlier been imprisoned in Turkey for murdering a pro-

gressive Turkish journalist. He had escaped from prison in Turkey.

On arrest Agca stated that he had acted alone, and was animated by the desire to stop the Pope visiting the Muslim country of Turkey. But after some months in an Italian prison, he suddenly changed his story.

He said that 3 Bulgarians working in Italy were his "accomplices".

"Leaks" about this new statement were made to anti-communist Italian newspapers, and flashed round the world by Reuter, API and other news agencies. Later the Italian government came into the act, and one of its Ministers said that, although there was not yet final proof, there was evidence to incriminate the Bulgarian secret service.

S. I. Antonov, the head of the Rome office of Bulgaria's Balkan Airlines, was arrested, and kept in jail for over a month without any reason stated.

Sanity

Agca's new statement does not merit serious consideration. He claims that, in addition to assassinating the Pope, he had also been asked to assassinate Queen Elizabeth of Britain, Lech Welasa of Poland, President of the European Parliament Simone Veil, and Malta's Prime Minister Don Mintoff.

This fantastic "hit list" casts serious doubt on Agca's sanity, or else indicates a willingness to confess to anything for a reduction of his sentence.

Agca is also said to have travelled, en route to Italy, to Bulgaria on a forged passport. While in Bulgaria, he had, according to the new tale, been asked to bump off the Pope and provided with a revolver for the purpose. For this he was to be paid 1.25 million US dollars through a reputed Turkish arms and drugs smuggler.

Italian newspapers, and the Italian authorities, have asked

why Bulgaria allowed such a notorious criminal to enter their country without arresting him. Apart from the fact that there is no evidence other than Agca's unsupported statement that he had ever been in Bulgaria, it is difficult to know how the Bulgarian authorities could have detected a man travelling on a forged passport from among 6 million tourists who visit Bulgaria each year—especially as the Turkish authorities had not warned them in advance of Agca's escape from prison.

It is also strange that, although Agca claims to have also visited the FRG and Spain before going on to Italy to

question, he was showing his visiting parents around Rome and, later, organising a cultural event for the embassy. Now in Bulgaria, Aivazov has publicly offered to establish his innocence, if need be, before an Italian court.

The third person named by Agca is Zhelio Vassilev, another embassy employee. According to Agca, Vassilev "hurriedly" left Rome for Bulgaria. But the facts show that he actually left on 27.8.1982, FOUR months after the attempt on the Pope's life and after completion of his normal term of service. He had been in Italy since 26 November 1979.

by Stanley Ranasinghe

kill the Pope, none of these governments have been asked how and why they failed to apprehend him.

"Confession"

Agca's "confession", as outlined to Italy's Parliament by Minister Lagorio, is even more strange.

He claims that Antonov, who was carrying a pistol and a grenade, came with him to San Pietro Square in the Vatican City at the time of the assassination attempt.

It is inexplicable why an accredited Embassy official should wander about with a pistol and a grenade in his possession, especially if he knew the Pope was to be assassinated, or why he should have needed the pistol at all as Agca says he was carrying his own gun.

Italian and western TV carried a photograph which was alleged to be of Agca and Antonov together, although they had later to retract and admit that the other person was not Antonov but an American tourist.

The second Bulgarian whom Agca names is TODOR AIVAZOV, an accountant in Bulgaria's embassy in Rome. He, too, is accused of being a member of the back-up group at San Pietro square. Aivazov has already provided evidence that, on the day and time in

What is even more strange is that no action was taken against any of the Bulgarians for more than a year and half after Agca's "confession".

Supportive

The supportive evidence is Agca's identification of the three Bulgarians, when photographs were shown to him in prison by the Italian secret service; his provision to the Italian authorities of telephone numbers that "more or less" matched those of the Bulgarians (one of whom was proved to have had no phone); and a description of the flat of one of them, which could easily have been supplied to Agca, together with the phone numbers.

The Bulgarian authorities have invited Italian Magistrate Ilario Martella, who is conducting the investigation, to come to Bulgaria and interview the two Bulgarians there. They have indignantly demanded the release of the arrested Bulgarian.

An example of the reckless anti-Soviet campaign that is being conducted around this affair was the news item, published throughout the world, that the Pope had told US Secretary of State, George Schultz, that the "real culprit was the KGB". Schultz has categorically denied that the Pope had told him any such thing.

It is not only Italy's socialists and communists who have ridiculed the charges made by Defence Minister Lagorio. The Christian Democratic Party's newspaper IL POPULO accused the Minister of "manipulating the evidence against Bulgaria for internal partisan purposes" (TIME, 3/3/83).

The same issue of TIME magazine also reports the scepticism that exists among other Western intelligence services about Italy's claim.

It says: "British intelligence officials remain skeptical about the Italian case, privately expressing doubts about the efficiency of Italy's secret service. West Germans note that such a Vatican operation would have been unusually sloppy since the alleged agents would have been left in Rome for more than a year after the crime. Says a spokesman 'It's just too unprofessional for the KGB'."

Despite this, US hawks have seized on this fabrication, and seek to use it to discredit the concrete peace initiatives of Soviet leader YURI ANDROPOV, whom they accuse of being directly involved when he was the USSR's Minister of the Interior. But even so reliable an anti-communist journal as TIME magazine has to admit that the "evidence" offered "does not constitute any proof of Soviet involvement" and that "Bulgarian involvement has not been proved".

