

Amandment needed to postpone LG polls

By G. Nadesan

The Department of Elections will have to go ahead with polls for local government bodies in the Vanni and the east on 25th September if the UNF government does not bring about an amendment to the election laws, Deputy Elections Commissioner S. Arunthavachelvan said on Thursday.

Tamil political sources said that elections to the local bodies have to be held according to nominations lists accepted by the commissioner of elections in March. This would mean the inevitable victory of the EPDP, PLOTE and the EPRLF (Varatharajaperumal faction) in more than six local bodies in the east. In March the EPRLF (Varatharajaperumal faction) and the EPDP were elected uncontested to two local bodies in the east.

"The elections cannot be postponed again because the Emergency Regulations are no longer in force. The minister for local government has to amend the election law with a simple majority in Parliament to cancel the polls," sources said.

"This would certainly upset the political balance under the interim administration sought by the LTTE," Tamil political sources said. "An LTTE run interim administration will find it difficult to cohabit at the grass-roots level with local bodies that come under its purview," they added.

Political analysts said that the issue could get more complicated if the SLMC and the LTTE do not reach an early agreement on amending the election law to cancel the local government polls. Addressing a meeting in Oluvil last month, the SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem said that his party would leave the UNF government if it does not hold the local government polls as scheduled on 25th September.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress feels that control of as many local government bodies as possible in the northeast would strengthen its position doubly within the interim administration, which it hopes to share with the LTTE.

"The UNF needs to resolve the issue quickly with the TNA and the SLMC before it begins negotiations with the LTTE in Thailand - if it has not done so already", said a TNA leader.

(See full story on page 11)

No clean slate by default

By a Staff Correspondent

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) will continue discussions on the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement before they entertain any suggestions by the United National Front (UNF) government to expand on matters not included in the document, informed Tamil political sources said.

The President and groups critical of the ceasefire agreement have urged a review of the MOU with a view to including several issues which they say are vital to make the peace process comprehensive.

In the circumstance the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) may not extend its support to the forthcoming confidence motion on the UNF, these sources said.

"The UNF government is still not in a position to even get the necessary constitutional modalities right for setting up a meaningful interim administration for the northeast. The President's powers hang like the sword of Damocles over the legal means necessary to consolidate the gains of the MOU and to build on it

further. Therefore if the ceasefire agreement is not implemented fully now, the Sri Lankan state would get a clean slate prematurely by default," a well-informed TNA leader said.

However, "taking cognizance of the political difficulties faced by the UNF government at this juncture," the LTTE would take a "slow but steady approach" on urging the UNF government to meet its obligations under the ceasefire agreement mainly with a view to restoring normalcy in the northeast.

"Instances where the Sri Lankan armed forces continue to act contrary to the spirit of the ceasefire agreement will be discussed and concrete solutions to the problem will have to be found first. And this will take some time, particularly because no one from the Vanni would be attending the first round of peace talks in Thailand," the sources said.

That the army and the navy continue to occupy the environs of schools and temples is a problem that needs to be resolved in view of protests by students and the public. In schools such as Hartley College in Pt. Pedro, the army abided by the letter

of the MOU by leaving the buildings of the schools. But it continued to violate

There are still many roads blocked by the Sri Lankan armed forces in the northeast.

But constituent parties of the TNA are in two minds on how to vote at the forthcoming confidence motion of the government, informed sources told the Northeast Herald.

The problem is the ambiguity the TNA members believe will arise if they vote with the government and thereby appear to endorse the governance of the UNF, while they have been openly critical of the actions of the government in the northeast, especially on the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement.

"It will appear the TNA is giving the government a clean bill of health," said ACTC's Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam (TNA-Jaffna District).

He said the TNA had repeatedly called upon the government to adhere to the stipulations of the Ceasefire Agreement such as moving out of places of religious worship, public buildings, schools and to remove restrictions for resettlement in areas des-

ignated as high security zones.

"Nearly every day there is a hartal in the northeast, where the public protests about some shortcoming regarding the military or the administration. How can MPs of the area vote with the government in a motion of confidence?" he asked.

"Even if we point out shortcomings of the government during the debate, but vote with it in the division, the TNA is will be seen as supporting the government," Ponnabalam said.

However it is believed the constituent parties of the TNA - TULF, ACTC, TELO and EPRLF (Suresh) - will vote together at the division on the confidence motion.

It is understood the TULF favours voting with the government.

The government put forwarded the confidence vote as measure whereby the House could endorse its support for the government, which has faced a no-confidence motion in parliament recently and has had to bear the brunt of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's claim the UNF is conceding too much to the LTTE.

Mannar in the grips of drought



The parched, arid bed of Periya Pullatchchi Potrkerni kulam pic. Buddhika Weerasinghe

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Pass system violates freedom of movement - Supreme Court

The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday declared the pass system in Vavuniya had violated internally displaced person (IDP) Peter Vadivale's right to the freedom of movement.

Vadivel and Lakshan Dias challenged the pass system in the SC. Vadivel challenged the pass system on the grounds he was an IDP, and the pass restricted his movement within Vavuniya as well as to come to the South. Earlier, the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) challenged the pass system by petitioning the SC in December 2001 and January 2002 that the structure and implementation of the pass system in Vavuniya amounted to an "infringement and imminent infringement" of the petitioners' rights under Articles 12 (1) (equality of treatment under the

law) and 14 (1) (right to the freedom of movement) of the constitution.

The petition went on to state the passes were not authorised by the prevalent law of the time and was ultra vires the powers of the secretary, ministry of defence under the public security ordinance (PSO), the prevention of terrorism act (PTA) and the principles of international humanitarian law.

The respondent party (State) took up the position the passes were in the interest of national security and were "reasonable and necessary" in the situation the country was in. Court held the petitioner's fundamental right to the freedom of movement guaranteed under 14 (1) (h) had been violated and awarded him compensation of Rs.30, 000 to be paid by the State.

East marks Black September massacres

Batticaloa marked the beginning of Black September yesterday (September 5) with a largely attended function at the Eastern University in Vantharumoolai on the 12 anniversary of the massacre of 174 refugees who had sought asylum on the campus during Sri Lanka army operations in the area.

Two human rights commissions appointed by the UNP and the PA respectively said categorically that the Sri Lanka army was responsible for the massacre. None of the perpetrators named by the commissions were brought to book. University students and relatives of the massacre victims burnt a replica of military boot.

A memorial lamp for the victims was lit by the mother of a refugee youth who was killed by the army in the massacre.

The Vice Chancellor of the Eastern University Dr. M. S. Mookaiah, the head of the university's Trincomalee campus, DR. K. Jeyasingham, the university's former registrar V. Sivalingam and other addressed the gathering.

The speakers emphasised the fact that successive governments in Colombo had not taken any interest in bringing the culprits in the Sri Lanka army and paramilitary groups to justice. They also blamed local politicians for taking no interest in bringing the massacres to the world's attention.

Human rights activists in the east estimate that the Sri Lankan armed

forces massacred more than six thousand Tamil civilians in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts between July and December 1990 when it moved into the east to recapture the region from the Liberation Tigers. The main mass massacres of Tamil civilians in the two districts took place in the month of September.

185 Tamils, mostly women, children and infants were rounded up and murdered by the army in the village of Sathurukkondaan, a large village near Batticaloa town, four days after the massacre of the refugees in the Eastern University in Vantharumoolai.

Human rights activists and residents of the village are erecting a memorial to mark the massacre in Sathurukkondaan next week.

"We could not mark Black September fully all these years for fear of the armed forces. But now things have changed. The kith and kin of the victims are coming out boldly to join us in building the memorials and observing the anniversary", a human rights activist in the eastern University said.

The following are some of the massacres in the Batticaloa and Amparai district during Black September of 1990 documented by the human rights activist:

- Thirty five Tamil villagers including women and children were hacked to death by Sri Lankan Army and Muslim home guards on September 22 in Thalavai, Batticaloa. Their bodies were burnt.

- Thirty five Tamil civilians were massacred by the army and Muslim home guards who surrounded the village of Sorikalmunai in the Amparai district near the Batticaloa border on September 17. The civilians were taken to the Savalakkadai

army camp near Kalmunai and were shot and hacked to death.

- Five Tamil girls were abducted by the army on September 5 from the village of Pullumalai in the Batticaloa district. They were raped and murdered. Their mutilated bodies were later found in a well. The Sri Lankan army arrested six civilians from Pullumalai on the same day, three of them later escaped, the other three were shot dead.

- Ten Tamil refugees were taken away by the Special Task Force from the refugee camp in Pandiruppu near Kalmunai. All were massacred in the Neelavanai STF camp on September 5.

- Four Tamil civilians were killed inside the Pallikkuddiyiruppu refugee camp in Mutur on September 15.

- Seventeen Tamil civilians including children and women were hacked to death by STF (Special Task Force) commandoes and Muslim home guards in Puthukudiyiruppu in Batticaloa on September 24. Seventeen escaped the massacre with gunshot and knife wounds.

Talks venue in Thailand base for US naval power

The port where the talks will be held between the Liberation Tigers and the Sri Lankan government, Sattahip, is one of the key strategic advantages the US Navy enjoys in the south-east Asian region. The Royal Thai Navy's port is also used extensively by the US Navy under the terms of a defence treaty between Thailand and America.

The port is becoming increasingly important in the emerging strategic balance the US is trying to evolve in the Bay of Bengal, the Malacca Straits and the Arabian Sea.

Thailand has very close military relations with the US. The U Tapaho naval air station in Thailand is also used by American military under a long standing treaty relationship.

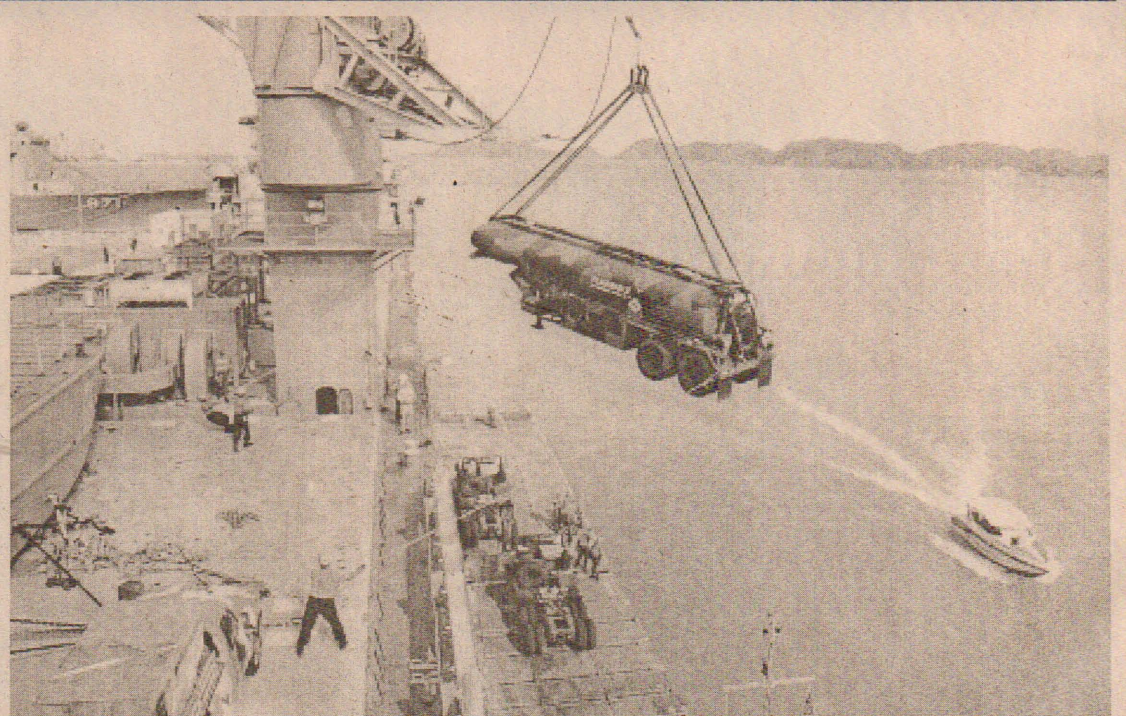
The United States exercises with Thai forces more than 40

times a year.

