

Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

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Govt's Midsummer Madness!

What is the Jayewardene Government trying to achieve in Jaffna?

Drive all the people into the arms of the militants?

This, we say with all the moral force at our command, will be the only result of its latest strategy to contain the law and order situation in the Peninsula.

Far better to lock up all the people in their homes

with a daily 24 hour curfew: then the Security Forces will have their work cut out for them.

According to the announcement made in Parliament by the ineffective Minister of National Security, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, on behalf of the Government, from 30th November only state buses shall ply on Jaffna roads: no private cars,

mini-buses, lorries, motor-cycles or even bicycles!

This, too, only for a limited period of two and a half hours in the morning from 6 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. and again from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

How the hell are the people to go about their daily business?

The bicycle especially is an indispensable part of the

life of the people of Jaffna. To ban its use means the crippling of the life of the people.

We are, however, not surprised at the way the Government's collective mind works.

On an earlier occasion too—18 months ago, to be exact—the Government contemplated a ban on the use of bicycles in Jaffna just

because some two-legged Tigers made this their favourite mode of transport. (The editorial we wrote on that occasion is reproduced below).

Fortunately, somebody or other was able to drive some sense into the Government at that time and prevent it from embarking on a course that would have sparked off a social revolution in Jaffna.

But this time the Government appears to have gone off its rocker.

Again we ask: what is the Government trying to achieve in Jaffna by resorting to a strategy that could only be counter productive?

OH DAISY, DAISY...

We do not know who invented the bicycle—could be the Chinaman—but we certainly do know who made this two-wheeled contraption reach its optimum utility. It is the Jaffna man. Many readers might not know old song of Daisy Bell. It ran thus:

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do!

I'm half crazy, all for the love of you!

It won't be a stylish marriage,

I can't afford a carriage,

But you'll look sweet upon the seat

On a bicycle made for two!

Well, that was a bicycle made for two. In Jaffna, it

is made for three, sometimes four! Whole families ride on them sometimes. The mother sits on the bar holding in her hands an infant, the bigger child sits on the pillion behind, and the head of the family sits on his high perch and pedals away nonchalantly. The family outing costs nothing. The farmer takes his produce to the market on a bicycle. The schoolboy, the schoolgirl, the school-master, the office-goer, the pensioner, not to mention the postman, the delivery man, the milkman, the gingelly oil man. More people in Jaffna travel on bicycles than on Minister Mohamed's buses. Jaffna without bicycles is unthinkable.

That is why when we read the following snippet in a

government controlled newspaper's political column, two Saturdays ago, we thought the whole thing was a little joke in which the military brass and the President himself had joined. Said the report:

"The military brass has complained that the biggest menace facing them in the north are bicycles, more than cyclists, and has urged that bicycles should not be permitted in the north.

"President Jayewardene discussed the suggestion both with his security and political advisers. He himself felt that while terrorism should be stamped out, innocent citizen of the north should not be penalized and

inconvenienced for the crimes of the terrorists.

"He agreed that battling killers on bicycles was a tough proposition, (sic), pointing out that Sri Lanka was the only country in the world where there were bicycle terrorists."

Living as we are during grim times we welcomed this refreshing bit of good humour as a breath of fresh air. But this morning, our favourite Colombo sister the SUN carries the startling news that the Legal Draftsman's Department is actually preparing draft regulations to enforce a bicycle ban within the Jaffna City limits! Don't they even listen to President

Jayewardene anymore? Is the world going mad, or are we losing our senses? Imagine battling killers on bicycles being tough for our Army! Are these two wheeled things faster than armoured cars, Army jeeps and trucks? Well, well, the Jaffna city resident will never hear the postman's bell anymore, nor the milkman's tinkle. What will those deadly terrorists do next? Take to tricycles? Will tricycles be banned too eventually?

This is no time to laugh. The joke has taken a serious turn. Banning bicycles because some "terrorists" use them is like banning Sex because some people take to adultery. Amen.

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THIRUKKURAL GEMS

Kural No. 656 (Eenral...)

"Though you find your
mother starving, do not do
anything which will be con-
demned by the great."

Translated by V. R. Rama-
chandra Theedcithar

Kural No. 657 (Palimalai...)

"Far better than wealth
earned by disreputable means,
is the pinching poverty of the
pure."

Translated by M. R. Raja-
gopala Iyengar

Kural No. 658 (Kadintha...)

"The actions of those, who
have not desisted from doing
deeds forbidden (by the great),
will even if they succeed
cause them sorrow."

Translated by Rev. Drew and
John Lazarus

Kural No. 659 (Alakonda...)

"All that is won by making
others shed tears, will vanish
with the tears shed. All good
deeds that are attended with
loss now, may prove blessings
in after days."

Translated by M. S. Poorna-
lingam Pillai

(Compiled by V. T. K.)

8 Consecutive Budgets II

Ethnic Conflict Threatens Economic Development

(Continued from last issue)

In 1983 the Finance Minister presented his seventh budget in the aftermath of the July-August anti-Tamil pogrom during which the economy of the country was directly affected to the extent of destruction of Rs.1875 M. (replacement value) worth of industrial machinery, plant and equipment and Rs.7500 M. worth of housing, retail outlets and other establishments; loss of 50,000 jobs and a total decline in wage income of Rs.300 million. One year later, at the time of the eighth budget the disastrous effects of the ethnic conflict on the economy continue unabated, while precious little has been done to resolve the ethnic problem. If at all, it has been rendered even more intractable. The Minister in his budget speech, does not fail to refer to the necessity for a political solution as a condition precedent to economic development.

The ethnic conflict as well as the means adopted to deal with it are crippling vital sectors of the economy. The foreign aid programme, prospects of foreign investment, earnings from tourism, employment openings in and private remittances from the Middle East, and the plantation sector are all being adversely affected in the absence of a satisfactory political solution to the national question. What is more, the growing tendency to enforce a military solution involving high cost militarisation is resulting in increasing defence expenditure at the expense of the more vital sectors like health and education.