Two more DPL loud-mouths?

Journalists, politicians and diplomats were puzzled over the main front page in the DAILY NEWS of January 10.

It announced that the government was "concerned" over the fact that criticism of it by diplomats in Colombo had not stopped after US diplomat, Kenneth Scott, was asked to leave.

It added that "two other instances of Colombo-based diplomats making disparaging remarks about the Sri Lanka government" had been "brought to the attention of the highest levels of government".

Action by the Foreign Ministry was not ruled out, the report warned.

"What's behind all this?", was the question asked.

Obviously such a story, which normally would not have rated more than a mention in a gossip column at a lean time for news, would not have got front-page prominence in the government's main newspaper unless someone "at the very top" wanted it.

Inquiries reveal that the government is somewhat disturbed at the cool reception Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel met with in certain western capitals, when he broached the question of additional aid.

CAUTION

The government can think of no other reason for this other than that certain missions here have filed cautionary reports with their Foreign Offices about the government's economic and political stability.

So the missions concerned are given an indirect warning to stop blabbing.

And, to cheer up the home side, the second story in the DAILY NEWS of the same date is that Sri Lanka is one of the 10 countries which the Reagan administration has told would-be private investors is okay for investment.

But nevertheless the report ends with a quote from the US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, the origin of the story, that "it is clear that US aid will not soon return to the scale of the 1950s and 1960s".

Public Service T.U.s Worried

Public service trade unions are worried over the adverse effect on their members if the government introduces a sales tax (VAT) on most consumer purchases in the first instalment of its 1983 budget, due in March.

They point out that, for a large number of employees, especially in the clerical and white collar grades, any such move will amount to cancelling any benefit gained by the raising of the limits of eligibility to pay income tax introduced a few years ago.

Coming at a time when demands for a salary increase to compensate for the further

rise in living costs are growing, the new government proposal is seen, as one trade union leader put it, as a "double blow".

Even leaders of the government's own JSS are anxious, as their rank and file have become restive over their inability to match wages and salaries to soaring prices.

JSS leaders have told the government that it is increasingly difficult for them to keep members in line. They point to the growth of spontaneous actions like the recent Harbour strike as examples of this.

Expressing the viewpoint of militant public service unionists, PSTUF President J. A. K. Perera told FORWARD that state sector employees, whose wages and salaries are fixed, felt the pinch of rising prices the most.

They opposed any increase in indirect taxation, especially on essential and semi-essential consumer items.

"We are ready to join with the general consumers in opposing such a move", he said.

J. A. K. Perera said that a new round of wage demands was likely.

Polls setback for Indira

The setback for Mrs. Indira Gandhi's CONGRESS(I) in the state elections in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura have come at a critical time for her government and herself.

They underline the growing contradiction between her international and domestic positions.

Internationally, there is high appreciation for the many positive aspects of Mrs. Gandhi's foreign policy. This appreciation has been expressed by the Non-aligned movement (whose next Chairman she will become after March 1983), by the socialist community, and by peace-loving forces everywhere.

But domestically, her position has been eroding fast. Economic problems, corruption and factionalism within her party, and the growth of fissiparous and secessionist trends in different regions of the country have, when combined with a confrontationalist attitude towards labour and the Left, led to an all-round weakening of Mrs. Gandhi's domestic position.

This has greatly encouraged the forces of rightist reaction in India, who are now presenting an open challenge to her.

These rightist forces are assisted by the US and other foreign reactionaries, who feel that the eroding domestic position can be used to pressurise Mrs. Gandhi to resile from her positive stance in world affairs, or threaten her with defeat if she refuses to do so.

The Congress(I)'s defeat by the Communist led coalition in Tripura merely repeats a situation that prevailed earlier. But the defeats at Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka at the hands of essentially rightist forces has created cause for concern.

Especially so, as it comes on the eve of the Non-aligned Summit at New Delhi.

Regional

Although the defeats at Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have been at the hands

of essentially regional parties, rather than any of the major Opposition parties at national level, a future link-up of regional secessionists with the right-wing national opposition is likely.

The first signs have already appeared in the state elections themselves. In Andhra Pradesh, N. T. Rama Rao's Telegu Desam Party, which was formed only in March 1982, allied itself with the Sanjay Vichar Manch, led by Mrs. Gandhi's rebel daughter-in-law, Maneka Gandhi. In Karnataka, the regional Kranti Ranga (in which many breakaway Congress (I) members are to be found) combined with the Janata Party.

The defeats in these two states also weaken Mrs. Gandhi's main power base in South India. Her control of 15 of the country's 22 states has now been reduced to 13, with other state elections coming up soon. She faces similar difficulties in these states, especially in Gujarat, where her Congress (I) is already split.

What about us ?

The "Certificate of Deposit" is one of the dodges introduced by the foreign banks to attract black money.

a certificate should be reduced from Rs. 100,000 to Rs. 25,000.

The scheme is simple. If you have money that you don't want the Inland Revenue Department to ask questions about, all you have to do is to purchase one of these certificates.

No questions will be asked. And the certificate does not bear your name; it can be freely negotiated; and it can be cashed in without difficulty !

