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AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. RAJIV GANDHI



Your Excellency,

It is with pain and anguish that we write – the pain and anguish of a people who, you will be the first to admit, have struggled bravely and courageously for justice against a continuing oppression and who, above all else, have struggled to be recognised as a people with a homeland. We also write as a friend to a good friend who has sought to come to our assistance. And we ask in pain, why is it that as the Prime Minister of the major power in South Asia, you have been unable to secure justice for the Tamils of Ceylon?

Soon after your assumption of office as Prime Minister in December 1984, you declared that you wanted a 'just and lasting solution' to the conflict in Sri Lanka. And we were buoyant with hope. But more than two years later, that 'just and lasting' solution that you have spoken about seems to be an ever receding mirage. Our fortunes have fluctuated with the frequent changes of Ministers and Secretaries in the South Block.

The Thimpu Declaration which expressed the joint and unanimous will of all the Tamil Liberation Organisations and which set out a principled framework for the

negotiating process was not acted upon. And the negotiating process in search of a political solution has slithered down a slippery slope of Sri Lankan expediency. And all that has been found 'lasting' has been the pain and anguish of the Tamils of Ceylon.

More and more Tamils have been intimidated, tortured, raped and killed and today an economic blockade has been imposed on the Northern Districts and an organised military attack launched on the Tamil civilian population – an attack which despite assertions to the contrary continues with increasing ferocity. And when we resist, we sometimes hear the voices of a sanctimonious morality which equates the violence of the oppressor with a fight-back of the oppressed who seek to escape that oppression.

Many of us live as wandering nomads, driven from our homelands and unwanted in those lands where we have sought refuge. And we scream that a "Biafra" is about to take place in our homelands. But it would seem that our screams are not heard – not even by our friends. And we ask ourselves whether that is because our cause is unjust.

The four-point Declaration of the Tamil Liberation Organisations at Thimpu in July 1985 was something that the Tamils considered just and principled. Was the claim of the Tamil people to be recognised as a nationality unjust? Was their claim that they could not have become a people with a separate language and a separate culture without a contiguous homeland and their fear that without a contiguous homeland they would cease to be a people, an unjust claim and an unwarranted fear? Is their claim to sit as equals with the Sinhala people and fashion a constitutional structure where equity may prevail an unjust claim?

We do, of course, understand President Jayawardene's rejection of our claim to be recognised as a nation because that, after all, is the logical extension of the task in which the Sri Lankan Government is engaged – the task of annihilating the identity of the Tamil people in Ceylon. But we believe that it is not your intention to assist President Jayawardene in his task. Has not the time come for you to declare openly that the Tamils of Ceylon constitute a nation, and that Sri Lanka today is a multi-national state? Has not the time come to declare that the gross and consistent violation of human rights by the Sri Lankan Government constitutes the deliberate response of that Government to the claims of the Tamil people for justice?

Continued on back page

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The Way Forward

IT IS MORE than three and a half years now since India entered the Sri Lankan political scene as mediator in the protracted conflict that has plagued the country for the last thirty years. Spurred by the pangs of conscience over the indifference and inactivity of the Sri Lankan Government in affording elementary safety and security to a community, their own citizens, and ordinarily available in any civilised state, and overcome by general grief at the inhuman and barbarous atrocities organised and orchestrated by the majority community, India expressed 'grave concern' at the genocidal situation and her speedy intervention brought to an abrupt halt the murder and mayhem that ruled the streets. That was July-August 1983. The news of the arrival of India's Foreign Minister, Narasimha Rao was itself sufficient to launch a feverish clean-up of the burnt-out vehicles and looted belongings of Sri Lankan Tamils that littered the streets - the operation continuing well into the night. For this and more, the Sri Lankan Tamil community is forever grateful.

In the wake of this show of sympathy and solidarity, India's further offer of mediation thereafter was not merely welcomed by the Sri Lankan Tamils in particular but the world at large as a generous gesture India owed to herself as a good neighbour and to humanity in general, her cultural and ethnic ties notwithstanding. The wave upon wave of Tamil refugees continuously pouring into India across the Palk Straits, even today, and the emotional outbursts evident in India itself were and are still proof of the urgent necessity of finding an early solution to this ethnic conflict.

We have seen and experienced its demonic efficiency in decimating almost daily its Tamil population in what has come to be conceived as a desperate bid to find 'the final solution' almost verging on the Nazi tradition. Negotiations have gone on now for the last three years. The Tamil problem to the world has sometimes become almost 'like a see saw finely attuned to the military balance'. But what is now obvious, even to a casual observer, is the dilatory and perfunctory nature of the peace process that has taken so long without even a ray of light emanating at the end of the tunnel. All this while the Tamil community continues to run helter-skelter in search of safety and security, knocking at every hospitable door the world over in search of protection, enduring the abuse and insults, "cheats", "brutes", "economic refugees", "terrorists", etc. The machinations and the machiavellian manoeuvres of the Sri Lankan Government in delaying a solution until it succeeds in its war of attrition, are something that the Sri Lankan Tamil has come to live with. But, what of India?

The inalienable right of the Sri Lankan Tamils to live and be recognised as equals in their homeland is what their struggle is about. It is their birthright. At least by the time of the Thimpu Conference this had become defined and forcefully asserted. That was as far back as August '85. This to the Tamil mind is the crux of the matter and lies at the very root of the current confrontation. Unless an unequivocal position is reached, or at least the negotiating parties are able to work within such a framework, any lasting solution to the Tamil problem is bound to elude us. What is noticeable however is that this position has been compromised or allowed to slide away in meeting to argue one proposal after another without adequate cognizance of this fundamental fact.

However, despite the repeated failures of the several talks and discussions and proposals drawn up and reneged, despite the hardship and suffering borne with fortitude by the Tamil community, two other significant factors conducive to a settlement have emerged almost imperceptibly. The Militants have come to be recognised as an effective and representative voice of the Tamil people, and ever since the Thimpu Conference, at least, they have been acknowledged as such by the Sri Lankan Government. They were once but 'a handful of terrorists'.

Secondly, and surprisingly so, India has been recently requested by the Sri Lankan Government itself, to underwrite and supervise any negotiated agreement reached. 'Sri Lanka expects India to underwrite the implementation of any agreement reached between the Government and the LTTE' said J. R. Jayawardene in his Address to Parliament.

This is the second positive improvement that is noticeable in the long and tardy peace process. The Tamil community have always wanted it so. Given the track record of the Sri Lankan Government in respect of the long list of broken promises, unfulfilled hopes and breaches of trust that has led to the confrontation, this the Tamils consider vital and certainly augurs well.

If three years have been thus spent in identifying the issues at the periphery, albeit within a 'coherent framework of solidarity with an oppressed people', as The HINDU commented editorially, a recognisable baseline to guide India's strategy is not far to seek.

CANDIDLY SPEAKING . . .

To speak candidly is to speak openly and frankly.

THE FUEL blockade imposed on the Jaffna District in early January must be seen for what it was. It constituted a near genocidal attack on the Tamils of Ceylon. The ostensible reason for the blockade by the Sri Lankan government was the announcement of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that they intended to make arrangements for the civil administration of the peninsula – a civil administration which had fallen into disarray and which badly needed reconstruction. But, whatever may be the ostensible reason, that which is relevant is that in July 1983, long before the LTTE announcement, President Jayawardene had set the frame for his government's response to the claims of the Tamil people for justice, by declaring in his now famous interview with Ian Ward of the Daily Telegraph: “. . . I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna people now . . . Now we cannot think of them. Not about their lives or of their opinion about us . . . The more you put pressure on the north, the happier the Sinhala people will be here . . . really, if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhala people will be happy . . .”. And the fuel blockade sought to ‘starve the Tamils out’.

Independent observers of the Sri Lankan scene will, therefore, be forgiven if they take the view that the recent actions of the Sri Lankan government which have caused untold misery and deprivation amongst the Tamil people were, in fact, actions intended to translate into reality the words uttered three years ago by an elected President about the ‘lives and the opinions’ of a section of his electorate. And they will also be forgiven if they link the fuel blockade in early January with the massive military offensive launched later in January, against the Tamil people both in the North and the East of Sri Lanka. More than five hundred Tamil civilians have been killed in recent weeks and these included 21 Tamil employees in a Batticaloa seafood farm who were allegedly lined up and shot dead by the state security forces. In a telegram to President Jayawardene, the Batticaloa Citizens' Committee pleaded that Tamil ‘males were being systematically killed’ by the armed forces.

It was a telegram reminiscent of the communication sent by Paul Nallanayagam some 18 months ago about a similar incident and for which he was arraigned before the High Court of Colombo for publishing false rumours – a charge of which he was acquitted after a prolonged period of detention and trial. But then, it is unlikely that telegrams such as those sent by the Batticaloa Citizens' Committee, cause much concern to the Sri Lankan government. After all, to the Sri Lankan government every Tamil is *prima facie* a ‘terrorist’ and therefore qualified for elimination. The words of National

Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali uttered in Parliament in December 1984 spring to mind: ‘Who is a terrorist? Is it the person who uses a gun? Or is he also not a terrorist who accompanies a terrorist with a gun? Is he not also a terrorist who gives a house to a person who has a gun and who wants to kill? Is he also not a terrorist who watches the movement of the army and then goes and tells a terrorist: do not go that way, the army is around?’ And on that occasion the Minister went on to advise the Tamils in the Northern Province to take a ‘holiday’ with their relatives in other parts of the country, so that the armed forces would be able to identify those who remained as the real terrorists. And, today, it seems that a concentrated military offensive has been launched on all those Tamils who did not act on the Minister's advice and take a holiday from their homelands.

The recent killings by the state security forces follow a pattern that had already been set. It was a pattern that had emerged as long ago as 1983. In July 1983, more than 50 Tamil civilians were killed by the state security forces, on the streets of Jaffna and Orville H. Schell, former President of the New York City Bar Association, was moved to comment in the New York Times on the 24th August, 1983: “I believe that recent killings by security authorities follow a pattern previously set . . . The government must bear full responsibility for these breaches of the right to life and other violations of human rights, especially in light of the wide powers that in recent years it has given the security forces . . .”. And, despite the concerns expressed by international human rights organisations, the murder of Tamil civilians continued in 1984 and thereafter. In respect of the massacre in Chunnakam in March 1984, Amnesty International concluded ‘that there is strong evidence’ that the people ‘died as a result of deliberate random shootings by air force personnel.’ And the Sri Lankan army shot at random not only in Chunnakam but elsewhere in Jaffna as well.

In May 1984, the London Times commented that “in the past two months at least 100 Tamils in the northern province of Jaffna have been killed by security forces – the official explanation is that these people were all ‘terrorists’, but this is contradicted by the accounts of every independent observer who has visited Jaffna . . .”. And in June 1984, Amnesty International continued to be ‘greatly concerned’ that the government has permitted its security forces ‘to commit grave abuses of the right to life, that it has failed explicitly to condemn these abuses and to halt their occurrence’. And, yet again, in January 1985, Amnesty International referring to allegations ‘of widespread killings in the Mannar area’

‘by personnel of the security forces’ pointed out that ‘the scale of these killings’ was ‘unprecedented’ and that it was alleged that ‘at least ninety unarmed civilians, nearly all Tamils, many of them old men, women and children, were shot dead’.

According to another independent observer of Sri Lankan scene, Trevor Fishlock, writing in the London Times in January 1985, the ‘Sri Lankan forces were conducting a harsh and remorseless campaign of intimidation among the island's Tamil minority – by means of random murder, indiscriminate shootings, beatings, torture and plunder’. And Senator A. L. Missen summed it all up when he declared in the Australian Senate on the 13th March, 1986: “. . . some 6,000 (Tamils) have been killed altogether in the last few years. These events are not accidental. It can be seen that they are the result of a deliberate policy on the part of the Sri Lankan government . . .”.

And, it was a policy which the Sri Lankan government did not hesitate to publicly declare, from time to time. Kuldip Nayar reported in The Island on the 17th February, 1985: “. . . The President conceded that ‘terrible things’ were happening in Sri Lanka . . . asked if he would set up an inquiry commission to go into the atrocities committed by the army against the Tamils, he said: ‘Did the British appoint a commission during the war? . . .’. The Sri Lankan government has had its moments of frankness. It was frank when it declared that it was no longer ‘worried’ about the ‘lives or the opinion’ of the Jaffna people. It was frank when it declared that in its perception ‘the Sinhala people would be happy if the Tamils are starved’. It was frank in advising the Tamils to take a holiday from their homelands, so that those who remained may be identified as ‘terrorists’ and dealt with as ‘terrorists’. It was frank when it declared that it was ‘at war’ with the Tamil people. And, it is important that the Sri Lankan government should be taken at its word.

The Sri Lankan government is engaged in a war to subjugate the Tamil people. But the process of subjugation is not without difficulty. The victim does not quietly submit. He screams for help. He seeks refuge and becomes a refugee. And, he even has the temerity to resist and retaliate. And in an increasingly small world, injustice anywhere begins to affect peace everywhere. And in the end, it is this which has given rise to the increasing international concern for securing human rights. Today, there is a need for informed opinion everywhere, to recognise that the continuing violations of human rights by the Sri Lankan government are not some accidental happenings – they have come as the deliberate response of the Sri Lankan

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APPEAL OF

Tamil Welfare & Human Rights Committee (U.S.A.) to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the present plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils

IN DESPERATION, we plead with you to act decisively and promptly to save the Tamils in Sri Lanka from the current economic blockade by the government. We are disturbed by the reports that the people in Jaffna have been totally deprived of fuel and even medicines, oxygen and other essential hospital supplies. Fuel shortage has seriously affected the movement of ambulances, thus denying the facilities to deal with emergency medical treatment.

These moves by the Sri Lankan Government do not come as a surprise to us because we find that the J. R. Jayawardene regime is only carrying out its designs which are not secret as evidenced from the following public utterances:

1. During Interview with Mr. Ian Ward of Daily Telegraph, July 11, 1983

"I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people . . . now, we cannot think of them, not about their lives or their opinion . . . the more you put pressure on the North (Tamil territories) the happier Sinhala people will be here . . . really, if I starve the Tamils out the Sinhala people will be happy . . ."

2. During BBC Interview on October 25, 1985

"I am not fully prepared to tackle Jaffna. I want to finish first with the other provinces. It is not difficult to handle Jaffna. We can cut off food supplied to the peninsula and flush out the Terrorists (Tamils) in a month's time."

These helpless and persecuted Tamils living in northern and eastern Sri Lanka continue to rely totally on you and India for their survival and safety. We feel that India has an obligation to save the Tamils and also to provide their essential supplies. Also we feel that India has the responsibility to raise the issue at international forums without further delay, and to ensure justice and the safety of Tamils. We submit that the national leaders in India should be concerned about the worsening situation in Sri Lanka and join forces with you in protecting the Tamils who share a common culture, language and religion with fellow Indians. We are not certain whether the Tamil Nadu government have appraised you of the seriousness of the situation in the midst of their own problems.

J. R. Jayawardene talks about a negotiated settlement, which has always been a facade designed merely to placate India, to deceive the international community while he continued to systematically eliminate the Tamils with his long-time determination to annihilate them, and to erase them from the face of Sri Lanka. If it is really so, it will haunt India in the future and we would have been silent victims. How else could we perceive the mass killings, rapes, plunder, arson, destruction of private property and infrastructure over a period of almost ten years? In July 1983 about 4,000 Tamils were killed. In 1985, the year that was

hailed as the year of peace in which India was actively involved, 2,215 Tamils were killed. More than 1,000 Tamils were killed in 1986 and many more taken into custody and disappeared. This was a year in which not a single day passed without 'talks about a negotiated settlement' with active Indian participation. The year 1987 has started with the economic blockade of the northern province and continues with further elimination of Tamils in the eastern province. The government has intensified its military violence against

Tamils, and hundreds of Tamils have already been killed in the eastern province. We do not have to detail the chaos and calamity wrought by such heinous crimes. It is no secret that the Sri Lankan government feared India for decades till 1981. Now, it is perhaps the perception of Jayawardene and his advisors that India has been vacillating and lacking political perception thus encouraging the Sri Lanka government to commit crimes that were never done by the majority against a powerless minority in any country in human history.