What is significant is that this disturbing situation is causing concern among the country's donors. At the Paris Meeting of the Aid Group, Mr. Hopper echoed the anxiety of all the members of the Group, when he said, "I join all others at this table hoping that there will soon be an agreement between the two communities in Sri Lanka. However, what Minister de Mel did not explain satisfactorily to me is the economic

foundation of the Terrorist Problem. I fully agree with him that Terrorism arises from some kind of "breeding ground". ... I think I speak for all of us at this table when I say that we hope your government will make every effort to undertake activities that will seek to remove at least the economic elements in the breeding ground of ethnic terrorism..... Our concern at this table is for the economic well-being of all the nation's people, we urge the government to make an early address to the economic components of the communal stress, and we stand ready to provide such assistance as we can give to support the government in this endeavour".

It would appear that Mr. Hopper's statement tantamounts to a rebuke of the recent and much publicised Cabinet Decision to suspend all development work in the North of Sri Lanka until terrorism is wiped out. According to reports, some of the on-going projects are being stopped, albeit temporarily, for security reasons. The utmost reluctance is however reserved for projects which would involve the settlement, in the North and East of up-country Tamils who cannot be permanently absorbed into the plantations where they are now. Even the Finance Minister's new proposal to give incentive to development investments in what he calls high unemployment districts to the exclusion of Tamil districts is patently discriminatory.

Defence Expenditure

Mr. Hopper's statement does not reveal any qualm about giving aid to a government which is the target of allegations of human rights violations. Quite understandably so. The question of giving aid in the context of human rights violations has, however, been raised in Canada and in the Scandinavian Countries.

But the continuing increases in defence expenditure in recent years are

likely to cause disquiet among the government's aid donors. The total allocation (both capital and recurrent) has now reached the Rupees Five billion mark, almost a 100 percent increase over the vote for the previous year. The annual percentage increases in defence expenditure, both capital and recurrent, have been far in excess of the respective increases in the total expenditure. The country's resources are being diverted to boost up its defences while starving the social service sectors of funds for development.

The World Bank has already questioned on economic grounds the recent increases in the defence budget. The aid donors will have additional grounds to complain of the failure of the government "to maintain the social and physical quality of life" of the people, despite its specific undertaking to do so. They might also question the wisdom of increasing the expenditure on defence if the goal is political settlement to the Tamil question.

Foreign Exchange Earnings

To the Finance Minister who has little time to lose before introducing "a series of measures to improve the medium term balance of payments performance", the most alarming prospect would be a fall in the foreign exchange earnings. Some of the key sources of foreign exchange earnings are directly affected by the ethnic conflict. According to the Minister "it is the plantations and plantations alone that can make the most substantial contribution to our export income". But a great deal will depend on how the government would resolve the problems of the plantation workers of recent Indian (Tamil) origin. The question of citizenship is just one aspect of the matter, but far more important is the problem of security. Declaring off-shore curfew in the northern seas and hitting at the bellies of 30,000 fishing families may not make any impact in Colom-

bo, but when the establishment of Army Camps gets going in the estates the consequences on tea plucking and production will certainly make themselves felt in the capital.

Tourism and private remittances have been important sources of foreign exchange earnings in recent years. The July-August pogrom of 1983 dealt a severe blow to the tourist industry, from which it has not so far recovered. For the first time since 1971, tourist arrivals declined in 1983 by 17% compared with the previous year. In terms of SDR tourist earnings dropped by 14% in 1983 from those of 1982. Even the employment in the tourist sector has fallen from 64,000 in 1982 to 53,000 in 1983. According to the Central Bank Report, a more distressing reason for the decline in tourism, than the July 1983 civil disturbances, is the relative competitiveness, in terms of prices and facilities, of other locations in the region such as the Maldives.

In 1983 total foreign exchange earnings from private remittances almost reached an impressive Rs. 7 billion, 54% of which was contributed by private remittances from the Middle-East countries. Employment opportunities in these countries greatly helped to ease the unemployment problem here. Now, as a result of the inexplicable decision of the Sri Lankan government to obtain Israeli assistance to deal with "ethnic terrorism", Sri Lanka is being virtually ostracised by the Arab countries. And quite apart from its economic costs, this egregious blunder on the part of the UNP government has led to political consequences with far reaching implications. For, what the Federal Party could not achieve for thirty years, Mossad has accomplished in less than one year: it has made the Muslim people, who live in the Northern and Eastern provinces, to consider themselves as part of the Tamil speaking people.

by Amali

The cruel hands of the assassins have removed the only shield against genocide that the Sri Lankan Tamils had in the person of Indira Gandhi. This sentence sums up the deep feeling of loss felt by the Tamils in every nook and corner of Sri Lanka. In the terrible months of June, July and August 1983, when the planned attack on Tamils, started in Trincomalee in June reached a crescendo in the last week of July, the Sri Lanka Government failed to take any action to stop the murder, arson, looting and rape unleashed against Tamils and their property. There was not even a word of sympathy to the victims from the President and his Ministers but there was a telephone call to the President. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, from New Delhi on July 28, which jolted the Sri Lanka Government out of its callous disregard of its elementary duty of maintaining law and order and safe-guarding the lives and property of the Tamil minority. Indira Gandhi followed this solicitous telephone conversation with sending her Minister for External Affairs, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao to Colombo the same day. It was only after this action by the Prime Minister of India that orders to shoot the murderers and looters were given to the Sri Lanka armed forces and attempts were made to bring the situation gradually under control.

