

# TAMIL NATION

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## Army goes back on its commitment

Senior "Defence Ministry officials who had earlier agreed to stop all offensive military operations in the Northeast during the period of the G.C.E. (A/L) examinations in which 21,000 children were involved, went back on their commitment within 48 hours. A total indefinite curfew was announced throughout the Jaffna peninsula, thereby denying the educational chances of the Jaffna children for the second time, and breaking the promise they had given the Examination Department, the ICRC and several NGOs.

Our Colombo correspondent reports that the idea behind the curfew was to discourage several members of diplomatic missions in Colombo from being present at the May Day rallies organised by the LTTE, to which they had received invitations.

# MORE GENERALS MEAN LESS PEACE IN LANKA

Have you noticed? - the plethora of Army Generals that Sri Lanka has been producing lately? With pips, stars, medals, ribbons and the whole trappings?

Why do some small, poor countries think of large armies? To protect the country from military invasion from outside, and occupation by some foreign power. Mercifully, Sri Lanka had during its forty three years of "independence" never had to face a foreign invasion. Even when foreign forces came into the country, first in 1971 and later in 1987, they were to assist the army, and at the invitation of the two heads of government, Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike and President Junius Richard Jayewardene. On both occasions, the Sinhala leaders took care to see that foreign troops did not enter Sinhala territory. In 1971, Indian troops were employed only to guard the international airport, and in 1987, they were confined to the Tamil-majority areas. So how did Sri Lanka manage to give birth to so many Generals within such a short period? The answer possibly is "Field Marshal" Prabhakaran!

It was talked about in Colombo during President Premadasa's early honeymoon days with the LTTE in 1989, how at some function he had said in a humorous aside to some political associates: "I wish I had Prabhakaran as my General". Presumably, one of the unstated reasons why the President now insists on the LTTE supremo's presence at any future dialogue with the LTTE might be this old hankering to see the man whom he apparently admires so much. Another unspoken purpose might also be clear all doubts that the man is still alive! After all, did not the late General Ranjan Wijeratne in the course of one of his breezy obiter dicta embarrass his Cabinet colleague A.S.S. Hameed by saying that the person whom the latter met in Jaffna was not Prabhakaran but his "double"?

### A Tamil in Command

Time was when during the first six years of "independence" (1948-1954), the Ceylon Army was commanded by two Britishers - Brigadier the Earl of Caithness and later Brigadier F.S. Reid. It took three years

for the army to achieve a strength of 70 officers and 610 other ranks. It was not until 1955 that a Ceylonese assumed command for the first time, and he happened to be a Tamil - Col. Anton Muttucumaru, promoted Brigadier, a dignified product of Oxford University.

The first functioning General appeared on the scene twelve years after "independence" in 1960, in the person of Major General H.W.G. Wijeyekoon. Apart from the 1958 riots in which the Army did a creditable job in putting down Sinhala mob terrorism, it had seen very little action. Until Junius Richard J. began his war against the Tamils, the only possible Army casualties, if at all any, could have come only through cirrhosis of the liver, by hitting the bottle hard! Who would have ever thought that the country today, yet without any signs of foreign invasion, would become chockful of prattling Generals not only overseeing action on the front, but even chitchatting at cocktails at Canberra, Ottawa, London? President Jayewardene was running short of diplomats and discredited politicians that he began sending defunct Generals and Brigadiers to represent the country abroad in various world capitals - some are still there we believe. Grant it to that man; he did not only militarise the society, politicise the army, but militarised diplomacy as well! The Sepala Attigalles, the "Bull" Weeratunga, the Denis Pereraras, were all in their own ways the architects of the suicidal military policy against the Tamils, later to serve as accredited ambassadors.

### "Offensive Defence"

These thoughts were occasioned by our reading two recent interviews, the first by Defence Secretary General C. Natunga, and the second by Army Commander General Hamilton Wanasinghe. General Cyril spoke about the Army now going on a strategy of "offensive defence"; which to us sounds not like an offensive against the Liberation Tigers but one against the Queen's English. The report of the interview given by General Hamilton to a foreign news agency says:-

"The Sri Lankan forces are gearing up to take complete control of the Tamil rebel-controlled northern and eastern provinces within a time-frame of eight months. General Hamilton Wanasinghe said... "We will finish mopping up operations in the East by the end of June and then clear the northern province of rebels before the year-end."

So much for the "good news" from General; which reminds us of a line from an old comedy

East for operations in the North where more than three-fourths of the territory is under LTTE "occupation"... He ruled out the possibility of a massive army operation in the North as he does not have adequate forces to hold the land area after clearing. "It will be a gradual clearing, area by area". He admitted that the earlier schedule for clearing the East by March 1991 could not be achieved because of the delay in recruiting and training

the government is in a position to enlist another 35,000 men, going by its own calculation, and train them within the next eight months, (which possibility is not considered feasible by the Army High Command itself), the Generals will not see light at the end of the Tiger tunnels, certainly by year-end as General Hamilton stated earlier. That was simply a whistle in the dark meant for foreign consumption.

The Generals know, and we know, that army recruits, trained hastily and sent to the battlefronts in recent times are not at all suitable, 'war material'. There were several instances, at Mankulam and recently at Mannar, where they simply dropped their arms and fled. One cannot blame them, because thousands of youths unemployed for years, joined the army for a monthly income, not to fight a war and die, but to live and support themselves and their families.

The only courage that General Hamilton could derive was from the promise of bigger and bigger arsenals; talking of new powerful 130 mm artillery pieces with a range of 27 km. and expecting to receive tracked infantry combat vehicles which will improve troop mobility. They could cause more destruction, yes, but what more destruction could they cause than the Sia Marchettis they have, the Chinese Y-12 bombers, their helicopter-guns, their Super Dyora fast attack crafts on the seas? The point to be realised is, that behind every artillery piece, there is a man, and behind that man (or woman) there is a commitment. If every Tiger casualty is a determined, willing sacrifice, every soldier who dies is an unwilling casualty, or a helpless victim.

Unfortunately, the Generals have to talk war, because war is their business; and bread and butter. President Premadasa will continue to talk Peace, because on that depends the country's bread and butter. On current form, they are destined to talk both, maybe until June, maybe July, but we have a hunch that talk of war would get progressively reduced by the time the year ends. And that is no astrological forecast, only a simple assessment.