The foreign banks claim that this is a better way than an amnesty in order to mobilise black and undeclared wealth for the development effort.

But, as everyone knows, very little of the deposits with these foreign banks actually finance development, except where foreign investors are involved.

Mostly, they help the banks to make quick profits by financing import-export transactions.

The flaw in the scheme is that only the very rich can benefit from it. For the minimum amount for a certificate is Rs. 100,000.

This has annoyed the up and coming speculator rich, who also have black money but not so much—at least not yet!

So they have begun to ask: What about us? Why help only the big blackies?

Their cause has now been taken up by the DAILY NEWS. Editorially (January 12) it urges that the minimum for

This, it says, "will be an immense relief to poorer folk". But it nevertheless does not recommend making the amount any smaller. Rs. 25,000 is the "poverty line" for the DAILY NEWS.

In any case, the rich with undeclared and undeclarable wealth won't have to suffer long. Apart from the "certificates of deposit", the government itself hopes to do away with income tax in the next Budget.

P.M.' new journey

The grapevine has it that Prime Minister Premadasa is getting ready for yet another world tour this year.

The first signs are an order placed for extra copies (in English) of his official biography.

There will be given a souvenirs to foreign dignitaries that he meets.

The announced purpose of the tour is to help the search for foreign aid.

But the Prime Minister also hopes it will help to boost his image abroad as a "successor" to President Jayawardene.

No one so far has taken him very seriously—except Mrs. Margaret Thatcher of Britain, a contact from earlier CPA days.

If he is appointed Vice-President, Mr. Premadasa is anxious to impress foreign leaders in the West that he has not been devalued, but confirmed as No. 2 in the cere of succession.

Warsaw Treaty Powers' Call

The Warsaw Treaty member states have offered the NATO states a treaty on the mutual non-use of military forces.

This emerges from the political declaration of the two-day Prague meeting of the Warsaw Treaty powers. The meeting of the Political Consultative Committee was attended by the leaders of Bulgaria, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia.

They underlined in the declaration that today "there is no task more important for the peoples than to preserve peace and end the arms race".

"It seems to be appropriate", the declaration says, "to include in the treaty an analogous pledge for the countries which are members of the two alliances, to use no force against third countries, may it be those linked to them in bilateral alliances, non-aligned, or neutral states".

The participants in the Prague meeting stress with all

emphasis that considerations to unleash and win nuclear war are against all reason". A nuclear war will be won by no one but will wipe out whole nations.

NO FIRST USE

"In this context the participants in the meeting expect all nuclear weapon powers which have not yet done so to pledge, as the Soviet Union did unilaterally, not to be the first to use nuclear weapons".

The meeting also called for resuming or speeding up negotiations to halt the arms race. It advocated in detail a treaty on a complete and general nuclear weapon test ban, as well as conventions banning chemical, radiological and neutron weapons and prohibiting the stationing of weapons of any type in outer space.

They also came out for "expediting a solution to the problem of strengthening security guarantees for non-nuclear weapon countries".

Nato's intention to deploy new American medium-

range missiles in some Western European countries is described as an "extremely big danger" to Europe.

The Warsaw Treaty, by contrast, proposes, in case a real zero option is impossible at present, a radical reduction of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe in keeping with the principle of equality and equal security and further disarmament steps on the continent.

The Non-aligned Movement is increasingly contributing to the elimination and prevention of crisis situations, the Declaration says. The meeting participants hold that initiatives aimed at establishing and developing good-neighbourly relations and at creating zones of peace and cooperation, are a "promising way to eliminate tensions".

MIDDLE EAST

"The participants in the meeting attach special importance to setting Middle East conflict.

They most strongly condemn the Israeli aggression, assess as positive the Fez summit principles for a Middle East settlement, and consider it necessary to convene an international conference with all interested sides, including PLO, 'participating'.

"They speak out for ending the war between Iran and Iran, for peacefully settling the conflict between the countries in the Horn of Africa, and for solving by political means the conflicts in Central and South America. The permanent threats and provocations against Cuba and Nicaragua must stop, they say.

(ADN)

Socialist film festival

A festival of films from socialist countries opened in Colombo on January 10.

It will continue until January 22.

The films are being shown every evening at the "Mir Hall" in the Soviet Cultural Centre, Colombo.

Among the countries showing films are the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Cuba, the GDR, Poland, Vietnam, and Czechoslovakia.

Performances start at 5.30 p.m.

The festival opened with the Soviet film "Lenin in Paris".

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Who pays for Consumerism?

All the advance news leaked by the government to its newspapers about the long-delayed Budget due in March indicate that the consumers are in for a rough time.

One of the main proposals seems to be that income tax should be abolished and, instead, a Value Added Tax (VAT) charged on the retail purchases of all items except basic foodstuffs like rice, flour and sugar.

It is not clear whether this new VAT is to be in lieu of, or in addition to, BTT—probably the latter.

The rich will, no doubt, rejoice over the new opportunity that the abolition of income tax will give them to shoot up profits still more.

But the poor will learn the hard way that it is the consumer who pays for consumerism.

Patrick Fernando

Moratuwa.

Local Polls

Whom does the government think it is fooling by announcing that elections to over 50 Municipal and Urban Councils will be held by May this year?