I had the privilege of being in touch with Indira Gandhi from 1979 when she was out of power and acquainting her with the situation that was developing in Sri Lanka against the Tamils. From the very first meeting my wife and I had with her, I was impressed with the deep knowledge of the facts and the intense awareness of the problem that she had. At the several subsequent meetings my colleagues and I had with her, we were amazed that in the midst of the multifarious problems she had to cope with, Indira Gandhi could find the time to learn precisely every detail of the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka and remember it. When talking to her about these problems one got the impression of dealing with a computer-like mind which could store all relevant information and pull them out whenever required.

The Nehrus always enjoyed a special place in the affection of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. From the early Thirties, pictures of Nehru with his wife Kamala and his daughter Indira standing on either side used to adorn thousands of Tamil homes in Sri Lanka. At a time when plantation Tamil workers were disorganised and were the targets of virulent anti-Indian propaganda by Sinhalese leaders like A. E. Goonasinghe, it was Nehru, who went to Sri Lanka (Ceylon then) and organised them into a powerful trade union called the Ceylon Indian Congress, the precursor of the present Ceylon Workers Congress.

Long before independence he visited Ceylon to discuss with the then leader of the Sinhalese, D. S. Senanayake, the future status and rights of Tamils of Indian Origin. In 1948 when

to his daughter Indira Gandhi.

The first open expression of this interest came in June 1983 when the government of India indicated to the Sri Lanka Government its concern over Emergency Regulation 15 (A), permitting the police and the armed forces to dispose of the bodies of persons killed by the security forces without judicial inquiry or post-mortem examination. It was pointed out that this regulation amounted to an open licence to the security forces to kill Tamils with impunity.

This innocuous indication of concern over violation of human rights provoked a howl of protest in the Sri Lanka press and from the Government benches in the Sri Lanka Parliament. They called it interference by India in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka.

ernment to put a stop to the genocide being perpetrated against the Tamils. It was this action by Indira Gandhi that saved the lives of thousands of Tamils. There was no question of any overbearing conduct on her part. The quiet dignity and the moral stature



Mrs. INDIRA GANDHI

At the same time I felt that the moral authority of a world statesman will act as an effective shield for the Tamil people. She knew every detail concerning the distribution of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka and the centres of violence against them and had already thought out possible lines of solving the problem. She had told Mr. H. W. Jayewardene, brother of the President his special emissary, that district councils would not meet the aspirations of the Tamil people and that the Sri Lanka Government should go beyond them. I had the feeling that the fate of the Tamils was safe in her hands and we also accepted her good offices and agreed to attend the all-party conference and negotiate with the Sri Lanka President, contrary to our earlier decision not to.

Although the process of negotiation has got protracted and Mr. Jayewardene has gone back on various matters agreed to with Indira Gandhi and her special envoy, Mr. G. Parthasarathi, so long as she lived, the Tamil people of Sri Lanka felt that she would somehow or other work out their salvation. Her sudden death makes them feel orphaned and face their future with trepidation. They are yet hopeful that her son, the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi with the advice of veterans like Mr. G. Parthasarathi, Mr. Narasimha Rao and Mr. M. K. Rasgotra (the External affairs Secretary will continue the same policy and achieve what she would have achieved for them. Such is the deep faith the Tamils of Sri Lanka had in Indira Gandhi and continue to have even after her death.

'Cruel Hands Have Removed Only Shield'

by **A. Amirthalingam,**
Secretary-General, TULF

In one of the last speeches I made in Parliament I had to point out that human rights violations in any country are the concern of everyone and if Sri Lanka could protest against violation of the rights of the coloured people in South Africa why could not India protest against inhuman treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The holocaust against the Tamils in July 1983 followed on the heels of the promulgation of these regulations and India's role became inevitable. There was only one leader in the world who had the courage and the moral stature to call upon the Sri Lanka Gov-

the citizenship laws of Ceylon were passed, Nehru, as Prime Minister of India, refused to agree to the Indian and Pakistani Citizenship Act which was calculated to decitizenise the plantation Tamils and thereby weaken the political strength of the Tamils in the island as a whole.

Throughout the stewardship of Nehru, the Indian Government maintained that the Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka had to be given full citizenship rights and absorbed in that country. Unfortunately, after his death it was during the premiership of Lal Bahadur Shastri that the pact for the repatriation of 5,25,000 plantation Tamils was signed. The farsightedness and genuine concern of Nehru for the Tamils in Sri Lanka were passed on

of Indira Gandhi were such that her offer of good offices was readily accepted by Mr. Jayewardene.

It was in this background that I went to New Delhi on August 14 and was privileged to discuss the whole problem fully with the Prime Minister for over an hour. Her deep sympathy for the sufferings of the people and genuine concern for their future gave solace and soothed my agitated mind. In spite of the deep feeling there was no question of any hasty action or any attitude of hectoring towards the Sri Lanka Government. I was made to realise that she was conscious of the delicacies involved in dealing with another State.



The skeleton of a burnt hut

The news media are full of 'that bleeding piece of Earth, the coastal town of Valvettiturai in the Jaffna peninsula of North Sri Lanka. Last month, the papers reported that "at least" 700 Tamil men from Valvettiturai (besides 1,000 from Jaffna) had been taken away in the preceding two months by the Sri Lanka army to undisclosed destinations. In many families, all the male members ("And all my children?" queries Macduff about Macbeth's exploits) had thus been spirited away. It has been said that Valvettiturai had been 'shelled' from the sea and from August 4 to 6 the armed forces burnt and destroyed over 100 houses. The Navy's shelling of the North Coast seems to go on still a pregnant woman being killed just a few days ago. Thus a recent report.

"Two Tamils were shot dead by the police at Chedikulam in Vavuniya district of Sri Lanka today even as the Island nation celebrated the 78th birthday of President J. R. Jayewardene" (The Hindu, Sept. 18, 1984.)