S. Sivanayagam

## VIEW POINT

### Another General to try his luck in the East

Army Chief of Staff, Major General Cecil Waidyaratne has been appointed the overall Security Forces Commander for the East. The Army's No. 2 at the moment, General Waidyaratne is reported to be devising new, more ruthless strategies in place of old ones that have failed. It was found that Major General Gerry Silva who was once in charge of the East was so convinced that a military solution was not possible (Bless his heart!) that he had become ineffective.



staged in Colombo about thirty years ago - The Return of Ralahamy - where the character says: "THAT is an old story. Tell us something new".

There is some "bad news" too, from the General. The report continues:-

"... But the General acknowledged that it is extremely difficult to eliminate "terrorism" within a time schedule. Lt. Gen. Wanasinghe said troops would be pulled out from the

additional troops. That schedule was drawn on the basis of an army strength of 100,000. Presently the strength of the army, including volunteers and auxiliary units, is estimated to be around 65,000 only...."

So that makes the position clear. It is virtual confession - coming straight from the horse's mouth - that it is impossible to secure territory with the present army strength. Unless



# TAMIL NATION

"Truth and knowledge are an idle gleam if they do not bring power to change the world."

Sri Aurobindo

Recognising that to change anything it is necessary to understand that which we seek to change, the TAMIL NATION is concerned, not only with providing information but also, with furthering an understanding of the issues that confront the Tamil national movement. Recognising that, in the end, we truly understand anything only to the extent that we have been able to change it, the TAMIL NATION is concerned with changing those material conditions of existence which continue to oppress and discriminate against the people of Tamil Eelam. The Tamil Nation is rooted in the growing togetherness of the Tamil people and it seeks to focus attention on the unjust relationship between nations without a state and nations that have attained state-hood. And the TAMIL NATION exists to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary, both amongst the Tamil people and outside, if the struggle of the Tamil people for national self determination is to be won.

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## Indian High Commission's Tamil employee beaten up in Colombo

V. Rajendran, a Tamilian employed as a personal assistant to Mr. M.P. Singh, Second Secretary (Information) of the Indian High Commission in Colombo was picked up near his home in Bambalapitiya on the night of April 19th and was beaten up at a police station.

Rajendran was taking a walk around 8 p.m. when three policemen said to be from the crime detection bureau suddenly pounced on him and dragged him by force to the Kolupitiya police station. Despite his protestation about his identity and producing his personal identity card issued by the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry, the policemen detained him at the station overnight, and beat him up. Rajendran's request to telephone the High Commission was refused. When he suggested that they do the telephoning themselves in order to ascertain his identity, they refused again; all of which indicated that it was a deliberate act of harassment.

Subsequently High Commissioner N.N. Jha called on Minister of State for Foreign Affairs John Ameratunga and registered a protest, after which the Colombo government expressed regret. A police spokesman claimed that the three policemen who had gone on leave "immediately after the incident" have been suspended. In Delhi, Sri Lankan High Commissioner Neville Kanakarathne called on the Indian Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey and conveyed his government's regrets.

Less than a month earlier, the *Times of India* correspondent in Colombo Ashwani Talwar was harassed at his own home, when policemen walked in and questioned him on his "frequent visits to the northeast". Subsequently it was explained by a senior police officer that it was a case of "mistaken identity".

## Five Tamils challenge British policy on asylum

The effectiveness of the British government's policy on granting asylum has been challenged by five Sri Lankan Tamils who have filed a petition before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The petitioners have claimed that British law provides no effective remedy for refugees who have been refused asylum.

Three of the five Tamils were jailed "ill-treated" after being repatriated in 1988 to Sri Lanka. The five appealed to the immigration adjudicator who ruled that the Home Office had been wrong in deporting them. The Tamils were allowed to return to Britain and demanded that British law should allow an appeal before repatriation.

They then filed a petition under the European Convention on Human Rights, and the European Commission on Human Rights decided, by 15 votes to one, that absence of a right of appeal before deportation is a breach of Article 13 of the European Convention, which guarantees a domestic remedy for those alleging a breach of their substantive human rights.

But the Commission held that the deportation to Sri Lanka of the petitioners was not a breach of their substantive right under Article 13 for protection against torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

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# Briefs

## Killing of Indian fishermen: Jha's protest to Lanka

On the 13th March, according to a report in the *INDIAN EXPRESS* of 15th March, an Indian fisherman, Krishna (35) of Uchipuli town in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu was shot dead by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing in Lankan waters. The body was brought to Rameswaram by the three fishermen who had accompanied him on the trip, and a meeting of fishermen's associations and left wing unions was held to condemn the indiscriminate opening of fire by Sri Lankan Navy men. That was the second Indian casualty in recent times. Recently, on the initiative by the Governor of Tamil Nadu Mr. Bhishma Narain Singh, a protest was lodged to Colombo by High Commissioner Jha.

## Rubber estate workers attacked

According to a UNI report from Colombo, a large Sinhalese mob attacked Tamil rubber estate workers in Sri Lanka's south-eastern Moneragala district on the night of 22nd-April. One Tamil worker of Indian origin was killed and at least six others wounded.

## Jha denies remark about Tamil Nadu

Indian High Commissioner in Colombo Mr. N.N. Jha, answering a question in an interview in Madras on why he was so keen on bringing the non-LTTE groups together when the LTTE was the force to reckon with, said there was a basic inconsistency in the LTTE's claim that it was the most popular group in the northeastern province, but that other groups would not be allowed to exist or contest the elections. "This is a natural contradiction", he said, "if the LTTE was sure of its stand that it called the shots, there must be no objection to its standing for elections."

Mr. Jha denied that he ever made a remark in the interview to *THE ISLAND* (17th February 1991, reproduced in *TAMIL NATION* of March 1) that the Sri Lanka government had demanded the dismissal of the Karunanithi government. On his quoted remark: "this is a very important development and is what Sri Lanka has been urging and something which we think should please Sri Lanka", Mr. Jha said: "I never said it. It has been made up. The Sri Lanka never demanded the dismissal of the DMK government and they have no right to do so. At that point of time, when it was dismissed, the Sri Lanka government was happy. New Delhi does not act on behalf of a foreign government. There was general satisfaction in Sri Lanka that the DMK government was dismissed. It is not my reaction. What their views are, I cannot control them".

## Nine soldiers & 3 militants killed

At least nine Sri Lankan soldiers and three LTTE militants were killed in the 24 hours preceding April 19, in two separate incidents in the north and east, according to a PTI report from Colombo. While five soldiers were killed in a gun battle at Andankulam in northern Mannar, four other soldiers were shot dead by the LTTE when they attacked a route clearing patrol at "Sardapura" in eastern Trincomalee.