Half of these are Navy exercises. Sattahip is also central to all major joint exercises such as Cobra Gold - a series of U.S.-Thai military exercises designed to ensure regional strategic superiority of the defense partners. Sattahip has a regular US military and other strategic presence.

The training includes joint combined air, land and sea operations. Cobra Gold is the largest strategic mobility exercise involving the U.S. Pacific Command forces.

U.S. Navy's largest bilateral exercise CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training) 2002 took place in June with Sattahip at the centre. 1,400 U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen were brought together with 2,600 Thai counterparts with Frigate Squadron Two for CARAT 2002. There were in-port and at-sea exercises.



US sailors and Marines guide a tanker trailer as it is lowered over the side of the SS Gopher State (TACS 4) to a lighter craft in Sattahip, Thailand for use in Exercise Cobra Gold

A civilisational adventure - fact or illusion?

By Rajpal Abeynayake

The coming round of talks in Thailand could be the only one in which terms such as 'position of strength' were forgotten.

"Position of strength" was the favourite catchphrase among the pack of newspaper analysts who wrote around the issues concerning previous talkathons between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE.

But, 'position of strength' is forgotten, as negotiators get ready to pack their bags for the 2002 talks in Thailand. There has been a lengthy interregnum between the last bout of hostilities between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. Whether by way of illusion or otherwise, this lull has created a psychology in which the negotiating parties are not thinking of translating relative military strength into bargaining strength at the negotiating table.

Instead, elegiac terms such as civilization has sometimes emerged as the catchphrase at these talks. S. P. Thamilselvan actually told a press inquisitor during the ceasefire lull that the LTTE is "civilized enough to know that there is no going back to war." The predominant mood at this stage when the talks are ready to get underway is one of businesslike pragmatism tempered by a

civilisational spirit of goodwill.

Now, how much of this is illusion and how much of it is real is what should be analysed not just by political analysts but also psychologists. On both sides, military men and risen-from-the-ranks frontliners have been eschewed for technocrats and politicians with professional or academic background to be negotiators. This exemplifies the emerging 'civilisational' trend in these talks which seem to — on first impressions — convey a certain growing sense of maturity among the two chief players — the LTTE and the GOSL (... which of course is preferred post-hostilities acronym for the Lankan government.)

Certain observers in the South see a certain unctuousness in this approach. Whether they are right or wrong only time will tell — but there is a Southern lobby that feels, to put it in plain terms, this gentlemanliness is killing all of us. In other words, they feel that the ground realities are being glossed over, in order to introduce an artificially induced sense of bonhomie and goodwill that surround the talks. Both sides seem to be eager this time to negotiate from a position of softness.

This is a hardsell — especially to cynics who have seen previous negotiations breakdown, and who have seen rapprochement wither into acrimony within weeks. If these talks are a civilisational ad-

Certainly the government of Sri Lanka does not want the talks to lead the way to creation of a separate state. But what is more interesting at the moment is whether the hubris - - and the particular psychological atmosphere, if you will — that surround these talks will be of a kind that will see the entire North East conflict to some kind of resolution, or not.

venture that both sides have embarked on in earnest, they feel that all the ceasefire violations that took place before the talks got underway do not reflect such an ennobling tendency at all.

But, all efforts however genuine they may be, may also contain a certain degree of hubris inherent in them. Certainly, we have all seen a certain hubris in this round of LTTE — GOSL rap-

prochement.

But there was hubris in the Israel — Palestinian détente sponsored by Norway, even though peacemaking in this arena has gone horribly awry now. There was also hubris in Zananoo Guzman's push towards cutting loose from Indonesian control in a successful bid to create a brand new state called East Timor.

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Lanka does not want the talks to lead the way to creation of a separate state. But what is more interesting at the moment is whether the hubris — and the particular psychological atmosphere, if you will — that surround these talks will be of a kind that will see the entire North East conflict to some kind of resolution, or not.

The predominant pre-talk psychology that now prevails is that negotiations should move slowly — that they should move incrementally. There is a feeling that both sides have all the time in the world. It is undoubtedly part of the hubris — but as the different dynamics of different conflicts have shown in the past, hubris can be both of a good and of a bad variety. Some hubris raises expectations. Some may say all hubris raises expectations. But, there seems to be another kind of hubris that acquires a life of its own that's almost separate from the conflict at issue!

Some who have been sanguine about this round of talks in Thailand may see this kind of hubris that is emerging in these negotiations. But others feel that the 'vibes' in these talks are far too good to be true. This is why somebody should go to Thailand perhaps and watch the surrounding drama closely — because that seems to be more important than the "issues" that both sides seem to be keen on soft-peddling at the moment.

Danger of Branding All Wars as Terrorism

By Gregory Clark

Soon after last year Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, I got into a debate with a hawkish member of the private consultative committee set up by then-Japanese Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka. He was demanding angrily that Japan should help eliminate something called global 'error' I tried to get him to define the word.

Were the Irish Republican Army attacks in Northern Ireland an example, I asked? Yes, he said firmly, with no hint that he realised how even British conservatives had come to rethink rights and wrongs in that dispute.

Sri Lanka, where the minority in revolt have had even more reason to complain of discrimination? That, too, was terror, he said unblinkingly.

Chechnya? Yes. Kashmir? Of course. The French revolution,

the US War of Independence? Silence. The Meiji Restoration? Deep silence.

In the 1980s, the South African apartheid government used to complain to the United Nations about cross-border 'errorism' by anti-apartheid guerrillas. At the time, no one took the complaint too seriously. Today, the world sees those former guerrillas as heroes.

'Errorism' has become an omnibus word that allows governments to try to suppress enemies at will. It has replaced 'ommunist' and is much more useful.

With 'ommunist' there had to be at least some proof of left-wing leanings before setting out to exterminate people. With 'errorism' not even this restraint is needed.

Unless, of course, the people fighting back are opposed to someone we dislike. Then, they are called freedom fighters, with every right to use whatever means possible to survive. The governments that chide

Pakistan for supporting anti-Indian guerrillas in Kashmir were full of praise when it supported Afghan guerrillas opposed to the former pro-Moscow regime in Kabul.

Anti-Government Battles

Most of what is now called terrorism is, in fact, civil war. Such wars are inevitable when disputes within the nation cannot be solved through negotiation, elections or some other peaceful means.

In most civil wars, usually one side will lack a formal government and army. So, it has no choice but to use unconventional means to pursue its struggle — guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, surprise attacks, sabotage, or support from across borders.

The fact that it uses such means is hardly proof of illegitimate 'errorism'. On the contrary, the willingness of people in the anti-government forces to suffer extreme hardship to fight for their cause could well be proof of sincerity and

even legitimacy.

The same logic can operate at the international level. People at odds with a stronger foreign enemy will feel they have no choice but to use unconventional means. But none of this necessarily adds up to global terrorism, even if the people targeted think otherwise.

This is especially true in the Middle East, where dissidents come together more on the basis of shared religion rather than the tribalistic nation-state. Use of unconventional means to wage disputes is inevitable.

Label Needs to Be Proven

Someone should tell US President George W. Bush that he got it right when, in the wake of Sept. 11, he said, 'his is war' Islamic militants had declared war on the US in response to what they saw as a de facto US war against the Islamic world. The US now has to decide how to wage that war. It can risk the enormous trauma and expense of trying to crush its guerrilla-

minded Islamic enemy. Or it can try to answer some Islamic grievances. But either way spare us the 'errorist' label.

True, efforts by some of the more fanatic Islamic militants to use violence for extremist goals can sometimes be labelled as terrorism. It is just possible that the Sept. 11 attacks fall into that category; we should, in any case, feel sorrow for the victims, just as we should feel sorrow for the victims of past US interventions in the Islamic world.

But accusations of terrorism need to be proved, with very close attention to the motives of those who commit the violence. US hawks, whose past support for anti-Soviet Islamic militants in Afghanistan did so much to lay the groundwork for the Sept 11 attacks, are hardly qualified to judge.

Courtesy: The Straits Times - September 3, 2002

A lack of space constricts Trincomalee campus

Text and Pic. by Our Trincomalee Correspondent

When it was built it was a house and used as government quarters. But what was once its storeroom in the outhouse close to the kitchen is now the Faculty of Communication and Business Studies. The dean of the faculty sits and types on his laptop in its dusty interior – 6 feet by 4 feet.

In another small room the campus' library is located. Members of staff from the rector and registrar to the more humble occupants of the halls of academia can all be seen huddled in the cramped cubicles in the building, working in almost subhuman conditions. This is the Trincomalee campus of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka.

Dr. T. Jeyasingham, the first rector of the campus, sits in his office and says dejectedly, "The entire campus is one building of about 4000 square feet. How can I manage a campus in this small house? How can I conduct classes for students in this building?"

The history of the Trincomalee campus goes back to the early years of the last decade. This institution was originally established as the Trincomalee Affiliated University College (AUC) in April 1993 under Ordinance No.01 of 1993, of the Universities Act of 1978. The late Dr. Keerthi Shironmani Rajaretnam was its first director. Courses conducted were diploma in accountancy and finance and diploma in English.

In April 1996, under the restructuring programme of AUCs in the country, the University Grant Commission (UGC) vested the Trincomalee AUC with the Eastern University of Sri Lanka. However its equivalents such as Sabragamuwa, Rajarata, Wayamba were upgraded to autonomous universities.

The Trincomalee campus did not launch any new degree-awarding programmes after it was vested with the Eastern University of Sri Lanka. Degree programmes were initiated only for those who had completed their diploma. However many external programmes were launched.

After several representations, the UGC finally decided to upgrade Trincomalee AUC to the status of a campus. The Trincomalee campus of the Eastern University was established on 15th June 2001 by gazette notification.

The senate of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka approved several degrees courses to be conducted at the Trincomalee campus in the faculties of Communication and Business Studies as

well as Applied Sciences. The campus administration developed curricula taking into consideration recent thinking and the latest developments in university teaching.

English was made the medium of instruction, students were given the option to choose their courses even from different faculties, a core curriculum to develop the all-round skills of students was prepared and a library with electronic access facility was made available.

In its vision the campus administration stated, "Our graduate would be one who excels not only in his or her area of specialty but also would be well-equipped to meet the challenges of society and to further develop him/herself while contributing to the development of the district, province and the nation at large. Thus this campus endeavours to preserve its identity and uniqueness in the system, without compromising its academic excellence."

However, since 1996 no capital funds were allocated either for the development of Trincomalee AUC or to the campus thereafter. Two faculties – faculties of Communication and Business Studies and Applied Science – have been assigned to the campus at present.