The pattern is similar said a group of visiting journalists three weeks ago, 'from Mannar, Valvettiturai, Karanavai and Achchuveli. There is a terrorist attempt by ambush. The army burns and destroys everything in the vicinity by way of reprisals.' Last month, it was in Valvettiturai and other sensitive spot in the Jaffna area; now, it was in Vavuniya. The papers also publish from time to time tell-tale photographs evocative of the brutality and terror of the operations, and the tragedy and pity of it all. And it is an almost self-perpetuating horror. The

TULF leaders moan that their hotel rooms in Colombo have been searched by the police three times in the course of ten hours. MGR warns JRJ against the lunacy of using mysterious hit squads in Tamil Nadu. Our P. M. during her recent visit to the South has expressed her deep concern regarding the killings in Sri Lanka. And the Emergency in Sri Lanka, already 16 months old, has been extended by yet another month. The abnormal is the new normality.

Force and Greater Force

Must the hapless nationals of Sri Lanka-alike those that profess Buddhism or Hinduism, Christianity or Islam-nact this meaningless fratricidal strife, in the process becoming increasingly less and less humane, and escalatingly more and more insane? Who benefits from all this violence (physical and psychological), this weariness and waste, and this atmosphere of desperation? Sinhala-Buddhist ethnic exclusivism and the overflow of the old majority inferiority-complex fuel rival Sinhala chauvinisms (say, of the JRJ and Sirimavo brands). Which competitively try to score over the Tamil-Hindus and the Indian-Tamils, and to a lesser extent the Christians, the Muslims, the Burghers and the rest, reducing their 'living space', abridging their human rights damaging their sense of security, all queering the minority persecution complex of these sizeable ethnic groups.

Fair play, reason and persuasion failing, force is finally called into play force is met by greater force and in the ascendancy of this

strife, what is readily sacrificed is human life, and what is purblindly bared away is the future. A further vicious twist has been given with the importation of the Israeli Mossad and Stein Bet for providing sharper teeth to Government action. One bears too of the U.S. interest in Sri Lanka, and of India's understandable apprehensions for more than one reason. Thus what happens in Valvettiturai doesn't concern that coastal town alone for there is lethal fall-out all over Sri Lanka and beyond its shores as well.

Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar is a distinguished Professor of English and an eminent authority on literary history and criticism. He retired as Vice-Chancellor from Andhra University.

Professor Iyengar started his life as an English teacher at Chidambara College, Valvettiturai (1928-31), an institution now threatened with closure because of the extension of the Valvettiturai Police Station.

This article appeared in 'The Hindu', Madras, on 29-9-1984.

by

Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

I was in Valvettiturai from February 1928 to March 1931 and taught English and Mathematics at the sea-facing Chidambara Vidyalaya. Valvettiturai was then a quite place, a sprawling village almost I taught ESLC and Cambridge Senior Certificate students the standards approximating to our SSLC and intermediate. My pupils were mostly Hindu Saivites. The 'Manager' (or proprietor) of the Vidyalaya ("we called it also a College in my time was G. Thyalpakar. He had his own temple, and his sonorous 'Thevaram' and 'Thiruvagasam' recitations would be wafted to my ears morning and evening. With the simplicity

of his dress and bearing he could pass for one of the 'Siva Nesa Selvar'. He was more friend and mentor than 'Manager' to me and to the two or three other graduate teachers from Tamil Nadu serving the Vidyalaya.

Eerie Experience

Ours was not an affluent Academy of course, actually the Vidyalaya was a complex of thatched shade big and small. Once while teaching, I found my pupils' attention straying to the high roof. I too looked up and the pupils pointed to an abnormally long rat snake moving behind the bamboo too looked up and the pupils pointed to an abnormally long rat snake moving behind the bamboo rafters. More curious still a rat was chasing the snake adroitly by intermittently stinging its tail till at last both disappeared. My pupils explained that the rat was taking revenge for some earlier crime committed by the snake. Another equally bizarre or eerie experience of that time was my trying to explore all by myself a sort of underground cave at some distance from the town having taken a few tentative steps into the cave. I panicked and surfaced up

and they were affectionate and respectful at once. And the people of Valvettiturai also made me feel I was wanted, and that I was one of them.

Valvettiturai, situated between Kankasanturai and Paruthiturai (Point Pedro), has been an adventurous maritime centre. A few were engaged I was told in the precarious occupation of opium smuggling from India, and my pupils would occasionally regale me with interesting stories of the trade. Aside from the handful that opted for the learned professions, the average student wanted only to take the ESLC or Senior Certificate and seek a modest career, if possible in FMS (the Federated Malay States) Many of the able-bodied young and middle-aged men of Valvettiturai would speak to me in their simple rugged way about their hard life as sailors exposed nude before God the elements in time of rough weather, and I have known instances of a student's father or brother failing to return after a voyage, and no news of the ship either. It was thinking of such brave sons of Valvettiturai that I wrote the verse sequence 'Riders to the Sea', now

with a 'Marabar Caves' kind of hangover.

A complex of sheds I said but airy and comfortable all the same, and we had a terraced building for the Physics and Chemistry laboratory. For the first two years I lived in a room adjoining the Vidyalaya but in the third year shifted to a little house in the part of the town, and rather close to the sea. What has happened to my 'Mallihai Villa', I wonder, I lived alone in that house but my pupils never let me feel my loneliness. Being hardly 20 when I went to Valvettiturai, there was no serious generation gap between my students and myself,

included in my Australia Helix.

Bred in the culture of the elements and heirs to the seas' vast wealth,

These riders to the sea have always lived marginal yet royal lives. And the women? Hardy, and feminine, and guardians of the shore'

Aye, these careering knights of the foamcrests gorging on uncertainty

And roaming the sea's dangerous highways, gamble zestfully with death....

old Valvettiturai

And the spouse waits, and dreams and knows by signs what tomorrow has in store.