## Premadasa suspects external forces

External forces bent on destabilising Sri Lanka could be working in collusion with the LTTE to create chaos, confusion and disorder in the country, said President Premadasa addressing a public rally at Divulapitiya on 19th April.

## Mandapam camp refugee held

An ex-militant group refugee at the Mandapam refugee camp was taken into custody by the "Q" Branch of the Tamil Nadu C.I.D., following the discovery of ammunition buried in the sand at Dhanushkodi. Two magazines, 56 rounds of cartridges of the AK-47 rifle and a walkie talkie set were among the items unearthed.

## Colombo to host SAARC summit

Sri Lanka plans to hold the sixth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Colombo in early November this year. Foreign Minister Harold Herat who was attending a reception in the Chinese Embassy told Chinese news agency XINHUA that the exact date for the summit would be decided after the general election in India in May. However, government sources in Colombo claimed that the summit was scheduled to be held from November 7 to 9 at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Congress Hall (BMICH).

## "Escaped from a nursing home"

*THE INDIAN EXPRESS* (Madras edition) of 26 April carries the following news item: "Three LTTE cadres-Bharath, Rajkumar and Ravi—who were being treated in a private nursing home in the Collector's Office Road here (in Trichy) since December last have given a slip to the police in the hospital and disappeared from the hospital. An intensive search is on to locate the whereabouts of these missing LTTE men".

## 3 Tamils held at airport

According to a report in *THE HINDU* of April 26, three Sri Lankan Tamils, including a woman, were arrested at the Madras airport on 24th April, after they allegedly attempted to fly to Singapore by an Air India flight using forged travel documents. The police said the three were staying at Mogappair on the suburbs of Madras.



# A COLOMBO COLUMNIST WRITES ON 'PRABHAKARAN'S HOLD ON TAMIL NADU'

Reproduced from THE ISLAND SUNDAY EDITION of 14th April 1991

'Captain Pirabakaran' is ready for release. It has been timed for the elections in June for the Tamilnadu legislative assembly and the Indian Parliament. Vijayakanth, an ardent fan of the Tiger leader and one of the top box office stars of Tamil filmdom's formula movies, has expressed hope that his role in 'Captain Pirabakaran' would bring him respect. Last year he named his son after his real life idol. Vijayakanth is an actor of the D.M.K. camp. A cherished goal in the life, he has said in a recent interview, is to meet Prabhakaran.

T. Rajendar is a big time producer, actor, director, distributor script writer etc. with several box office hits to his credit and a propensity for not too pleasant alternative harangues. Rajendar also belonged to the D.M.K. once. He was sacked from the party in 1989 for publicly opposing and criticising Karunanidhi's leadership and revealing details of the corrupt practices of the D.M.K. leader's son M.K. Stalin. Later Rajendar founded a party called Thayaya Marumalarchi Kazhagam - party for the renaissance of the homeland. Last year he was one of the main organizers of the meeting in Madras to mark Prabhakaran's birthday on November 26. Now he is said to have formed an umbrella organization called Tamil United Front. This organization will call upon Delhi to give assistance to the LTTE to set up Thamileelam and to recognize them as a legitimate liberation organization like the PLO.

Dr. M.S. Uthayamoorthy is a prolific writer and one of Tamilnadu's most influential opinion makers. He wrote an article in a weekly with a very large circulation in the state that the 'soft McCarthyism' which is being practised in Tamilnadu to

suppress opinion in favour of the Tiger cause should be done away with. He is one who has regularly criticised the D.M.K. government. He says "some prominent persons and papers are today reluctant to talk or write about the problem of the Sri Lankan Tamils... If there were talk of Eelam there are cries that it is a plan to separate Tamilnadu as an independent country. Once there was a senator called McCarthy in America. He used this (anti-communism) to brand even people whom he did not like as communists. Many reasonable and innocent government officials were removed from their jobs as a result. Those who criticised him were accused of being communists and he ruined their lives... we must not allow McCarthyism in Tamilnadu."

The intelligent Tamil people must understand the truth of the Sri Lankan problem. Who are the perpetrators of this lenient McCarthyism in Tamilnadu? They are those who wanted to remove the D.M.K. from power. I am sad that the Sri Lankan Tamil problem was made the scape goat for dismissing the D.M.K. Didn't they have the Sarkaria commission and thousand and other reasons to do so?

Did the D.M.K. give an uncorrupt, clean government? Did they work with foresight?.. (goes on to describe corruption and abuse of power under D.M.K. rule). In other countries they would have taken up such reasons to remove a state government. If one cannot rule with responsibility we can look to another.

But it is deplorable that rather than follow such a course of action McCarthyist methods were used and the problem of the Sri Lankan Tamils fell victim. The Sri Lankan Tamils have been fighting for their

By TARAKI



Vijayakanth



T. Rajendar



Dr. M.S. Uthayamoorthy

basic rights against an authoritarian regime for many years. They have lost their

homes, lost their kith and kin and shed blood in their struggle. We must respect their courage and determination.

Some politicians speak as though Prabhakaran should conduct himself as a blameless saint when it comes to waging war. They forget that in war even Ram had to kill Vali by perfidy... Indira Gandhi who created Bangladesh as a separate nation helped the Sri Lankan Tamils to run training camps here because she understood the validity of the reasons for the Sri Lankan Tamil problem. This is why Rajiv Gandhi took the step to send in the air force to drop food although it was a violation of a neighbouring country's sovereignty.

Can we continue to ignore everything that the Indian government has done? The Sri Lankan should be enabled to get their legitimate rights. If those are not granted, assistance should be given for setting Eelam. Some would say that if Eelam is created then Tamilnadu would also separate, it will be a threat to India.

This is an insidious cry that seeks to cover the truth.

Dr. M.S. Uthayamoorthy is a pan-Indian nationalist who does not share the views of the Dravidian movement.

'Gnani' is leading intellectual of Tamilnadu avant garde. He belonged to the elite circle of Tamil literary magazines which discuss matters ranging from post-structuralism to forgotten forms of folk theatre apart from producing some story writers, novelists and poets. The 'Ananda Vikatan' Tamilnadu's oldest and most popular magazine invited him to comment on the political trends. Tamilnadu in the 80's for its first week's issue for 1991. What he wrote astonished many and was promptly dismissed by some more, I suspect

out of fear of the consequences of acknowledging at least some aspects of Gnani's views.