All the talk that this will be a "mini-general election" and disprove the charge that the government is against elections only shows that the UNP's intentions are purely propagandist.

I remember what a fuss the government made when it held elections to Village Councils some time ago. But it followed this up by abolishing Village Councils, when it introduced the DDCs.

Will the MCs and UCs suffer the same fate? Will they be elected only to be phased out?

Anyway it is no proof of the government's concern for elections to hold them to local bodies that have next to no powers, and to deny them in connection with Parliament, where some power still remains despite its devaluation by the 1978 Constitution.

We should also not forget that even MCs and UCs have lost many of their former limited powers after the DDCs were set up.

Government also hopes to impress the credulous by saying that it is thinking of holding another mini-general election to elect 28 new MPs. Whether this will happen or not remains to be seen. The problems involved for the government are formidable. And even if these elections too are held, we will have the strange situation, after August 1983, where our Parliament will consist of 168 chit MPs and 28 elected MPs.

After using the 38 per cent vote (inclusive of impersonation) that it obtained in the referendum to deny 62 per cent of their voters their fundamental right to elect their representatives until mid-1989, the government has no right to say that its decision to hold some local polls indicates that it is really not against elections.

This is like telling us, after having gagged us and bound us hand and foot, that we are free to wriggle our toes.

Sarojini Muttuthamby

Colombo 15.

New Maths

Prime Minister Premadasa is obviously worried over the Communist Party pointing out that only 38 per cent of the registered voters (including impersonators) approved the

proposal in the referendum to put off the general election due in mid-1983, while 62 per cent did not.

Both in and out of Parliament he has tried to confuse this central fact.

He has referred to previous governments that took office and ruled even though they did not have the support of over 50 per cent of the registered voters.

But surely even the PM knows the difference between an election and a referendum.

It is possible in a general election, especially on the first-past-the-post model, for a government to be elected on

a vote that is less than 50 per cent of the registered voters.

But in a referendum, the registered voters are asked to approve a proposal—in this case, that we should all surrender our right to vote for six years.

Only 38 per cent of the voters (together with impersonators) have agreed to this, while 62 per cent have not.

As this 62 per cent amounts to 5 million people, the fact that between one or two lakhs may be dead or in the Middle East makes no substantial difference. It is still more than the 3.1 million who voted for the proposal (including the Middle East expatriates who were voted for even though they were not present, not to speak of the dead who were resurrected for the day).

No amount of "new maths" from the PM can disguise the fact that the majority of the registered voters don't want the general election to be postponed. The government can't force the views of a minority on the majority and call it democracy.

Palitha Ranaweera

Kalutara.

Maithri's bid

Mr. Maithripala Senanayake's statement to Parliament on the day it was prorogued is clearly an appeal to the UNP government to help him to be "recognised" as the official SLFP and awarded the HAND symbol, thereby setting aside the decision of the Commissioner of Elections, which Maithri himself publicly accepted when he thought that it would help him to return to the SLFP.

In order to recognise Maithripala's group as the official SLFP, the UNP will have to pass a law in which

the Commissioner of Election's decision is set aside and the "decision" of the stage-managed Select Committee of Parliament is upheld.

It will be a small thing for the UNP to do in return for all that Maithri has done for them.

It looks at though the UNP's gratitude will not stop there. If they can't accommodate Maithri in a "National" government, they may make him the Leader of the (democratic) Opposition, by making sure that he gets a sufficient number of the additional 28 MPs that the UNP wants to add to the present Parliament.

I don't think that Mrs. B. and her faction in the SLFP

Perhaps the inquiry is to find out why the obnoxious game warden did not receive an even heavier assault at the hands of the M.P.?

Mr. de Alwis had the reputation of being one of the few UNP Ministers who had some respect for democratic norms and proper conduct. Has his recent setback at Kotte at the referendum made him believe that decency does not pay?

P. A. Nandasena

Rajagiriya.

J. S. S.

JSS leaders, who exist on government patronage, face a difficult time in the period ahead.

They will have to choose between loyalty to the government and to their members, who are getting more and more restive over frozen wages, rising prices and the inability of the JSS to stop other attacks on them.

At factory level, many JSS leaders, especially in Mr. Cyril Mathew's corporations, are local thugs who were recruited to terrorise members of other trade unions. In recent times, they have extended this terrorisation to members of the management. How much longer can the government, who has to prevent a complete collapse of industrial discipline if it wants the corporations to be viable, allow this to go on?

Bandula Ramanayake

Kelaniya.

Congrats

I wanted to write to congratulate the Communist Party of Sri Lanka on its contribution to the struggle against the UNP at the Presidential election and the referendum.

Its energy, courage and constant effort to build fighting unity among the widest sections of progressive opinion are appreciated by all who have the interests of the country and its people at heart.

What was striking, too, is that the CPSL asked nothing for itself, and even publicly and repeatedly turned down the SLFP offer to share power if Mr. Kobbekaduwa won the Presidential election.

The viciousness with which the CPSL is now being attacked by the Prime Minister and by other Ministers like Ranil Wickremasinghe shows that the UNP also realises the important role that the CPSL played in this fight. So no further words are needed from me.

I would also like to express my appreciation of the role played by FORWARD and other CPSL newspapers in this fight. I shall try to make this appreciation more concrete by enrolling new subscribers to your journal.