We appeal to you "PLEASE ACT NOW AND IN EFFECTIVE MANNER TO SAVE THE HELPLESS TAMILS . . .". Let it not be said that the patriots of India ignored the sentiments of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Let them all give you moral support.

Benjamin J. Raj, President

February 7, 1987

Message cabled to the Prime Minister of India regarding economic blockade of the Northern Province on 23.1.87

ECONOMIC BLOCKADE of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, in particular the stoppage of fuel and essential food supplies, is causing grave hardship to the population. Crops, irrigation, public and private transportation, operation of hospitals and medical facilities, and distribution of food and essential goods have come to a standstill. Population is threatened by starvation and death from lack of food and medical facilities. In view of this impending human calamity of grave proportion, we appeal to your honourable self to intervene and take action to force withdrawal of this blockade forthwith. Despite appeals on humanitarian grounds from the citizens of Northern Province, President Jayawardene has refused to withdraw the blockade. Immediate intervention from your government alone can save the people of the Northern Province from disaster. We make this plea to you in desperation for prompt action.

DR. BENJAMIN JOSEPH RAJ,

President of the Tamil Welfare and Human Rights Committee of The United States of America

CANDIDLY SPEAKING — Continued from page 3

government to the claim of the Tamils to be recognised as people. The Sri Lankan government seeks to intimidate the Tamil people by threatening genocide. And, to paraphrase the words of Professor Leo Kruper, there is today an urgent need to refine the norms for 'humanitarian intervention for the exercise of the right of self-determination' of people. This is the positive area of human rights work, to which, both governments and non-governmental agencies, concerned not merely with mouthing platitudes but with securing justice, should increasingly give their time and energies. **Otherwise, genocide will continue to be a scourge and human rights more often than not a mere**

exercise in rhetoric. And it is in this context that we welcome Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's initiative in calling upon the Sri Lankan government to lift the fuel blockade, desist from the continued military onslaught on the Tamil people, and to get to the negotiating table. Hopefully, the Sri Lankan government will recognise that peace will not come by killing more and more Tamils and by seeking to starve the remainder into submission — it will come only through a negotiating process firmly founded on the recognition of the Tamils of Ceylon as a nation. It is around reason that peace will grow.

Savitri

RESUME OF ACTIVITIES IN 1986 OF TAMIL WELFARE & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE (U.S.A.)

8 Camellia Court, Baltimore, MD 21234

1. The committee organised a memorial service for all the Tamil victims of Sri Lanka. This service was done in collaboration with Washington Tamil Sangam.
2. The committee organised a signature campaign in support of unifying all Tamil areas in Sri Lanka. More than one thousand signatures were sent to the Indian Prime Minister.
3. We exhibited the photographs of Tamil victims to Indian gatherings such as Association of Indians in America and attracted several enquiries.
4. The members talked about 'Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka' in India House of Worship, a Gujarati organisation in Washington.
5. India House of Worship on the initiative of Prof. B. P. Shah presented a huge parcel of used clothes to Tamil refugees at Madras which was sent to M.U.S.T.
6. The committee members sent telegrams, letters etc., to Indian leaders at appropriate times to desist from disastrous decisions and to put the case in its proper perspective. We will continue to do so in the interests of India and the Tamils.
7. The committee members discussed 'Human rights violations in Sri Lanka' in Medical Scientists Committee, NIH, Civitan International, Silver Spring, Amnesty International etc. and evoked response and concern.
8. The committee released a pamphlet on the third anniversary of mass violence which occurred in Sri Lanka (July 1983) and this was sent to several key persons, organisations and news media in USA and abroad.
9. The committee in collaboration with Amnesty International, USA has distributed literature, videotapes and audiotapes for mass circulation in USA.

This was our humble start for 1986. We can sustain it further with your donations by cheque, stamps etc. Though there are requests to make our committee international, we are unable to do so because of lack of time and money.

Sri Lanka Blacklists Swedish Professor

A SWEDISH SCIENTIST, Peter Schalk, has been pronounced "undesirable" by the Sri Lankan Government - this despite the fact that his research is supported by Swedish aid money.

Peter Schalk is professor on history of religion with emphasis on India and East Asia at the Uppsala University. His treatise dealt with Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

For the past two years Schalk has amongst other things devoted himself to a great scientific project on the armed conflict between the ruling Sinhalese and the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. "I was scheduled to give a series of lectures in Jaffna. There was nothing controversial and the subject did not even deal with Sri Lanka", says Professor Schalk.

The Recipient of Aid Money

"It looks to me as if the Lankan Government wishes to prevent me from gaining contact with Tamil scientists", says Professor Schalk. Aru Sandanam, a Tamil doctor resident in Sweden for the past 17 years, says that a series of independent observers had earlier been refused entry permits to Sri Lanka. This applies amongst others to personnel from the Red Cross and to journalists.

Scientific Research Scrubbed

Other scientists are also affected by the hardening control imposed by the Lankan authorities. In future all scientific research projects will be scrutinised for approval by the Lankan embassies in the various donor countries before a visa is granted.

"I know of four Swedish scientists who are directly affected by this decision but for them there should be no great problem as they are technicians", said Professor Schalk.

The Hydro-Electric Scheme at Kotmale in Sri Lanka financed by Sweden will be

finalised with at least 250 million crowns during this and the coming financial year. Over and above this SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority) is contributing about 200 million a year on education and development in the rural areas. With this investment SIDA will be meeting the criticism that the aid to Sri Lanka is only benefitting the Sinhalese elite.

"It is idealistic but naive. By entering into an agreement with Sri Lanka one will at the same time legalise a detestable regime which terrorises the Tamil population by even dropping bombs", says Sven-Ake Aulin, a journalist familiar with the country.



PETER SCHALK

Tamil Housing Project

TWO HUNDRED MEMBERS of the Toronto Tamil community joined representatives of four levels of government on the afternoon of January 11 to commemorate the official start of construction of Tamil Co-operative Homes. The ceremonial sod turning took place at the construction site on Wade Avenue in Toronto's west end and was followed by a reception at Perth Avenue Co-op in the same neighbourhood.

As President of the non-profit Co-operative, Mr. Mahe Thuraiajah welcomed the guests and led the ceremonies. Representing the Government of Canada, which through its agency, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, guarantees the 100% mortgage financing and provides an annual operating subsidy, was Mr. Ken Holder, Toronto branch manager of CMHC. The Ontario Ministry of Housing, which also provides an annual operating subsidy and rent-g geared-to-income assistance for half the project's 129 households, was represented by Mr. Bill Munro, a Ministry official.

While the municipal governments are not involved in the financing of the Co-op, both the City of Toronto Alderman,

Betty Disero, and the Metropolitan Toronto Councillor, Richard Gilbert, had been helping in getting community support and municipal approval for the eight-storey apartment complex. Ms. Disero was able to take part in the ceremony while Councillor Gilbert was represented by his assistant, Mr. Rob Maxwell.

The Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities (SACEM), the sponsoring organisation which first began pursuing the development of a housing Co-operative in 1984, was represented by its President, Mrs. Rosaline Rajanayagam. She gave a resumé of the activities of SACEM, noting in particular the relationship of the housing Co-operative to the larger task of welcoming recent refugees to Canada and publicising the nature of the troubles in Ceylon.

The construction of the rental project will take around 14 months with initial occupancy to begin in March 1988.

Lantana Non-Profit Homes, 761 Queen Street W., Toronto, Ontario M6J 1G1, telephone (416) 366-3734 will provide further information for would-be residents.

News from Canada

Tamils March To Protest Sri Lankan Conditions

By Elana Rabinovitch

TWO HUNDRED Tamil demonstrators marched on Parliament Hill to protest what they say is the Sri Lankan government's recent action of preventing food, medicine and gasoline from reaching the island country's northern province where nearly 1,000,000 Hindu Tamils live. The march began at the Sri Lankan Embassy and continued on to Parliament Hill until below zero temperatures forced organisers to cut the rally short.

Rev. Philip Ratnapala, president of the Eelam-Tamil Association in Ottawa, said the demonstration was to urge the Canadian government to aid Tamils who have had to flee the country to other areas, particularly South India, because of the ongoing civil war.

Earlier, at the Sri Lankan embassy, the demonstrators presented the office of the High Commissioner with a list of grievances. The charges included the embargo of supplies in the northern region, as well as the alleged killings of innocent people in the eastern province, another area of the country heavily populated with Tamils.

Tamil spokesmen said the Sinhalese government's action is particularly crippling to the country's Tamil minority. In the wake of the government's expulsion of Red Cross workers in the area in 1983 and without medical aid, pharmaceuticals and food, Tamils are dying, victims of a civil war which has escalated since it began that year, they said.

By courtesy of "The Ottawa Citizen"

THE TAMILS OF CANADA PETITION THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

We Urge The Government

1. To persuade the Jayawardene Government of Sri Lanka to restore the transportation of food and fuel supplies to the Tamil Areas of Sri Lanka,
2. To use the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to give emergency relief to the poor Tamil refugees in the State of Tamil Nadu, India where there are over 100,000 refugees from Sri Lanka,
3. To give financial aid to the State Government of Tamil Nadu in Madras to cater to the basic needs of the Tamil refugees,
4. To urge the Government of Sri Lanka to allow the International Red Cross/Crescent to assist the victims of civil war in the Northern and Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. (The Sri Lankan

Government has banned and expelled the Red Cross workers since July, 1983).

5. To confer with the Commonwealth Office in London and plan to send a Canadian Peace Delegation of eminent persons to bring peace to this island country. This peace delegation to visit Colombo, Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Madras and New Delhi to urge all parties to resolve this bitter ethnic conflict,
6. To send a Canadian medical team with medical supplies to Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Madras to care for the wounded victims of the civil war.

January 16, 1987

P.O. Box 2426, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5W5

Appendix A: Ethnic Breakdown - North & East

NORTH	Total	Sinhalese	Tamils	Moors	Indians	Others
Jaffna	831,112	4,615	792,246	13,757	20,001	493
Mannar	106,940	8,710	54,106	28,464	14,072	1,588
Vavuniya	95,904	15,978	54,541	6,640	18,592	255
Mullaitivu	77,512	3,948	58,904	3,777	10,766	116
	1,111,468	33,149	959,797	52,638	63,431	2,453
		2.98%	86.35%	4.73%	5.71%	.23%
EAST						
Batticaloa	330,899	10,646	234,348	79,317	3,868	2,720
Amparai	388,786	146,371	78,315	161,481	1,410	1,209
Trincomalee	256,790	86,341	86,743	74,304	6,767	2,526
	976,475	243,358	399,406	315,201	12,045	6,465
		24.92%	40.90%	32.28%	1.24%	.66%
OVERALL TOTAL						
	2,087,943	276,507	1,359,203	367,839	75,476	8,918
		13.24%	65.10%	17.62%	3.61%	.43%

(From Census of Population and Housing 1981)

Sri Lanka: Tamil areas




Sri Lanka Tamils descend from South Indian settlers 1000-2500 years ago.

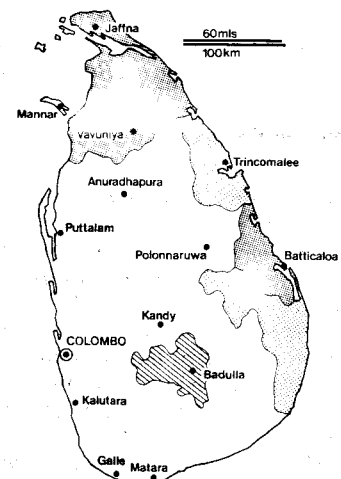
Indian Tamils descend from workers introduced by the British 70-120 years ago.

Country's population: 15m

SINHALA	74.0%
SRI LANKA TAMIL	12.6%
INDIAN TAMIL	5.6%
MOOR	7.1%
OTHER	0.7%

1981 Census

-  Over 50% Sri Lankan Tamil
-  20-35% Sri Lankan Tamil
-  Up to 47% Indian Tamil



LTTE Communique issued from Madras: 10 February, 1987.

SRI LANKA LAUNCHES ALL OUT OFFENSIVE IN THE NORTH

80 TAMIL CIVILIANS MASSACRED IN MANNAR

BY OPENING UP a new front of engagement at Thondamannaru, Valvettiturai and Palali, in the peninsula, Sri Lanka has escalated the arms conflict with the LTTE, and has transformed the entire Northern Province into a theatre of war. Fierce fighting is raging in several areas, between the LTTE fighters and Sinhala soldiers as the war reaches the fifth day, assuming the dimension of an all-out offensive by Sri Lankan forces in a desperate attempt to wrest control of the North.

LTTE guerrillas are putting up a stiff resistance in several areas of Mannar and Kilinochchi, and the troops having suffered serious reverses in the battle with the LTTE have turned their revenge on civilian masses. The worst affected are the people from Mannar, who are being subjected to untold suffering from the rampaging army. 4,000 troops drawn from various camps, descending on the villages of

Pandiviruchchan, Thiruketheswaram, Manthai, Uyelankulam and Parappukadanthan, went on a wild rampage slaughtering innocent civilians and burning down their houses. More than 80 civilians were hacked to death and the rampaging soldiers left a trail of arson, looting and rape. Women and children were also mercilessly massacred. 18 refugees from Thiruketheswaram refugee camp were rounded up and shot dead.

About 500 refugees have been rounded up at Madhu church by the army and held as hostages and used as a human shield whenever the military advanced. About 10,000 people have fled into the jungle and are facing starvation. **In the meantime, a fighter aircraft has dropped napalm bombs on civilian targets and set ablaze more than 30 houses.**

In the clashes in Mannar, which is raging for the third day, 14 soldiers have been killed and a number of them

wounded. The LTTE have lost six fighters.

The jubilant claims made by the Sri Lankan army, that it has destroyed LTTE bases and killed a large number of fighters at Mannar, are far from the truth. The army has killed innocent civilians but claims to have wiped out LTTE fighters. Military atrocities are continuing in the area.

Heavy fighting is still raging at Kilinochchi for the fifth day. In a fierce counter-offensive, the LTTE fighters have driven the troops from Uruthayapuram, where they attempted to hold hostages.

In the peninsula, heavy fighting is raging around Thondamannaru and Vasavilan. Troops, drawn from the Valvettiturai, Palali, and Thondamannaru army camps are locked in a fierce battle with LTTE guerrillas near Thondamannaru bridge. In an all-out war in the North, the Sri Lankan government have deployed more than 10,000 troops in this combined operation. The air force and navy are actively involved in providing support to the land forces.

Fuel Embargo & Military Onslaught

ON 2 JANUARY, 1987, the Government of Sri Lanka announced an embargo on fuel supplies to the Northern Tamil district of Sri Lanka. The government has admitted that this measure was a response to the declaration by Tamil militants that they would control the issue of vehicle licences as part of their plan to set up their own civil administration in the region.

The fuel embargo covers supplies of petrol, dieselene and paraffin to an area densely populated by civilians who are heavily dependent on them. Petrol and dieselene are vital not only for transport, but also to operate agricultural machinery (water pumps, tractors etc) and to provide lighting. Paraffin is still widely used in the villages of this region as cooking fuel.

There is also growing evidence of an unofficial, yet effective embargo on movement of supplies. It is reported that nearly 250 trucks have been prevented from reaching the northern peninsula. These trucks were loaded not only with food but also urgent medical supplies including oxygen for hospitals in the region.

The civilian Tamil population of this region who have had to put up with the excesses of an army of occupation during the last three years is now being subjected to a comprehensive economic blockade which could well lead to a Biafran situation - death through starvation and lack of medical facilities.