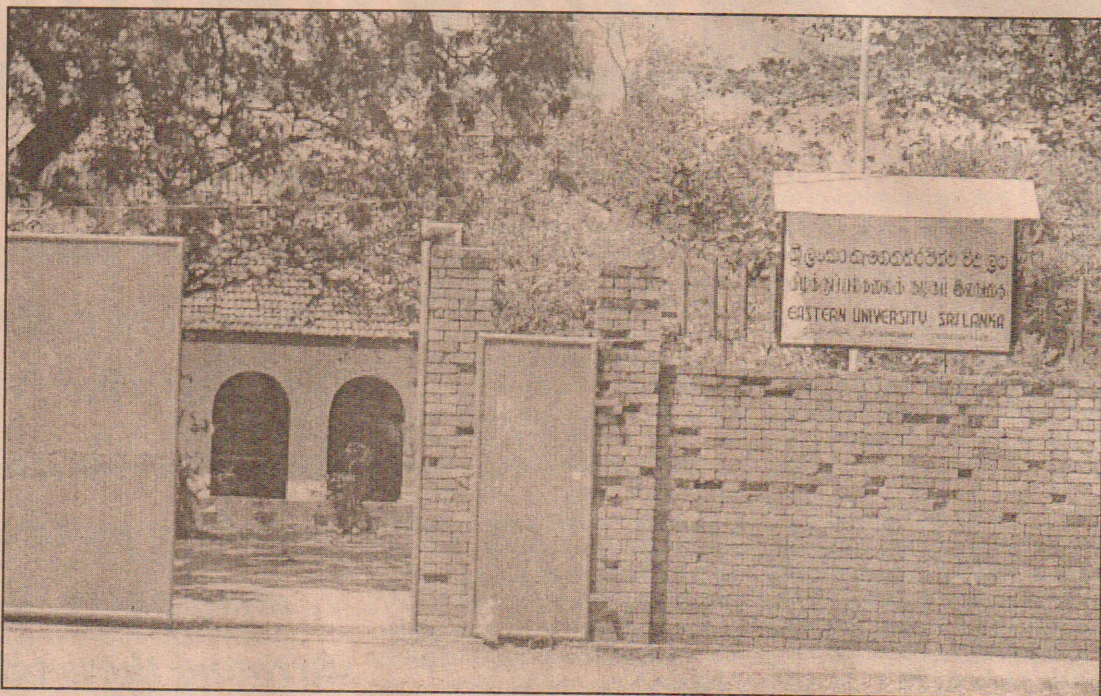
"Though the campus had two faculties, no staff has been assigned to the Faculty of Applied Sciences to date, which has denied the campus the opportunity of calling for students this year," Jeyasingham has stated in his annual report. The other faculty, Communication and Business Studies, absorbed staff of the former AUC.

Seventy-two students have been enrolled at the campus for the year 2002/2003. Lectures are scheduled to commence around November this year. Most of the students have already registered with the campus. Forty-two are Sinhalese students from all parts of the country as the Faculty of Communication is only available at Trincomalee Campus in the country. Thirty students are Tamils and Muslims.

The members of staff at the campus face several problems. The available space in the present building is not adequate to house the entire staff. A suggestion has been made to rent out the rest house building located near the campus office on a temporary basis for one year to begin classes for the Faculty of Communication and Business studies.

The campus administration faces the pressing problem about providing hostel facilities to students enrolled in the Faculty of Communication and Business Studies.

"We have two options. The first option is to repair the old colonial style building known as the Commissioners Building, close to the present campus office, which is in a dilapidated state at a cost of Rs.25 million. This could help us to tide over the accommodation problem until a new campus complex is con-



House converted into university buildings: Entrance of the Trincomalee campus. Eastern University

In April 1996, under the restructuring programme of AUCs in the country, the University Grant Commission (UGC) vested the Trincomalee AUC with the Eastern University of Sri Lanka. However its equivalents such as Sabragamuwa, Rajarata, Wayamba were upgraded to autonomous universities

structed at Konesapuri. About 30 million rupees is needed to implement this second option," said Jeyasingham.

Konesapuri is close to Nilaveli, 10 km north of Trincomalee town.

"The second option is to start construction work on the proposed campus complex at Konesapuri where already fifty acres of land had been leased to the Eastern University. Another 200 acres have been surveyed for leasing," said Jeyasingham.

The Konesapuri land represents the beauty of the coastline and the serenity of the rural and rustic life of Trincomalee. A full-fledged campus with residential facilities will be developed at this site, said a hand-out distributed at the inaugural event of the Trincomalee campus held on 19th November 2001.

The rector is of opinion a dormitory type accommodation, an administrative complex, a canteen, library staff quarters and security huts are to be constructed immediately. He has obtained necessary plans from the buildings department for

cost-effective and expeditious construction within three months.

Jeyasingham has recommended the second option as it provides the best for the students and the community though needs comparatively large initial investments. "Further, this could facilitate the intake of students to the faculty of Applied Sciences much earlier, which is an urgent need. Money is needed immediately for the second choice. The buildings to be constructed now will be incorporated into the future design of the campus complex," the rector said in his report.

He has approached several sources to obtain the necessary finances to start work on the construction of a new building at the permanent site. But the response has been negative to date.

Whether the faculty of Communication and Business Studies could commence its classes to the newly enrolled students this year, is the question facing the rector and the Trincomalee faculty. Every thing depends on the availability of accommodation to students and nec-

essary staff, reiterates Jeyasingham.

First an Affiliated University College, now a campus, will it become a full-fledged university in time to come? "First we must make a concerted effort to organize the campus to work with full vigour," says the rector.

Fifty-two years back in 1950s, Tamil educationists headed by late Professor Mylvaganam inaugurated the Tamil university movement. The main objective of the movement was to construct a Tamil university in Trincomalee town. The foundation stone was laid for the ambitious project on a land bought by the movement, right in front of the Trincomalee harbour. Several Tamil residents in Trincomalee donated their lands to the movement, especially people of Trincomalee, who believed a Tamil university would become a reality very soon.

However the two main Tamil political parties at that time clashed over the question on whether Tamils needed a university in Trincomalee or in Jaffna. Finally, the initiatives taken by then Tamil university movement ended in only laying the foundation stone.

The establishment of a campus in Trincomalee however has re-kindled the dream among the people of the district that one day a fully-fledged university would become a reality.

At the inaugural of the Trincomalee campus, Jeyasingham said, "The dream of those who made tremendous sacrifices by donating their lands and money to have a university in Trincomalee has now been fulfilled by a campus. It is in the hands of the people of the district to make this campus a fully-fledged university a reality."

Repudiating the sense of belonging

Professor Karthigesu Sivathamby

Though one does not want to dwell on politics all the time, one cannot refute the fact that today, at least in the so-called third world countries, culture is politics. The Sri Lankan Tamil issue is not in any way different.

Both the president and the prime minister have gone on record stating that it were the accumulation of un-redressed grievances over the years that led to Tamils taking a militaristic position on the ethnic issue.

I recall LTTE's Anton Balasingham once stating that the organisation's demand for a separate country had arisen because the LTTE felt there was no chance for equal treatment for Tamils on the island. When questioned as to whether he would give up that position, he replied that if conditions changed the LTTE would be in a position to reconsider its demand. In a way, the LTTE's decision to agree for talks is also to explore whether such equality of citizenship is possible for Sri Lankan Tamils in this country.

It is important when one treats a disease that he or she should not go to the mere symptoms of the disease, but also to its causes. *Sri Lankan Tamil identity is something Sri Lankan Tamils value very highly. It is a combination of both Sri Lankan and Tamil, which distinguishes him from a Tamilnadu Tamil.*

If one takes the history of the development of Tamil consciousness, one would see that their early efforts to assert and emphasise their identity was not in relation to other Sri Lankans as much as it was to the Tamils of Tamilnadu.

The Sri Lankan Tamil dialect is distinctly different from the Indian Tamil dialect. Despite regional variations, one can identify a Sri Lankan Tamil dialect easily.

When it comes to religion – Hinduism – the religion of most Tamils, there has been a conscious effort ever since the time of Arumuga Navalar (1822 – 1879) to uphold Saivite traditions that highlight non-Brahminic Saiva Sitthanda approaches, in preference to the Brahminic Vedanta traditions. Even today, the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus want to call their religion Saivism, and not Hinduism.

More importantly, in the field of literature, there have always been efforts to emphasise the Sri Lankaness of the Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil literature – espe-

cially in terms of language and style. From the time Sri Lankan Tamils started developing a literary tradition of their own, they have been very careful to emphasise their contribution towards the development of Tamil as a whole. Even today, the Navalar – Ramadiya Swamigal debate looms large in the memories of some Sri Lankan Tamil scholars.

It is also important to note that in spite of the commonness Tamil performance tradition, the Sri Lankan 'kootthu' (traditional dramatic performances) are easily discernible from the 'thrukootthu' of Tamilnadu as it is performed today. The Vithiyandan and post-Vithiyandan theatre development have been to preserve the local 'kootthu' tradition and work on it for further enrichment.

The Sri Lankaness of Sri Lankan Tamil tradition is also seen in such basic day-to-day matters such as kinship relations and food habits.

The Sri Lankan Tamil, in spite of regional variations is very keen to maintain and foster this identity. Despite the fact he is a Tamil and in spite of the fact some of the holy places he wishes to visit during his lifetime are in Tamilnadu, he wishes to remain a Sri Lankan Tamil. It is this ethnic identity that has never been taken into account by the articulate Sinhala politicians. This has been so especially since independence, when discrimination on the basis of ethnic identity began to grow.

Only when this sense of belonging to Sri Lanka was shattered by consecutive actions was there a political fallback on the northeastern region, and the Tamil homeland demand. This could also be seen in the parity of status of languages being transformed into a demand for regional autonomy (federalism) and ultimately Thamileelam.

This sense of belonging has been shattered in many matters of vital concern to the Tamils. We could highlight a few of them here – religion, culture, literature and the arts.

One should not under-estimate the importance of religion in any traditional society, especially so in a developing society where religion and language have become identifying symbols. Since the early 1980s, the number of temples and cult centres that have been destroyed or made inaccessible are numerous. Even after eight months of the Ceasefire Agreement the average Jaffna person cannot go to the Keerimalai temple or the tank unescorted by army personnel.

It is important to highlight that when people started moving out from their villages in the north and east, they also took with them sur-

rogate temples / cult centres from their areas of origin to the places which they had started occupying, so much so that that in the mid-1990s, many temples were celebrating festivals of temples abandoned in the north and east. I am personally aware of how a family from my village, which immigrated to France holds a 10-day festival in one of the temples in Paris, taking over the temple almost on contract for 10 days. Such is the importance of religion and belief.

In this matter there is no question of big temples and small temples. The question is whether your place of worship has been disturbed or not. There is a famous Tamil saying, "Do not live in the place where there are no temples."

It has been the unfortunate record of successive governments, to repudiate the sense of belonging the Tamil people had to Sri Lanka by bombing and damaging their temples and cult centres, as well as making them camps for the security forces. Some of the most important cult centres of Batticaloa were denied to worshippers because of such 'occupation.'

In fact the rise of so many temples and cult centres in the comparatively safe and peaceful Colombo municipal limits is an indication that many of the northeast refugees have created new centres of worship. These centres are also of some relevance to the faith of Sinhala-Buddhists and as such they are doing extremely well. So much so that traditional Hindu temples in Colombo, which are managed by South Indian merchants and some of the leading Colombo Tamil families, are not so much in the picture as these new cult centres are.

In the field of literature and the arts there has hardly been any attempt on the part of the state to encourage the development of a typically Sri Lankan literature either in Sinhala or Tamil, by encouraging such projects as translations. The work of the Indian Sahithiya Academy that publishes annually translations of that year's creative writing from the major Indian languages is unimaginable here. It has therefore become fashionable for Tamil literati to seek recognition and acceptance in Tamilnadu, even though Sri Lankaness of local literature is very distinct.