Dunstan de Abrew

Dehiwela.

TALES FOR OUR TIMES

The other day I ran into my old friend Vivil Krasse. He complained that he found it impossible to get any Sri Lanka newspaper to carry the death notice of his uncle Demosthenes (home calling Demo) Krasse. It seems the old boy died on 22 December, and his brother Otto Krasse had grabbed all the property and was in sole control.

Vivil asked me a riddle:— How does our President compare with the President of Zimbabwe? When I failed to find the answer, he said: "The President of Zimbabwe is Banana. The President of Sri Lanka is bananas".

Vivil went on to say that he had worked out the essential difference between Colvin's Constitution and JR's. Colvin provided for an elected Parliament and an appointed President, while JR's constitution has an elected President and an appointed Parliament.

Vivil is a great admirer of JR. He says that JR is gung-ho for democracy. He claims that for democracy JR will even go to the extent of locking up all his opponents. He thinks that what JR is going to do next is to ensure that there is a strong opposition in Parliament. In order to achieve this, says Vivil, JR will personally handpick the next Leader of the Opposition. In this way democracy will be safe on both sides of the House.

By "Wanderer"



MORE ON ANURA BASTIAN

In Parliament last week, Colombo West's UNP M.P., Mr. Anura Bastian, made a statement in which he denied that he had entered the Ladies College polling booth on referendum day for any purpose other than that of casting his vote.

He also denied threatening, or brandishing a pistol, at anyone **WITHIN THE BOOTH.**

Mr. Bastian did not mention, let alone deny, the specific charge made by Colombo businessman, Mr. Mohamed Saleem Cader of 24, 28th Lane, Colombo 3 in a complaint to President Jayawardene (published in full in our last issue of 5.1.1983), in which he charged that Mr. Bastian, accompanied by other green-shirted persons, had stopped his Toyota van after he and his family members had voted at the St. Anthony's Balika Vidyalaya polling booth, Kollupitiya Lane, Colombo 3, threateningly brandished a pistol at Mr. S. Nadesan Q.C. and another person to whom he had given a lift after polling, assaulted him, and insulted members of his family.

Mr. Bastian's carefully worded denial was a confined specifically to entering the polling booth at Ladies College and brandishing a pistol there.

Eye-Witness

Even in this matter, there is the eye-witness account of

a newspaper photographer, published in the **ISLAND** of the next day (December 23) under the headline "Pistol packing politico threatens policeman".

The report does not specifically mention Mr. Daniel, but it gives this account:

"A UNP politico who pulled out a revolver caused a stir at Ladies College polling booth yesterday. He threatened a policeman on duty at the booth, when the latter came to the rescue of the Senior Presiding Officer, who was being manhandled by a crowd of hostile thugs. A "Island" cameraman, waiting to take a photograph of Pieter Keuneman casting his vote, was an eyewitness to this incident.

"The incident took place about 10 a.m. yesterday.

"The SPO challenged a person who had come to cast a vote. Suspecting the voter to be an impersonator, the SPO questioned him at length. At the end of the questioning, the person had not been able to even remember his own name. Satisfied that he was an imposter, the SPO refused to allow him to cast his vote.

"A few minutes after the impersonator left the booth, a crowd of men stormed the polling booth in a threatening manner and assaulted the SPO. The policeman on duty

rushed to the scene when the politico pulled out a revolver from his waist threateningly at the policeman.

"However, before the incident could assume serious proportions, the politico was led out of the booth by one of his supporters. The photographer was also threatened and was able to come out only when more policemen came to the scene later. Police are investigating the incident".

Mr. Pieter Keuneman told **FORWARD** that, when he and his wife went to vote at this polling station shortly afterwards, both the cameramen and the Police officer on duty had made the same statement to him, naming Mr. Bastian.

Affidavit

In an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court in the appeal of the editor of **ATHTHA** and others against the sealing of this newspaper, the following is stated regarding the situation that existed at the Ladies College polling booth:

"At the Ladies College polling station a large number of UNP thugs congregated at the roadside gates which led up to the polling station. A jeep brought in people right up to the gates and there polling cards were openly distributed to those who arriv-

ed in the jeep and they went in to vote. The jeep did several journeys. A lady who lives in a house close by and who witnessed what was happening went to the police station to make a complaint. She was told by the police that they had received several such complaints but were unable to do anything as they had received instructions not to interfere in these matters. The lady however insisted in making her complaint and it was recorded."

After repeating the details of the incident at Ladies College referred to earlier, the affidavit goes on to describe the situation in other polling stations in the Bambalapitiya ward of Colombo West.

"There were four polling stations in the Bambalapitiya ward of the Colombo Municipal Council, to all of which the SLFP had nominated its polling observers. On the morning of the polling day three of these observers complained of threats by UNP thugs that they would be assaulted, and their houses burnt down, if they functioned as polling observers, and they refused to report for duty. Only the polling observer assigned to the University Campus polling station at Thurstan Road reported for duty.

"At about 10.45 a.m. about fifteen persons, some of whom were sporting green caps and Jayawardene badges, came near the entrance to the station and were standing in the adjoining corridor. One of them went up to this polling observer and punched him in the face, saying that if he did not leave by lunch time, they would cut off his beard and do the needful before he went home. He bled from his nose as a result of the blow.