More recent proof of this callous and

ham-fisted approach is just emerging with reports (quoted in the World Service of the BBC, on 1 February) of a three day attack with armoured cars and helicopter gunships on an area in the Eastern Province, where it is estimated, 200 civilians lost their lives. Some who survived the attack claim that workers in a local factory were lined up and gunned down. In spite of the Sri Lankan government's denial of these reports as "borrowed war stories", the neighbouring Indian government has taken these seriously enough to express 'grave concern' at this latest development.

The actions taken by the Sri Lankan authorities to contain Tamil militancy show a cynical disregard for the awful sufferings they heap on innocent civilians, even though Tamil militancy itself was nurtured by the government's own prevarication and vacillation in dealing with the Tamil demand for a reasonable measure of autonomy.

These latest moves, however, go far beyond the scope of actions available to a civilised government faced with a similar problem.

We therefore urge those in this country, who are concerned with the sanctity of human lives, to voice their concern and dissuade the Sri Lankan government from continuing these devastating methods of reprisal.

C Kathiresan, On behalf of the Human Rights Council
Standing Committee of Tamils 2 February, 1987

Tamils get landed status in Canada

A TOTAL of 8,639 persons (many of them Sri Lankan Tamils) have been granted landed immigrant status in Canada between the period 21st May to 19th December, 1986. This number is out of a total of 25,000 claimants who had arrived in Canada before 21st May, 1986. One thousand two hundred and forty eight applications were rejected, and about 2,500 kept pending for further checks.

The refugee question and the influx of a large number of refugee claimants to Canada have been periodically highlighted in the press here, first by the arrival of 155 Sri Lankans by boat off the coast of Newfoundland in August, 1986, and more recently by the arrival of thousands of Turks and persons from South American countries, all trying to beat an imaginary deadline when Canada might shut its doors. In the Montreal area alone more than 700 'refugees', most of them Turks, arrived in just three days.

S.V.P.

Crackdown on refugee flood

Canada has introduced emergency measures to stem the flood of refugees coming into Canada. On February 20th, Immigration Minister Benoit Bouchard announced that he was scrapping the blanket approval for refugee claimants from 18 countries including Sri Lanka, to which Canada did not deport persons if their claims for refugee status were found to be groundless. There will not be any automatic admittance of refugee claimants at Canadian borders, who come through the United States. Transit visas will also be required from citizens of 98 countries who plan to travel through Canada to another country.

"FULL-SCALE" Probe Into Prawn Farm Massacre

THE GOVERNMENT will launch a full-scale inquiry into the Kakkadicholai prawn farm incident, National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali said yesterday (February 3).

This follows allegations by the Serendib Sea Food Company that the Police Commandos of the Special Task Force had killed 22 of its employees and counter allegations by the STF that the farm was used as a terrorist hideout with several terrorists on the pay of the company.

Mr. Victor Santiapillai, Managing Director of the Company has said the employees shot dead were not terrorists. He says the employees were ordered by three members of the STF into the farm's tractor trailer and shot.

Mr. Santiapillai says the driver of the tractor and a few others are still around to tell the tale. He has also alleged that the STF opened the sluice gates of a number of grow-out ponds thus allowing the prawns to float out of the farm.

Mr. Athulathmudali said Mr. Santiapillai was of unimpeachable character but the Managing Director of a company could not be expected to admit terrorists were employed by the company. The Managing Director of a company must protect its employees, he said. Mr. Athulathmudali said if the tractor driver and some others were alive, they would be welcome to make a statement to the police to assist in the investigations.

"The Island" reliably learns that the Board of Directors of the Company comprise Mr. V. Santiapillai, Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam, Messrs. N. Santiapillai, Joe de Livera, V. E. Selvarajah, Ranjith Fernando, David Milton, K. D. Wisler, R. Lund, I. Lund and Mrs. Milton.

Meanwhile Mr. Santiapillai rebutting the Media Centre's version says the facts, contrary to the Media Centre's flights of fancy, are as follows: Serendib Seafoods Ltd., is an FIAC-approved public company with a 50/50 shareholding of a group of foreign investors (mainly US and British) and a broad-based group of Sri Lankan investors including three institutions, viz the National Development Bank, the Export Development Board and the Capital Development and Investment Co. Ltd.

The company has pioneered prawn culture in Sri Lanka and was the first to export cultured prawn from Sri Lanka in April 1985. Its farm (there is no factory or processing plant) is located in Mannunai, adjacent to the village of Mahuladitivu, about two to three miles from Kakkadicholai.

The small farm office is located within the farm premises, while the main farm office and the Farm Manager's residence are combined together in a house at Boundary Road, Batticaloa. Mr. Bruce Cyr, who is the third in line of foreign Farm Managers never lived at the farm, as the farm has only very basic sleeping facilities for local night shift staff.

On 1 January, 1987, a Sri Lankan, Mr. Karunaraj (now shot dead) who had worked for the company since its inception, was appointed Farm Manager in pursuance of the Company's policy of replacing foreigners with trained Sri Lankans. Mr. Bruce Cyr was to continue his connection with the Mannunai farm in the capacity of a Visiting Agent, while his main responsibility would be to develop a new farm on the west coast. On my last visit to Batticaloa, I met Mr. Sumith de Silva, Co-ordinating Officer for the Batticaloa area, on 17 January, 1987 and introduced to him the new Farm Manager. The Accountant of the Batticaloa office also was present.

The farm has been very much operational till

the events of last week. In January, 1987 we had two harvests which brought in for the Company and the country Rs. 3.3 million in foreign exchange. Nine other grow-out ponds which were due to be harvested up to the end of March contained, conservatively, Rs. 12.5 million worth of prawns.

As Chief Executive of the company I have exercised the greatest care in recruiting staff to the company by making enquiries from government officials in Batticaloa and having local senior citizens (e.g., the present Secretary of the Batticaloa Citizens' Committee and his predecessor) screen new recruits.

Furthermore, we maintained very cordial relationships with the senior officers of the security forces in Batticaloa (at present, myself with Mr. Sumith de Silva and Mr. Bruce Cyr with Mr. Jayasundere, Head of the Special Task Force) and we have repeatedly told them that, if they had the slightest reservations about any of our Batticaloa staff, they should let us know quietly and we would take action discreetly to get such persons out of the Company.

I repeated the request to Mr. Sumith de Silva on 17 January, 1987, when I met with him and he assured me and my two colleagues that he had no such reservations and would give every support to a development project in the area that offered employment opportunities. How these same good men became terrorists on 28 January, 1987 confounds me.

Against this background, I totally reject the Media Centre's charge that the 22 Serendib Seafoods staff members (plus 12 still missing) who were shot by the security forces were terrorists. The Centre must find some other more intelligent and plausible ways of handling such incidents.

By courtesy of "The Island", 3rd February, 1987.

Sri Lanka Expects

India . . .

MR. JAYAWARDENE made it clear in Parliament yesterday that his Government would neither put a halt to security operations nor lift the fuel embargo on Jaffna until the LTTE agree to cease violent activities and military preparations and make an announcement in that regard.

He said that Sri Lanka expects India to 'underwrite' the implementation of any agreement reached between the Government and the LTTE.

He said if the LTTE was prepared to attend talks with the Government of Sri Lanka towards a peaceful solution 'appropriate talks' might be held in New Delhi with the assistance of Indian Government.

He said he had conveyed this to India on February 13 in his response to Mr. Gandhi's message. Mr. Jayawardene in his response reaffirmed that 'the results of the discussions held so far, including the proposals of December 19, will be the basis for evolving a durable solution'.

He also said that if the militants give up their arms, a general amnesty would be granted to them and when talks for a peaceful solution commence the Government would release those held in custody under the PTA against whom there were no charges.

By courtesy of Indian Express, February 20

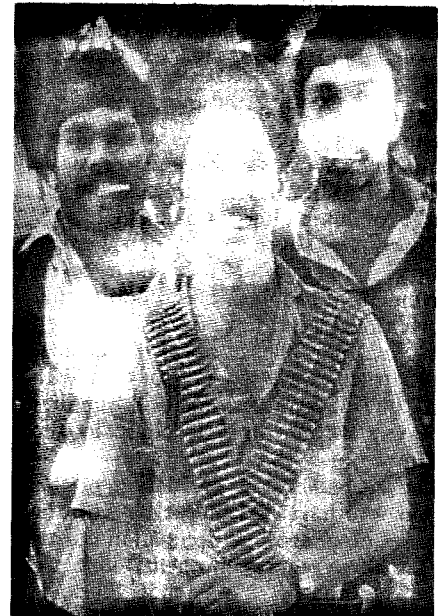
Tamil Rebels Prefer Suicide To Capture

A TAMIL REBEL LEADER has disclosed that more than 200 guerrillas have committed suicide by swallowing the ampoule of potassium cyanide that each wears around his neck in case he is captured.

"It is better to take cyanide and take your own life than be subjected to inhuman torture," said Rahim, a lieutenant of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

"We are only human. No one can withstand torture. We would reveal secrets, and so we choose an honourable death rather than betray our liberation struggle," he said, adding that every one of the 5,000 rebels wears the poison capsule. Cyanide is readily available as a component in fertiliser production and other processes. His claim was endorsed by Brigadier Gerry de Silva, army commander of the Jaffna peninsula. He said that "more than 50 per cent take cyanide" but he could not supply casualty figures.

Since 1982, Rahim said, the "Tigers" have lost 420 men in battles with government forces and more than 200 have committed suicide with cyanide.



Tamil Tigers in their Jaffna barracks proudly displaying cyanide capsules.

JAYAWARDENE'S BULLET-RIDDLED HEART

"When every bullet from 'terrorists' or security forces kills a civilian, the bullet goes into my heart,"

President Junius Richard Jayawardene at SAARC meeting in Bangalore.

What a terrible tragedy, that Sri Lanka's dear President should have such a bullet-riddled heart. Only now the people of this country, including the thousands of innocent Tamil civilians, men, women, children and the rest of the world know how hard the President's heart could be after so many bullets have entered it during the last three years. Or, could it be possible that the great President has no heart now? To have absorbed so many bullets into that precious heart has indeed been a stupendous feat, especially if such a heart could have existed after almost a thousand bullets, both from the security forces and the 'terrorists'.

The President has also followed the bullet in my heart cry with, *inter alia*, "I do not know how to stop it. Violence achieves nothing, except distress and hatred". Then he goes on about the Gautama Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and elaborates on having participated in the non-violent movement in India and ends his speech thus: "As I say again violence means hatred. Hatred cannot be conquered by violence, but only by non-violence and love. That is the way I would like to follow."

Never Went Back

Great sentiments and well expressed Mr. President. While reading your speech, my mind wandered down memory lane . . . the famous liberalisation of the economy affected the farmers of the North and East very badly. Why wasn't the All Party Conference to settle the minority problems called? After 1977 the gradual escalation of violence started on both sides - the security forces and the militants. . . In 1979 the Government threatened to 'wipe out terrorism in six months' and a State of Emergency was declared. Several Tamil youths taken into custody never went back. . . and although even a Parliamentary Select Committee did not exonerate the police and the security forces, no further investigations were made.

In 1981, the UNP candidate Thiagarajah and two policemen were killed by the militants during the DDC election campaign. That resulted in the storming of Jaffna by the JSS shock troops and security forces. The Jaffna Public Library with around 95,000 valuable books were burnt. The public markets in Jaffna, Chunnakam and Kankesanthurai were also destroyed by fire. . . that was real violence which could not control hatred.

Then came the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and since 1979 how many young men have been taken into custody

and detained often incommunicado on the suspicion of being involved with 'terrorism'?

Amnesty International, the Civil Rights Movement in Sri Lanka and the Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality have condemned the PTA and expressed grave concern at the violation of human rights and excesses of the security forces. Many Sinhala political parties have also called on the Government to repeal the PTA.

Settling By Thuggery

That was in the North. What about the Sinhala areas in the south? Since 1977 thuggery was resorted to by the Government to suppress dissenting views. The general strike of July 1980 demanding a salary increase was suppressed by dismissing the strikers numbering about 100,000.

A pro Government mob attacked a section of the strikers, killing Somapala a trade unionist. Their families are starving. Around 13 of them committed suicide. Yet about 10,000 have not been given back their jobs. Violence was used to suppress all trade union activity.

Thuggery is synonymous with violence. During the last few years after 1977, thugs have been used against groups or individuals that sought redress of any grievances through peaceful demonstration.

Take the cases of students, women workers on strike, nurses, the 700 blind weavers, Buddhist monks, joint gatherings of the clergy, the Sinhala Balavegaya, Prof. Ediriweera Sarathchandra. They were set upon by thugs with the assistance of the police. May be our President in his absolute innocence and dharmista ways was not aware of any of those incidents.

Police officers found guilty of violating human rights were immediately promoted and any damages ordered by the Supreme Court paid by the Government. To crown everything Supreme Court judges were humiliated and intimidated by thugs who had been transported in state owned vehicles.

Several leading politicians in the UNP are alleged to have hit squads ready to be rushed to any place where settlement by thuggery was called for. Settling matters by thuggery may give short-term results suitable to the Government. But thuggery could boomerang as has happened in the case of the militants. Of course the President, whose heart bleeds when a bullet enters it, has not been aware of any of the incidents of violence given in general outline.

Unbridled Violence

The Referendum of December 1982, when unbridled violence and thuggery were unleashed often encouraged by the police, was the final trump in the game of thuggery. Then came the holocaust of July 1983. The orgy of looting, arson, rape and murder went unchecked. The immediate provocation, allegedly was the killing of 17 Sinhala soldiers by Tamil militants on July 23. But the killing of about 40 Tamil young men taken by the security forces on July 24 was made public only later.

From the dawn of July 25, thugs went on the rampage. There was absolute anarchy, with some sections of the security forces participating in the violence. A curfew was declared from Monday 2 p.m. to Wednesday. That kept indoors only the law abiding people. The thugs never had it so good.

On Thursday, 29 July, 1983, President Jayawardene spoke to the nation on television. His message was in reality an excuse for the violence by the Sinhalese. He added that early legislation (the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution making the demand for a separate state illegal) would be passed early.

It would have been fun going down the corridors of memory had the incidents that took place in this country not been so full of tragedy, misery and frustration for not only the Tamils but to all reasonable Sinhalese.

However, I only weep for the bullet-riddled heart of President Junius Richard Jayawardene.

A. M. HETTIARACHCHI

EROS Leader Pleads for PLO-type Status

The Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS) co-ordinator, Mr. V. Balakumar, has appealed to India formally to recognise the liberation movements fighting for the Tamil cause. He called upon the India Government to spell its stand out clearly.

No problem with LTTE: Addressing a press conference in Jaffna, Mr. Balakumar said the liberation movements would then gain the status enjoyed by organisations like the PLO and SWAPO. Such a move would dilute the aggressive stance of Colombo in negotiation, and increase India's leverage in the process. Mr. Balakumar did not say which movements he wanted recognised. The EROS leader, however, said that his movement had no problem with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

He further said EROS was not prepared to take part in direct talks with the Sri Lanka Government alone. Experience of bilateral talks between the Tamil political parties and Colombo had shown that nothing worthwhile could be achieved. The EROS was not prepared to talk without Indian good offices being available.

Interim settlement unlikely: Mr. Balakumar said the EROS ultimate goal was Eelam, comprising the Northern and Eastern Provinces and Uva district. It did not think an interim settlement was possible but was prepared to accept one if it emerged. If it did, the EROS would definitely not contest for any political office, he said.

JAFFNA – Bearing The Blockade

COLOMBO'S economic blockade of the Jaffna area in northern Sri Lanka is the latest strategy in the Sri Lankan Government's war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the group that now has total control of the area. To gauge the success of that strategy and analyse the overall liminary situation, India Today's Madras Correspondent S. H. Venkatramani visited Jaffna last month and reports:—

THICK SMOKE billowed over Jaffna last fortnight. But it had nothing to do with any battle between the army and the LTTE, or the "boys" as they are popularly known. It was a fiery demonstration of the total control that the Tigers currently wield over the strategic city. The cause of the smoke was the four-storeyed Veerasingham Hall, the tallest building in Jaffna town. Located within 50 yards of the Old Dutch Fort, it had once housed income tax and labour department offices.