The basic trends in the politics of Tamilnadu in the eighties, he argued, were set in motion by the direct and indirect influence of two people: M.G.R. and Prabhakaran. The duplicity of Delhi's attitudes towards the Sri Lankan problem had disillusioned many youth in the state and coupled with the opportunism of Tamilnadu's politicians is leading them away from the traditional interests of the established political parties, he avers. In conclusion he wrote that many leading politicians of Tamilnadu today may fade away towards the end of this century as a result of the impact Prabhakaran and M.G.R. made on Tamilian politics.

The opinions and convictions of Vijayakanth, T. Rajendar, Dr. M.S. Uthayamoorthy and 'Gnani' are the dividends of the LTTE's long term and useful ideological investment in Tamilnadu: more effective and stable than the patronage of an M.G.R. or a Rajiv. These dividends will gradually place Prabhakaran at the critical interstice where a potential tension may develop between the covert desire in the west to see fissures to the Tamil South of the Indian Union and Delhi's determination, however muddled headed or counter productive in its manifestations, to hold it together. And then Colombo will lose its significance in the LTTE's scheme of things. Prabhakaran's stature, potential real, in Tamilnadu will present Delhi with two options: Terminate him or win him over to their side. When they calculate the ideological and material cost of the former they will be impelled sooner or later to try the latter.

## TAMIL DISAPPEARANCES IN THE EAST

Tony Emerson with Steve Le Vine in Trincomalee reporting for NEWSWEEK

In the beautiful harbor of Trincomalee, capital of Sri Lanka's northeastern province, ethnic Tamils whisper of security men who come at night, wearing black shirts and pants, and announce that "you are wanted for questioning." No one knows how many Tamils have disappeared from Trincomalee, apparent casualties of a new phase in Sri Lanka's eight-year-old civil war. The Sri Lankan Army is pressing a campaign to purge civilian areas of rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who are fighting for an independent state in the northern and eastern regions. From Batticaloa, south of Trincomalee, human rights observers report that in the last nine months, 2,000 Tamil youths have been arrested on unknown charges - and have not been seen since.

It will be difficult to count the missing in Trincomalee, an increasingly silent and empty city. Last June the Liberation Tigers broke a 13-month truce by massacring scores of police officers. The Colombo govern-

ment responded by dropping "barrel bombs," oil drums filled with burning liquid, in civilian neighborhoods to smoke out rebels. Nationwide, more than 4,000 people have died in rebel ambushes and Army reprisals since that time, in Trincomalee, an estimated one fourth of the 350,000 residents have fled the fighting and Army manhunt - not always to safety.

Soldiers have searched for rebel suspects in some of the 30 refugee camps that now ring Trincomalee. A leader of one camp, near the village of Nilaveli north of Trincomalee, said that 84 men were detained in a series of Army sweeps last year. One refugee who returned said he was locked in a prison that held about 350 men "They tied my hands behind my back and kept a blindfold around my eyes. I hardly ate for two weeks," he said. "I was finally released with 15 (men). We don't know what happened to the others." The camp leader, who requested anonymity, said

only 45 of the 84 detainees are accounted for. The others "disappeared or have been killed. We don't know."

The apparent Army crackdown on civilians has not improved its position on the battlefield. The rebels still hold sway over much of the northern and eastern provinces, except in big cities where government forces guard roadblocks by day and usually retreat to barracks by night. Diplomats in Colombo say President Ranasinghe Premadasa, considered pragmatic but occasionally ruthless, has given Army hard-liners until June to gain the upper hand, or he may attempt to reopen peace talks. An Army surge seems unlikely, but so is a Tiger victory. In the Trincomalee district, the army estimates that the rebels are outnumbered by at least 10,000 to 800.

No involvement: Most Tamils in Trincomalee won't discuss the disappearances, even under the cloak of anonymity. "I've stopped working in human rights

because it's not wise anymore," says a formerly outspoken advocate. A local relief official said he seeks an escort from international organizations just to deliver medicine to the refugee camps. Another adds, "We don't get involved with human-rights issues. Our lives literally depend on it."

A citizens committee set up by the military to represent refugees directs inquiries about missing persons back to the Army. Brig. Siri Pieris, Army commander in the Trincomalee district, said he had received no official complaints of disappearances, but was investigating the reports nonetheless.

This is not the first time Sri Lankan have reported hearing midnight knocks at the door. The government, which is dominated by Sinhalese Buddhists, the country's largest ethnic group, has faced challenges from several rebel armies. According to the Mothers' Front, a Colombo-based human-rights group, more than 40,000 people disappeared in 1989 and 1990, when the gov-

ernment put down a rebellion among Sinhalese extremists. Now the target of disappearances has simply shifted, some say, to the Liberation Tigers, the last active rebel group.

As frustration mounts in the armed camps, by standers suffer. At least 19 people died when Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne was assassinated March 2 in a car-bomb attack that Colombo blamed on the Tigers. The same day, five Tamils were brutally beaten to death in a village near Trincomalee. Reports of disappearances are now likely to focus attention on the conduct of the Army. But that alone won't prevent more atrocities by troops on both sides of Sri Lanka's civil war.

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TAMIL NATION



## ASIA WATCH

Washington: Asia Watch, a nonofficial American Human Rights-monitoring organization, has charged that the Sri Lankan Government has directly contributed to the violence in Sri Lanka by "supporting, training and arming groups with a history of abuses against civilians, sometimes supporting two or more rival factions against each other, sometimes encouraging the formation of death squads composed of members of the security forces. It has engaged in a series of purges of suspected sympathizers of the various guerrilla groups, involving mass arrests, disappearances and extrajudicial executions."

### Brutal campaign

Asia Watch also blamed the militants. "All have committed atrocities in the course of the civil war", it said.

Asia Watch said that the killing of Deputy Defense Minister Ranjan Wijeratne on March 2, 1991 underscored the Sri Lankan human rights situation, which is "marked by lawlessness on all sides". Wijeratne "ran an often brutal Government campaign against Tamil separatists". It is not

immediately clear which of the several parties with grievances against the Minister was responsible. Those parties included militant groups such as the Janatha Vimukhi Peramuna (JVP), a radical Sinhalese nationalist insurgency operating in the south of the country, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the largest of numerous Tamil guerrilla groups fighting for an independent state in the northeast."