It is true the cultural ministry has panels for Tamil literature, music etc., but a perusal of the comparative budgets of the Sinhala panels and Tamil panels will be a very interesting exercise.

More eye-catching or 'ear-catching' is the role of the state media in Tamil. I would like to highlight what is happening in the Tamil media ser-

vice of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), especially the cuts that have come into operation recently.

SLBC's National Service distinguishes itself from the Commercial Service on the basis of the programmes. The former is meant for the promotion and better practice of national cultural traditions. And programmes that cannot be broadcast over the Commercial Service because of their 'elite' label are very carefully produced and presented over the National Service. This is so both in the Sinhala and Tamil.

Tamil broadcasts from the 1980s have been very dismal and tragic. In the government's attempts at broadcasting its viewpoint, it is over-careful of what is broadcast not only by way of news, but also in the songs and spoken-word programmes. Thus, both the national and commercial programmes are handled as one. The Tamil service is worst affected because it ceased to reflect the local cultures of the northeast except in the ritualistic broadcasts like the relay of temple car festivals.

It should be remembered the SLBC's Tamil National Service, especially in the pre-1980s period, had a distinguished record for broadcasting in Tamil all over the world. Even the BBC had officials from Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan Tamil broadcasts, especially on drama, were highly appreciated in Tamilnadu. Besides, the Tamil National Service built up a wonderful library of records of eminent Tamil scholars and artists both from Sri Lanka and Tamilnadu.

Recently, SLBC authorities cut three hours of broadcast time from the Tamil National Service. Whereas earlier the broadcast began at 5.00 a.m., it now begins at 7.30 a.m. It should also be remembered that most of this is recorded music and news broadcasts. The midday broadcast from 12.00 noon to 2.00 p.m. has been completely taken away. This slot was an oasis for the discerning listener to hear both classical music – both vocal and instrumental – and certain intellectually appealing programmes, which the FM broadcasts were naturally unable to offer.

The unkindest cut is in the evening broadcast where the programme from 5.00 p.m. to 11.15 p.m. was cut to 5.00 – 10.30 p.m. In the case of evening broadcasts, 8.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. goes for the Muslim programme, 9.00 – 9.30 p.m. for news and announcements and 9.45 – 10.15 p.m. for the BBC relay. Earlier, the 10.15 – 11.15 p.m. slot was used to broadcast tasteful music, but no more. In fact, given the

current time schedules it is not possible to broadcast any serious, heavy or intellectually stimulating programmes.

The Tamil National Service has ceased to broadcast serious musical programmes. The tragedy is that right now in Nageswaram musical tradition it is Sri Lankan artistes who are doing extremely well, even in comparison with Nageswaram artistes from Tamilnadu. Under the present dispensation at the SLBC, it is not possible to broadcast really satisfying Nageswaram music programmes.

The damage done to literary programmes is far worse. No more the discussions that were very lively – now we only have the weekly review programme with its format changed very much. The education service however lives on, broadcasting pedagogic programmes in the afternoon.

What is ironic is all this is happening as government ministers storm Jaffna, while army generals and the LTTE are meeting in Batticaloa.

Given the overall ethos of the times, one would have thought this would have been the most conducive time to open up the Tamil National Service more extensively to artistes from the northeast, than restricting it to those living in Colombo and imitating Batticaloa and Jaffna.

This is cultural alienation. This is repudiating the sense of belonging to this country and its results are more damaging than could be imagined. To the discerning listener, the only alternative is to turn to Trichy or Chennai, if he or she wants to listen to satisfying Tamil music. Does not cultural separatism begin at this point?

The biggest tragedy of all is the loss of archival Tamil cultural material that is stored in the SLBC's records library. As already indicated, some of the best programmes belong to the pre-1980 era, which is technologically also a 'pre-modern' era. It is rumoured that almost all the valuable recordings done on disks in the '50s, '60s and '70s cannot be used now. Worse still, some of them are being purposely damaged. If this is true, it is cultural vandalism. It is the duty not merely of the SLBC, but the media ministry and the prime minister himself to order an impartial inquiry.

Let us make the Sri Lankan Tamil feel he is both a Sri Lankan and a Tamil.

NORTHEASTERN HERALD

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Playing politics with the conscience vote

The 19th Amendment to the Constitution ran into rough weather last week as the UNF government's efforts to clip President Chandrika Kumaratunga's wings and permit MPs to vote according to their conscience was opposed by the PA and Kumaratunga herself.

The 19th Amendment was welcome for two reasons. It was expected there would short-term dividends to be reaped by its enactment as well as long-term benefits, which together would ensure democracy and good governance.

The short-term benefit was of course constraining Kumaratunga from dissolving parliament and thereby throwing out of office an elected government. This could also put the peace process in jeopardy, because it is well known Kumaratunga has reservations on matters of vital importance to the LTTE such as its de-proscription as well as the interim administration, and dissolving parliament before asking for a fresh mandate from the people could be a way out.

The conscience vote on the other hand would facilitate MPs from Kumaratunga's own party to vote for the amendment that would clip the wings of their leader. The new law would ensure they were not penalised by their party by being deprived of their seat in parliament, which is permitted as the law stands at present.

The long-term value of the 19th Amendment was that a more virile parliament untrammelled by presidential whims and more independent MPs not mindful of the tyranny of their party leadership would contribute to making Sri Lanka a more robust democracy.

There is however apprehension the clauses in the amendment, which permit a conscience vote, might only be a diluted version of the original. For one, despite all the bravado displayed by the UNF on preserving liberal-democratic values such as MPs voting according to their conscience, it too fears the amendment could, in future, lead to confusion and anarchy in its own ranks. The PA, with differences of opinion surfacing in different corners of the party, would be only relieved by a watered-down amendment.

It is in the interest of both major parties to dilute the conscience vote clauses in the amendment. There is every possibility that the conscience vote will be limited to permit MPs voting only on preventing the president from dissolving parliament, but inapplicable in the future as a guarantor of the freedom of conscience of an MP. In other words, it will only facilitate the resolution of the immediate problem.

If this is to go through however, it will create enormous problems in the peace process. TNA members of parliament are on record stating the 19th Amendment would be of benefit when there need to be constitutional changes requiring a two-thirds majority to effect decisions that might arise from the peace process.

This is an obvious reference to Kumaratunga's reluctance to negotiate with the Tigers unless certain conditions are met, none of which the LTTE has displayed any enthusiasm of meeting.

Under these circumstances, we are compelled to believe the conscience vote will only facilitate the immediate interests of the UNF government. If it indeed gives sufficient leeway to MPs to vote to clip the president's wings and thereby ensure the longevity of the UNF government, but not facilitate obtaining two-thirds majorities for other vital constitutional amendments in the future, what does it reflect?

It only displays rank partisanship where constitutional amendments help the southern political parties to survive in government and play politics, while denying the use of the same instruments for the benefit of the people of Sri Lanka by facilitating the peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict.

Nuts of bolts of the interim govt.

By D. Sivaram (Taraki)

The brouhaha over the interim administration is like the emperor's new clothes. No one as yet has any clear idea as to what it would be in concrete legal terms. What is going to be the constitutional basis of the council? No one is sure. Will the council administer both central government and provincial departments and agencies? No one is certain. Can the interim administration council (IAC) raise or allocate funds for reconstruction and development? Not clear.

Generally any fundamental question about the nuts and bolts of the proposed interim administration draws a blank or raises confusion.

In the past, Minister G. L. Pireis himself went on record that there is no room in the constitution for establishing an interim administration. He was then with the PA.

The JVP and the PA say that the interim administration is the first step to Eelam.

Given the numerous legal snags which lie on the path to any meaningful interim arrangement their claim is preposterous.

Currently there are three different systems of administration in the districts of the northeastern province.

One is the central government's civil administration, comprising the District Secretariat and the Divisional Secretariats.

The other consists of departments and local government bodies that come under the provincial council. The third of course is the one that runs parallel to these two in areas controlled by the Liberation Tigers. It is the LTTE's civil and judicial administrative system.

What amount of the central administration does the LTTE want included in the IAC? What quantum of its power in the districts is the central government prepared to part with?

If the IAC is to fulfil Tamil expectations regarding reconstruction, rehabilitation and development of the northeast it would have to take over a substantial portion of the central government's administration in the districts.

This is so because over the years the central government has successfully undermined through many subtle and overt administrative tactics the powers devolved to the provincial councils under the 13th Amendment. The system of divisional secretaries was specifically designed to take the central government's power and reach right into the heart of the provincial councils' grass roots level authority.

The IAC would be no more than a cosmetic advisory body to the government agents and the Governor of the northeast province if it does not have executive, legislative and financial powers.

The NEPC has been shorn of much power since Varathrajaperumal threatened to declare Eelam and ran away to India 12 years ago. The central government's grip on the districts is exceedingly strong. In this context an IAC without even minimal executive, legislative and financial

power would be a pathetic joke.

Under the present constitution, it is possible to explore the possibility of setting up an administration either under Article 76 (3) or under the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment.

Article 76 (1) of the constitution expressly forbids the Parliament from delegating its legislative power to any other institution. It is the article that gives teeth to the unitary state. (The Parliament shall not abdicate or in any manner alienate its legislative power, and shall not set up any authority with any legislative power.)

However paragraph (3) of the Article states: "It shall not be in contravention of the provisions of paragraph (1) of this Article (76) for Parliament to make any law containing any provision empowering any person or body to make subordinate legislation for prescribed purposes".

In terms of this, the Parliament can, with a simple majority, create an IAC for the northeastern province, empowering it with the authority to make 'subordinate legislation', the purpose of which can be prescribed as the administration of the NEP.

What about executive powers to the IAC?

Under the 13th Amendment the President's executive power is delegated and exercised through the Governor of the province and not by the provincial council.

But the agreement between the Indian government and the LTTE on 28th September 1987 shows clearly that executive power might be delegated by the president to the IAC.

As we are all aware the IAC was an idea proposed by the Indian government in consultation with President J. R. Jeyawardene and his advisors.

It was one of the main issues that led to the break down in relations between the LTTE and the Indians in October 1987.

The LTTE wanted to appoint as the chairman of the IAC N. Pathmanathan, who was a former Assistant Government Agent jailed for allegedly assisting the Batticaloa jail break in 1984. J. R. refused to appoint him on the grounds that he had been accused in the case. (Pathmanathan has risen very high in the ranks of the country civil service today)

The Indian High Commissioner at the time, J. N. Dixit held discussions with Prabhakaran at the IPKF headquarters in Palaly on 23, 26 and 28 of September 1987 and reached an agreement on the formation of an IAC for the northeastern province. This IAC was to have 11 members headed by the LTTE nominee - the 'Administrator in Council'.

The agreement was signed by Hardip Puri on behalf of the Indians and by Mahathaya for the LTTE.

The TULF, Muslims and Sinhalese had membership in the council. The LTTE was to have six members.

The IAC was to function until conditions could be created for elections to the provincial council.

The 'Administrator in Council' was also responsible for law and order in the province.

It was agreed that the Sri Lankan government would formally an-

nounce the establishment of the IAC within 48 hours of the signing of the agreement.

But then the deadlock developed over the 'Administer in Council' and things fell apart.

The interesting aspect of the 1987 agreement on the IAC is the delegation of executive powers of the President to the administrator in council.

It was envisaged that the IAC would be able to run the administration of the northeastern province effectively because President J. R. Jeyawardene had agreed to delegate his executive powers to the IAC during the interim period under paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2 of the Bangalore Proposals.

The agreement between Dixit and Prabhakaran states that the IAC, as a consequence, would be able to fulfil the demands put forward by the LTTE at the time such as the resettlement of refugees who were evicted from Manal Aaru in 1984.