Shortly before noon, the northern regional commander of the LTTE, Sathasivam Krishnakumar alias Kittu, his deputy Kanakarathnam alias Major Rahim, and other important leaders of the militant group arrived at the building site with barrels of petrol and bottles of kerosene. They had managed to procure the fuel in spite of the total cut-off of all fuel supplies to the Jaffna peninsula by the Sri Lankan Government from the new year. They doused the building with fuel and then set the city landmark on fire.

"We decided to burn down these buildings because we had information that the army was planning to advance from the fort and occupy them," explained Rahim. The army, keen to live down the ignominy of having been contained by the Tigers, drives a lot of propaganda mileage by occupying abandoned buildings in the town.

But there is nobody who can raise as much as a finger against the LTTE among the 1.5 lakh people of Jaffna town or even the 8 lakh population of the entire Jaffna peninsula. Outside the Sri Lankan Air Force base in Palaly, the newly established army bridgehead in Mandaitivu Island off Jaffna town, and the tall boundary walls of the historic Jaffna Fort, it is the LTTE's writ that runs in the whole of the Jaffna peninsula as well as parts of Vavuniya and Mullaitivu districts immediately south of Jaffna, and a good chunk of the north-western Mannar district. The Sri Lankan Government had imposed a fuel blockade on Jaffna from January 2, because the Tigers, who had been gradually taking over more and more wings of the administration in the northern Jaffna peninsula, had declared their intention to register vehicles and police traffic.

After 1983, Colombo has slowly lost control of Jaffna. Police disappeared from the north. The taxation authorities and other government departments followed suit. Even the municipal sweepers vanished. Civil administration collapsed.

Today, at each of the nine entrances to Jaffna town within 100 to 200 metres of the periphery of the fort, a couple of armed

LTTE sentries stand guard. It is an ironic coexistence of the military forces and the militants. Anybody entering Jaffna town from anywhere near the fort area has to sign a register maintained at an LTTE entry post and take permission. The Tigers have put up road blocks and effectively mined the roads at each of these posts. Two battalions of uniformed soldiers at the fort and Palaly watch helplessly as groups of lungi-clad 16 to 25-year-olds sporting a variety of sophisticated weapons rule the Jaffna roost.

It is the LTTE, therefore, which has been trying to fuel Jaffna after taking on and practically wiping out the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation in April and May last year, and after bringing the curtain down on the activities of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front in the north.

The cadres of the Eelam Revolutionary Organisers are surviving in Jaffna because their Convener V. Balakumar has expressed confidence in the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE military commander who recently returned to Jaffna from Tamil Nadu. The other prominent military group, the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) has been confined to Tamil Nadu. Concedes S. M. Gopalathnam, editor of *Eelamurasu*, a Jaffna Tamil newspaper: "It is only the LTTE which is functioning in Jaffna." Towards the end of last year, the LTTE even gained implicit official recognition from Colombo when a peace delegation from the capital visited Jaffna and held discussions with the Tiger leaders.

But with the collapse of the Government's civil administration in the north the Tigers had to necessarily fan out into other than military areas of operation. That was where the liberation shoe began to pinch. The Tigers organised 116 people's courts to function in all the divisions of the peninsula, but certainly that kind of dispensation of summary justice wasn't foolproof. As Colombo stopped collecting income and business turnover taxes, the Tigers started arbitrarily collecting their own 10 per cent sales tax from wholesalers on what they had classified as luxuries like cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. The LTTE even made a half-hearted attempt to provide its own municipal conservancy services for the northern province, but quite apparently, the boys were much more at home with their bunkers rather than their brooms. And last month, as the LTTE announced that it was going to register vehicles and have its own traffic police,

Colombo came down heavily with a crippling fuel embargo.

Admittedly, Jaffna province had received 7.09 million gallons of petroleum products from Colombo during each of the last three months of the last year, which was half the normal monthly supply before 1983. But when Colombo suddenly clamped the fuel embargo, the peninsula had fuel stocks to last for barely a month.

The Jaffna economy had begun to totter much earlier. While there are hardly any economic statistics about the peninsula available, it is a pointer that while the Jaffna coast used to export over 30 metric tons of fish daily to southern Sri Lanka during the fishing season lasting two months in a year, the figure now is eight metric tons. And roughly one-third of the peninsula population is directly or indirectly dependent on fishing for its livelihood.

While some fuel was getting smuggled into the peninsula last fortnight, the exorbitant prices of kerosene and firewood has made life difficult for poor and lower middle class people. Firewood costs have gone up by 50 per cent. Petrol prices went up from the normal rate of Rs. 17.50 for a ¾ litre bottle to over Rs. 60. Consequently transport costs and the prices of all essential commodities also shot up. Potatoes weren't available in Jaffna last fortnight, and even locally grown onions, which used to be Rs. 3 a kg in relatively normal times, were being freely sold in Jaffna town for Rs. 10 a kg. Nearly a hundred lorries used to cross Elephant Pass every day carrying foodgrains and other essential commodities to the northern peninsula but last fortnight, on average, only four lorries were allowed to cross the pass everyday to go to the north.

The problems were everywhere. An official source disclosed that in the Jaffna Government Hospital half the stock of life-saving drugs would run out by mid-February and 19 of the 34 oxygen cylinders in the intensive care unit were empty.

The Sri Lankan Government deliberately imposed the economic blockade on Jaffna in the hope that the suffering northern Tamils would pressurise the Tigers to come to a settlement with Colombo. National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali made no secret of the fact that "what we want is the dismantling of the LTTE's civil administration and that the Tigers should come to negotiate with us. We can even think of giving amnesty to many militants. We are in touch with Kittu and Rahim but have not yet been able to establish contact with Prabhakaran". Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayawardene told India Today "I am willing to consider a general amnesty for all the militant Eelamists if they are willing to lay down arms and accept the unitary status of the country".

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THIMPU DECLARATION: THE PATH OF REASON

AT THIMPU, in July, 1985, all six Tamil Liberation Organisations, consisting of the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), and the parliamentary Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), jointly and unanimously declared:

"It is our considered view that any meaningful solution to the Tamil national question must be based on the following four cardinal principles:-

1. *recognition of the Tamils of Ceylon as a nation or nationality*
2. *recognition of the existence of an identified homeland for the Tamils in Ceylon*
3. *recognition of the right of self-determination of the Tamil nation*
4. *recognition of the right to citizenship and the fundamental rights of all Tamils who look upon the island as their country."*

"Different countries have fashioned different systems of governments to ensure these principles. We have demanded and struggled for an independent Tamil state as the answer to this problem arising out of the denial of these basic rights of our people . . . However, in view of our earnest desire for peace, we are prepared to give consideration to any set of proposals, in keeping with the above mentioned principles, that the Sri Lankan government may place before us."

The Thimpu declaration continues to represent a watershed in the Tamil struggle because apart from anything else, it was the expression of the joint and unanimous will of all six Tamil Liberation Organisations engaged in the struggle and it therefore served to crystallise the political issues of that struggle.

Sinhala Nationalism's Denial Of Tamil Nationalism

But, the negotiating process initiated at Thimpu floundered and continues to flounder because of the continued refusal of the Sri Lankan government to recognise the existence of the Tamil nation in Ceylon. The stand of the Sri Lankan government was enunciated by Dr. H. W. Jayawardene, the leader of the Sri Lankan government delegation to the talks:

" . . . it is clear that a political settlement of the Tamil question cannot be made either on the basis of the claim to be a separate nation or nationality distinct from other racial groups that are citizens of Sri Lanka or on the basis of a claim to be heirs to a territorially demarcated area styled the 'traditional homelands of the Tamils' transcending the provincial boundaries of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, since both such claims are inconsistent with and contradictory to a united nation" [Dr. H. W. Jayawardene's Report to the Cabinet on the Thimpu Talks - Sunday, 18th July, 1985].

And, ten months later, in presenting the so called 'peace proposals' of the Sri Lankan government to the Political Parties Conference on the 25th June, 1986, President Jayawardene reiterated that 'the proposals of the Sri Lankan Government have to be examined within the framework of the principles to which the Sri Lankan Government subscribes' and these included, not only 'the maintenance of the unity, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka', but also 'the maintenance of the unitary character of the Sri Lankan constitution'.

Pragmatism?

Again, Lord Avebury, a member of the International Emergency Committee on Sri Lanka has been moved to comment:

" . . . I may be wrong in my interpretation, but it is not helpful for either side to lay down, in advance of negotiations, conditions

which are absolute . . . If there is a genuine willingness to negotiate, the fairest solution would seem to be one that demands equal concessions, however that can be measured. On the other hand, there has been so much bombastic rhetoric about 'legitimate expectations' on the Tamil side, and so much bloodshed in the struggle for 'liberation', that some elements would find it emotionally impossible to accept anything less than unconditional surrender from the government . . ." [Lord Avebury: Keynote Speech of the International Alert USA Seminar on Sri Lanka, Los Angeles, 25th October, 1986].

The view that it is not 'helpful for either side to lay down, in advance of negotiations, conditions which are absolute' and the further view that 'given the willingness to negotiate, the fairest solution would seem to be one that demands equal concessions' are views that do have a certain pragmatic appeal. It is a pragmatic approach which may also be described as the 'shopkeeper's approach' to the resolution of conflict - that which is fair is the bargain that is struck. But it may not always be easy to determine where pragmatism ends and the slippery path of expediency begins. And the negotiating process may then descend into a political horsedeal, which at best may serve the immediate self interest of some of the negotiators, but will be unrelated to the central issues of the conflict. And political horsedeals quickly become unstuck. **A political negotiating process is concerned with securing the interests of large numbers of people and that which is fair and therefore acceptable to large numbers of people, cannot be determined without crystallising, beforehand and with some care, the central matters that are in issue. And, strange as it may seem to some, the Tamil Liberation Organisations took the view that an open discussion about the framework for the negotiating process would help, rather than thwart, the negotiating process.**

by Nadesan Satyendra

Thimpu Declaration: Rhetoric Or Path Of Reason?

Be that as it may, comments such as those made at the International Alert Seminar and the continued refusal of the Sri Lankan government to accept the framework suggested at Thimpu focuses attention on the need to examine the rationalities of the Thimpu declaration. Did the Thimpu declaration represent bombastic rhetoric or did it seek to concretise the political reality which had moved both the Tamil guerrilla movement and the Sri Lankan government to 'peace talks'? Did the Thimpu declaration prescribe 'absolutist' pre-conditions to the negotiating process or did it set out a principled framework intended to advance the negotiating process? Was the Thimpu declaration a reflection of an 'emotional' attitude which would not 'accept anything less than unconditional surrender from the Sri Lankan government' or, on the contrary, did the declaration recognise that 'different countries have fashioned different systems of government' to secure the principles set out in the declaration and did the declaration therefore seek to construct a rational basis for discussion about an acceptable political solution? What does reason show?

What Does Reason Show?

Reason shows that a political resolution of the conflict between the Sinhala people and the Tamil people should, after all, begin by recognising the existence of the Sinhala people as a people, and the Tamil people as a people. Otherwise we shall all be engaged in an exercise in cuckooland. And central to the Thimpu declaration was the claim for the recognition of the Tamils as a nation. And it was this which led the representatives of the Tamil Liberation Organisations to declare at the Thimpu Talks on 17th August, 1985:

" . . . we say, very respectfully, please understand that we too are a people and please deal with us on that basis, or not at all. Please do not give us the niceties of legal interpretations. Please tell us

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straight: do you regard us as a people or not? We are here because we seek to engage you in the serious business of talking about the problems that have arisen between the Sinhala people and the Tamil people. And that is why, as a reasonable people, we say at the beginning, please tell us with whom do you say you are talking? . . . And for our part, we declare here at Thimpu, without rancour and with patience, that we shall speak at Thimpu, or for that matter anywhere else, on behalf of the Tamil nation or not at all . . ." [Statement made at Thimpu on behalf of the Tamil Liberation Organisations on the 17th August, 1985]

A Nation Is Not A State

What, then is a nation? It is useful to begin by recognising with Professor Seton-Watson that the belief that every state is a nation or that all sovereign states are 'national' states has done much to obfuscate understanding of political realities:

"The belief that every state is a nation, or that all sovereign states are national states, has done much to obfuscate human understanding of political realities. A state is a legal and political organisation, with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens. A nation is a community of people, whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture, a national consciousness . . ." [Professor Hugh Seton-Watson: Nations & States - Methuen, London, 1977]

The continued assertion of the Sri Lankan government that the demand for the recognition of a 'Tamil nation was inconsistent with and contradictory to a united nation' is an attempt to obfuscate an understanding of political realities. It is an assertion which confuses by using the term 'nation' in two different senses at the same time. It is an assertion which prefers to cloud the reality that not 'every state is a nation' and that not 'all sovereign states are national states'. And it is an assertion which refused to face up to the question whether Sri Lanka today is a multi-national state consisting of both the Sinhala nation and the Tamil nation.

The Political Force of Tamil Nationalism

But, perhaps, more than matters³⁹ of constitutional or international law (though, these are not without relevance and do have their place) that which must be confronted in a search for a political solution, is the political reality. What is the political force of Tamil nationalism today? Again, what does reason show? Reason shows that the Tamil nation is a deep and horizontal comradeship which exists amongst the Tamil people - deep because it is rooted not only in their cultural identity but also in their suffering; horizontal because it prevails despite the inequalities amongst them. It is a stubborn togetherness born out of a process of differentiation and opposition. Distress has bound the Tamils of Ceylon together. Suffering is a great teacher. That was the lesson that was taught by Gautama, the Buddha. And the suffering of the Tamil people, appropriately enough in Buddhist Sri Lanka has served to educate them about their identity - that it did not matter whether they were Jaffna Tamils, or Colombo Tamils, or Batticaloa Tamils or Trincomalee Tamils or Badulla Tamils or Indian Tamils - that it did not matter whether they were Hindu Tamils or Christian Tamils or Muslim Tamils - that it did not matter whether they were so called 'high caste' Tamils or so called 'low caste' Tamils - that it did not matter whether they were public servants, professionals, teachers, students or farmers, employees or employers, well-educated or ill-educated, qualified or not - that which did matter to the environment in which they lived was that they were Tamils.

And, it was the political force constituted by this togetherness which took the representatives of the Tamil people to Thimpu in July, 1985. It was a political force rooted in the direct personal feelings and the material interests of large sections of the Tamil people, whether they be public servants deprived of increments and promotions in consequence of the Sinhala Only Act, whether they be expatriate Tamil professionals who had left Ceylon in the face of a growing discrimination so that they may lead a life not of luxury but of dignity, whether they be those who continued to suffer discrimination at their workplace because they had nowhere else to go, whether they be students deprived of

admission to Universities because of standardisation, whether they be parents who saw no future for their children's advancement, whether they be farmers who were forced to contend with an 'open economic' policy which granted them no protection, whether they be businessmen who had their businesses burnt and destroyed by Sinhala goon squads, whether they be those who had their kith and kin killed and raped and their homes looted, whether they be those who were rendered homeless and who lived in refugee camps in their own 'homelands', whether they be those who had left their homelands in fear and who had sought refuge in Tamil Nadu or as wandering nomads in foreign lands, whether they be those who continued to remain in Sri Lanka and live in fear because they were Tamils and whether it be those who said that 'enough was enough' and who would not take it lying down anymore and who were ready to give their lives in an armed struggle.