The landscape of the Jaffna peninsula was not exactly luxuriant or overwhelming, and was more a matter of bareness and dryness than of variegated richness. There were numerous palmyrah and coconut trees, however, and no wonder most of the houses had thatched roofing. Tobacco was widely grown and my pupils used to tell me, 'You don't smoke Master else we could offer you excellent tobacco.' The boys had verily hearts of gold, and that they were unsophisticated, was all to their credit. The more affluent parents preferred to send their wards to study in Jaffna at the Hindu, Parameshvara or St. John's College and a few found their way even to far off Colombo.

Early during my stay in Valvettiturai, I had a piece on Education in Ceylon and India Published in the THE HINDU Educational and literary Supplement and I reviewed for the Times of Ceylon K. S. Venkataramani's The Next Rung and Lytton

Strachey's Elizabeth and Essex. There was no University in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in my time, but there was the University College at Colombo that prepared students for the 'external' degrees of the London University. There was, however, a proposal to start a University at Kandy, and the Riddell Commission's Report was published in January 1929 and I wrote a long article on its recommendations in the Calcutta Review (July 1929.) Taking note of the then existing conditions the Government policy and practice of recognising and paying grants to denominational schools and colleges of all grades the Commission was content to recommend the establishment of 'Halls of Residence for the four communities, Hindu, Buddhist, Roman Catholic and non-RC-Christian. The Commission felt however, that their hesitant acceptance of communal differences was 'a partial surrender of the University ideal.' No doubt, hindsight might today locate in the educational denominationalism of over 50 years ago the germs of the present conflict between Sinhala and Tamil, and between Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim.

Fifty-three years after is it the same old Valvettiturai the homely coastal town I knew so well, that has now cantered to the front page with its recent blood-bolstered history? I cannot help invasion of a profound sadness at the thought that, perhaps, some of my old pupils or their sons or their grand-sons have been among the victims of the present holocaust. Although I was to lose touch

with the hundred or more who passed through my hands during those three years, I have often recalled with gratitude certain names-Sasindra Sivakumaran, Selvaraj, Sakthivel, Velupillai, Murugesu for these came to the bus stand and some to Kankesanthurai. When I left in March 1931, and chorused "Come back Master". I did go back a month or two later but to Colombo. I had my feel

of Cinnamon Gardens, the Galle Face and the shopping centre, made the acquaintance of the Principals of the University, Royal and Zahira Colleges, met a few Sinhala gentlemen courteous and affable at once and was the guest of a Muslim merchant from Tamil Nadu. Colombo was more London than London, some one said, but before I could know more of it, I too and instead of going to Valvettiturai, returned to India for good. It was Sasindra Sivakumaran who packed up my belonging (mainly books) and sent the consignment to India.

(Continued on page 7)



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Referendum And Elephant Mutations

The Editor,
SATURDAY REVIEW

In a humorous yet disturbing cartoon, a newspaper disclosed the fact that although the Ceylon Elephant, Elephans Maximus is being threatened with extinction, four new subspecies with dominant diagnostic characters have evolved in Sri Lanka within a short period of time, namely, Elephans Maximus Wal-Aliya, Elephans Maximus Gon-Aliya, Elephans Maximus Hora-Aliya and Elephans Maximus Paga-Aliya.

These biological monsters have created history (not to mention havoc) because they do not owe their existence to Darwin's process of natural selection (general elections) but rather induced mutation (referendum).

The cartoonist understandably not being a biologist did not recognise our advanced scientific capabilities in tissue culture, genetic engineering and gene splicing which has now produced the super species of Elephans Maximus with the Wal, Hora, Gon and Paga genes of the four sub-species, all in one, and nomenclaturally known as Elephans Maximus 4-in-1.
Winged Bean
Colombo.

HOW ABOUT THIS?

The Editor,
SATURDAY REVIEW

May I suggest that the following measures be adopted as a minimum requirement to bring about a better atmosphere in the present ethnic situation in Sri Lanka?

The Tamil language should be adopted as a state language. It should be the duty of the Government to protect and preserve this language also and not treat it as a "national language" with hardly any legal status.

The 25 administrative districts should be reconstituted into 25 districts of 1,000 square miles each to cover the area of 25,333 square miles of this country, with Colombo District to be the major district with 1,333 square miles.

The proposed Second Chamber should be composed of two members from each district, to ensure the election of one member from the majority community and the other from the minority community in the respective districts. While Parliament is elected strictly on a popula-

tion basis, the "upper house" should be composed only on the area basis.

The districts where the minorities are in a majority should be declared as the districts for the minorities inhabiting them and their composition should not be changed by state-aided colonisation schemes, etc.

Two or more of the districts should be permitted to merge at their option, provided they are adjoining districts in order to perform more development functions. As an alternative, the Government can abolish the present nine-province system dating from colonial times and introduce a new system of states or provinces, say six of four districts each or eight of three districts each, leaving the Colombo district alone as a metropolitan district/state.

All public servants working in Colombo under the suggested system of devolution of power, should be required to possess a knowledge of both national languages so that there is at the central administration level no language barrier.
S. T. Rajah
Dehiwala.

CHAMPAGNE OF TEARS
The Editor,
SATURDAY REVIEW

There is a unique solemnity about death. John Donne, of the Metaphysical School of poetry wrote:-

"EVERY man's death diminishes me
For I am committed to mankind;
Therefore, send not for whom the bell tolls
It tolls for thee".

Grief in the event of the death of anyone should be majestic, sedate, cleansing and strong enough to consume small troubles. All these are idealistic. However, from some happenings after the demise of the great leader Mrs. Indira Gandhi, it seems that all these sentiments are reduced to trash. In the euphoria of consuming champagne in prestigious Hotels celebrating the death of a brave lady, some rum-bustous rustics had displayed a type of gaucherie which will make even a common criminal hide his face in shame.