Assault

"At this time, Mr. Duncan Fernando, UNP Member of the Municipal Council, who was watching from the corridor beckoned to the polling agent to go to the corridor. When the polling agent went to the corridor, Mr. Duncan Fernando found fault with him for not having gone to the MMC's house when he was asked to do so, and asked him not to wait in the polling

station as he was the only Opposition observer in that area, and that it would not be safe for him if he continued to function at the polling station and requested him to leave before lunch.

Anura Bastian

"Then Mr. Anura Bastian came up to this polling observer saying, "Is this the SLFP fellow who is here?". Then Mr. Anura Bastian held a pistol to the chest of this polling observer and told him that if he did not leave before lunch time he would know what to do with him. Then the polling agent turned to go to his seat, but he received a blow from some heavy object on the nape of his neck, and was also assaulted by the thugs who were with Mr. Anura Bastian.

"This incident was watched by the polling officer inside the station and by the solitary policeman on duty. When the polling observer requested the policeman to take action, he declined to do so saying that he did not want to get mixed up in the matter, and advised him to make a statement to the Senior Presiding Officer. Accordingly, the polling observer made a brief statement to the Senior Presiding Officer and left for fear of the consequences".

Perhaps Mr. Anura Bastian would like to comment on these specific complaints, recorded at the time, which allege that he was brandishing a pistol to intimidate polling observers and polling staff, including policemen?

Perhaps, too, the President and the I.G.P. would like to say what action they have taken on these specific complaints?

After all, as the affidavit points out, emergency regulation No. 38, which was then in force, states specifically that: "No person shall, without lawful excuse, point at any person any gun whether loaded or unloaded" and lays down as punishment for such offence "rigorous imprisonment for a term not less than three months and not exceeding five years and to a fine of not less than five hundred rupees and not exceeding five thousand rupees".

The Marvel of Matale

The apparently high civic consciousness of the voters of Matale has been the subject of marvel among political observers.

Although large parts of this electoral district were marooned on referendum day by floods, landslides and earthslips, and although access was only possible by helicopter, Matale nevertheless recorded the **HIGHEST PERCENTAGE POLL** in the country at the referendum.

Weather in the area was also most unfavourable. The **SUN** (23/12) reported:—"In Matale heavy rains in the catchment area swelled the Amban Ganga and as voters set out to their polling booths created a certain amount of chaos and confusion. Voters in Laggala and Pallegama were cut off from their polling stations and could not cast their votes".

However, at the Laggala polling station, where there were no Opposition observers, 30,569 votes were cast at the referendum, a number almost equal to the 30,889 cast for President Jayawardene in the Presidential election two months earlier (and before the natural disasters).

Whether this remarkable performance testifies to the civic consciousness of Laggala's voters or the organisational skill of UNP MP Mr. Alick Aluwihare is not difficult to answer.

But the "marvel of Matale", as it is popularly called, surpasses other marvels seen at the referendum, when the dead came to life and when absentees in the Middle East were teleported to Sri Lanka in order to vote for the government's proposal.

SALUTE TO LOUIS ARAGON

Louis Aragon. France's great poet and man of letters, who died on December 25th 1982, at the age of 86 years, was the second major figure of revolutionary literature to pass away last month.

The other was Bishnu Dey, also a famous poet and Marxist, who was the foremost of contemporary Bengali poets and writers.

Both were Communists for the greater part of their adult lives. Both were honoured for their contributions to literature and to the advancement of the cause of the working people.

Georges Marchais, General Secretary of the French Communist Party, summed up the feelings of all revolutionary Frenchmen when, on the occasion of Aragon's death, he said: "I have lost a very close friend, our party has lost one of the best of her sons, France her greatest poet of the age".

Louis Aragon was one of the great figures of French and world literature and art who were Communists. They include such famous names as Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Andrew Breton, Paul Eluard, Pablo Picasso and many others.

Aragon did not begin his literary life as a Communist. For some time in his early days, he followed the nihilistic philosophy of Dada-ism. For 15 years, he dabbled with surrealism, which he was later to call "an error of youth."

1927

But in 1927 he joined the Communist Party, and remained a member till his death.

For many years he was a member of its Central Committee.

He first visited the Soviet Union in 1930, where he met Stalin, and remained a firm friend and supporter of the first workers' socialist state for the rest of his life.

Aragon was also active in the international peace movement.

Even his bourgeois detractors could not impugn Aragon's patriotism or courage.

He earned the "Croix de guerre" twice, for bravery in the first and second world wars.

He was an active partisan in the resistance to Hitler fascism.

His support for the anti-fascist struggle in Spain before the second world war was memorable.

He won the Lenin Peace in 1937. On his 75th birthday the Soviet Union awarded him the Order of the October Revolution.

HUMANIST

Louis Aragon continued the great humanist and revolutionary traditions of France which, until 1917, was one of the main standard bearers of humanism and revolutionary struggle, as manifested in the French Revolution, the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" (1791), the proclamation of

the fighting slogan of "liberty, equality and fraternity", the historic Paris Commune of 1871 that "stormed the heavens", and the anti-fascist Resistance led by the French Communist Party.