A nation is an idea - but it is more. And they err who conceive the nation as a mere intellectual platform. On the other hand, they also err who see the force of nationalism as simply the thrust of a people to better their material conditions of existence. These latter fail to recognise that ideas too have a material force. And 'work without ideal is a false gospel'. A nation is an amalgam of the 'ideal' with the 'material' and it is this inter-play, evidenced in the cultural identity of a people, which gives nationalism its strength in the political arena - its power to influence and direct the conduct of millions. To fail to understand this is to fail to understand the wellsprings of human action. It is also to fail to understand that which has made possible the colossal sacrifices so willingly suffered by so many thousands of young Tamils during the past several years.

Linked To The Tamil Homelands

And, nations do not come into being in the stratosphere. It is land which constitutes the physical base of the life of a people and it is around land that the togetherness of the Tamils of Ceylon has grown. The homeland of the Tamils in the North and East of Ceylon did not come into existence overnight. The togetherness of the Tamils of Ceylon has grown, hand in hand, with the growth of their homelands in the North and East of Ceylon where they lived together, worked together, communicated with each other, founded their families, educated their children, and also sought refuge, from time to time, when subjected to physical attacks elsewhere in Ceylon. Without an identified homeland, the Tamils in Ceylon would not have become a people with a separate culture and a separate language and without an identified homeland, the Tamils of Ceylon will cease to exist as a people in the future. And, these were the rational concerns which found expression in the second claim at Thimpu - the claim for the constitutional recognition of an identified homeland for the Tamils in the North and East of Ceylon - a claim which, after all, the 1978 Sri Lankan Constitution had itself, by implication, partially recognised when it made provision for the use of the Tamil language in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

And The Right Of Self-Determination

And, the third claim at Thimpu - the claim for the recognition of the right to self-determination of the Tamil nation was intended to secure an open recognition of the equality of the parties to the negotiating process. The Tamil people do not deny the existence of the Sinhala nation in Ceylon. The question is whether the Sinhala people are ready and willing to recognise the Tamils of Ceylon as a nation and to deal with them on that basis. And on the answer to that basic question, depends not only the political status of the negotiating parties, but also the nature and content of any political solution, and the political will of both the Tamil people and the Sinhala people to work for the implementation of that which may be agreed. The concerns of the Tamil people for their 'physical security, employment and education' cannot be resolved by a negotiating process unless the Sinhala people recognised the Tamils as a people and the two people, together fashion a constitutional structure on the basis of such recognition. It will be idle to pretend that equity will be achieved through a negotiating process which does not itself commence on an equitable footing.

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Exaggerated Sinhala Nationalism

Sufficient, perhaps, has been said to establish the rationalities of the Thimpu declaration. But, there are none so blind as those who refuse to see. And, the Sinhala political leadership refuses to see the existence of the Tamil nation. They refuse to see the existence of the homeland of the Tamils in Ceylon. They refuse to acknowledge the right of the Tamil people to sit as equals with the Sinhala people and negotiate a political solution to the conflict between them. They continue to compete with each other to nurture an exaggerated Sinhala nationalism, which claims that it is the Sinhala majority who should rule. **And, if patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel, then, the Sri Lankan Constitution has today become the first refuge of Sinhala chauvinism.**

Which Has Sought Refuge In The Constitution

“... Under our Constitution . . . the powers of Government inhere in all the People of Sri Lanka and this sovereignty is itself declared to be inalienable. A federal system which implies a divided sovereignty is therefore inconceivable in Sri Lanka . . .” [Statement of Observations dated the 30th January, 1986 by the Government of Sri Lanka on the Proposals of the Parliamentary Tamil United Liberation Front]

It is true that in a democracy, sovereignty is vested in the people and is inalienable. The people are sovereign and they rule. But people do not rule anyhow. They rule through the instrumentalities of a constitution. They exercise legislative power through an elected Parliament. They may exercise executive power through a directly elected President or through an indirectly elected Prime Minister and a Cabinet. They exercise judicial power through judges appointed under laws enacted by Parliament. The circumstance that a people exercise power through a number of different instrumentalities does not have the result that their sovereignty is eroded. On the contrary, it is the checks and balances between the different instrumentalities which secures for a people their true sovereignty. And so, too, the checks and balances in a federal system of government, secures for a people their true sovereignty. **A federal constitution does not somehow ‘divide’ the sovereignty of a people – on the contrary, it enhances their sovereignty,** by helping them to exercise their power and their influence more effectively, and by helping them to cooperate and work with each other on an equitable basis. And in the end, a federal constitution, when enacted by a people, will itself be the expression of their sovereign will. But, the Sri Lankan Government would have the Tamil people and the world believe that the federal constitutions of the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., India, Australia, Canada and Switzerland are all instances of a ‘divided sovereignty’ and, for that reason, ‘inconceivable’ in ‘democratic’ Sri Lanka.

And ‘Democracy’

And, to the Sri Lankan government democracy means rule by a permanent ethnic majority within the confines of a unitary state.

“The Tamil United Liberation Front cannot be unaware of the longstanding opposition of the two major political parties of the Sinhala people, who represent nearly 74% of the population, to a federal form of government . . .” [Statement of Observations dated 30th January, 1986 by the Government of Sri Lanka on the Proposals of the Parliamentary Tamil United Liberation Front]

Whilst democracy may mean according to the rule of the majority, democracy also means government by discussion and persuasion. **It is the belief that the minority of today may become the majority of tomorrow that ensures the stability of a functioning democracy.** But in Ceylon, where a unitary state has sought to govern a territory inhabited by two peoples, the arithmetic of democracy has resulted in the continued and permanent dominance of one people by another. The reality of democracy in Sri Lanka is that no Tamil has ever been elected to a predominantly Sinhala electorate and no Sinhalese has ever been elected to a predominantly Tamil electorate. And so the practice of democracy within the confines of a unitary state has inevitably resulted in rule by a permanent ethnic majority. It was a permanent ethnic majority which through a series of legislative and administrative acts, ranging from disenfranchisement, and

standardisation of University admissions, to discriminatory language and employment policies, and state sponsored colonisation of the homelands of the Tamil people, sought to establish its hegemony over the Tamils of Ceylon. These legislative and administrative acts were reinforced from time to time with physical attacks on the Tamils of Ceylon with intent to terrorise and intimidate them into submission. It was a course of conduct which led eventually to the rise of Tamil militancy in the mid-1970s with, initially, sporadic acts of violence. The militancy was met with wide ranging retaliatory attacks on increasingly large sections of the Tamil people with intent, once again to subjugate them. In the late 1970s large numbers of Tamil youths were detained without trial and tortured under emergency regulations and later under the Prevention of Terrorism Act which has been described by the International Commission of Jurists as a ‘blot on the statute book of any civilised country’. In 1980 and thereafter, there were random killings of Tamils by the state security forces and Tamil hostages were taken by the state when ‘suspects’ were not found. Eventually, in the eyes of the Sri Lankan state all Tamils were prima facie ‘terrorist’ suspects. And in 1983, the Tamils were deprived of the effective use of their vote by an amendment to the Constitution which the International Commission of Jurists has declared to be a violation of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and which has rendered vacant the Parliamentary seats of the elected representatives of the Tamil people. And it is to this democracy that the Sri Lankan government refers when it invites the attention of the Tamil United Liberation Front to the views of ‘the two major political parties of the Sinhala people, who represent nearly 74% of the population’ and who have expressed a ‘longstanding opposition’ ‘to a federal form government’. And it is this ‘democracy’ which the Sri Lankan government seeks to preserve – by armed force, if necessary.

A Sinhala Chauvinism Which Denies The Existence Of The Sinhala Nation

The Thimpu declaration sought to question openly and directly the claims of an exaggerated Sinhala nationalism – a Sinhala chauvinism which has sought to feed on the latent fear of the Sinhala people of the Tamils of neighbouring Tamil Nadu and which has sought to encourage the belief that a ‘Sinhala identity’ can be secured only at the expense of erasing the identity of the Tamils as a ‘people’ in Ceylon if not now, at least at some future date – a Sinhala chauvinism which has sought to subjugate the Tamils of Ceylon by attempting to ‘assimilate’ and ‘integrate’ the Tamil people into a so called ‘Sri Lankan nationality’ within the confines of a unitary state whose official language is Sinhala, whose official religion is Buddhism and whose official name was itself changed to the Sinhala ‘Sri Lanka’ without the consent of the Tamil people. It is a Sinhala chauvinism which in pursuance of its objectives, has, logically, sought to deny the existence of the Tamil nation in Ceylon and which, in addition, seeks to masquerade as a ‘Sri Lankan nationalism’ by denying the existence of the Sinhala nation as well. And, nothing exemplifies the intellectual dishonesty of the Sinhala political leadership more than its continued denial of the existence of its own constituency, namely, the Sinhala nation in Sri Lanka.

The Basic Question

And in this context the comments of Lord Avebury in his key note speech at the International Alert seminar may not be irrelevant:

“... Would the Sri Lankan Government be prepared to go as far as a genuinely federal Constitution, and would the majority of the Tamil community settle for something less than total independence? The outsider might be attracted to the idea, on the grounds that it would lie somewhere in between the positions taken up by the parties.” [Lord Avebury: Keynote Speech of the International Alert USA Seminar on Sri Lanka, Los Angeles, 25th October, 1986].

But, though it may be true that an ‘outsider’ might be attracted to the idea of a genuinely federal Constitution because it would

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NEWS REPORT

Lanka Offensive Against Militants Continues

THE EIGHT DAYS of sustained ground and aerial offensive by the Sri Lankan armed forces continued all over the northern districts with equal intensity after the extension of the 36-hour curfew in Kilinochchi till 6 p.m. today.

The curfew in two other districts, Mannar and Mullaitivu, was, however, lifted at 6 a.m., according to official sources.

A government communique here said that in Jaffna district, the security forces from Kattuwan, Kurumbasetti, Telipallai and other places had advanced eastwards to Atchuvveli and on the west towards Mallakam, destroying the militants' bunkers in numbers and capturing 'caches'.

The militants, according to the communique, "are fleeing" in all directions, as the armed forces "entrenched themselves" in the occupied strongholds of the Tamil rebels.

The Sri Lankan television has been screening the army operations in the northern districts, particularly in Jaffna peninsula, exhibiting in colour the bulldozing of the rebels' bunkers and movement of armoured cars and infantry.

The daily communiqués have not been specifically mentioning any number of casualties for the past two-three days leading to strong apprehension among the independent sources in northern

districts about the number of civilian casualties.

These sources in Mannar and Kilinochchi, where the army has been undertaking "sweeping aerial operations by firing rockets and bombing at times", said the number of civilians killed and wounded was quite high.

"Nobody knows the exact number, as the mighty offensives have been launched during curfew hours, restricting spread of news in a complete blacked out phenomenon", these sources added.

Authorities of some churches in these districts, while pleading their ignorance about the extent of casualties among the civilian population, do maintain that villagers have evacuated a number of hamlets and taken shelter in these shrines and other safer places.

Instances of armed forces raiding these sacred places to hound out the "refugees" or to arrest many of them on charges of being "terrorists' sympathisers", were cited by the independent sources.

In Madras, the politburo of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) expressed concern at the "brutal massacre" of innocent Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka by

the armed forces and said the Sri Lankan government was "ruthlessly persisting in executing its plan to decimate the Tamil people".

In a statement, the politburo alleged that the army had so far killed 500 civilians and "destroyed" several villages in Mannar, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts since the 28th January, and over 10,000 since June 1983.

The politburo regretted that the government was not extending any assistance to the Tamil refugees who had left their homes and were facing starvation.

30,000 Facing Hunger in Lanka Jungles

MADRAS, February 13. More than 30,000 persons are facing starvation in the jungles as the rampaging Sri Lankan troops intensified their military operations in the districts of Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya of northern Sri Lanka, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam said here tonight.

By courtesy of Times of India, February 13

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hopefully lie 'somewhere in between the positions taken up by the parties', a 'genuinely federal Constitution', will not come as a by-product of a political horsedeal. It will come only when an honest and open answer is found to the preliminary question: who will federate with whom? Who are the two peoples who will federate to form a 'genuine' federal union? And it was to this basic question that the Thimpu declaration addressed itself. Because it is this which goes to the root of the conflict in Ceylon. All else is secondary. And it is to this question that agencies such as the International Emergency Committee on Sri Lanka may also usefully address their minds. And, hopefully, they will also attend to the comments of Professor Leo Kruper in 1984 - comments which have today, assumed an urgency and an immediacy:

"... genocide continues to be an odious scourge on mankind ... there are also at the present time many immediate issues related to genocide which call for the most urgent action ... (such as) the communal massacres in Sri Lanka ... some of these genocidal massacres arise out of struggles for greater autonomy, and might be regulated by recognition of the right of self-determination ... there is a great need for delegations of member states with a strong commitment to human rights, and for non-governmental organisations with consultative status, to continue their efforts to recall the UN to its responsibilities for international protection against genocide and consistent violations of human rights. These efforts would include ... attempts to develop norms for humanitarian intervention, for the exercise of the right of self-determination ..." [Minority Rights Group Report: International Action Against Genocide]

It is not enough to continue to report, ad nauseam, on the 'gross and consistent violations' of human rights in Sri Lanka without at the same time openly recognising that a threatened genocidal situation has arisen out of a struggle for greater autonomy and without openly recognising that there is an urgent need 'to develop norms for humanitarian intervention for the exercise of the right of self-determination' of the Tamil people in Ceylon.

And informed liberal opinion which is not content with 'bombastic rhetoric' should, perhaps, also see the need to act on the reports of Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, the Lawasia Human Rights Standing Committee, the International Human Rights Law Group; and The United Kingdom Parliamentary Human Rights Group, on the 'gross and consistent violations of human rights' in Sri Lanka and to recognise the underlying reasons for these violations. A reluctance to be seen as espousing the division of a sovereign state should not lead to a refusal to recognise that Sri Lanka today is a multi-national state. Two nations may agree to live together by force of reason. They cannot be compelled to live together by force of arms. And it is the rejection of reason by successive Sinhala governments which also constitutes the rationale for the continued armed struggle of the Tamil people for an independent Tamil Eelam.

The Thimpu declaration which represented the unanimous will of all six Tamil Liberation Organisations was not an exercise in rhetoric. Too many lives had been lost and too many lives were at stake to have permitted that particular luxury. The Thimpu declaration was founded on reason and time will testify to the validity of that reasoning. Because reason, even if it be denied, will continue to influence and direct and to give coherence and legitimacy to the aspirations of the Tamil people. Time will show that Tamil nationalism will not be easily snuffed out. It will not quietly and obediently go away and disappear from the political scene. And faced with the continued intransigence of the Sinhala political leadership, it will inevitably seek broader channels for expressing itself. And, in the end, it will be a round reason that peace will come - not only for the Tamils and Sinhalese of Ceylon, not only for the peoples of the Indian region but also for people, everywhere - and, in an increasingly small world it will be increasingly difficult to separate the so called 'insiders' from the so called 'outsiders'. And, the words of Lila Watson come to mind:

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time ... But, if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together".

LORD AVEBURY: Sri Lanka – conflict or compromise?

Keynote Speech of the International Alert USA Seminar on Sri Lanka, Los Angeles.

Introduction

When communications were poor, and the notion of sovereignty had yet to be diluted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenants, group conflicts within national boundaries excited less attention, and it was only in exceptional cases that outside influences were felt to have any moral or practical value. The earliest example I can think of was the demand by Mr. Gladstone in the 1880s for the Turks to withdraw from occupied Bulgaria, generally considered to have had a successful outcome, but leaving the unresolved problem of the ethnic Turks who remained in that country and are now themselves victims of extreme cultural oppression.

Today, however, the victims of these conflicts cry out to the world for justice through the medium of television, and the acceptance by nearly all states of international codes limiting their freedom of action towards their citizens implies the external judiciousness of those codes. The United Nations has gradually developed its own machinery for attempting to secure compliance with the Covenants, and NGOs have played an important role in monitoring deviations. They have gained some measure of acceptability in that governments reluctantly admit their representatives conducting investigations, and even afford them privileges such as access to prisons, and discussions at ministerial level of human rights problems.