But today, we have President Chandrika Kumaratunga who is bent on convincing the Sinhala masses that the IAC is the first step to Eelam. Can anyone in his or her senses expect the President to delegate her executive powers to the LTTE's interim administration?

Thirdly to the fundamental question of funds to the IAC.

There is general agreement that the setting of the finance commission stipulated under the 13th Amendment would provide the basis for channelling funds to the IAC.

The UNP and PA governments did not set up the finance commission despite numerous demands from the provinces to do so.

Article 154 R of the constitution (13th Amendment) states that the Finance Commission will comprise the governor of the Central Bank, the secretary to the Treasury and three members to represent the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities. The government has to allocate funds from the annual budget adequate to meet the needs of all the provinces.

The commission can allocate funds to the provinces on the basis of a province's population, its per capita income, the need to progressively reduce social and economic disparities. In doing so it has to take into account "the need, progressively, to reduce the difference between the per capita income of each province and the highest per capita income among the provinces."

It would be a tall order indeed for the Finance Commission even as it contemplates allocations for the Northeastern IAC.

The central problem here is that the president has a pivotal role to play in the finance commission and in delegating executive powers to the IAC. But we cannot, by any yardstick, expect her to be seen helping the LTTE set up what she insists is the precursor to Eelam.

Therefore it would be a miraculous feat indeed if the UNF manages to establish by law an IAC that can meet even the basic demands of the Tamils for rebuilding the northeast.

Muslim leadership collaborating to aid divide and rule in Northeast

By V. I. S. Jeyapalan

The nature of the northeast's military geography was such that it kept the focus of the war and strategic thinking on the north. But the political geography of the region is different because of the multiethnic politics of the east, which therefore becomes the main focal area in the peace negotiations. This is why political analysts, citing previous experience, say that if peace fails it will fail in the east. It is a politically fragile area.

Understanding the east in its wholeness is the basic criterion for successfully negotiating peace.

Irrespective of their ethnic background, Tamil, Muslim, and Sinhala political leadership have of the history and political nature of the east continues to be narrow and parochial.

From the beginning colonising the east with Sinhalese has been central to the political agenda of modern Sinhala nationalism engendered by D. S. Senanayake and SWRD Bandaranaike.

(If Sinhala nationalism had any other agenda at the time of independence from British rule it was the disfranchisement and deportation of the Plantation Tamils.)

Sinhala nationalism had no conflict with the north.

Almost all the northern leaders from Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan to G. G. Ponnambalam were northcentric. Their political world was Colombo and Jaffna. They collaborated with the Sinhala establishments of their time.

Even with his fifty-fifty demand, G. G. Ponnambalam never took a stand against Sinhala colonisation in the east or the disenfranchisement of the Plantation Tamils.

On the other hand, the political leaders of the east at the time who came largely from the Muslim and Tamil landed gentry of the region were parochial and supportive of the UNP. This leadership was not sensitive to the dangers posed by the Sinhala nationalist agenda in the east.

But things began to change in 1956.

For the Tamils of the north 1956 was only about the Sinhala only act. In their political consciousness state sponsored violence that accompanied the Sinhala only bill was limited to the Galle Face green where Federal Party satyagrahis were assaulted by Sinhala goons.

But in the case the eastern Tamils, state sponsored Sinhala nationalist violence and thuggery became a direct threat to their very existence in 1956.

Goondas and land development and irrigation workers mobilised by the SWRD

Bandaranauke government and led by the Land and Irrigation Minister C. P. de Silva unleashed a violent campaign in the east to chase Tamils and Muslims from their traditional lands and settle Sinhalese there.

The government wanted to use the euphoria of the Sinhala Only bill to extend the state-sponsored Sinhala colonisation by forcefully evicting Tamils and Muslims from their ancestral lands.

Military-backed ethnic cleansing of Tamils and Muslims took place in most parts of the western periphery of the Eastern Province. Pankulam in the Trincomalee district is an example.

In recent history, Ravi Jayewardene with the backing of the STF in Manalaaru (Weli Oya) established West Bank like strategic settlements to divide the north from the east.

This type of state sponsored Sinhala nationalist violence to grab land was very rarely witnessed in the north.

In 1958, Sinhala nationalists attempted to repeat this in the southern part of the Vanni though on a smaller scale. Expecting the attempt to spread, C. Suntharalingam warned, "the jungle would fire". (Kaadu Sudum). He armed Tamil peasants in the southern parts of the Vanni against the inroad.

The difference here was that the state did not want to involve itself fully in the Sinhala nationalist project and back land grabbing because they did not want to create friction with the northern Tamil

In 1958, Sinhala nationalists attempted to repeat this in the southern part of the Vanni though on a smaller scale.

Expecting the attempt to spread, C. Suntharalingam warned, "the jungle would fire". (Kaadu Sudum). He armed Tamil peasants in the southern parts of the Vanni against the inroad.

wanted to capture and annex the east and go for talks with the north. Even at the political negotiation table this is going to be the Sinhala establishment's strategy.

In 1956, the armed Sinhala nationalists were not content with grabbing land from the Tamils and Muslims in the hinterlands of the east coast. After driving out thousands of farmers from the fertile hinterland west of the Batticaloa-Ampara region, hundreds of armed Sinhala goons backed by the government advanced towards the main towns and villages along the coast where refugees had begun to pour.

But they were stopped by the peasants of Thuraineelavanai who spontaneously took up arms against

people here around the federal agenda to fight against state aided Sinhala colonization.

Unfortunately the traditional Muslim leadership in the east continued to collaborate with the Sinhala establishment instead of rallying its people to defend their ancestral lands in the hinterlands that stood dangerously exposed to unrelenting efforts by the Sinhala nationalist to colonize and grab natural resources.

The traditional Muslim leadership in the east was well manipulated by the Sinhala establishment to systematically take over or encroach on irrigation resources, grazing lands, inland waters, rain catchment areas of tanks and fertile lands in the hinterlands of the east.

This naturally began to increasingly limit the traditional economic resources that were available in common to the Tamils and Muslims in the east.

Competition and friction between the two communities was therefore inevitable as both were in the vast majority farmers, fishermen and cattle keepers. The crunch on resources increases imperceptibly everyday, despite the power of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress in the government. It continues to further entrench the Tamil-Muslim divide.

To counter Tamil resistance, the Sinhala establishment created Amparai District in 1961. They also annexed the hinterlands of the Tamils with the Amparai district. The Sinhala nationalist agenda was to use the collaboration of the Muslim leaders to not only grab Muslim and Tamil lands, but to legitimise it.

The great losers are Muslims. In the Ampara District they created new Sinhala AGA divisions in order to legally annex state and traditional Tamil and Muslim lands and to establish Sinhala settlements there.

This further intensified the conflicts between Tamils and Muslims for the leftovers.

With the expansion of the Muslim educated middle-class in the late 1960s and 70s there were agitations by Muslim youth against the grabbing of their ancestral lands such as Digavapi by Sinhala governments in

collaboration with their leaders.

This culminated with an ideology opposing collaborationist attitudes of their leaders who traditionally went behind those in Colombo and their commercial interests. The late MHM Ashraff gave leadership and a political structure to those sentiments. He envisaged an eastern-centred northeastern Muslim political party.

But today Muslim politics is back on square one. There is a clear danger that the present Muslim leadership has begun to collaborate with the Sinhala nationalist agenda to the detriment of the interests of the Muslims in the northeast.

The first phase of the Sinhala nationalist political agenda was to collaborate with Muslim leaders and grab Tamil and Muslim lands.

In the second phase which was military, the Sinhala establishment gave arms to Muslim extremists in the Ampara district and instigated Tamil Muslim riots with a view to creating a situation conducive to containing the Tamil militant movement.

Third phase (political) – is to make the Tamils and Muslims fight at the negotiations table in order to revive the early strategy of dividing eastern society ethnically and annexing it to the east and then negotiating a compromise with the north.

The greater danger is for the Muslims than the Tamils because Muslims are not organised, they are in the periphery, and they do not even understand that they have lost their fertile lands in places like Digavapi where more Muslims lands were annexed. Even Muslims political heroes like Ashraff gave the traditional lands of their people on a golden platter to the Sinhala nationalists, and they made the Muslims believe that all their problems related to land water, jungle basin lands and other natural resources were caused by the Tamils.

Eastern Tamils too are affected by similar parochial ideas.

Any success in negotiations, any successful development, any successful conclusion of the freedom struggle cannot be achieved without understanding all this correctly, without understanding the cause of the problem and the enemy correctly.

Muslims need no Tamil rajahs in the east and the Tamils of the Amparai district need no Muslim sultans to lord over them.

In any envisaged solution, Tamils should not control Muslim enclaves in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts and Muslims should not think of controlling Tamil enclaves in the Amparai District. Both are unacceptable. We have to include Sinhala settlers too as naturalised citizens of the northeast and mobilise all three ethnic groups to develop our lands.

Eastern Tamils too are affected by similar parochial ideas. Any success in negotiations, any successful development, any successful conclusion of the freedom struggle cannot be achieved without understanding all this correctly, without understanding the cause of the problem and the enemy correctly.

leadership.

The agenda of the Sinhala state right from the beginning has been to compromise with the north and annex the east. This attitude was not merely political but was integral to the Sri Lankan state's military strategy against the Tamils. Therefore this military strategy by necessity requires the continuation of Tamil Muslim clashes in the east.

The main contradiction between a school of thought believed to have been led by Gen. Kobbekaduwa and the UNP government in the early nineties was over the east. The UNP

the invaders. They drove back the Sinhala goon squads. The heroic acts of the Thuraineelavanai peasants in still remembered by the elderly of the east. The government sent the army to Thuraineelavanai to crush the peasant's resistance. It was ambushed and attacked. Most northern intellectuals are either ignorant of how the Tamil armed struggle against Sinhala domination began in the east in 1956 or they choose to ignore it.

This jolted the Federal Party out of its mere theoretical concern for the Tamils and Muslims in the eastern province. The party mobilized

Most federations that work are those that respect minorities, says former premier of Ontario

By J. S. Tissainayagam

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) in collaboration with The Forum of Federations co-hosted a seminar on 'Constitutional Reform and Conflict Resolution: Federal Options' at the Hotel Galadari on 2nd September 2002.

The participants included a number of foreign scholars who had researched and written extensively on federalism. Among them was Bob Rae who combined a distinguished academic record with practical experience in day-to-day governance.

Rae was premier of the Canadian province of Ontario from 1990 to 1995 and was elected eight times to federal and provincial parliaments before he retired from politics last year. He led the NDP in Ontario from 1982 to 1996 and served as leader of the official opposition before he became premier.

Rae has a BA and LLB from the University of Toronto, was Rhodes scholar for Ontario in 1969 and obtained a M. Phil degree from the University of Oxford in 1971.

He is also author of numerous articles and speeches on employment and labour law, public and constitutional law, changes in the modern state and the challenge of political leadership. Penguin published his book 'From protest to power' last year. He is also adjunct professor at the University of Toronto in the faculties of law, management, arts and sciences.

Rae was named a member of the Order of Canada in 1984.

Excerpts of Bob Rae's interview with the 'Northeastern Herald.'

Q: The moves for secession in Quebec, the French-majority province in Canada, have been contained for the moment, while East Timor became a full-fledged, independent nation-state lately. What are the reasons for one movement for secession to succeed, while the other is yet to do so?