### Ranjan's assurance

Asia Watch noted in a 22-page update on human rights in Sri Lanka that in August 1990, Wijeratne told the Sri Lankan Parliament: "Just as we dealt with the JVP, the scum of the south, we shall deal with the scum of the north. We got the leadership of the JVP, and I have given assurance that we will get the leadership of the LTTE" (The top leaders of the JVP, "responsible" for thousands of killings in 1988-89 of Government officials, members of the security forces and citizens believed to be working with them, were shot dead while in custody in late 1989). Two months before Wijeratne made the statement,

however, the LTTE and the Government had been in a de facto alliance, Asia Watch points out. "If the Government's own abuses have served to escalate the violence in Sri Lanka, so have its continually shifting stands towards the guerrillas."

"If the LTTE initiated this latest round of fighting", says Asia Watch, "The security forces have been equally responsible for abuses. Some civilian deaths have been attributed directly to the Army and police; others have been linked to vigilante groups. Since June 1990 there have been numerous reports of arrests, torture and killings of young Tamil men by the security forces."

### Wrenching stories

Tamil refugees who have fled Sri Lanka have told foreign journalists wrenching stories of the torture and horrible mutilation of young family members by Sri Lankan soldiers. Reports of disappearances, necklacing (burning live victims in tires) as well as tires being used to burn corpses are numerous. Many homes and businesses have been destroyed by fire.

Amnesty International reported in September 1990 that since the Sri Lankan Army regained control of Batticaloa in June, they estimated that over 400 people have disappeared from that district alone, following detention by security forces. Although some may have been released, many are feared dead. In Batticaloa, "piles of burnt bodies have appeared in various places overnight, when only the security forces are likely to be out on the roads."

### Civilian shields

Asia Watch says that "according to reliable reports, on September 29, members of the Special Task Force (STF) reportedly rounded up four tractor loads of Tamil civilians near Tirukkovil, many from refugee camps, and took them to Kanjikudicharu. Some were made to march in front of the STF forces, reportedly to clear mines, while others were held close to STF Men as shields to protect their exposed side when carrying weapons. During the mission, the LTTE and the STF exchanged fire on several occasions, seriously endangering the hostages."

When the Army finally reached the LTTE camp, they found food stores, supplies and refrigerators which the civilians were made to carry back to the STF camp. The refugees were allowed to keep a portion of these supplies when they were released, but this is small consolation for their humiliation and terror. Civilians now flee when the STF are sighted, often with tragic consequences."

### Cyclists attacked

Asia Watch backs its charges by quoting the Citizens Committee of Jaffna, local Citizens Committees and Jaffna local Citizens Committees and Jaffna Diocesan Human Development Center. It quotes the Diocese report as saying: "The declaration of curfew is an open licence to kill civilians at will from the air". People in the district of Jaffna "travel almost exclusively by foot or by bicycle and often travel up to 90 miles in search of food." Thousands of bicycles move in and out of the peninsula night and day, carrying sacks of provisions. Hundreds of these bicyclists have been attacked and killed by helicopter gunships."

## REFUGEE RELIEF WORK BY C.S.I. (JAFFNA)

A report by the Rt. Rev. D.J. Ambalavanar, Bishop in Jaffna, Bishop's House, Vaddukoddai of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India, states:-

\* The Jaffna Diocese of the C.S.I. between July and December 1990, helped with 21 lorry loads of dry rations in the form of Rice, Flour, Dhal, Sugar, Milk Powder, Tea Leaves and also other items like Candles, Boxes of Matches, Soaps etc.

\* Thirteen lorry loads were brought into the Jaffna Peninsula, two sent to the Eastern Province and six to the areas south of Elephant Pass.

\* Each lorry load including transport cost a little over Rs. 300,000/-.

\* The main bulk of these provisions was distributed to 53 camps with about 30,000 refugees in Uduvil, Sandilipay and Tellippalai A.G.A. Divi-

sions. These camps were provided with weekly food packs for four weeks in succession. Another 22 camps also in the same divisions with about 10,000 people were provided with one week's food packs.

\* A week's supply of food packs were given to 600 families in Pasaiyur and another 600 families from Palaly who are at Uduvil. Nearly 1,000 families in Delft were also given food packs.

\* The Diocese also provided more than 3,000 mothers with children under one year of age with milk food packets.

\* At Shalomnagar in the Kilinochchi District, the Diocese has maintained now for over six months a refugee camp with over 250 families.

\* Refugee families at Cheddikulam, Niraivudallur, Vavuniya, Oddaruthankulam, Vannivelankulam, Barathipuram, Murikandy, Konavil, Pallikudah, Jeyapuram, Murusumodai, Visvamadhu and Poonakary were also given relief rations for a few weeks.

\* The Diocese has spent on the above programme nearly Rs. 6,500,000/-.

\* The Diocese is also helping more than 100 widows in the immediate vicinity who lost their husbands due to the military operations of the last few months. These families on the average receive immediate help of Rs. 2,000/- each.

\* The Diocese is also arranging a rehabilitation programme for over 500 widows affected by the ethnic conflict during the last few months. This programme is now being planned and will be affected within the next two months.

\* The Diocese gave financial assistance to 115 students at the Jaffna University who were from the Eastern Province when they were cut off from their usual sources of support. They were given Rs. 300.00 each.

## Two historic anniversaries: Hope in the midst of suffering

Dr. D.C. Ambalavanar from Surrey, U.K. writes:-

There is not much to commemorate or celebrate in a country that is torn by civil war such as Sri Lanka is today. However even in the midst of such conflict there yet might be cause of gratefulness and hope for the future.

Two important milestones are reached this year and both are connected with the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India. This year it is 175 years since the American Ceylon Mission was formed and 150 years since the Morning Star, the Diocese's weekly paper, was established.

It was in 1816 that the first American missionaries arrived in the Jaffna peninsula. They had reached their destination after many months of arduous sea travel during which many of their children died. Yet with great faith and determination they set about spreading the word of the Gospel. Soon they had established several educational institutions of which Jaffna College and Uduvil Girls' College are but two well known examples. Health work has started at Pandaterippu. The work that these missionaries did was to change the way of life of the Jaffna people irrevocably and with consequences even they could not have anticipated. The American - Ceylon Mission which they

established was the forerunner of the Jaffna Diocese of the South India United Churches (SIUC) which in 1947 became the Church of South India.