But International Alert starts from a different perspective, which ought to make its work even more welcome to governments. **It notices the violation of human rights as one of the symptoms of group conflict, while trying to find or at least to encourage political solutions that will remove the causes of the conflict.** Thus it does not have to be judgemental in its approach. Because it does not have a mandate restricting its attention to the violence done by states to individuals, it can and does condemn the use of armed force by all groups for their own ends, whether they are in power, or form a military opposition.

We start with the assumption that outsiders may have something to contribute towards the solution of these conflicts, and perhaps that needs to be argued a little. The participants are emotionally involved, and in many cases are heavily weighed down with cultural baggage that hampers intellectual movement. They may benefit from disinterested comment, the questioning of old prejudices, and even the presentation of tentative solutions which provide a framework for discussion. Because IA have nothing to gain or lose, their advice may be respected on both sides, and thus it may be helpful as a component in any mediation process. I think it has to be emphasised, however, that **unless there is the will to negotiate settlement of group disputes, outsiders can do nothing.** Ultimately it is for the parties themselves to make peace, and our role is that of sympathetic, and we hope, understanding friends of both communities.

The ingredients of the conflict

I start by observing some of the features of the Sri Lanka problem, and noting where those features are shared with other group conflict situations. And the first one, so obvious that one would hardly think to mention it, is that one group has a monopoly of government. Since the Tamils form only 18.2% of the population, one would not expect them to rule, and I merely observe it as a fact. The corollary, however, is my second feature: by means of their control of the state, **the majority community have secured for themselves a disproportionate share of public appointments, access to higher education in preference to better qualified minority candidates, better public services through exclusive use of the Sinhala language, and control of land in border areas formerly occupied by the minority.**

The next major ingredient in the situation, a familiar one to anybody who has studied the Irish problem, is the history going back over many centuries of formal armed conflicts between the two communities. "Remember Parakramabahu!" is a phrase that would be understood by almost everybody on the island. He was the Sinhala king who recovered Anuradhapura from the invading

Tamils in the tenth or eleventh century AD, and the invocation of his name would carry the same overtones as the use of King Billy's has in the six counties. In fact, this illustration shows how intractable the problem is: in Ireland people remember the battle of the Boyne, a mere two centuries ago, and Cromwell, whose depredations in Ireland occurred three centuries ago. They may even refer to the Elizabethan settlement of four centuries ago. But King Parakramabahu lived nine centuries ago, and his exploits are still celebrated. Indeed, when I mentioned this contrast to a Tamil friend the other day, he said:

"You have overlooked Dutugamunu, the Sinhala king who drove the Tamils out of the island altogether about 2000 years ago."

For another parallel between the Northern Ireland and Sri Lankan problems I am indebted to the late Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe, who made this point to me after he visited Belfast a few years ago. The majority in both Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland had some of the psychological attributes of a minority, arising from the fact that the minority could look to a big "reservoir" of the same community near at hand: the Catholics of the Republic, and the Tamils of Tamil Nadu.

The reservoir was also a characteristic of the Cyprus problem. The ethnic Turks in Cyprus could look to an effective military power for advancement of their claims, as in the end did happen. In Cyprus also the communities were divided on linguistic and religious lines, and there also they lovingly tended a history of armed struggle.

The major difference between Cyprus and Sri Lanka, on the other hand, is that Turkey saw herself as having nothing to lose by intervening on behalf of "her" people, and this was roughly correct. Now that Turkey is knocking at the doors of Europe, the episode of 1974 has been forgotten already, and it is Turkey's present human rights performance which may have some bearing on her entry to the EEC. But India has every reason to discourage the Eelamites, because of the implications domestically. There are enough problems with separatism in the Punjab, without giving encouragement to local nationalism in the south, as support for total independence of a Tamil mini-state in Sri Lanka would do.

Reference to India leads us to consider another important aspect of the problem, which may not always be given proper weight. In India, a federal state, the various nationalities by and large do not feel emotionally that to satisfy their aspirations to separate cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity, they have to be totally independent. In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, the demand by the Tamils for "self-determination" seems to imply the creation of a new mini-state, without regard to economic or geopolitical realities.

Finally on this list, which is not intended to be exhaustive, we should note the positive feedback effect of violence. **With each atrocity, either by government or "the boys", the feelings of hatred between the communities are further reinforced, and the willingness to compromise is further sapped.** "How do you expect us to live with these people", a Tamil asked me, at the end of a graphic description of atrocities by government forces in Eastern Province villages. And the obverse of this coin is the strong feeling among the Sinhalese that "you cannot negotiate with terrorists; they must be crushed by military force"

The peace negotiations

The hopeful sign in Sri Lanka, which contrasts with many other group conflicts, is that some representatives on either side are at least prepared to talk, albeit on their own terms. At Thimpu, not only the TULF, a constitutional political party, was present, but also representatives of the various military groups: EPRLF, EROS, PLOT, LTTE and TELO. In the latest round of talks, only the TULF participated, and they emphasised at the end of the round that the militants had now to be involved.

On the other side, the SLFP are playing a very dangerous game,

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in doing their best to stir up the Sangha and the JVP to join in a campaign against concessions. Mrs. Bandaranaike has virtually destroyed her own party and cuts a pathetic figure today. **She must be really desperate to play the racist card, for that is what she is doing, together with her son Anura. There is latent prejudice in the majority community, which can be fanned all too easily into violence and murder.** It is wicked and despicable to exploit these tendencies for political ends, and Mrs. Bandaranaike is an accomplice in the murders and other atrocities which her words help to provoke.

Incidentally, there is rather less likelihood today that the Sangha will allow itself to be exploited than in the past, and the world community of Buddhists, particularly the Theravadins, can bring their influence to bear in the cause of peace. Perhaps International Alert might look into ways of mobilising the Buddhist groups in North America and Western Europe, to get the Sangha to reject Mrs. Bandaranaike's evil counsels.

There is, unfortunately, a strong tendency in the peace talks for the participants to strike attitudes, and to lay down "principles", which they say must be honoured in any settlement. At Thimpu, the Tamil delegations were demanding:

1. *recognition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka as a nation.*
2. *recognition of the existence of an identified homeland for the Tamils in Sri Lanka.*
3. *recognition of the right of self-determination of the Tamil nation.*
4. *recognition of the right to citizenship and the fundamental rights of all Tamils who look upon the Island as their country.*

I may be wrong in my interpretation, but it is not helpful for either side to lay down, in advance of negotiations, conditions which are absolute. The government's preamble to their own scheme, presented to the Political Parties Conference on June 25 this year, prescribed what President Jayawardene described as a "framework", but others might call a straitjacket, within which he said the negotiations had to be conducted. The three indispensable features, according to JR, were:

1. *Maintenance of the unity, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka.*
2. *The maintenance of the unitary character of the Sri Lankan Constitution.*
3. *The principle of devolution of powers upon the Provincial Councils within the framework of the Constitution of Sri Lanka as proposed to be amended."*

In detail, the government scheme proposed the establishment of Provincial Councils on existing boundaries, and of Provincial Governors appointed by the President. The Governor would appoint a Chief Minister, and a Board of Ministers on the recommendation of the Chief Minister. Executive power was to be vested in the governor, even in matters where the Provincial Councils had the right to enact legislation. The Provincial Councils were to have power to raise taxes, and they were to control some aspects of law and order, and of land settlement.

However, the provincial police were to be responsible to a national Inspector General, and were to have responsibility for a limited range of offences. The judiciary would be appointed centrally. Radio and television would be national. The settlement criteria for land settlement and irrigation schemes would be determined by a central formula. There was no question of provinces being delineated on the basis of actual ethnic and linguistic boundaries, though "suitable arrangements" were to be provided for Provincial Councils to coordinate their policies on matters of mutual interest. And at any time the President could step in and dissolve even these glorified parish councils, imposing direct rule.

Two major problems thus arise: **even if the Tamil people were ready to settle for something less than a sovereign state, the realisation of a "Tamil homeland" would require thorough-going devolution, and constitutional safeguards against the revocation of provincial rights by the central government. And second, the Tamils, both constitutional and military wings, insist that the**

Northern and Eastern Provinces be given a single administration. Their argument is that in the twenties, the Sinhalese component of the Eastern Province population was only 2%, and it has only been raised to the 1981 census figure of 26% by a deliberate policy of colonisation. (No doubt the demographic make-up of the Province has changed markedly since the troubles began, a large number of Tamils having been killed or having fled to the north and into exile as a result of the systematic attacks on them by the army, police and "home-guard").

Some authorities, such as the Colombo-based Citizens' Committee for National Harmony, have argued that maintenance of national unity is fully reconcilable with a system of effective devolution, and they say the lesson Sri Lanka can learn from India is the "need to make timely and appropriate adjustments to the problems of ethnic and cultural identity in a rapid process of democratisation".

Another model which may be worth examining is that of Canada. **After much turmoil, the Canadians have forged a Constitution in which the French and English "nations" have equality of status, in spite of the differences in numbers.** There also, the French-speaking people have felt from time to time that their aspirations could be realised only through unique constitutional arrangements, the latest version of which was described as "sovereignty-association": Quebec was to be sovereign, but was to remain associated with the remainder of Canada. **Today, most Quebecois must be relieved that they did not embark on a process of constitutional experimentation, but instead turned their minds to the adaptation of federal principles, and the extension of built-in safeguards for the human, linguistic and cultural rights of all Canadians.**

Ingredients of a solution

Would the Sri Lankan Government be prepared to go as far as a genuinely federal Constitution, and would the majority of the Tamil community settle for something less than total independence? The outsider might be attracted to the idea, on the grounds that it would lie somewhere in between the positions taken up by the parties. **If there is genuine willingness to negotiate, the fairest solution would seem to be the one that demands equal concessions, however that can be measured.** On the other hand, there has been so much bombastic rhetoric about "legitimate expectations" on the Tamil side, and so much blood shed in the struggle for "liberation", that some elements would find it emotionally impossible to accept anything less than unconditional surrender from the government. As The Hindu put it:

"A militant movement, which believes in the legitimacy of an armed struggle to achieve its political or social objectives, is not interested in a negotiated settlement". (The Hindu, international edition, 5 October, 1985).

The constitutionalists would accept genuine federalism, as opposed to the saccharine federalism they have been offered so far, if they were free agents. As we can see from the latest round of talks, however, they have difficulty in agreeing to anything unless the military opposition is brought to the conference table. This is not "merely" a democratic gesture to the constituencies of the guerilla groups, whose appeal to the public have never been tested, but also a sensible precaution to take if they want to stay alive.

But the TULF proposals made at the PPC this year do provide for the "Tamil Linguistic State", consisting of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, to be part of a federal Sri Lanka, with a common citizenship. Their practical concerns are reflected in the separation of the courts, police, and public service commissions, and the exclusive state control of all land matters including irrigation. **After all, the demand for autonomy was not based originally on abstract ideas of Tamil patriotism, even if the effect of the civil war is to make people think in those terms. The grievances which led to the armed struggle concerned discrimination against Tamils at every level of society; in recruitment to the public and armed services; access to higher education; representation in the professions; land rights, and electoral weight. If they can establish a just framework inside their own state, using the term in the Indian or American sense, then the case for separation disappears.**

continued opposite

Those who favour the more extreme solutions ought also to have regard to the attitudes of the outside world. The United Nations rules on self-determination are clear, and when it does suit the General Assembly to ignore them, it is always in favour of the power actually controlling the territory. In the civil wars of Zaire and Nigeria, and UN opposed separation. In the struggle of the Eritreans for their freedom they receive no encouragement or even notice from the UN, in spite of the fact that the confederation with Ethiopia was an artificial arrangement sponsored by the UN, before the General Assembly laid down rules for the decolonization process in its resolution 1514 and 1541 of 1960. **One might argue, as an aside, that if a solution can be devised for Sri Lanka, it will probably demand international guarantees to make it convincing,** in the light of the Eritrean case. In the case of East Timor, where the UN rules were violated, the General Assembly passed the buck to the Secretary General four years ago, and a majority no doubt hope the problem will simply go away. Other "internal" liberation movements which are simply ignored include the Kurds of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and the Soviet Union; the Tigreans of Ethiopia; the Western Saharans, the Southern Sudanese and the West Papuans. If none of those cases elicit support, the Tamils are unlikely to fare any better.

What sort of concessions would the Government have to make, to get total independence dropped by all but a small minority of extremists? **The Provincial Councils simply will not do.** Enlargement of the scope of devolution has been mentioned already, and it may be that Indian and Canadian draftsmen might be consulted, so that a series of models could be examined together. This is not the place to go into great detail; one only has to observe that **the extent of powers granted to the subordinate legislature must be sufficient to ensure that the ability of central government to discriminate is effectively removed.**

Then comes the intractable problem of boundaries. If one is prepared to accept the case that all the immigration of non-Tamils into the Eastern Province was organised by the Sinhala authorities as part of a long-term plan of internal colonisation, nevertheless we have to take account of the demographic situation as we find it. If the Northern and Eastern Provinces are combined to form a Tamil state, it would incorporate a quarter of a million Sinhalese, and 315,000 Muslims who although Tamil ethnically and linguistically, might not all welcome the idea. This has led the Citizens' Committee for National Harmony to suggest a variety of options short of a merger between the two Provinces.

For instance, of the three Districts comprising the Eastern Province, Amparai has the highest proportion of Sinhalese, at 37.6% and also the highest proportion of Muslims, 41.5%. It also happens to be the southernmost District of Batticaloa so that its detachment would leave the remaining Districts and Trincomalee as contiguous with the Northern Province.

Whatever special arrangements are made for the Eastern Province – and there is no logical reason why it should be kept

intact as a political unit in any settlement – there are going to be local minorities who dislike their own state. But equally, it may be assumed that the Indian Tamils, who live in Sinhala-dominated areas, would prefer an administration of their own kind. They have existed as a kind of under-class, confined to the back-breaking labour of the tea estates, living in revolting hovels called "lines", deprived of their rightful citizenship, and of all of the benefits that should bring, such as proper education and health care. Once there is a Tamil state in the island, it may be expected that many if not most of the estate workers will migrate there, so that they can enjoy equal opportunities. Although the government has now belatedly admitted them to citizenship, they too have suffered violent racial attacks, and are bound to feel insecure in the midst of a hostile majority.

Conclusions

From time to time over the last sixty years, federalism has been discussed and advocated in Sri Lanka. In the government's statement of 25 June, reference is made to a speech of the late Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to a Students' Congress in 1926, and the words he used are worth repeating:

"There would be trouble if a centralised form of government was introduced into countries with communal differences. In a federal government, each federal unit had complete power over itself."

The Donoughmore Commission of 1928 recommended an examination of a federal system, in which the Northern and Eastern Provinces would have formed one of three self-governing units.

It was a tragedy that when Ceylon became independent in 1948, these ideas were not implemented. Europe knew enough about group conflict arising from linguistic, religious and cultural differences, and yet the constitutions we devised were all unitary, and in the case of the British territories, either based on the Westminster constituency system or the party list system of elections. In both cases the linguistic and ethnic groups tended to polarise into corresponding parties, thus accentuating their differences. It was also clear that the majority community, or the community which gained a majority in the legislature, would exploit that advantage, as we saw not only in Sri Lanka but also in Guyana, Malaysia and Cyprus.

Now it is of course for Sri Lankans to correct the mistakes made in the process of decolonisation, and the British have to be particularly careful not to allow their natural concern at the tragedy that has engulfed the Island to develop into a form of neo-colonialism. We can and should condemn violence, whether from the armed forces and the police, or the military opposition. We can back up the efforts being made by Rajiv Gandhi to bring the parties together, and we can urge our friends on both sides to sit down and talk. We can explain to them what we see as the boundaries within which the answers have to be found.