A: There is a fundamental difference between the two situations. Canada became a federation in the 19th century (formalised by the Constitution Act of 1867). But even before 1867, these areas were self-governing. There are arguments and debates on the terms and conditions on the legal, political and constitutional elements of the federation, but the fact is they were areas that were traditionally self-governing, made it easier for them to federate.

Indonesia on the other hand was a colony and came out of colonialism only in much more recent times. What is more, it is not a federation, but a unitary state. Western federal systems like Canada and Switzerland have been successful in dealing with their minorities peacefully,

It has to be understood that Canada is a democratic federation.

Quebec is a particular and well-defined area in that federation.

There have been discussions about the powers that Quebec could enjoy under the Canadian constitution and about how power could be shared. But the dialogue has been democratic – it is the type of dialogue you and I are having. It is important to note this. In East Timor and Sri Lanka the situation is different. There has been a long drawn out, violent conflict demanding secession

whereas it has been different in the case of Indonesia.

You have to look at state formations in the historical context. The religious wars in Europe during 15th and 16th centuries played an important part in the evolution of Switzerland into a federation. Similarly, the contestation of Canada between the British and French empires in the 18th century impacted on the formation of the Canadian federation.

Therefore different countries have to come to terms with conflicts in different periods in their history that dictate the nature of the state. Quebec voted rejecting secession in the referendums in 1980 and 1995, because the people of Quebec wanted to remain as part of the Canadian federation.

Q: There are Quebecers however who believe very strongly the French language and French culture is not adequately protected by the Canadian constitution and feel that secession is the only option.

A: I challenge the basis of your question. The Canadian constitution protects the autonomy of the people of Quebec – it guarantees the autonomy of Quebec. There are guarantees that protect the French language and Quebec culture.

There is a minority of people

a flexible one. It is able to absorb demands made on it by adapting itself, by being flexible. Canadian federalism is good enough to accommodate differences and diversity without forcing on a section from the federation.

Q: Looking at the different paths struggles for secession and nationhood have taken in Canada and Indonesia, where the secessionist movement in Canada was contained, whereas the other ended with East Timor seceding from Indonesia and forming a state of its own, what do you think of the violent conflict in Sri Lanka?

A: It has to be understood that Canada is a democratic federation. Quebec is a particular and well-defined area in that federation. There have been discussions about the powers that Quebec could enjoy under the Canadian constitution and about how power could be shared. But the dialogue has been democratic – it is the type of dialogue you and I are having. It is important to note this.

In East Timor and Sri Lanka the situation is different. There has been a long drawn out, violent conflict demanding secession. The defining factor is that one is democratic, while the other is violent.

Q: Do you feel that since the

ing?

A: I do not wish to comment on the killing of minorities. It is not for me to comment on nationalistic movements in other countries – I do not have the expertise. But there has been intense civil conflict in East Timor and Sri Lanka. Finally, people of both sides have to work together to bring about a solution to the conflict, through dialogue and accommodation.

Conflict in one country is different from another. Though there has been violent conflict in both countries, East Timor and Sri Lanka are also different.

Q: Confederation and asymmetrical devolution have been suggested as solutions to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. But there are sections of people who believe that Sri Lanka is too small to become a federation.

A: This is a matter for the parties themselves to consider. The best form of devolution and power sharing has to be worked out by the two sides, which sit down for talks. But it is important for the public to dispel the myths that are associated with federalism and might be a stumbling block in the quest for a settlement of the conflict. Size of the country is one such myth. Switzerland is smaller than Sri Lanka and yet has a successful federal system. Therefore such myths should be dispelled if the outcome of political negotiations is to lead to the successful establishment of federal government.

Q: Sri Lanka is expected to begin talks with the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by the middle of this month and there is speculation in some quarters that federalism could be the form of government that accommodates Tamil demands within the Sri Lankan state. As a former premier of a province in a successfully run federal political system, what do you think the pitfalls in the negotiating process are going to be?

A: Of course the path ahead is not going to be easy. In terms of the peace talks there are three important phases that have to be ex-

amined. First, there need to be steps taken by both sides to build initial confidence in each other. Second, interim issues are important; these are the issues coming up in the six to 12 month period and have to be provided for. Third, there are the long-term measures.

What is the process for an accepted constitution? There are various stages along the way, which have to be reached as talks progress. The process has to make the people to feel engaged and involved in the finding of a solution. The talks themselves is about how much autonomy, what is the jurisdiction and what sort of power-sharing can take place between the federal government and the sub-national unit.

We should not forget that federalism is about two things. One is autonomy; the other is coordination and shared government. Both are equally important for a viable federal government. While autonomy and self-government are important for the preservation of identity and managing internal affairs, sub-national bodies should also coordinate with other sub-national bodies as well as the federal government.

Q: It is well known that majority populations in multicultural populations fear that minority communities might be supported by neighbours who push these minorities to secede by arming them and so on. In other words, that even if a federal state is established, there has to be constant vigilance to see it is not made a stepping-stone to complete secession.

A: Country building requires political will. It means recognising recognizing diversity and difference and on sharing power. Most federations that work are those that respect minorities. Therefore minorities do not have to push for secession. As I said before, successful federal governments contain two basic elements – autonomy and coordination.

Q: Canada is vastly different from Sri Lanka in many respects. However, as Sri Lanka is preparing to begin negotiations with the LTTE to resolve the ethnic conflict, what lessons can the Canadian experience teach Sri Lanka?

A: Federalism is about values – values such as celebrating diversity, doing things together as well as autonomy. Canada cannot be imagined without federalism and democracy. These values are very significant. And these values may be transplanted in any country or society. It is important for any federal system that it respects such values such as recognising differences and at the same time for units forming the federation learning to work in harmony with each other.

We should not forget that federalism is about two things. One is autonomy; the other is coordination and shared government. Both are equally important for a viable federal government

whop who might be interested in secession and might be working towards that end. But it is only a minority. I am confident a majority in Quebec will not ask for separation or secession.

Also the Canadian constitution is

secessionist struggle by the Tamils in Sri Lanka, which has been violent like that in East Timor and seen large doses of state terrorism, killing and anti-democratic laws such as the PTA, it has greater chances of succeed-

The LTTE needs to preserve its military assets

By M. Sreetharan

While the promise of peace resulting from cessation of hostilities, MoU, and the imminent peace talks, have made people in the south and northeast euphoric, serious concerns remain on the tenuous nature of the existing political equilibrium. The following then is a short summary of the impending dangers, firstly, to the peace process as a whole, and secondly to the progress of the Tamil struggle in particular. There is a need for urgent expatriate action.

The vehemently anti-LTTE President Kumaratunga - Lakshman Kadirgamar partnership, equipped with constitutionally authorized provision to dissolve the parliament, presents a clear and real danger to the continuity of the current peace climate. Any change in government or continuous instability within the instruments of governance in Colombo will endanger the current constructive UNF-LTTE engagement. Only die-hard optimists will envision a similar process taking shape between PA and LTTE.

If we assume that the 18th and 19th amendments to the constitution and their smooth passage are successful in clipping the wings of the President and can thereby ensure stability of UNF for the next three years, the following factors, individually or a synergistic combination of them, can still sabotage the peace process:

- * Continued occupation of the military, especially navy, of public buildings and schools. This will provoke the public as it become more assertive with the increasing presence of the LTTE cadres to the army-controlled areas.

- * Increasingly belligerent behaviour of the President-friendly navy. Sea-Tigers appear to be disturbed that the MoU has given an advantage to the navy to venture into areas that have previously been under LTTE control. If provisions and agreements are not made to demarcate sea-based FDLs similar to the ones on the ground, the navy can precipitate renewed war.

- * With the LTTE attempting to accommodate the grievances of the Muslim community, the Rauff Hakeem-Feriel Ashraff leadership can easily sabotage the process by insisting on demands that the main parties to the conflict cannot deliver. The Muslim stand can also be utilized by the UNF, to contain LTTE demands. Jinna's maneu-

vers in the carving out of Pakistan during India's independence is a historical precedence that both parties are uncomfortably aware of.

- * The Madras-Brahmin controlled media, and the political circus in Tamilnadu are currently obnoxiously anti-Eelam. The central government is keeping its options open by renewing the ban and extradition request of Prabhakaran, and if the talks were to lead to a Confederation, this would push the central government into a tailspin. Notwithstanding the embarrassingly subservient culture in Tamilnadu, India may try to get involved to contain Tamil gains in northeast.

- * Anti-peace campaigns of other hawkish segments of the Sinhala South generating enough opposition to the government making it an unreliable partner. Anti-proscription, and opposition to interim government before core issues are discussed, both

but force their entry into spaces created by rebels to engage in intellectual trash-talk. LTTE is painfully aware of other legitimate struggles extinguished by movements unwittingly allowing deeper involvement of peace-NGOs and other western donors who assure flow of development funds, with the aim of slowly blunting the fervour of national struggle. It is unlikely that the LTTE with its politico-military capability will accommodate these if the interference becomes serious enough to threaten its mission, post 911 climate or not. LTTE will however encourage donor funding to develop destroyed infrastructure while keeping the NGOs under intense scrutiny. The funding-starved peace NGOs are containment agents and will be a constant irritant to the progress of talks.

- * As a latecomer, US intention appears to be more to cement its image as a global policeman and to embellish its resume as a

These research groups consistently and conspicuously evade criticizing State excesses but force their entry into spaces created by rebels to engage in intellectual trash-talk. LTTE is painfully aware of other legitimate struggles extinguished by movements unwittingly allowing deeper involvement of peace-NGOs and other western donors who assure flow of development funds, with the aim of slowly blunting the fervour of national struggle

portend danger to the progress.

- * Theoreticians from Colombo-based research organizations and other NGOs are jumping into the fray to raise issues related to taxation (Tigers, Taxes and Tamils, Island 8/11), and the need for bringing human rights concern to centre stage are constantly raised in several articles (Alan Keenan, www.lines-magazine.org) including editorials from the howler in the wilderness, The Island. These research groups consistently and conspicuously evade criticizing State excesses

Peace-Cop than to be an active and objective participant in the peace efforts. Possible military assistance to the State, however, will be a component in LTTE calculations.

When the interacting dynamics of these factors begin to impact the balance of power of the protagonists, either party may resort to renewed military confrontation. This possibility makes it imperative for the LTTE to preserve its military assets and further enhance its fighting capacity. LTTE's sustained capacity to respond to any future

military threat with decisive force is fundamental to the Eelam Tamils if they are to emerge as a free people. The State, functioning as a legitimate institution within the international framework can acquire destructive weapons with ease. The LTTE does not have this ability.

One can see that any issue during the talks that involves laying down or even reduction of arms is likely to hit an impasse. It is with this intention in mind the President-Kadirgamar duo is insisting on talks to concentrate on core issues, a preplanned path to disaster.

On the ground, the longer the talks continue, the less reversible the scenario becomes and less likely the threat will be of war breaking out. The LTTE's advantage becomes stronger by the day much to the detriment of the Government.

Visitors to the North will see that by December, the soldiers in the North will have been stricken with boredom, allowed only to stare at passing visitors and engage in hopper-business. Stripped of the power derived from the barrel of a gun, disallowed to strip search Tamil civilians, thrown out of real-estate where they were illegally engaged in income generating activities and stealing produces, and with shrinking haul of bribes from Tamil civilians and businesses, the army has lost the incentive to keep occupying Tamil land.

In addition, for the talks to progress, LTTE is likely to insist that the army be moved to barracks or in the least stand at road junctions with the arms removed, similar to what one witnesses in Vanni, where no arms are visible in environs where civilians move about freely.

