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Is The
All-Ceylon
Tamil Congress
Communal?

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TO ALL WHO LOVE FREEDOM & HONOUR
BY DR. E. M. V. NAGANATHAN

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WE in the Tamil Congress are often taunted with the parrot-cry that we are a communal body and, therefore, reactionary. We are even accused of "perpetuating communalism." These are statements which a little examination will prove to be absurd, because the communal structure of Ceylon's society has been perpetuated from time immemorial. Ethnologically and racially the Tamils, the Sinhalese and even the Moors are one people, but they have continued to live in water-tight communal compartments. In the past racial fusion between the Tamils and the Sinhalese has been very much more common than to-day. During the middle ages when the Tamil kings and the Sinhalese rulers fought against each other and alternatively conquered and occupied large tracts of each other's lands, and again, when they took away thousands of prisoners, who subsequently became permanent settlers in the country of the victors, and finally, when comparatively recently (a hundred years ago) the maritime provinces of Ceylon were largely populated by Indian Tamil settlers, racial fusion had been carried on apace.

A popular farce known as "Fifty-Fifty" has been staged in many parts of Ceylon. It humorously suggests inter-communal marriages as the solution to our communal problem. In fact, Lord Soulbury was so much taken up with this childishly easy way out of our communal tangle that he prevailed upon Mr. Bandaranaike on the one hand and Mr. Ponnambalam on the other to go and see this skit "for my sake." Unfortunately, however, as already indicated, even though racial fusions have taken place on a large scale in the past, the continued existence of distinct communal entities has been rigorously preserved, because the progeny of these inter-communal marriages have been absorbed into one or the other of the different communities **and have never formed the nucleus of a unified Ceylonese race.** Thus it is that from generation to generation communalism has been perpetuated and preserved in this Island; yet, curiously enough, the Tamil Congress is accused of perpetuating what has already been perpetuated!

All that the Tamil Congress does is to take a realistic and practical view of the social structure of Ceylon's society.

It is a historic fact and an undeniable truth that the structure of political parties in a country is conditioned by and based upon the social structure of society. Political parties are, therefore, merely a natural reflection of the social structure of the people in any country. It is absurd to pretend that while in our everyday life we live communally, in politics alone we can be non-communal. Realising therefore, the inevitability of communal alignments in all bona fide parties in Ceylon (whatever their professed labels may be) the A. C. T. C. has sought to build up on this structure a composite nation of true communal brotherhood based on the principle of racial non-domination. That in essence is the fundamental position of the Tamil Congress. Let any honest person read the Tamil Congress' constitution; its Aims and Objects in particular, will give him a broad and clear insight into politics at its highest and best.

The Tamil Congress is, no doubt, a party of Tamils, but it is a party with a completely national outlook, nay, with international ideals. It stands for freedom and fairplay to all. Everyone of its political aims concerns the welfare of Ceylon as a whole and not the Tamil people exclusively. Comparisons, they say, are odious, but we invite any man or woman of understanding to compare and contrast the political aims and objects of the Tamil Congress with those of the Sinhala Maha Sabha, the Muslim League, the Burgher Political Association or the European Association, and then dare to throw a stone at us. It behoves not those who live in shoddy political and communal glass houses to throw stones at those who live in a stronghold of truthful realism built on the rock of broad internationalism.

Recently Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was candid enough to state that the Soulbury Constitution had not solved the communal problem in this country. Everybody knows that the communal problem exists in spite of Mr. Senanayake's amusingly puerile statement to the contrary, that "Communalism was dead as the dodo." Mr. Bandaranaike's admission or rather confession of electoral injustice done to the minorities is a little too late in the day. In any case he cannot absolve himself and his ministerial colleagues from their share of responsibility in a Constitution which, **while unconscionably decreeing that the principal minorities, (the Tamils and the Muslims) how form one-third of the population should get only one-**

fourth of the seats in Parliament, actually confers weightage to the majority community! Let it not be forgotten that the Solbury Constitution is nothing but a reiteration of the Ministers' own constitutional proposals. Let it also be remembered that the Soulbury Commissioners made one little concession favourable to the principal minorities in recommending multiple member constituencies, and that even this strenuously opposed by the ministers as a bloc, and the U. N. P. as a party.