Good breeding comes from the ennobling circumstances of good homes. It is the result of much good sense, parentage and education. What happened in certain

places is a case for regret. It is indicative of the degradation of some unmitigated hoodlums of the slums and gutters who had expressed their joy at the brutal and fatal attack on a defenceless lady who had made several sacrifices for the development of her Motherland.

It is a crying shame that society can gloss over such disgustingly boorish behaviour.

It is reported that even in our country some stooges and camp followers had expressed their glee by clapping hands and fiendishly shouting that the Mother of the Tigers has been finished. The jubilation of some at the death of the late Indian Prime Minister makes one realise that there is very little difference between man and beast or a maniacal moron or a GENTLEMAN.

R. C. Thavarajah
Jaffna.

IMPOTENT NATURE

The Editor,
SATURDAY REVIEW

All of us know what are the results of the recently

It was the failure of the anti-UNP forces to put forward a progressive alternative policy and their incapability in converting the grave problems faced by the people into a forceful mass resistance movement that enabled UNP to make gains as never before in the post-independence history.

Except in the cases of some by-elections selectively held by the UNP, the anti-UNP forces never dared to come forward and arouse people against the UNP. I think that they are now paying for their failure to unite the people under a progressive anti-UNP leadership.

I can daresay that only reason for the mass victory of the UNP in the by-elections is the people's thinking of having no capable alternative political force to lead them.

I wonder when will the anti-UNP progressive forces begin to realise their im-

In India Rajiv, AMIDST MOURNING, within HOURS of being appointed appealed to the PEOPLE and ordered the ARMED FORCES to stop the violence, whereas in Sri Lanka, no action was taken for. ONE FULL WEEK except INSTIGATING MORE AND MORE WITH "SINHALA ASPIRATIONS" and NOT one word of sympathy for the Tamils was spoken.

Whereas in India Sikhs already enjoy Regional Autonomy and were not physically and psychologically disturbed by previous murder, looting, arson, rape in Sri Lanka the Tamils have no regional autonomy and have been disturbed physically and psychologically, forcing on them the emergence of P.L.O. type of men.

In India, the Government talks of India and Indians whereas in Sri Lanka, the Government talks of Sinhala and Buddhist aspirations. And so let us co-operate with Rajiv, for recognition of our P.L.O. which Sri Lanka recognised.
S. Harischandra
Puttur.

DEPT. BUNGLES

The Editor,
SATURDAY REVIEW

A private candidate who sat the G.C.E. (O/L) examination to obtain a credit pass in English to enrol for a London examination achieved her objective. But in the result schedule, the Examination Department had inserted the wrong initial "H", when it should have been "A".

She wrote to the Department three times requesting it to issue the right schedule with the correct initial of her name but there was no response.

As a result she could not register for the foreign examination because the date for applying had passed. She will have to waste one year before she can register for this examination.

The carelessness and indifference of the Department has thus affected the future of a student.

S. S. B. Subramaniam
Kokuvil.

LETTERS

held bye-elections for Minneriya and Kundasale electorates. People of these two electorates have given UNP the chance of boasting of their mass support for their development programmes once again.

Apart from the agonising experiences of the Tamil people of this country, it is well clear that, in spite of economic burdens and social hardships being exerted by the UNP government from its advent to power in 1977, Sinhala people have voted en masse for the UNP in many elections.

Whatever the findings of the impotent opposition politicians might be, I hold that, continuous surprising victories of UNP in many elections that were held after 1977, can be attributed to the disarray in the opposition ranks.

potent nature and the uselessness of the parliamentary politics.

V. Thanabalasingham
Colombo.

THOUGHTS!

Editor,
SATURDAY REVIEW

When thoughts are passed on, it is nothing but fair that others also respond. And here are my thoughts Sir and will you be astonished?

Whereas in India, the riots were a SPONTANEOUS outburst as a result of killing of a REVERED WOMAN HEAD OF STATE, unaided by State, in Sri Lanka they were PREPLANNED AND ORGANISED and triggered by the killing of PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERS and aided by Saints and others.

Dirty Dozen 6

With self-made rules their game goes well!

(Continued from last issue)

The de-mystification of technology is looked upon as another way of bringing in quackery through the back door and the vested interests are as virulently opposed to it as planners are on the issues of decentralised planning. Any move to strengthen the hands of the beneficiaries of the planning process is effectively scuttled. Any move to recognise village skills, local knowledge and rural wisdom for development purposes is completely outside the comprehension of the planner and it is not likely to receive his support. This is obviously because his practical experience is limited but he will be the last one to confess this deficiency in himself. The planner has in fact set the unhealthy trend of looking on the problems of the rural poor from a global perspective where at least he will be safe. It is a game he knows how to play and where he is at his intangible best.

What makes matters worse is the aura that the planner has managed to build around himself. If a field problem looks tricky call the expert, the planner. If schools are

not running and there is a drop in attendance there is something wrong with the system so call the educational planner. He may not have run a school in his life or ever been a teacher but that is immaterial.

If there is something wrong with the health delivery system it is easier to call someone from outside to study the problem, a hot shot foreign UNICEF expert perhaps, whose only knowledge of India is that it is full of snake charmers and maharajas. Many a project has seen the arrogance of such experts planning in areas such as the repair and maintenance of hand pumps for safe drinking water, in the design of programmes for women and children in rural areas, in preparing plans for the release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers even though they have never met one in their lives. The list where they have the authority to interfere is endless. Their advice is sought on field matters which is one reason why the credibility gap between the government and the people has become so obvious.