The Morning Star - the bilingual weekly published by the JDCSI was started in 1841 by these American missionaries. It is one of the oldest Asian newspapers and certainly the oldest in Sri Lanka after the Observer. In the early years, as it was the only paper available, it was not only a source of news but had an educative aim. Today its continued publication in the face of adversity is a testament to the resilience and faith of its Church and people. Its news content and editorial comment are especially appreciated by its expatriate readership.

The spirit of the early American missionaries is embodied in the work of the present clergy and workers of the JDCSI as they continue to serve their people in the face of considerable hardships.

These two anniversaries remind us how grateful we ought to be and how hope should be kept alive however dismal the future might appear to be the lines of that famous hymn seem to appropriate for this occasion.

"O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come..."



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# TWO MUSLIM M.P.s IN THE SRI LANKAN PARLIAMENT

(Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees)

Mr. M.A. Abdul Majeed, 20 minutes please.

(Mr. M.A. Abdul Majeed)

Thank you, Sir. Today we are again debating the Emergency. How the Emergency came to be invoked in this country is because of problems created by just politicians. The last time when I partook in the debate, I informed the House about a cartoon I saw in the library where a small boy asked the parents "Dad what do the politicians do?" The dad says "The politicians solve problems". Then the boy asked "What sort of problems?" "Problems created by the politicians."

Today in our country over a period of years through acts of omissions and commissions by all, by the leadership of all political parties, the so-called ethnic problem has now come to a situation where there is an all out war by the security forces against those who are fighting the legitimate government of this country. When I listened to the contributions during the debate, I had the feeling that most of us are still going on the same way of accusing each other. "You did that, you failed to do this and we did this."

I was very happy when I listened to the speech of Mr. Ratnayake, a very senior politician from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, who took a very sober attitude and appealed to all to get involved in solving this problem. But he failed to mention one thing, the most important thing he omitted to mention was the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. According to my way of thinking, the two important parties in this country, the United National Party which is now governing this country and the alternate party and the alternate government, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, must not look at this problem through tinted spectacles. They should at least now think that this has gone too far and try to look at it from a national point of view, get together and evolve a common front and say "This is what we will do". And I am sure if that attitude is taken, the other minority parties will take cognizance of that and we would try to sort out and solve this problem.

## The ethnic game

Sir, I come from the Ampara district which is in the East where due to the insurgency, not thousands, but lakhs of people, Sinhalese, Muslims, Tamils have been forced to live in refugee camps nor for days, not for weeks but for months together. For how long are we going to allow this to fester? If we allow it to fester, this cancer many even eat us up. So I would appeal - as I tend to appeal at every turn whenever I have taken part in a debate in this august assembly - to the leadership, to please not look at it as an issue on which a Government or a party can be overthrown and another party can come into power. We have played that game for too long. Everyone should realize that this ethnic problem can no longer be an issue and should

From the HANSARD 20th March 1991

not be an issue. The way the people of this country have responded too has shown that this cannot be so. There was a time when the language issue could make or break a government. Ultimately when Tamil was declared an official language there was not even a whimper. What does it clearly show? It shows that the people of this country, whether they be Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims, are mature. They think and act wisely. Why cannot we do that?

I am happy that the Premadasa Government has for the first time tried to build up a Sri Lankan identity. This is something that we should have done as soon as we gained Independence. Unfortunately we have failed to build up a Sri Lankan identity. Everybody thinks in terms of "my language, my race, my religion", and we are in this soup. This must be first corrected in the educational policy. That is where we should have started. Now for our children in this country, saner counsels have prevailed and we have realized that they must be taught the languages of this country and also English, the important international language. If we had done that earlier we would not have been in this situation. Our language policy right throughout has been actually dividing.

## Politicians' creation

I remember I once had occasion in the 1960s to meet the then Principal of Royal College. While talking to him, the interval bell rang. I saw the children getting into the quadrangle to play. They separated into two directions. I questioned the Principal. He said, "This is your creation, the creation of politicians. Those are the Sinhala medium children and these are the Tamil medium children". The children could not even play together. Fortunately, under the direction of the President and the capable Hon. Minister of Education and Higher Education, Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali, we are taking a purposeful step to ensure that the future generation will be able to at least converse with each other, talk to each other across the communal divide and become friends. That is what happened to us. My generation, when we were in school, were all together but it was limited to a very small minority, the English-medium children. The rest of them were divided. So I am personally thankful to His Excellency and the Hon. Minister of Education for having taken the wise step to ensure that at least in the future, whatever be our race and language, we could all get together, speak to each other and try to develop a national identity.

Education should be outside party politics. All parties must agree on it and that policy must continue whether the Government is of green colour or blue colour. Likewise, as we have to

agree on educational policy, I would appeal to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and its leadership to adopt the same co-operative attitude regarding this vital national issue which has become a cancer in the body politic to that in the very near and foreseeable future the insurgency can be brought to a halt and the people of this country allowed to live in peace....

(Mr. Deputy Chairman of Committees)

Now your time is up, please.  
(Mr. M.A. Abdul Majeed)

My time is up, the Deputy Chairman says. Therefore, may I close my speech by again appealing to the alternative party, and SLFP, please take this ethnic issue seriously as a national issue and co-operate to find a solution.

(Mr. M.H.M. Ashraff)

With respect, I must say that the leaders of political parties can get together, if they are sincere and if they are committed towards solving the problems, I suppose we should be able to solve the problems. I feel sorry that history and posterity will indict us and charge us for having collectively failed in our responsibility to solve the problems.

Sir, I remember having come to this august Assembly two years ago and participating in almost all the Emergency debates except the last one. Sir, I feel that the country is going through a perpetual state of Emergency. The late Hon. State Minister for Defence, Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne, told this House on several occasions that terrorism in the South is over. He used the phrase, "The game is over". He also gave this House on several occasions the assurance that the Government will take the necessary steps to lift the Emergency as far as Southern Sri Lanka was concerned.

Whilst congratulating the Hon. Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance, on whose capable shoulders an additional responsibility has been placed, may I draw his attention to this assurance. We should be able to sort out the wood from the trees. It is very simple. The Emergency laws, as it is, are applicable throughout the country. If you please go through the various speeches made by the former State Minister for Defence, Hon. Ranjan Wijeratne, you will agree that he has accepted that there is no situation that warrants the continuation of the Emergency in areas outside the North and East. But has not given positive reason, concrete reason as to why the Emergency has continued in so far as areas outside the North and East were concerned. The only reason he gave us was that although the threat of the JVP is no longer in existence, there are hundreds of youngsters who have been arrested under the Emergency Regulation. They

have to be detained, they have to be reformed and unless or until such time as the Government is in a position to bring out the necessary legislation to keep them detained under special laws, there was the necessity to continue the Emergency rules. This is what Hon. Ranjan Wijeratne said.

Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the Hon. Prime Minister to that assurance. Why do you not expedite the passage of that special legislation, so that whomsoever you want to keep in custody for the purpose of either reforming them or subjecting them to further inquiry and inquest or for the purpose of punishing them, you would always be in a position to keep under the strength of those laws, and withdraw the Emergency laws in so far as the rest of the country is concerned. There is no other reason whatsoever that has been adduced in support of the argument for retaining the state of Emergency in so far as Southern Sri Lanka is concerned.

## Mr. Prabhakaran

Then, Sir, we come to the other question, the situation in the North and East. It is a very peculiar situation, a very unfortunate situation. The plight of the people in the North and East has reached such proportions that the history of this country is going to be plagued with the fact that the country failed, that it got into a mess as a result of its total failure to understand the grievances of the Tamil speaking people, specially the Tamil community. The story has started not only from Prabhakaran. You have to trace the beginning to 1956. As you have rightly pointed out, yes, both sides have made mistakes. I am not for a moment saying that Mr. Prabhakaran is not a necessary party. He is a very vital party. I accept that position. But because Mr.

Prabhakaran is not here, does it mean that we should not do anything about solving this problem?

There are two ways of solving this problem. I want to spend some time on this aspect only because I think that is the only relevant aspect. Otherwise I will also fit into your description of "the stereotype." As for as the rest of the country, the North-East, is concerned, there is no other argument, the Emergency has to be withdrawn once the Government expedites the special legislation.

Then coming to the North and East, the question is - Prabhakaran is a necessary party, yes - is Prabhakaran the only party? No. Together with Prabhakaran there are so many other factors that have to come into play. Firstly, the major Opposition political party has to throw its full weight. Secondly, the other Tamil political parties who believe in militancy and those who believe in non-violent ways have to be drawn in. Thirdly, the important and vital development of the North and East the Muslim factor in the North-Eastern region. Therefore the necessary parties are not only Mr. Prabhakaran but the leaders of all these communities. All these facts are there. Now there is a problem. Mr. Prabhakaran is not the problem. There is a cause. The grievances are the problem. Therefore we have to find a solution.

There are two ways of alienating the LTTE. As Mr. Joseph pointed out, one is discriminately, or otherwise, you bomb and kill everybody. But that is not going to solve our problem. So what then is next. If a military solution is no solution to the problem, then we are left with the other question.

..... You cannot alienate the LTTE by the power of the gun and by the power of bomb. The LTTE can be alienated, in my humble view only by the people.

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# DISCRIMINATION AGAINST

Phrases such as "Federalism", "Regional Autonomy", "Devolution of Power" etc., are being used rather freely and loosely, and often interchangeably, in discussions on the Tamil question as possible alternatives to secession. While one can understand the desire for the consideration of alternatives to *Eelam*, (such desire being based on concerns for an easier and a quicker solution, lesser human suffering, etc.) the use of these terms in this manner is adding needless confusion to an already chaotic

problem.

I am not an expert on constitutional matters, nor am I a political scientist, or even a lawyer. But there are many not there, who are as qualified as I am, expressing their opinions, criticisms and concerns about events in *Eelam*, and about the performance of the Tamil leadership. My statement here is not a criticism or condemnation of their participation in the discourses on the Tamil question. In fact, I think, that their involvement in such discourses is a good thing. After all it is

such involvement that has led to the evolution of the Tamil Nationalism, and I do welcome it.

My unease, however, is about the confusion created by the use of these terms employed to define alternatives to *Eelam*. Confusion is something that the successive Sri Lankan governments have thrived on. It has been one of the more powerful modalities by which they have thus far cheated the Tamils of their due. It is of paramount importance that we all, including the Tamil

leadership, stay clear of any confusion or disorder, especially the one created by the use of these terms and phrases.

It is therefore necessary for us to define these terms clearly, so that we may at least have some idea as to what these terms mean, and whether these "alternatives" are applicable to the Tamil question. This is not to say that the people who are at the frontiers of this battle do not have such clear comprehension, or even that, the majority of Tamils do not understand these terms. In fact it is my

feeling that most Tamils know that these terms mean. But having participated in discussions at the level of average expatriate Tamil citizens (to which category I also belong), I must say that I have encountered a certain degree of misconception about these terms.

Before we embark on this exercise of defining these terms and/or deciding whether they are applicable to the Tamil question, however, we need to clarify one basic question, and that is - "What is it that the Tamils are trying to rectify?"

Although the word discrimination would answer this question quite clearly and aptly to most Tamils, when you say this to an outsider however, it somehow doesn't seem to communicate or describe well the kind of abuse the Tamils have experienced under the Unitary system of government in Sri Lanka.

When you say that, "Tamils are discriminated against in Sri Lanka" an Indian for example, would respond, "Oh, we have discrimination in India too." He would then proceed to draw a parallel with the "inability of a Maharashtran to get satisfactory employment in Tamil Nadu," implying that such discrimination is part and parcel of human life, and that one shouldn't complain too much about it. An American sees this as something equal to the discrimination experienced by the blacks in the USA. The problem is that the word discrimination has been used so commonly and widely that people often have preconceived notions about its meaning, usually based on their own personal experiences. They have difficulty comprehending its meaning in another context or in another setting. By the time you muddle through the details explaining that "a Maharashtran has his own statehood in India", or that, "there are laws in the U.S. protecting the rights of the blacks", neither of which privileges the Tamils in Sri Lanka enjoy, the interest in the dialogue is often lost.

I have even heard well educated Sinhalese people trying to equate the abuse experienced by the Tamils to the maltreatment of the "working class Sinhalese" by the "bourgeois". Try explaining to this Sinhalese that a Tamil working class person has to overcome, not only this particular brand of obstacle that he is talking about, but in addition a discriminatory invidious by virtue of the fact that he/she is a Tamil. I bet you will never win this argument!

## At Personal Level...

The discriminatory maltreatment experienced by the Tamils under the unitary system of government in Sri Lanka may be classified into three basic groups, and it is necessary for me to elaborate on this if one were to understand the depth of the problem. After all, without such appreciation or comprehension of the basics and fundamentals of the issue, one can never find a lasting solution.