There was just a chance that the Tamils and the Muslims together may obtain one or two additional seats by the "multiple number" device. It is recent history that Ministers made every effort (fair and unfair) to whittle down even this miserable measure of partial relief to the minorities. Yes, the Soulbury Constitution has not solved the problem, but we in the Tamil Congress firmly believe that our proposals, if accepted, would have solved the communal problem (as far as politics was concerned) for all time, and politically, at least the peoples of Ceylon would have become a united nation. Our plan was based on the great principle of non-domination. It is an unchallengeable fact that in a country with a heterogeneous population and a communal structure of society any stereotyped form democratic of government would become a tyranny and "freedom" itself a mockery to the minority races unless and until the principle of non-domination as between the various races in the country is implemented as the basic foundation of the Constitution.

We do not for a moment suggest that balanced representation would have completely obliterated by some magic, the age-long communal structure in the country. In other words, we do not pretend with any claims to sanity that communalism would have forthwith become as dead as the dodo. But we do maintain that the communal problem as far as politics was concerned would have been solved for all time. The only true indication that communalism is **non est** will be when the average Sinhalese, Tamil or Moor parent will think it natural and nothing out of the ordinary, if his daughter or son were to marry a member of another community. Communalism would be dead as the dodo only when the Registrar-General's department ceases to classify people in its census and other statistical returns as Tamils, Sinhalese, Būrghers etc.

It is axiomatic that under the democratic system of government people must divide into parties. On the other hand

the creation of a single party or a so-called United Party as exemplified in Germany by the United National Socialists (Nazis) is nothing but a totalitarian phenomenon. The U. N. P. which endeavours to cannibalise all spineless political parties and to annihilate all others is transparently a local Fascist production. In Democracy, however, people divide into parties. This does not mean that national disunion has resulted, because on all foreign affairs and external matters the nation is one and indivisible. The well-known dictum "division into parties on semi-fundamentals and union of all parties on fundamentals" is the essence of the democratic party system.

In a democratic country sovereignty is said to vest in the people—the so-called masses. Parties must, therefore, emerge from the people themselves; that is why it is axiomatic when we state that **parties spring from the people**. Now, there must be reason—some fundamental reason—why people join one party or the other. They will do so only because some common interests or interest binds them together in their day to day life in society. This binding force may be a common language or it may be a common creed or it may be a common fear or it may be common greed for power or it may be a common economic identity of interests, but whatever the common interest may be, it is essential that a bona fide party can be formed **only when the people forming it (not the leaders) have some common factor or factors which influences them in their daily life**. It goes without saying that the greatest common factor in Ceylon which binds people together into different groups is the communal structure of society in which we live, move and have our being. Today the reason why the Tamils form a natural party is not only because of their common language, their common heritage and their common culture, but above all other considerations, they are welded into a party by the threat of political emasculation and national deterioration implied in the new constitution which has been thrust upon us. Mr. Bandaranaike himself has admitted the Tamils are in a difficult position and that their future is very perilous and unenviable. There is a danger that some Tamils will follow the lead of those Tamil apologists for the U. N. P. who declared that "the Sinhalese are now our masters and, therefore, we must do what is pleasing to the Sinhalese leaders." This philosophy which is one firstly of surrender—not of freedom or democracy, and secondly of unmiti-

gated fauning, cringing and cadging at the feet of those in power, is the first and foremost danger that faces the Tamil race at the present time. It is being dinned into all Tamils on all sides and in many subtle ways that it is political wisdom for the Tamil people to surrender gracefully and for the Tamil politicians to toady opportunely.