While the gossamer promise of peace provides some relief, we

need to remind ourselves that the Tamil people arrived at this juncture not by the benevolence of any one but by the military might of an organization that asserted its independence with Tamil peoples' support. One can take solace in the single-mindedness of the LTTE leaders and cadres who have dedicated their lives to their mission, but what about the expatriates? The words of Swami Vivekananda on the subject of patriotism provide some inspiration for action.

I believe in patriotism, and have my own ideal of patriotism. Three things are necessary for great achievements.

First, feel from the heart. What is in the intellect or reason? It goes a few steps and stops. But through heart comes inspiration.

Second, You may feel, then; but instead of spending your energies on frothy talk and discussions have you found a way out, any practical solution, some help instead of condemnation, some sweet words to soothe their miseries, to bring them out of living death?

Third, Yet that is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you dare to do what you think is right? If your wife and children are against you, if all your money goes, your name dies, your wealth vanishes, would you still stick to it and go on steadily towards your goal? Have you got that steadfastness? If you have these three things, each one of you will make miracles. •E

The third requirement is a bit too much for many of us, but if we adhere to the first two we can accomplish a lot.



'Consider it to be similar to your favorite TV broadcast: enjoy the program and ignore the commercials'

Pro-CIA critic Thomas M. Troy Jr. reviews 'The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters' by Frances Stonor Saunders. New York: The New Press, 2000 p.p. 509

If *The Cultural Cold War* had been published in the 1960s or 1970s, it most likely would have caused a sensation and been a best seller. It would have provoked anguished editorials in major Western newspapers and a barrage of "we-told-you-so" items in the communist-controlled media. Published at the turn of the century, however, the book is something of a curiosity. It contains a long cry of moral outrage over the fact that the CIA committed "vast resources to a secret program of cultural propaganda in western Europe." At the same time, the author, an independent filmmaker and novelist, has produced a well-written account of a basically unfamiliar story with a cast of many larger-than-life characters who played roles in the Cold War.

To over-simplify the historical background: In the late 1940s, Washington did not take it for granted that the people in Western Europe would support democratic governments and that their states would effectively oppose the Soviet Union and support the United States. To help promote democracy and to oppose the Soviet Union and West European communist parties, the CIA supported members of the non-communist left, including many intellectuals. Because the CIA's activities were clandestine, only a few of the beneficiaries were witting of the Agency's support, although a large number suspected Agency involvement.

Frances Saunders evidently was dismayed and shocked, shocked to learn there was gambling in the back room of Rick's café. She finds the Agency's activities to be reprehensible and morally repugnant and believes that the CIA's "deception" actually undermined intellectual freedom. She rejects the "blank check" line of defense offered by some people that the Agency "simply helped people to say what they would have said anyway." She reminds readers that the CIA overthrew governments, was responsible for the Bay of Pigs operation and the Phoenix Program, spied on American citizens, harassed democratically elected foreign leaders, and plotted assassinations. The CIA denied these activities before Congress and, "in the process, elevated the art of lying to new heights." Ms. Saunders vents her spleen mainly in her introduction, but in the text she repeatedly returns to the theme that the CIA injured the cause of intellectual freedom by clandestinely supporting (oh, irony of ironies!) champions of intel-

lectual freedom. Not adverse to using cliché, Saunders refers to the CIA at various times as a "wilderness of mirrors," an "invisible government," and a "rogue elephant."

According to Saunders, the list of CIA covert activities during the 1950s and 1960s is long. The Agency subsidized European tours of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and paid for the filming of George Orwell's 1984 and *Animal Farm*. It clandestinely subsidized the publishing of thousands of books, including an entire line of books by Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., and the renowned work by Milovan Djilas, *The New Class*. It bailed out, and then subsidized, the financially faltering *Partisan Review* and *Kenyon Review*.

The centerpiece of the CIA's propaganda campaign and the focus of Saunders's book as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its principal publication, the journal *Encounter*. Saunders's diligence and hard work shows as she describes the creation, activities, and downfalls of the Congress and the journal. She read the Church Report, performed research in various archives, and conducted many interviews, including some with retired CIA officers. Her fine writing style and occasionally even gossipy method of presenting the material makes what could have been a dry-as-dust account of institutions read easily. She also has some fascinating characters, for the people dis-

Frances Saunders evidently was dismayed and shocked, shocked to learn there was gambling in the back room of Rick's café. She finds the Agency's activities to be reprehensible and morally repugnant and believes that the CIA's "deception" actually undermined intellectual freedom

may have intervened to prevent the journal from printing articles.

For Saunders, however, the CIA's "interference" was much more invidious. She writes that, "The real point was not that the possibility of dissent had been irrevocably damaged...or that intellectuals had been coerced or corrupted (though that may have happened too), but that the natural procedures of intellectual enquiry had been interfered with." And, "Whilst *Encounter* never shrank from exposing the useful lies by which communist regimes supported themselves, it was never truly free itself of the 'bear trap of ideology,' of that pervasive Cold War psychology of 'lying for the truth'." *Encounter* "sus-

counting the intriguing story of how the CIA worked with existing institutions, such as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, and established numerous "bogus" foundations to "hide" its funding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its other covert activities. Everything came a cropper in 1967, however, as a result of press articles, especially revelations in the long-gone *Ramparts* magazine.

The Cultural Cold War has some major shortcomings. First and foremost, despite Saunders's assertions that the CIA undermined intellectual freedom, she does not present any examples of people whose intellectual growth was stunted or impaired because of the Agency's programs. Nor does she provide any examples of people switching ideological sides after the revelations about the Agency's role in the Congress and *Encounter*. She mentions that Jean Paul Sartre switched sides or just "dropped out" of the Cold War; however, Sartre denounced the Soviet Union and repudiated communism after the USSR invaded Hungary.

Saunders also fails to discuss the results of the CIA programs. Granted, it would be difficult to measure objectively the effectiveness of propaganda programs or campaigns. What did CIA achieve by "running" the Congress for Cultural Freedom and *Encounter*? I would venture the guess that Irving Brown and Jay Lovestone won more "hearts and minds" in Western Europe by working with the trade unions than any 20 people involved in the Congress or all the articles in *Encounter*. (Of course, according to Ms. Saunders, the CIA also subsidized the activities of Brown and Lovestone.) I also suspect that the ham-handed tactics of the Soviet Union and its allies had a far more profound impact on the West European populace than any Western propaganda program. Saunders, however, is so intent on asserting that the CIA "crippled" West European intellectuals that she does not take time to analyze the effectiveness of the Agency's propaganda campaigns.

Another flaw in *The Cultural Cold War* is that the book discusses only the Western side and barely mentions communist participants in the Cold War. The author does not mention the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Soviet military intervention in East Germany in 1953, or the upheaval in Poland in 1956. There is one sentence each about the Berlin blockade and the Berlin Wall. She does devote two pages to the Soviet invasion of Hungary, but offers several pages on Western "desertion" of the Hungarian rebels. Perhaps Saunders thought her readers would know all about the Soviet cruelties and decided it was unnecessary to discuss or even mention them. A more captious view would be that she did not want to discuss Soviet actions lest it appear that perhaps the CIA and the West in general had real reasons for doing what they did in the "cultural Cold War" in Europe.

The Cultural Cold War contains some silly mistakes and some real gaffes. For example, Charles Bohlen was not the US Ambassador to France in 1948; he became Ambassador to France in 1962. Edward Barrett was never Secretary of State; he is correctly identified as an assistant secretary of state elsewhere in the text. The KGB did not have a spy "planted" on Willy Brandt in West Berlin in 1962; unless Saunders knows something nobody else does, she is probably mistakenly referring to East German spy Guenter Guillaume, who infiltrated Brandt's office in Bonn in 1969. If the Cuban missile crisis was an "imperial blunder," then it was a Soviet imperial blunder, not an American one. Finally, the author relates a story from an interview with former CIA officer Tom Braden that David Rockefeller frequently donated money to aid the CIA, including at one time writing a check for \$50,000 to assist European youth groups. Saunders believes that such "freelance transactions" and "governmental buccaneering" created a culture that eventually resulted in "Oliver North-type disasters." She says the comparison is "apt" because "like the architect of Irangate" these "earlier friends of the CIA were never once afflicted by doubt in themselves of their purpose." I think the comparison is absurd.

As should be clear, I do not share Frances Saunders's opinion about the "morality" of CIA's activities and do not accept her notion that CIA undermined "intellectual freedom" in Western Europe. I highly enjoyed and strongly recommend her book, however. Consider it to be similar to your favorite TV broadcast: enjoy the program and ignore the commercials.

Encounter "suspended that most precious of western philosophical concepts. The freedom to think and act independently and trimmed its sails to suit the prevailing winds"

cussed in *The Cultural Cold War* are among the leading intellectual figures of post-World War II Europe and America. She presents these people with wit and occasionally a pen dripping with acid.

After the CIA established and funded the Congress for Cultural Freedom and *Encounter* magazine, did it then call all the shots? Did the Agency determine what the Congress should support or what *Encounter* should publish? Evidently no. In the 15 years that the Agency "ran" the magazine, *Encounter* probably published about 2,000 articles and reviews. Saunders can cite only two (rather dubious) cases in which the CIA

pended that most precious of western philosophical concepts. The freedom to think and act independently and trimmed its sails to suit the prevailing winds." I must admit that as I read such passages, I kept thinking "those poor stupid intellectuals."

Saunders deserves praise for presenting opposing views. She admits that other people thought and think much differently than she does on the issue of the CIA's stifling of intellectual freedom. She offers quotes from, George Kennan, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Michael Josselson that in effect are rebuttals to her arguments.

She also does a fine job in re-

LG polls snag ahead of Thailand talks

By G. Nadesan

The Department of Elections will have to go ahead with polls for local government bodies in the Vanni and the east on 25th September if the UNF government does not bring about an amendment to the election laws, Deputy Elections Commissioner S. Arunthavachelvan said on Thursday.

Tamil political sources said that elections to the local bodies have to be held according to nominations lists accepted by the commissioner of elections in March. This would mean the inevitable victory of the EPDP, PLOTE and the EPRLF (Varatharajaperumal faction) in more than six local bodies in the east. In March the EPRLF (Varatharajaperumal faction) and the EPDP were elected uncontested to two local bodies in the east.

"The elections cannot be postponed again because the Emergency Regulations are no longer in force. The minister for local government has to amend the election law with a simple majority in

Parliament to cancel the polls," sources said.

"This would certainly upset the political balance under the interim administration sought by the LTTE," Tamil political sources said. "An LTTE run interim administration will find it difficult to cohabit at the grass-roots level with local bodies that come under its purview," they added.

Political analysts said that the issue could get more complicated if the SLMC and the LTTE do not reach an early agreement on amending the election law to cancel the local government polls. Addressing a meeting in Oluvil last month, the SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem said that his party would leave the UNF government if it does not hold the local government polls as scheduled on 25th September.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress feels that control of as many local government bodies as possible in the northeast would strengthen its position doubly within the interim administration, which it hopes to share with the LTTE.

"The UNF needs to resolve the issue quickly with the TNA and the SLMC before it begins negotiations

with the LTTE in Thailand - if it has not done so already", said a TNA leader.

The government postponed elections to the local bodies, including the Batticaloa and Kalmunai municipal councils and the urban councils of Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Kattankudy in March this year following representations made by the TNA.

The TNA's nominations lists for the Trincomalee UC and eight Pradheshiya Sabhas in the Batticaloa district and one in Ampara due to last minute bungling.

As a consequence of the TNA's nomination lists being rejected, the EPRLF's Varatharajaperumal faction was elected uncontested to the Porathivu P.S., the administrative area of which lies in the LTTE controlled part of the Batticaloa district.