He continued and developed the glorious literary and philosophical traditions of Rousseau and Voltaire, of Diderot and the Encyclopedists, of Babeuf and the "Society of Equals", of Mably and Morelly, of Saint Simon and Fourier, of Victor Hugo and Anatole France.

To this great national tradition, Aragon added the universal and scientific truths of Marxism, and proletarian internationalism.

In his revolutionary work in France, Louis Aragon was closely associated with the great revolutionary leaders of France's workers in the first decades of the 20th Century—men like Marcel Cachin and Maurice Thorez.

As a poet, Aragon was greatly influenced by Mayakovsky, whom he knew intimately and whose sister-in-law, Elsa Troilet, herself a poet, was his life-long companion. His poems and his novels like "The Bells of Basel", "Heartbreak", "Holy Week" and "To be killed" remain part of the great legacy of French and world literature.

All progressive mankind salutes this great figure, an outstanding man of letters and a great revolutionary fighter, who all his life moved, in his own words, "towards singing tomorrows".

J.R.'s NEW ROLE-THE SPHINX

William Shakespeare, the author of the most memorable quotes in the English language, observed that all the world's a stage, and all its men and women merely players.

This is certainly true of President J. R. Jayawardene.

Our President, who has an irrepressible urge to reminiscence, often tells us that in his younger days, he was a cadet, a cricketer, a boxer - and even an actor!

In the past three months, we have seen him play different roles - Hitler, Napoleon Bonaparte, and even (where judges he doesn't approve of are concerned) Abraham Lincoln.

But after the referendum, he has started to play a new role - the sphinx.

No one could be more enigmatic, inscrutable and silent about his next move than President Jayawardene is at the moment.

Coming from a man who likes to think aloud, his present silence is deafening.

Even MIGARA, who usually clues us in on what the President wants us to know about what he thinks, is not there to help. There has been no word from him in the last three issues of WEEKEND.

Everyone knows the subject of J. R.'s current thoughts - namely, what changes to make in his government set-up to fit in with his second term in office, which starts on February 4.

But J. R., who is on record that he does not tell even his wife what he thinks about his next political move, just smiles and smiles - and says nothing.

This is very much in keeping with another character from Shakespeare whom this column thinks resembles J. R. the most - namely Iago, who could "smile and smile and be a villain".



Speculation

This sphinx-like silence has also let loose a flood of speculation.

Some of it is informed, but quite a lot does not move out of the realm of kite-flying.

At the pub-sorry, club-where journalists meet to exchange all the news they are not allowed by their bosses to print, many stories are going the rounds, between rounds.

Premadasa, they say, is to be kicked upstairs to a newly created decorative post of Vice-President, but will retain housing.

Gamini Disanayake, the front runner in the succession stakes, will be made Prime Minister.

But as the "Lord and Master" does not like to concentrate too much power in any of his lieutenants, there is talk about the creation of three posts of "Chief Ministers" or Deputy Prime Ministers.

They will follow the ancient triple division of the country, at the time of the Sinhala kings, into Ruhuna, Maya and Pihiti.

Ruhunu, the scribes say, will be headed by Upali Wijewardene, and Pihiti by Cyril Mathew. As the latter also contains the Tamil-majority areas of the country, such an appointment may please the Sinhala chauvinists. The man for Maya has still not been selected.

The Cabinet will be reduced. J. R. loyalists like Gamini, Lalith, Cyril Mathew and Anandatissa will remain. So will Mr. Thondaman, one of the most powerful Ministers today after he delivered the hill-country vote for the UNP, at both the Presidential election and the referendum, in sufficient numbers to make possible the government's majority on both occasions.

Thondaman's growing stature and backstairs influence on the President were recently editorially acknowledged by the DAILY MIRROR (12/1), which also stressed Thondaman's "humility", a quality, the DM noted on behalf of its Chief, that more ambitious and pushy Ministers (both prime and ordinary) should seek to emulate.

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Emergency

Whether the emergency, proclaimed on 20.10.82 and twice renewed, will lapse on January 19 is anybody's guess.

Nearly all the people who ought to know say it will. But after what happened last time, when a Cabinet decision to let it lapse on December 19 was countermanded by J. R. the next day, making Minister Anandatissa de Alwis, who had announced this to a press conference, look a fool, no one can tell.

Belief that things may be different this time is strengthened by the interview that J. R. granted Mrs. Chandrika Kumaranatunga and her sister, Sunethra, last week in which he is said to have stated that Vijaya Kumaranatunga will be released "soon".

But, as all that has happened so far is Vijaya's transfer from detention to "house arrest", no one can say what the future has in store.

Another victim of the emergency, ATHTHA, will be free to resume publication if the emergency is lifted. But it may not be able to do so straightaway.

Its printing machines will have to be re-serviced and repaired after 3 months of enforced non-use. How to overcome

1978 Constitution; the freedom granted by Article 14 (1) (b) to all citizens to engage in any lawful occupation, profession, trade etc; and the manner in which bureaucrats who are entrusted with discretionary powers under emergency regulations should exercise these powers when they affect the fundamental rights of citizens.

The application has been argued by Mr. S Nadesan QC, supported by Messrs Peter Jayasekera and other lawyers. It has taken several days and, at this writing, judgement by a 5-judge Bench is waited.