THE ANXIOUS NEIGHBOUR

THE ANTI-TAMIL RIOTS of July 1983, externalised the Sri Lankan conflict with the exodus of more than 100,000 Tamil refugees to India's Tamil Nadu state, already the home of Sri Lankan Tamil rebel groups and self-exiled Tamil parliamentarians. The situation, said then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, was "unacceptable". She promptly offered her "good offices", which Colombo was in no position to refuse. Thus, India became mediator in Sri Lanka's communal war.

Since then, two important developments have placed India and Sri Lanka on a collision course, though there have been moments of high expectations of an India-sponsored peace settlement. First, Sri Lanka's ruling United National Party hasn't been able to forge a compromise

offer of regional autonomy that New Delhi can get Tamil separatists to accept.

This is partly due to political constraints – chiefly, adverse majority Sinhala-Buddhist opinion and opposition from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of former prime minister Sirima Bandaranaike. After three-and-a-half years, New Delhi has doubts about the government's political will and misgivings about its true designs.

The second development is what India perceives to be the gradual militarisation of Sri Lanka, once its only friendly neighbour, with the aid of some countries regarded as hostile to India.

While arms have come to Sri Lanka from China, with whom India remains locked in a border dispute, Britain, India's former colonial master, South Africa, the

international pariah, and West Germany, Israel has opened an "interests section" in the US Embassy in Colombo. Israeli experts in intelligence, counter-insurgency and land settlement strategies – a very sensitive area in the present context – are advising Colombo. Even more disturbing is the Pakistani presence in Sri Lanka.

India has also accused Sri Lanka of using "American mercenaries", a charge bluntly rejected by Colombo but less so by Washington. New Delhi is concerned that Sri Lanka is being incorporated into what it sees as the "Washington-Islamabad-Peking axis", which it would view as a new threat to its southern flank.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's courtship of the US has proved brief and disenchanting, while India's strong ties with Moscow were re-confirmed by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov's visit to India late last year.

By courtesy of Far Eastern Economic Review,

MEDIA FILE

THE THREE POINT proposition the Government of India is pressing on Colombo in order to get the negotiating process back on track is a belated recognition of what needs to be done from the standpoint of sound politics, justice and humanity. Those who are handling India's Sri Lanka policy at a complicated and difficult stage need to remember that the prospect of success in the fresh mediatory venture will depend on their ability to avoid the costly mistakes of the recent past. These have resulted in a clear weakening of India's leverage and influence in the situation without, in any way, lowering the spill-over burdens and risks this nation has had to accept in relation to the deteriorating political crisis of its neighbour to the south. The fact that New Delhi has no immediate direct way of communicating with the LTTE leader, Mr. V. Prabhakaran – in some ways the key political factor in respect of negotiating a settlement with Colombo – is reflective of this self-inflicted lowering of credibility.

The Government of India has, over the past few weeks, watched confusedly a new course of military brutality unfold against the Tamil population of the North and the East. The Sri Lankan Government, with its morale boosted by what it takes to be signs of weakness in the official Indian line, has pursued its two-track strategy in an educative way. It has pushed ahead with its military strategy against the Tamils, with the hawkish Minister for National Security, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, very much in charge of this track. It has thrown the burden of finding a new political initiative to reactivate Track Two on the Government of India – with the clear implication that, if India cannot go along with Colombo's attempt to drown the Tamil political struggle in blood, it can at least let the military heat push down the negotiating level of the Tamil militants. At a practical level, Colombo's recent response has been to compound the outrage of an economic blockade against an important section of its population with daily barbarities by the security forces against innocent Tamil civilians – there has been, of course, some grisly retaliation against equally innocent Sinhala civilians. It is regrettable that official as well as public opinion in India has seemed so inured to the violence in the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka that it has not made much of a fuss over the liquidation of over two hundred innocent civilians by the security forces in Batticaloa district (with inputs made by specially recruited external elements including Western mercenaries and Israeli agents).

The policy of the Rajiv Gandhi administration has been conducted with no coherent framework of solidarity with an oppressed people, no recognisable base line to guide India's mediating strategy, and no strategic direction to pursue. There has been a tendency to equate the victims – the Sri Lankan Tamils and their political representatives – with the aggressors – the Sri Lankan state and its marauding security forces. The Government of India line (with the influence of the AIADMK State Government mobilised) has attempted unsuccessfully to pressure the militants, and especially the LTTE led by Mr. V. Prabhakaran, into accepting virtually

REACTIVATING NEGOTIATING TRACK IN SRI LANKA

anything that has been proposed by the other side – including (in November, 1986) a notably unsound proposal to trifurcate the Eastern Province into Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala units.

The December 19 framework proposal – the centrepiece of which seems to be an Eastern Province reconstituted, through excising Amparai electorate and joining it to an adjoining Sinhala province, so as to give the Tamils a greater numerical and political weight in the reconstituted unit – is clearly an improvement on the earlier ideas. But the curious thing is that the Indian mediators have not thought it fit to inform either the militants or the moderates (the TULF) in any precise way of the details of the proposal that is on less-than-firm offer. To expect the LTTE, with its fiercely determined leadership, to signal a willingness to accept a somewhat unclear proposition at the point of a gun is to pursue a policy that is politically naive.

All this is not to suggest that India's attempt to reactivate the negotiating track is a hopelessly bleak venture. The burden of the ethnic conflict is being felt quite seriously in Sri Lanka, even if a political state akin to desperation has not been reached. Political observers call attention to an interesting but still unfocussed division among high-level Sri Lankan policy-makers – those led by Mr. Athulathmudali, who want to pursue a hawkish military solution and others who believe this cannot work. If there is a genuine peace constituency at work in mainstream Sinhala politics, it must be appealed to effectively by Indian policy. A welcome development in November – which was neutralised by clumsy measures pursued by the Tamil Nadu and Central Governments – was the signalling by the LTTE leadership that it was prepared to cooperate with the Government of India's attempt to find a "lasting" political settlement (which ruled out Eelam) and that, specifically, it was prepared to participate in India-mediated talks, if the proper climate of trust and confidence was created.

It was significant that in his letter of November 3, 1986 to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. Prabhakaran did not emphasise the Eelam demand but specified that a "meaningful" political solution would have to be based on the recognition of a traditionally constituted and "indivisible" homeland comprising the North and the East. Currently, the key militant position in relation to the negotiating process appears to be based on an insistence on a correct atmosphere being created through a withdrawal of the economic blockade of the Jaffna peninsula, a cessation of hostilities and violence by the Sri Lankan security forces, and the release of political prisoners. These are being presented not as rigid "pre-conditions" but as necessary steps to pave the way for India-mediated talks with the Sri Lankan Government. If it is going to be very difficult to find an "agreed upon" political basis for serious talks, the LTTE has expressed its willingness to enter into "clean slate" talks (without any binding proposal on either side), given a conducive atmosphere.

While pressing with Colombo its three point proposal – an unequivocal public

declaration by the Sri Lankan President, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, that he stands by the December 19 proposal, a termination of the economic blockade of the Jaffna peninsula and a suspension of the military operations in the Northern and Eastern provinces – New Delhi must rebuild its political influence with the credible representatives of the Sri Lankan Tamils. It must prepare carefully for the strenuous and challenging task of narrowing the still considerable political gap between the two antagonists and moving them back to the negotiating track.

The one thing that can be taken advantage of in the effort to find a peaceful solution is the realisation among a growing number of sensible Sri Lankans – Sinhala and Tamil – that neither side is capable of winning a military victory in this tragic dispute. Editorial, "The Hindu", Feb 14, 1987

LANKA CIVIL WAR

WHAT IS GOING ON in Sri Lanka can only be described as a civil war. The Sri Lankan army is waging a full-scale offensive against Tamil strongholds in the North, even as its earlier assault on Tamil redoubts in the East continues. Already, scores of lives have been lost, including those of Tamil civilians, and many times more have been wounded. For their part, the Tamil militants, if official Sri Lankan accounts are to be believed, are inflicting retaliatory punishment on the Sinhalese in, for instance, Aranthalawa village in Amparai district in the eastern province. The only hope of ending the bloodletting lies with New Delhi which, unfortunately, has done nothing beyond conveying its concern to Colombo. With the economic blockade of the Jaffna peninsula still operative, communications severely disrupted and the shortage of food becoming acute, the privation of the local people worsens by the hour. Colombo is tightening its vice-like grip on the North through other methods as well, such as its immediate ban on the flying of "ultra-light aircraft" anywhere in the country. The ban is to prevent such planes, reportedly put together by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Jaffna, from taking off.

Apparently, New Delhi is urging President Jayawardene to reiterate his commitment to the proposals made on December 19, so that negotiations on them between the militants and Colombo, through New Delhi's mediation, can be resumed. If he makes such an unambiguous public commitment, lifts the blockade of Jaffna and suspends military operations in the North and East, New Delhi is reportedly prepared to try and persuade the militants to accept those proposals as the basis for a negotiated settlement. While the militants have insisted on linking the northern and eastern provinces, the December 19 scheme envisages the retention of the eastern province as a Tamil-majority area after detaching the mainly Sinhalese parts of Amparai district from it.

However, President Jayawardene has been hedging on accepting even this compromise since it would mean leaving

continued opposite

BEARING THE BLOCKADE

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But what the blockade achieved was precisely the opposite. With Colombo having shown itself to be prepared to push the Tamils right to the brink, the people of the northern peninsula felt more alienated than before from the southern Sri Lankan capital. Jaffna cycle shop owner M. Thambimuthu's comments were more to the rule than the exception. As he pointed out: "The Tamil people will only become more loyal to the militants as a result of their present suffering." Observed a Jaffna-based government officer working for the Land Settlement Department in Kilinochchi located immediately south of the peninsula: "The boys may be tilting at the windmills in hoping to ultimately drive out the army and attain Eelam. But considering all the suffering they have undergone in protecting the Jaffna people from the atrocities of the army, nobody here will come forward to ask them to negotiate with the Government." Kittu himself says: "Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayawardene is trying to fool everybody, but we will not go for direct talks. We are not prepared to talk to Colombo.

We may express our views to the Government, but we will not come to any conclusion without Indian mediation." And the Government of India, on its part, has also expressed serious concern about the fuel blockade that Colombo has imposed on Jaffna. Late last fortnight, the convenor of the Organisation for the Protection of the Tamils of Eelam from Genocide S. C. Chandrahasan, also sent a telegram to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi calling for urgent Indian intervention to end Colombo's economic blockade on Jaffna.

So the stalemate continues. With the people of Jaffna braving the economic storm and, contrary to the Sri Lankan Government's expectations, having become more resolute in their support of the militants, the blockade may just boomerang on Colombo.

By courtesy of India today,
February 15, 1987.

Lanka Civil War

continued from page 18

Trincomalee port under Tamil jurisdiction. If the militants can be persuaded to modify their plans for a North-East linkage and if Colombo can be made to agree to the creation of the eastern province minus Amparai, a solution may be possible.

On the other hand, so long as Colombo feels confident of being able to defeat the militants and then make them accept the solution it wants, it will have no incentive to reconsider the December 19 plan. That is why New Delhi must make it plain to Colombo that any hope it might have of imposing a military solution is illusory and that New Delhi will not allow the bloodshed to go on indefinitely. But such a positive stance on New Delhi's part presupposes that it has got its own act together.

Of this, there is as yet little indication.

Times of India Editorial, 10.2.87

Letters to the Editor

Sinhala Democracy

I WAS rather amused to read the extracts of the Elections Commissioner highlighted in your last issue - not at the platitudes but that these should come from Chandananda de Silva.

You will recall that de Silva, while he was attached to the Ministry of Lands, was specially called to Jaffna by Ministers Gamini Dissanayake, Cyril Mathew and others (who were then there directing operations) to assist in conducting that shameful and ignominious District Development Council Elections of 1981. Shortly afterwards he was made Commissioner of Elections in recognition of the "good work" done in Jaffna.

Chandananda was supposed to be a Trotskyist when he started his career as Assistant Elections Officer. Perhaps, what is bad in democracy for the Sinhala voter is good enough for the Tamils.

Subra
West Indies

Constructive Support & Sympathy

With due respect to Mr. S. Sivanathan of NSW, Australia, I wish to give my opinion of the liberation struggle in Tamil Eelam.

Mr. Sivanathan should look at the struggle from a positive angle and see how the LTTE is transforming the popular mode of urban guerrilla warfare into a mass struggle, rather than challenging our opponents wholesale as if the Tamils are prepared for a Mahabaratha Uththam.

Secondly, Tamils know that Israel, Pakistan, to name a few, are meddling in Sri Lankan affairs now. I think we should go a little deeper to analyse what the Leader, Mr. V. Pirabakaran, meant with regard to Indian intervention. Those of us who are domiciled in developed countries, let us give our support and sympathy to the genuine freedom fighters, the LTTE, rather than engaging ourselves in pointless political analysis.

Would Mr. Sivanathan be prepared to sacrifice all the comforts that he now has in Australia and serve Eelam when surely it must come?

KESHA
Zimbabwe

UNP Bourbons

THE UNP Bourbons learned nothing and forgot nothing. This is true not only of the contemporary UNP but the UNP since its founding in 1946 under the leadership of the wily Don Stephen Senanayake. There are two concepts in the UNP vocabulary which cannot be erased. One is "purchasable", the other is "divide et impera" (the imperialist concept of divide and rule). The fact is that neither tactic works any longer among an oppressed people who are to be a sovereign state in the perspective of time.

Take the first concept "purchasable". The UNP tried it only to learn that the Tamils who joined them from the time of the inauguration of the Soulbury Constitution were by the time of the 1956 General Election swept away from electoral politics. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's stool pigeons and Jayawardene's present minions have suffered worse fates. Those who are allowed to remain provide valuable information. They serve a purpose. Those whom the UNP purchases, the Gods destroy.

Divide and rule has been tried from time immemorial. If it had succeeded, the colonial empires of the past would still be flourishing. To some extent the British perfected it. The Sinhalese have been poor copy-cats. Now the Sinhalese talk of caste divisions among the Tamils, regional differences (Jaffna Tamils and Batticaloa Tamils), religious differences (Hindus, Catholics and Protestants), divisions between Colombo Tamils and the Tamils of the North and the East, and divisive factors between Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils. We do not know to what purpose these "differences" have been highlighted to the level of propaganda.

There are as many differences, jealousies and divisions among the Sinhalese. Neither C. P. de Silva nor Ranasinghe Premadasa achieved or will achieve the highest position. A Sinhalese Prime Minister changed his religion to lead the Sinhala Buddhists. The Tamils, over 90 per cent of whom are Hindus, did not force their leader,

S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, a christian, to change his religion in order to lead them.

We hear of Kandyan Sinhalese flooding the bureaucracy. Cyril Mathew's caste brethren never had it so good while he was a Minister. Philip Gunawardene once said in Parliament that one big fisherman had appointed two other fishermen to the Supreme Court. And the great perfect one, "Mahauttamar" Junius Richard Jayawardene, complained when N. O. Dias was Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, that our "coastal brethren" have been recruited disproportionately to the security forces. The vicious tirade against so-called "Catholic Action" does not have to be repeated here.

The fact is that Tamil national identity has come to stay. There may be differences. But by offering the Chief Ministership of Jaffna (not the Northern Province) to Velupillai Prabhakaran, a military commander of the status of Field Marshal Rommel, a hero famed as the "Desert Fox", the J. R. Jayawardene Government is trying to be too clever by half. The Tamil people will follow any charismatic leader, regardless of caste, religion or region, provided he is honourable and a man of integrity. Prabhakaran has more than proved himself. Why does senility waste its time?

There is another dimension to the military commander whose disciplined army was only the other day dismissed by Junius (sometimes we wonder whether Janus is a more apt name) Jayawardene on the B.B.C. as "a gang of murderers". Direct negotiations will exclude India.