Similarly, the EPDP was elected uncontested to the Alaiyadivembu Pradheshiya Sabha following the rejection of the TNA's nomination list. An independent group back by the SLMC was also elected uncontested to the Eravur town P.S.

If elections are not cancelled there will be eight local government bod-

ies in the east, including the Trincomalee UC that wouldn't be under the TNA.

This would be seen by the LTTE as an impediment to the smooth functioning of the interim administration. The Tigers accuse the EPRLF's (Varatharajaperumal faction) and the EPDP of working with the armed forces against its interests.

"Control over the local government bodies and access to minor development funds will be exploited by the anti-LTTE groups to build pockets of political and other influence in areas dominated by the Tigers, leading to erosion the grass roots level confidence building measures. This is why we are urging the government to cancel the polls," TNA sources said.

There are three P.S in Kilinochchi, four in Mannar and four in Vavuniya. There are ten P.S in the Batticaloa district - two are Muslim dominated. The TNA's nominations were accepted only for the Vavunathivu P.S and the Ariyampathi P.S.

There are 14 P.S., a Municipal Council and a Urban Council in the Amparai district. Elections have been held to the Ampara UC and the

Sinhala majority P.S of Damana, Namal Oya, Uhana, Dehiyatta Kandiya, Lahugala, Maha Oya and Padiyatalawa. The commissioner of elections can hold polls for each local body independently as it constitutes a separate electoral unit similar to an electoral district in elections to Parliament.

The government suspended elected local government bodies under the Emergency Regulations from 1983 to 1994. Elections to local bodies were held first in March 1994 in the east amidst charges of mass rigging by groups working with the armed forces.

Elections to local bodies in Jaffna were held after 15 years in 1998.

The TULF filed nominations only for the Jaffna Municipal Council and the Valigamam North Pradheshiya Sabha, saying that armed groups such as the EPDP and the PLOTE were a threat to supporters and potential candidates in other areas. The term of the local government bodies in Jaffna ended early this year. The UNF government extended it by an year. There are 12 PS, 1 MC and 3 UCs in Jaffna.

George W.'s post-September 11 reinvention

From Bozo to Churchill By Mark Crispin Miller

Countless leaders have been deified by national emergency, but few have been remade as quickly and completely as George W. Bush. In many cases, those who had misread him as a simple tool, braying automatically at his most trivial mistakes, now automatically revered him. Such converts suddenly agreed with those who had seen Bush? flaws as signs of latent greatness—thitherto the notion only of a large plurality, but now the common wisdom.

And so, before you knew it, the seeming bozo was our savior. Not only were his famous foibles magically erased, but Bush? entire political pre-history also slipped right down the memory hole - the fraud and thuggery in Florida, the Supreme Court? complicity, the appointment of John Ashcroft, the budget-busting tax cuts, the moves against Social Security, the screw-you foreign policy, the slash-and-burn environmental policy, the lame prescription drug plan, the Jeffords controversy, California? power black-outs, Dick Cheney? Enron black-out and the many other signs of Big Oil? toxic spread, and on and on. Such a tacky record contradicted Bush? recent incarnation as America? Augustus, and so the record (briefly) disappeared.

Certainly the corporate media did all they could to reinforce the mass amnesia. Eager, as ever, to exploit the craze, and also to score brownie points (or still more brownie points) with our now-towering leader, they glorified him with a panting desperation that recalled the war-time cult of Stalin. We had the cable operations vying to outdo each other with slick,

airless "profiles" of his brilliant leadership - shows that might as well have come straight from the White House. ("And he will not waver!" Andrew Card said at the end of one on CNN—10/20/01).

We had the national dailies and top TV pundits, along with scores of lesser lights, promiscuously classing Bush? pipsqueak rhetoric with the most exalted works of war-time oratory. ("When he said at the end, I think there is a bit of Churchill in that, in the sense that he was saying, his is not the beginning of the end, it is perhaps the end of the beginning," Chris Matthews yelled at Larry King on November 8.)

In an extraordinary act of self-abasement, Newsweek Howard Fineman (12/3/01) deemed Bush "a model of unblinking, eyes-on-the-prize decisiveness," called him "eloquent," "commanding" and "astute," and treated his simplistic taglines as articulations of a reasonable policy: "From where does George W. Bush - or Laura, for that matter - draw the strength for this grand mission, the ambitious aim of which is nothing less than to 'the world of evildoers'?"

And in February, there was "War and Destiny"—not a network miniseries, but a reverent spread in Vanity Fair, which lionized the presidential team with solemn head shots and TV-wrestlers-nicknames—Cheney was "The Rock," Ashcroft was "The Heat"—while ranking Dubya with Demosthenes. ("It been a while since presidential rhetoric could raise the hairs on your arm," wrote Christopher Buckley. "Is this really the same frat boy who choked on his tongue talking about 'ubliminable-advertising? Johnny got his gravitas.'")

Such overt Caesarism was con-

tinually reinforced by the discreet erasure of all incongruous information. Just as the news teams prettified the "war on terrorism"—and did it gladly, as if such a whitewash were a patriotic act—so did they work to idealize the man ostensibly in charge, by tuning out or under-playing all discordant facts about him.

There was, first of all, his non-election. The media chose, in mid-October, to postpone reporting on the long-awaited recount of the votes in Florida—because, they said, we were at war, which made resources tight, and also made the whole thing "utterly irrelevant," as the New York Times FONT face=TIMES> Richard Berke asserted (Salon, 9/29/01). That the war was partly in defense of "democratically elected government," as Bush himself had said to great applause, did not, apparently, strike such reporters as ironic.

Then, a month later, the media did Bush/Cheney an enormous favor, by killing the important news that Gore had won the vote in Florida, and so, according to the Constitution, ought to be our president. This inconvenient finding was played way, way down, as, by and large, the newsfolk either sat on it (ABC World News Tonight, NBC Nightly News) or brazenly distorted it, highlighting Bush? slender victory just in those four counties where Gore had sued for hand counts. Such disinformation came from several broadcasts, but it was the New York Times that started it, with a front-page obfuscation that gave lots of ammo to Rush Limbaugh and Matt Drudge (The Nation, 12/17/01).

It was more as our commander-in-chief, however, than as the leader of a great democracy, that Bush was constantly made over by the media, whose watchdogs guarded his per-

sona with the loyalty and zeal of presidential handlers. Thus they kept on talking up his day-to-day performance, while spiking contradictory reports. When, at the end of September, CBS (9/25/01) confirmed that Air Force One had not been targeted on 9/11, the other media held back, as if to certify Bush? excuse for speeding out of town.

Far more troubling, however, was the media? failure to report those stories that would surely complicate Bush's posture as a pure crusader. Our press has told us very little of the links between him and our new enemy—such links as would have had the anchors turning somersaults if it had been Bill Clinton.

Concerning Bush? family, first of all, the watchdogs have been perfect lambs. Most of them spiked the news that the bin Laden family owned a small piece of the Carlyle Group, employer of the senior Bush (an awkward fact reported by the Wall Street Journal—9/27/01—and that drove the bin Ladens to sell their shares); or that Salem bin Laden, Osama's older brother, seems to have invested in Arbusto Energy, George W. Bush? fledgling oil concern, back in 1976 (a story noted in the foreign press, and, stateside, only by such plucky independents as the On-Line Journal—7/3/01).

The media have also been too tactful about Carlyle's profits from the "war on terrorism," through the (aptly named) Crusader, a giant, pokey howitzer made by United Defense, a Carlyle subsidiary. Although the Pentagon itself had hoped to phase it out (in Kosovo, it proved to be not worth the cost), that \$11 billion turkey was resuscitated by the terrorist attack. "On Sept. 26, the Army signed a \$665

million modified contract with United Defense through April 2003 to complete the Crusader's development phase," reported the Los Angeles Times (1/10/02)—and few others, including Multinational Monitor, Red Herring and Paul Krugman in his New York Times column. (The deal was never mentioned on TV.)

And while the media laid off such family ties, so did they play down, or ignore, the larger links between the evil ones and our own government. There was the poignant case of John O'eill, the Twin Towers security chief who died on 9/11, and prior to that one of the FBI? top counter-terrorism experts. In November, it emerged that he had finally quit the Bureau in disgust because the State Department interfered with his investigation of certain of Osama? siblings, then living here in the United States. O'eill believed that he was stopped because of oil, and our unofficial closeness to the Saudis.

That story broke in France, in an exposé by two investigative journalists (Jean-Charles Brisand and Guillaume Dasquie, Bin Laden: The Forbidden Truth), whose findings were then carefully neglected in this country—although there was one brief item deep inside the New York Times (11/12/01). (O'eill? death inspired many patriotic eulogies, but none made mention of the reason why he changed careers.) Clearly, the U.S. media were loath to follow any leads that might somehow implicate Bush/Cheney in the great disaster.

This article is excerpted from the new preface to the updated paperback edition of Mark Crispin Miller's The Bush Dyslexicon: Observations on a National Disorder (Norton).

Determined to fight the jungle tide

The Muslims of the once prosperous Musali division are returning after their long sojourn in Puttalam to make preparations for starting life again on the lands of their ancestors. But the jungles of the Vanni that had inexorably claimed their villages and fields over the years are stubborn.

The Muslai Muslims are fighting hard to turn back the jungle tide, the ebb and flow of which has driven the history of the Vanni for millennia.

The Musali Assistant Government Agent's division covers most of the southwestern, southern parts of the Mannar district.

There were more than 15 Muslim villages in the division. The largest was Silavathurai. It was fast growing into a minor town 12 years ago, servicing remote hamlets in the interior that had little access to the Murunkan town on the Mannar-Madawachchi Road.

The army as usual was camped by the Silavathurai government school. In 1991 the Tigers attempted to overrun the camp and the army's positions in the adjacent village of Kokkuppadaian. The military pulled out of the area many years ago. But the Muslims of these villages are unable to resettle because the whole area has been sown with land mines. "We cannot even clear the jungle that has overgrown our old neighbourhood near the Silavathurai school because no one is coming forward to de-mine the area", said Mohideen Bawa who has come sans his family to clear and cultivate the family land for this season.

Returning Muslim refugees have put up temporary shacks outside their villages in the Kokkuppadaian - Silavathurai area because of the extensive mine fields.

In most villages only the male heads of the displaced families are camped in makeshift huts. They say that it is still too dangerous to bring women and children back. Elephants



Concrete blocks for house construction at Periya Pulatchi Potkerny resettlement Pic. by Buddhika Weerasinghe

and bears menace them daily. "The elephants are here almost every night. They try to chase us out of this place. I never saw elephants in Muslai in my time. Now the elephants have taken over our village and think we are intruders," Siddique, a youth from Veppankulam told the 'Northeastern Herald.' Their Tamil neighbours lend them trap guns to scare the elephants and bears, he says.

The Muslims of Musali have

been living in refugee camps in Kalpitty, Noraicholai and Pallivasalthurai for more than a decade.

The government provides them little assistance to clear the jungle and resettle. The Divisional Secretary's office has not paid the 1000 rupees due to them for buying implements to cut and clean the undergrowth. They haven't got assistance for putting up temporary shelters either. Some resettlers are bringing in thatch and other build-

ing material from Puttalam to erect their huts.

The returning refugees have to walk a long distance on dilapidated dirt tracks to get their basic provisions and medicine in Murunkan town. Tamil villagers in the area help

many with gifts of rice and meat.

The Muslim resettlers in Musali say that the Ministry for Vanni Rehabilitation does little about their predicament.

But they are determined to fight the jungle tide.



Remains of a damaged Mosque near Musali Maha Vidyalayam



Settlers cooking lunch