If it was in my hands to change the set up what would

I do? I would make sure the planner stayed a major portion of his time in the village. He need not work with his hands because by the time he gets to some position of power and authority he is no longer as healthy as he should be. But he must observe, he must sit and listen. He must be accessible and speak to people as a human being. He must see his plans being implemented from the other end, see how it is interpreted and distorted to suit the powers that be and then decide right there how to plug the loopholes. If he takes planning seriously he must have the time to see its effects, good or bad. He must refrain from pontificating on the projects he has conceived because he tends to think globally or nationally and really no one is interested in listening to such projects in the village. If anything the response of the villagers should help the planner come down to earth, come down to the nuts and bolts of the immediate problems facing them and see how they tackle it for themselves. See how the poor are more self-reliant than the richer half of the village who are more dependent on government, see how the poor actually practice integration without having to create

infrastructures. There are lessons to be learnt there that illiterate (but not uneducated) villagers can teach the planner that no books or studies or reports can teach in a lifetime.

The unlearning process for the planner can indeed be traumatic and it takes greater men than we have to want to be changed by someone who he regards as socially and economically inferior. The planner will see how difficult it is to get—what he thinks are too simple to spend time on—pensions, loans, subsidies, inputs, health services, sending scheduled caste children to schools in the interior. One hopes he will realise when he sees it for himself how indifferent the system is to the problems of those non-persons and then may be he will change and we might see some change in the planning process. Right now he has preconceived ideas and plans that must fit or else he rejects it outright.

The planner would also see how figures are collected at the village and block level. There is no competent system that ensures the collection of proper data. It is not considered important. In fact it is taken as a waste of time and functionaries usually sit at tea shops and fill in the blanks. For their own safety

and interest patwaris, gram sevaks, cooperative inspectors fiddle with figures and play the game planners play at the block level. Multiply that by 5,000 Blocks in this country and imagine the figures, planners are planning with.

It is a game now but it need not be and we have it in us to change it to mean much more. But we are distracted by our selfish ambition to use it as a stepping stone to gain recognition and attention. In the final analysis the poor always suffer. There is no urgency and even less commitment. Those who have broken away from the usual way of doing things are considered eccentric within the bureaucracy. Well if I have to pin my hopes on anyone for planning to have more meaning I would do so on these handful of bureaucrats who are not willing to be dictated to by the system where mediocrity is a qualification. For them it is not a game. In their own way they are setting an example and I think, it is only a question of time before their numbers grow. For the present Mark Twain's words would suffice, "To do good is noble. To tell others to do good is also noble but much less trouble."

Requiem for old...

(Continued from page 5)

A Requiem now to Old Valvettiturai, its simplicity, and austerity, and beauty, and industry, and religious clarity. It must have grown during the last half-century into a flourishing modern town producing scholars, scientists, lawyers, doctors, patriots. Many are abroad, but carrying within the mystic fire of their origins. And now cannot the

Tamils and the Sinhalese and the rest enact successful co-existence even in these days when the five continents of the world have shrunk into the dimensions of the global village? Must a terrible and seemingly unescapable death wish seize the nationals or Sri Lanka? Can nothing—neither wisdom nor statesmanship, neither commonsense nor self-interest, neither friendly advice from India nor

international moral pressure can nothing at all, save the people of Sri Lanka, who are all, at some remote or other of Indian origin too and hence truly our own brothers and sisters, from this accelerating race towards the Abyss?

And the Sri Lanka problem is not all that insoluble: either President Jayewardene's statement of December 1, 1983, after detailed confabulations in Colombo and New Delhi (in which the seasoned G. Parthasarathy took no small part) provided in its 14-point-C. Annexure for the conversion of the District Development Councils into larger regional Councils with a fair measure of autonomy and the power to levy taxes, and enact laws, for regional Chief Ministers and Committees of Ministers, regional High Courts and Public Service Commissions, with the President and the Parliament retaining specified as well as re-

siduary powers. The annexure also provided for the Armed Forces to reflect adequately the national ethnic position and in the North and East (i.e. the Tamil regions) the Police reflecting the local ethnic composition. Tamil was to be accepted as a national language. All this would have meant genuine federalism without jeopardising the integral unity of Sri Lanka. How was it that Mr. Jayewardene permitted a going back on these understandings? In this context his fresh offer of "inter district co-ordination in defined spheres of activity" appears "very vague" to the TULF leaders, for once bit, they are inclined to be twice and thrice shy.

No, no: the holocaust in Colombo and other places last year and in Jaffna, Mannar, Valvettiturai, Atchuvelli and Vavuniya this year, these cannot be the continually renewing agenda of dear Sri Lanka's history. May good sense prevail again. May the understandings relating to the Regio-

nal Councils be revived and accepted and implemented, May the egregious Matthew and Athulathmudali and Premadasa learn to talk the language of the Buddha not that of the police.

May Jayewardene rise above the lesser pulls of day-to-day politics and make a bold imaginative bid for the larger human cause, the noble end of ethnic peace and justice and harmony. May the experienced and mellowed G.P. on another mission to Sri Lanka, help to bring the Hindu and Sinhala hands together in a unique gesture of adoration of the common mother, Sri Lanka. And may dear Valvettiturai rise again from its current charred predicament, and may its sons and daughters prosper once more with eyes of freedom, hearts of love and fulfil the ambrosial truth of the deathless myth.

The bird of wonder dies, when the maiden phoenix
Her ashes new-create
another heir
as great in admiration as herself.

WEEP NOT

Mother,
Weep not for those who have
left you
They are the birds that
Desert an empty field.

Weep not for the blood of
your sons
That flowed free on your
lap
You have given birth to
Many more in the darkness
of death.

Weep not for your children
standing homeless
They shall build a land of
freedom.

Weep not for your young
who'll
Die in the nakedness of
shame
Though their blood will
make the sands muddy
You will once again
Bear sons in the darkness of
death.