The desicated calculating machines of the UNP think that Prabhakaran will fall into the trap. Once India is excluded, the Tamil National Liberation leaders will become solely dependent on the philanthropy of Colombo. Whom do they think they are dealing with? Tamil nationalism has come to stay. The war can go on for a thousand years. The Tamils are assured of victory, come what may.

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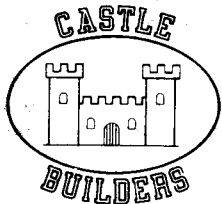
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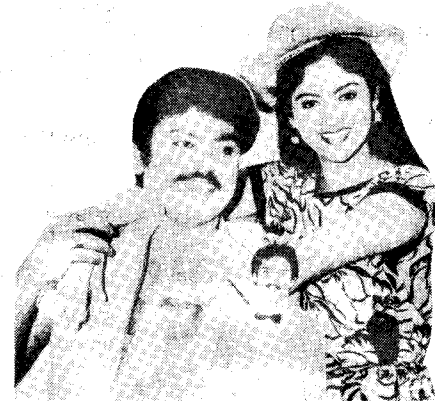
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Barbara Atkins

Memorial Thanksgiving Service for life and work of Barbara Atkins at the Putney Methodist Church, 3 pm., Saturday, March 7.

Tamil Women's League

Cultural Evening, 6 p.m., Saturday, 14 March, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1.

S.C.O.T. Musical Evening, Dinner, Disco, 6 pm., Saturday, 21 March, Lola Jones Hall, London, SW15.

London Veena Group

Grand Cultural Evening, 5 p.m., Sunday, 5 April, Lola Jones Hall, off Garratt Lane, Tooting. Tel: 01-672-0603.

"Viraj Mendis Will Stay!"

Conference Saturday, April 11 and Sunday, April 12. Church of the Ascension, off Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester.

London Tamil Congregation

Easter Service, 3.45 p.m., Sunday, 19 April, Putney Methodist Church, London, SW15.

Tamil Performing Arts Society

Presents "Mukamillatha Manitharkal", 7 p.m., Monday, 20 April. Bharata Vidya Bhavan, London, W4 (Performance scheduled for 7 March, has been cancelled).

S.C.O.T. Tamil New Year Lunch

1 p.m., Sunday, 3 May, Lola Jones Hall, London, SW15.

OBITUARY

MRS. EDITH LUDOWYK

passes at 92 years

Dr. Edith Ludowyk-Gymroi, wife of the late Prof. E. F. C. Ludowyk, passed away peacefully in her sleep on the night of February 12th, in her London home in St. Johns Wood.

At the final leave taking at Golders Green Crematorium on the afternoon of the 18th, were present those who knew and valued her years in Ceylon from 1938 to 1956, years of promise, and who regarded her as much a fellow countrywoman as she was a native of her own dear Hungary, and an international gathering of friends and colleagues especially of The British Psycho Analytical Society.

"She sleeps or wakes with the enduring dead"

OBITUARIES

By Courtesy of "Sri Lankan Situation Report" (Issue Nos. 22 & 23).

KANDIAH, Ponnampalam, Attorney-at-law. Husband of Rajeswary, father of Valli, Sri (USA). 3 De Fonseka Place, Colombo-5.

SUBRAMANIAM, Kanakambikai (kamala). Wife of late M. Subramaniam (Dy. Ch. Acct. Rly.), mother of Subathra, Sumithra, Srikanthan, Saratha, Saroja (UK) Manickavasakar, Shanthikumar (UK). 23, 4th Cross Street, Jaffna.

CASINADER, Charles Brown. Husband of late Mildred, father of Bertram (Rtd. Asst. Com. Local Govt. Trinco). Prince (Principal, Methodist Central College, Batticaloa). Nible, (Acct.). Wesley (formerly Asst. Controller, Central Bank, presently Australia) and Kingsley (formerly staff Trinity College, presently Australia). 26/1, Chapel Street, Batticaloa.

LEDCHUMIPPILLAI, Mrs. Kumarasamy. Wife of late Kumarasamy of Puttalai, Puloly. Mother of Kathirgamanathan (Zimbabwe), Dr. Senathirajah (Australia), Jeganathan (Zambia), Kamalambigai, late Nadrajasunderam, Sithamparapillai, (UK), Balasubramaniam (Australia). 3/1. Arethus Lane, Wellawatte, Colombo.

SARAVANAMUTTU, Lily. Wife of late Dr. H. R. Saravanamuttu, mother of Rajan (UK) late Rane, Kamalini, Sarojini, Padmini and Selvan (UK). 160, Old Park Road, Chundikuli.

TISSEVERASINGHE, F. R. (Licenced surveyor). Husband of late Diamond (Teacher), father of Jeeva, late Bertram, Angela (USA), Beanllab (Teacher GTMS Puthur), Lilian (USA), Godfrey (USA), Pilo (Canada), Fatta (USA), Lourdy (USA) and Joy (USA). 24, Corington's Road, Batticaloa.

SARAVANAMUTHU, Maheswaran (Colombo Motor Ltd.), husband of Naguleswary, father of Raj Mohan (Rajan UK) and Damayanthie. Maniagars Lane, Kokuvil East, Kokuvil.

KANDASAMY, Seevaratnam. Husband of late Viyalammah, father of Gnanambikai, Kamalambigai, Sri Rajalingam (Canada), Ranjanadevi (Germany). 31/1, Maheswari Road, off Peterson Lane, Colombo-6.

TAMPOE, W. M. S. Film Producer. Husband of Meena, father of Robin, Indra and Dr. Devan (Australia). 10, Dickmans Lane, Colombo-5.

MANICKAM, Selvaratnam. Station Master, Maradana, Colombo. Husband of Parameswari, father of Vasanthi, Anandi (Denmark), Vasanthan, and Shanthi.

NADESAN, Victoria. (Rtd. Teacher, Holy Family Convent, Bambalapitiya). Wife of V. Nadesan (Lake House), mother of Gerard and George (West Germany), Gordon and Geraldine. 92/18, College Street, Kotahena.

RASENDRA, Nagalingam. Attorney-at-law. Husband of Pushparani, father of Gajendran, Jayendran (USA) and Sivendran. 6/1, Fernando Road, Wellawatte.

RAJARATNAM, R. S. (Purser). Husband of Nallanayaki, father of Kyrie, (UK). Rajalekha (UK), Vithuran (UK). 25, Ramakrishna Road, Colombo.

JAYARATNAM, Ruby. Wife of late E. D. N. Jayaratnam, mother of Ruth (Maldives) and Sam (UK). Wariyapola Estate, Matale.

NAMASIVAYAM, Maruthappa. (Rtd. Conservator of Forests). Husband of Tresilla, father of Dilkusha, Shalini (USA) and Rohanna. 21, Frankfort Place, Colombo-4.

SELLAMAH. Wife of late V. S. Selladurai, mother of Pushpakaran, Rajasuriyar, Dr. Rajendram (University of Malaysia) and late Sarojinidevi. Palaly Road, Urelu East, Chunnakam.

RATNASABAPATHY, Wijeya Indra. Brother of late Mangaiyarkarasi Kandiah, Raja Indra (Michigan) late Maha Indra, late Poorna Indra and Mrs. Indrani Pathmanathan (Michigan). Cremation Sunset Hills Cemetery, Flint, Michigan.

THAMBIRAJAH, C. Husband of Thangaratnam, father of Jayaseelan, Jayarane, Kamalagini (Kuwait), Pushpagnani (Australia) and Sathiyaseelan (America). 306/1 Navalar Road, Jaffna.

PERSONAL

Mrs. Mano Anantha-Nathan B.A.



has been appointed Head Teacher, Malorees Primary School, London N.W.6

Mrs. Anantha-Nathan is the first Sri Lankan to be appointed head of a school in the U.K. We wish her good luck in her career.

N.T.A. President Mrs. Jemmie Srivastava J.P. Delivering Her Presidential Address:

THE N.T.A. works with the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. In this connection it co-sponsors a project for the homeless in Tamilnadu. Mr. David McArtney of IYSH explained its work here and in Tamilnadu with a suitable film show and slides.

**NORTHERN TAMILS
CELEBRATE THAIPONGAL**

TAMILS in the North celebrated the harvest festival of the Tamils on Saturday, 17th January, at the Longsight Community Hall in Manchester under the auspices of the Northern Tamil Association.

Proceedings began with prayer in Tamil led by Dr. (Mrs) Sivayoham of Blackburn, Lancashire. Dr. Sivayoham also gave a discourse in English on the history, significance and impact of the Thaipongal festival, for the benefit of the large crowd present, particularly the younger listeners by and large raised in Britain.



The well-known Tamil singer from the North-West, Mr. V. Balasubramaniam, rendered some popular Tamil songs and a Veena recital by Mrs Kanages Chandrakumar followed. She was accompanied on the Miruthangam by Dr. Mathi Chandrakumar.

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Circulation Manager,
Tamil Times

MARTYRED FR. BASTIAN REMEMBERED

TAMILS in the North of England remembered the martyred priest Fr. Mary Bastian, two years after his untimely death on 6th January, 1985.

In a Thanksgiving Mass held at the Guardian Angels Church, Bury, Fr. J. Cribben speaking to a packed gathering stated that witnessing to Christ in the oppressed parts of the Third World was always fraught with danger and in Sri Lanka, where the Tamils were being suppressed, it was even more dangerous for a Tamil priest to stand for Justice and Truth. Fr. Bastian did no more than care for his flock both young and old and for this he paid with his life, concluded Fr. John Cribben.

The carefully selected Liturgy for the day was on the death of Moses. It described and set out frontiers onto the land that God would give to his chosen people, as we are sure it must happen some day for the Tamil people themselves. In further reading, the

text spelt out how no man had yet found the grave of Moses, and indeed no man has yet found the grave of Fr. Bastian – if ever there was one.

Tamils both young and old read the 1st and 2nd lessons while Fr. Bastian's sister, brother-in-law and family in customary fashion made offerings at the altar.

A number of Tamils from the north were present at the Service and thereafter met at the home of Fr. Bastian's sister. It was decided to call for donations to the Bastian Educational Assistance Scheme.

Northern Tamils seek your assistance and would be grateful if funds could be sent to:-

The Secretary, The Bastian's Educational Assistance Scheme, St. Francis Xavier's Seminary, Colombogam, Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

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S.C.O.T. EVENTS

Musical Evening, Dinner, Disco

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**Tamil New Year Lunch and
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1 p.m., Sunday, 3 May

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Lola Jones Hall, Greaves Place,
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BOGUS REFUGEES

THE INTEMPERATE reaction of the Immigration Minister, Mr. David Waddington, to the sudden arrival of 64 Sri Lankan Tamils at Heathrow claiming asylum in the U.K. is more a matter for pity than sympathy. Pity for the insensitive approach to a problem that is plaguing Sri Lanka and its Tamil population and for Mr. Waddington's complete ignorance of the present state of the conflict raging in Sri Lanka where the authoritarian State employs with gay abandon all its might in decimating its minority community.

Since the outburst of the July, '83 violence over 10,000 Tamils have been killed and as many injured or maimed and several thousands held in detention camps through the country. No accurate figures are available and even reputed Organisations admit their inability to obtain classification or confirmation of allegations made to them. The last report of the Amnesty International highlights the situation where of the 276 cases referred to the Sri Lankan Government for clarification, only TWO have been satisfactorily explained.

In the eyes of the Sri Lankan Government the Amnesty International, the BBC and the British Press are all in league to discredit what they call a "Five Star" democracy in its desperate bid to "liquidate" terrorism by a handful of terrorists who have been eluding them for the last three years or more. The aerial bombardment of civilian targets in the North and East, the embargo on fuel supplies and the ever so frequent rampages of the Security Forces stationed in over 60 camps all over the Northern region, and similar numbers dotting the East in areas where the Tamils live, are of sufficient significance to dispel the theory of a "handful of terrorists".

What Sri Lanka faces now is a civil war, a war which threatens to divide up the country and a major confrontation between the Sinhala majority of 12 million and a minority of about 3 million Tamils.

It is idle to educate Mr. Waddington on the security that a Tamil receives in his homeland and the High Commissioner in Colombo may certainly have no reason to believe that any Tamil returning to Sri Lanka will be persecuted. However not all are so naive, even in Colombo after the holocaust of July, '83 when international opinion expressed its revulsion at man's inhumanity to man. Can the High Commissioner truthfully assert that a Tamil's life in his homeland is safe.

It is the physical safety that any civilised society or Government must provide. It is this danger from the marauding forces of the Government, both the Security Forces and the notorious "S.T.F." banded together under the leadership of no less a person than the President's son, Ravi Jayawardene, added to the regular and indiscriminate shellings from the Army Camps and aerial strafings on civilian targets - these are some of the factors that make life for any civilian impossible, besides the humiliation and suspicion that any Tamil faces outside these areas, in Colombo and elsewhere in the South.

Be that as it may, the total number of refugees and asylum-seekers admitted to this country after the 1983 riots does not exceed 2,000. The number of refugees in India is about 150,000. Those in Germany and other European countries exceed 30,000. Canada and Australia have accepted quite considerable numbers. Canada has recently granted immigrant status to over 8,000 Tamils.

Not a few months ago 155 refugees seeking asylum from Germany were admitted despite the hysterical outbursts of Mulroney's backwoodsmen. We recall the Prime Minister's historic declaration "My government will do anything but allow refugees in lifeboats to be turned aimlessly around in the ocean and turned away from our shores. To think that, in some way, 155 Sri Lankans will diminish our citizenship and ruin our immigration policies is not the resilience and strength of Canada."



A Tamil family getting a police escort at Heathrow, for another day in Britain.

The circumstances were almost identical but his remarks reflected the general sympathy and understanding more characteristic of the British people in the face of human misery.

As in the Canadian instance, what is more important is to find out whether they are Sri Lankan Tamils from the affected areas and the nature of their hardship so as to elicit their reasons for fleeing from the land of their birth and if these are well founded. It does not improve the image of Mr. Waddington and others of his ilk in the House of Commons who were using words such as "brutes", "bogus" and the like to describe these pathetic frightened escapees from state terror.

Until and unless the root cause of the problem in Sri Lanka is identified and international pressure is brought to bear on resolving the conflict between the two major communities there, which is what India is precisely trying to achieve, there will be more and more refugees knocking on the doors of whatever country which calls itself civilised. If India is involved because of her cultural and ethnic ties, Britain had her links too and the current confrontation could trace at least some of its roots to the British colonial administration that left in such a hurry.

AN OPEN LETTER - continued from page 1

We understand as head of a sovereign state your reluctance to say anything that may be construed as interference in the internal affairs of another sovereign state. But after all, it was your concern for human rights - a concern which overrides the territorial boundaries of a state - which has given legitimacy to your mediator role. And, any attempt to 'mediate' should surely include surfacing the root causes for the continuing violations of human rights by the Sri Lankan Government.

And, so we ask you to declare openly that a negotiating process directed to achieve a political solution should be founded on the recognition of the political reality that there exist in Ceylon today two nations - the Tamil Nation and the Sinhala Nation.

Please add your powerful voice to the voices of others in the international community in their efforts to secure the right of self-determination of the Tamil people. In the words of an article which we carry on our centre pages in this issue, 'Two nations may agree to live together by

force of reason. They cannot be compelled to live together by force of arms. And it is the rejection of reason by successive Sinhala Governments which also constitutes the rationale for the continued armed struggle of the Tamil people. . . .

We welcome your call to the Sri Lankan Government to lift the fuel blockade, stop the military offensive and to genuinely negotiate a political solution to the conflict, but we plead with you to ground the talking process on reason and not expediency.

As a friend of the Tamil people we ask you to secure the negotiating process that be founded on the principled framework contained in the Thimpu Declaration. It is only justice that will yield peace in the Indian Region. And justice is not an empty platitude - it alone will secure political stability. Justice must be done and must be seen to be done.

Yours in pain and suffering,

THE TAMIL NATION OF SRI LANKA.