The respondents in the application are Messrs D. F. F. Liyanage, Secretary to the Ministry of State and Competent Authority; Rudra Rajasingham, IGP, and S. Pasupathi, Attorney General.

The petitioners have alleged that the sealing of ATHTHA and its printing establishment was not for the purposes set out in the orders made - namely that, in the Competent Authority's opinion, ATHTHA had published matter "calculated to be prejudicial to the interests of national security, the preservation of public order, the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community, and matter inciting and encouraging persons to mutiny, riot or civil commotion".

Instead, they charge that the Competent Authority had acted mala fide; that "there is absolutely no material on the basis of which such an opinion could have been formed" by him; that the Competent Authority had instead "acted on the directions of the President": that the order to seal ATHTHA was "a patent abuse of the power granted by Regulation 14(3) and the fundamental rights of the petitioners; and that the order was "a cover and a sham to achieve the purpose of preventing the ATHTHA from participating in the referendum campaign" and spotlighting government malpractices.

The petitioners have asked that the ban on the ATHTHA and the sealing of its printing establishment should be lifted, and that they be paid compensation for the losses they have sustained.

In support of their application, the petitioners have submitted a massively documented account of the malpractices that took place at the Presidential election and the referendum, which ATHTHA would have taken up if it had not been banned.

This document alone is of great importance to anyone who wishes to study these malpractices factually and comprehensively.

During the hearing, the whole question of how public officers should exercise discretionary powers given to them by law, and the extent to which they should be influenced by their political masters, were fully discussed.

Houses

Is Prime Minister Premadasa's move bring down two

Professors from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (SUN, 12/1) to "make a critical appraisal of the ongoing housing programme here" and advise on his new "scheme" to build one million houses in the next six years, an attempt to counter the stinging criticism by the World Bank about the housing programme, as well as to build up confidence among those foreign investors that he hopes will contribute funds to his "Housing Bank"?

The World Bank has already pointed out that Mr. Premadasa's present housing programme is too costly, and the work too shoddy, to justify any substantial diversion of more funds to support it.

It has drawn attention to the facts that the number of houses actually constructed fall far below the 100,000 promised in the 1977-1982 period, and that a large number of these houses remain unoccupied as no one wants them at the price.

A recent example was the advertisement in the SUN (13/1) calling for applications for houses at the just-completed Mattakuliya scheme. Houses of 475 square feet in size are "offered" for Rs. 225,000 each.



Poll Cards

An investigation into the number of polling cards that were not distributed by post offices throughout the country, and into how, in several areas, such cards came into the possession of UNP members and supporters, who used them for massive impersonation in the referendum, has been demanded by the Opposition.

Several complaints have been made about what took place at Attanagalla.

Here UNP thugs collected undelivered polls cards and even snatched polls cards away from voters on their way to the polling stations. These cards were subsequently used to facilities impersonation.

At Rukgahawila Post Office, polls cards were not delivered to supporters of the POT. However, UNP office-bearers distributed polls cards on 14.12.82 to supporters of the LAMP only. Those who went to the post office to claim their cards were told that they had been lost.

At Veyangoda post office, a gang of UNP thugs tried to burgle the post office on 21.12.82. The ISLAND (17/12) reported this under headline; "Gang bid to remove polling cards fail". The UNP thugs had entered the office and demanded that the Assistant Postmaster should hand all the undelivered cards to them. When he refused, they broke open the cupboards.



Tailpiece

An anecdote in current circulation runs thus:

Question: Why have Premadasa and his publicity officers started always referring to him as the "People's P.M."?

Answer: Because, like the people, he has lost all power.



Also Ran

Mr. Premadasa will continue to be a member of the inner Cabinet, as will his ally, Ronnie de Mel, but the latter not necessarily in his present portfolio.

Ministers mentioned as unlikely to make it to the "inner" or "outer" Cabinets are Nissanka Wijeratne and Wimala Kannangara. The only two deserters from the SLFP mentioned for Cabinet posts are Maithripala Senanayake and P. B. G. Kalugalle, but opposition to this from within the UNP is strong.

Speculation about the number of MP's to be dropped varies from 10 to 40. But the decision of the UNP's Working Committee on January 12 to appoint a 4-man Committee to go into complaints against its MP's indicates that action in this matter will be delayed, if it takes place at all.

Personally, despite all this talk, this column believes that changes, if any, will be minimal. J. R. has never been fond of rocking boats, especially those in which he travels.

Only God and he know what he will do next, and this time J. R. hasn't even told God.

the new difficulties created by the stopping of government advertisements and distribution facilities through public transport will also have to be explored.

In the meantime, the CPSL has brought out MAUBIMA as a weekly, and will continue to do so. The first issue of the weekly appeared yesterday, and it will be available on weekends until ATHTHA restarts.

Meanwhile ATHTHA's management has appealed for funds to help it in the work of re-starting. Contributions should be addressed to the MANAGER, ATHTHA, 91, Cotta Road, Colombo 8.



Legal History

Although largely blacked out in the bourgeois newspapers, the application made by the editor, publisher and directors of ATHTHA to the Supreme Court against its closure by the Competent Authority is likely to make legal history.

The issues raised are of considerable importance both here and abroad. They concern the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and expression, including publication, set out in Article 14 (1) (a) of the