ANJALI

Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

NEWS BRIEFS

Tamil Youths Arrested

It is reported that over 200 Tamil youths have been arrested in Colombo and other areas. Most of these arrests are reported to be from Kotahena, Maligawatte, Wellawatte, Pettah and Fort Areas and the arrested youths are stated to be from Jaffna, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Mullaitivu and Mannar areas. It is further stated that most of these youths have in their possession travel documents, passports and Air tickets. National Intelligence Bureau, C.I.D. are closely checking these youths, although they are reported having valid travel documents.

'Planned Encroachments'

Dr. AL. Haj Badi-Uddin Mohamed has voiced strong objections against 'planned and co-ordinated encroachments on muslim lands in the Pottuvil Area. This is the subject of a memorandum addressed to Pre-

sident J. R. Jayewardene on behalf of the Sri Lanka Muslim Council. It is further stated that these 'planned encroachments' are on the ratio of 5 families a week and for every 25 houses a Buddhist Shrine has been built. Such 'planned encroachments' are not in the interests of peace and the muslim population of Pottuvil have expressed their fear and dissatisfaction over these 'encroachments'.

Up-country Tamil Youths

Minister S. Thondaman and Secretary of the C.W.C. Mr. Sellasamy are reported to have met President Jayewardene on 27th. inst. and stated that members of the C.W.C. 'do not have ties with Tamil militant youths and even if they do, such misguided youths should be corrected and it was the bounden duty of Government to do so.'

JAFFNA HOSPITAL'S SUPPLIES NOT MET

At the last meeting of the Jaffna Hospital, the Medical Superintendent called upon the Hospital Committee to make direct representations to the Minister of Health concerning the inadequacy of supplies to the Hospital from Colombo.

The Hospital authorities said that in the past the requirements of the Hospital were obtained by direct contact with the Authorities in Colombo. But now the position has changed. Despite repeated requests, the requirements of the Hospital are not being met. The supply of drugs for the Third Quarter (July to September) and the last Quarter (October to December) are yet to be received. The Hospital Authorities further stated that only 6 months supply have so far been received whereas actually the full quota for the year should have been received by now.

Following the appeal of the M. S., the Hospital Committee resolved to request the Hon. Minister of Health to ensure that immediate action is taken to despatch the quota of drugs for the last two Quarters.

The Secretary of the Hospital Committee has also appealed to the Tamil expatriates to make generous contributions to the Hospital. He referred to the example of a Tamil expatriate in Nigeria, whose child underwent treatment in the Intensive Care Unit of the Hospital. The father of the child had been so taken up by the care taken over and the treatment given to his child that he went on to organise a gift of valuable equipment to the Hospital by Tamil expatriates in Nigeria.

It was pointed out that the Two Eye Surgeons at the hospital were unable to

perform corneal grafts for lack of a certain grafts for lack of a certain equipment which would cost about £50. A list of such urgent requirements for the Hospital is available with the Secretary, Hospital Committee, General Hospital, Jaffna.

It was further pointed out that the supply of Oxygen Cylinders was not regular and frequently routine operations are being cancelled. There are 50 Oxygen cylinders available and empty cylinders are sent to Colombo by train for re-filling. They are usually received on the 4th day after filling. A cylinder costs about Rs.2,000/-. The daily requirement of the Hospital is 10 and it is not possible to have more than a days supply. With frequent disruptions in the train service a situation may arise when even a day's supply of oxygen is not available.

APPRECIATION

C. V. VELUPILLAI

The death of Mr. C. V. Velupillai, the Administrative Trustee of the National Union of Workers, occurred on the 19th of November, 1984 at 2.30 a.m., at his residence in Talangama South.

In 1934, on leaving school he published his first booklet of English poems dedicated to Rabindranath Tagore. Mr. Velupillai was educated at Holy Trinity College, Nuwara Eliya and later at Nalanda College, Colombo.

As a youngster from the hills, he showed keen interest for the welfare of the plantation workers.

The late Mr. Peri Sundaram persuaded him to give up a lucrative teaching profession and join the then Ceylon Indian Congress, which had been formed on the advice of Jawaharlal Nehru.

He was elected to the first Parliament of Sri Lanka as a member of the Talawakelle Electorate in 1947. During this period, he became the General Secretary of the Ceylon Indian Congress and served in that ca-

capacity for nine years along with Mr. Somasundaram and the late Mr. Motha and Mr. Rajalingam.

In 1946 he successfully organised, the popular 1946 Knivesmire Estate Hartal along with Mr. S. Thondaman and Mr. A. Aziz. He was also the Chief Organiser of the hundred day Satyagraha in Colombo against the disfranchisement of the people of Indian Origin.

On his visit to India Mr. Velupillai held discussions with the Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru on problems faced by the Indian Origins in Sri Lanka.

In 1965 he chose to serve the plantation people through the National Union of Workers and joined hands with the late V. K. Vellayan and preferred his progressive policies.

He was a pioneer writer who hailed from the plantations. He was equally proficient in Tamil and English. He published two volumes of English verses, two novels and one collection of sketches on plantation life. He wrote five novels in Tamil.

Mr. Martin Wickramasinghe has commented on Mr. C. V. Velupillai's celebrated work - "Born to Labour as follows:

"...the author's sympathy for and insight into the life of estate labourers run like a thread through these anecdotal studies....those who read C. V. Velupillai's book will begin to feel that estate labourers are kith and kin of all common people who treat Ceylon as their mother country...."

In 1981 Mr. C. V. Velupillai completed fifty years of writing. At a function organised by the Hill Country Writers he received the "Golden Mantle" and the title of "Kavi Mani."

His cremation took place at Kanatte, on 22 November, 1984 at 3 p.m.

With the death of Mr. C. V. Velupillai the plantation has been deprived of a humane poet and writer and particularly an ardent fighter for their cause.

General Secretary
—The National Union of Workers

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