In a manifesto signed by Mr. C. Ponnambalam, Chairman of the Jaffna Urban Council, Proctor R. R. Nalliah, Advocate S. Kanaganayagam and Dr. P. S. Subramaniam, all executive councillors of the U. N. P., the Tamil people are told that rightly or wrongly the Sinhalese Ministers have certain opinions and certain personal likes and dislikes, and that we Tamils should not dare to go against them or their wishes; but that we should do what is pleasing to these new masters if we wished to get on! It is this philosophy of slavery which the Tamil Congress has to combat as its first and foremost policy. It will be a difficult struggle for the Tamil people because the power of Government and the patronage of office will be utilised to crush us on the one hand and to pamper opportunist careerists on the other. We are told in the U.N.P. press, if not in so many words, that the political salvation of the Tamil race is dependent on their obediently carrying out the imperious wishes of Mr. Senanayake and electing his Tamil nominees to the future parliament, for then Mr. Senanayake will reward the subservient Tamil race by allotting couple of ministries to his Tamil nominees. But what profit is it to a nation if it were to lose its own soul so that a Mahadeva or a Nalliah may gain a ministry for himself! The elected Tamils in the state council who betrayed the trust of their electors by voting for the White Paper in the fear that they would otherwise lose the "goodwill" of the rent unrepresentative and unsatisfactory Sinhalese State Councillors, and who in words of Shakespeare, "were afeared to tell grey beards the truth", are the men who now pretend to decry what they call our communalism and affect what they pretend is their nationalism; but the world knows better. When in the British parliament the anomalies of the constitution—viz: weightage to the majority community and its consequent injustice to the minorities were laid bare and a question asked, the Secretary of State replied that he was not prepared to interfere since an **overwhelming majority of elected Tamils had voted for the White Paper Constitution**; and yet these are the men who having let the nation down demand that

they be returned to Parliament and thereby to office "so that the Tamils may have a share in the government of the country." Can unctious hypocisy go any further !

We, the Tamils, are today a subject people and tomorrow under the Soulbury constitution we may become doubtly so, never, therefore, was a central organisation like the Tamil Congress so necessary for the Tamil people as it is today if they wish to escape from the perils that lie ahead of them. The Tamil Congress is both a challenge and a hope to the Tamil people. Let all true Tamils rally to its flag and keep the spark of freedom burning in their souls and the light of knowledge ever in their eyes. The Tamil Congress has faith in the future. It has faith in the Tamil people and, yes, it has faith in the Sinhalese people as well. We have proclaimed it as our decision to offer co-operation to the patriotic and progressive sections of the other community, and thank God that in the ranks of the good Sinhalese people as well as of the other communities there is emerging today a great host of men who qualify under these terms, who are prepared to work with us.

The present-day Sinhalese leaders who have usurped leadership by exploiting the war emergencies and their statutory position to aggrandise themselves into power. It thanks to their 12-years term of office may be able to manoeuvre themselves again into office for a further period, but their nemesis is not far off. **The work before the Tamil Congress today is firstly to prevent the national deterioration and spiritual enervation of the race, and to prevent the good Tamil people from being deceived by false propaganda.** Like the proverbial ostrich some are prepared to stick their heads in the muddy banks of Lake House and pretend that all is well. The Tamil Congress stands for truth, the Tamil people, must first of all be told the truth. The so-called leaders and representatives of the Tamils are but the servants and agents of the sovereign people. They dare not arrogate to themselves power to mislead their people by their diplomacy. The people must be told the truth and the Tamils must be united into one determined race who will fight for their freedom as well as for the freedom of the other communities in the Island.

A resolution passed at the special Congress sessions held in Colombo on the eve of the White Paper debate stated that even under a Constitution (The Soulbury Constitution) con-

ducive to political domination and national enervation we the Tamils should be so resolved and so organised, as to be able to win freedom and self-respect not only for ourselves but for all the other races in this Island. Another resolution recently passed at the second plenary sessions in Jaffna stated that **since the Soulbury Constitution was inevitable we were obliged to work it "but only in a manner consistent with the dignity and self-respect of a great people."** We have also offered responsive co-operation and whole-hearted support to all other political parties and cultural institutions in the Island which are prepared to work for the political freedom, economic welfare and cultural greatness of this beautiful Island of ours.

The Tamil Congress has reiterated once again its resolve to work for the attainment of Swarajium (complete independence) for this Island. To-day more than ever before we are assured that a united Tamil people and a self-respecting and honest race can (in spite of severe handicaps at the present moment) win through and attain all the blessings of Democracy and all the benefits of good government in a free and independent Lanka.

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BY DR. E. M. V. V. V. V. V.