This discriminative maltreatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka takes place at a personal level, as a group and also legislatively.

Discrimination at this level is difficult to substantiate, and is also a situation where other groups can claim similar perver-

sion, but a few examples can exemplify the particular vicissitude experienced by Tamils.

I would like to use one of my own personal experiences as an example for this type of maltreatment, not because it was particularly impressive or even typical of the widespread abuse that goes on in Sri Lanka. I am using it only because it happened to me personally and I can vouch for the details.

In 1972, I as a physician working in the government service of Sri Lanka, needed a transfer out of my station. After having failed to accomplish this through the so called "normal channels", I tried to use the influence of my personal friendship with a Member of the Sri Lankan Parliament (MP for Bandarawela). This MP, after his visit to the Ministry of Health on my behalf, informed me that the Director of Health Services at that time, Professor Rajasooriya, had expressed surprise at the fact that the request was being made by a Sinhala MP for a Tamil, and had asked him, "why do you want to help a Tamil?"



My Sinhala friends are not impressed by the discrimination I felt in this instance. The more honest among them are aroused more by the corrupt systems in Sri Lanka, depicted by my experience, that permits the need for the use of influence to secure reasonable (and in many instances unreasonable) necessities. They argue that all communities in Sri Lanka are victims of this perverse system, and the victimization suffered by Tamils is no worse. I agree that the system is corrupt, and I am also not particularly proud of my attempts to use this unethical means (even though I thought that what I had asked for was reasonable and owed.) But the fact of the matter is that, I as a Tamil had to overcome not only this disadvantage experienced by all Sri Lankans, but also another detriment heaped on top of this by virtue of the fact that I was a Tamil.

Which of these shortcomings of the Sri Lankan order do you think is worse or more immoral? I think it is the latter because, here was a Director of the Health Services, who was entrusted with the supreme responsibility of providing

health services to the entire country; an educated man, who was a Professor and the head of the Department of Medicine of the University of Ceylon; and he not only possessed this racist outlook, but was also able to openly and shamelessly express it to another human being. And, in the Sri Lankan system he was able to do this with impunity. How could the Tamils, who my Sinhalese friends prefer to refer to as a "fellow citizens", have expected to receive a fair or equitable share of the health services from this man?

## At a Collective Level...

At a collective level (i.e. as a group), the examples of discriminatory maltreatment of Tamils, again personally experienced by yours truly, are voluminous. As a physician I have seen it happen in the hospitals there.

The hospitals in Sri Lanka, as in any third world country, experience shortages in medicines and other supplies. The difference in the degree of shortages between the hospitals in the Tamil areas and the Sinhalese areas, however, even in the early seventies (which

ple of the learned behaviour of slave mentality referred to above; the Tamils have by then learned not to protest, because they have learned by experience that it is a waste of time to do so. If there was a similar situation in the south Sri Lanka there would have been riots in the streets!

I was there, when the esteemed Professor of Medicine turned Director of Health Services, referred to above, visited Jaffna. This man, during his visit to Jaffna couldn't hide his hostility or his jealousy, at the efficient man-

## Rajan Sriskandarajah a Ceylon-born Tamil physician, now a Clinical Assistant Professor at the New York Medical College looks back

This, I can assure, certainly was not an isolated incident. My Sinhalese friends have tried to tell me that Professor Rajasooriya was an exception, and that most Sinhalese holding public offices are not like him. This is certainly not true. I have heard many, many reports of similar discriminatory maltreatment in Sri Lanka, at this "individual level", by Sinhalese holding public offices. A friend of mine who applied for a permit to import machinery for a poultry farm, who was told by the Minister of Agriculture that the permit would be granted only if he would site the farm in a Sinhalese area; another whose overseas business contact was wrenched and given to a Sinhalese (to one who did not have the necessary expertise to run that business and eventually ruin it), etc. are just a few cases amongst many that I have come to know. In fact most Tamils I know have experienced discrimination at this personal level, to a greater or lesser degree, and I am convinced that there are millions whom I don't know, with similar tales to tell.

Another aspect of this problem that is worthy of mention is the fact that, over a period of time most Tamils have learned not to ask for even what is owed to them. When you know in advance that the answer is going to be a "no", you learn not to waste time asking. This learned behaviour can only be called a slave mentality, and over the years this demeanor has become quite prevalent in the Tamil community.

difference, I understand, is much worse now), was truly remarkable. In the remote Sinhala village of Mulhalkelle, where I once worked for an year, no patient went without the needed basic medications. They may not have had sophisticated drugs, but the basic ones were freely available at this little hospital. The Jaffna General Hospital on the other hand, didn't have an adequate supply of even the common antibiotics; patients had to buy the drugs, prescribed at this government hospital, from private pharmacies. In fact, a private pharmacy situated right across the street from the Jaffna O.P.D. had a lucrative business for years, dispensing drugs prescribed at this so called free (government) facility.

Believe it or not. Patients undergoing surgery at the Jaffna hospital, when I worked there (1972 - 1974), had to buy privately, from outside sources, the supplies needed for their surgical operations. These supplies included some of the very basic materials, such as surgical catgut, surgical blades, syringes and needles, IV tubing, plaster of paris, sponges etc. I have subsequently worked in many other parts of the world, and I have never seen or heard of, patients having to provide such equipment for their own operations, anywhere else in the world. Even my Sinhalese doctor friends have difficulty believing this, but the Tamil patients who were subject to this ghastly deprivation complied without protest. This is another exam-

ple in which the Jaffna hospitals were being run, in spite of all the deprivations they were subject to. The Tellippalai hospital was fairly new at that time, and to his obvious glee he found some unused suction machines there, which he promptly ordered to be sent back to Colombo, even though the nearby Jaffna General hospital was acutely short of this item.



The entire Jaffna district had only two ambulances, whereas the little Hospital in the remote Sinhala village of Maturata (the hospital in the next town when I worked at Mulhalkelle) had its own ambulance. The Kandy district had a fleet of more than eight. The discriminatory maltreatment of Tamils in the health care system alone are infinite, and the above are only examples.

People are horrified at the recent stories of the army interdicting medical supplies reaching Jaffna, but to me it is only an extension, perhaps an extreme example, of what went on for years. Before it was the health department that did it,



# TAMILS AT THREE LEVELS:

and now the army is doing it. Before it was a partial blockade, and now it is a complete one. The fact of the matter is that, the selective discrimination in the provision of health care existed for decades.

## Schools....

This reminds me of my visit to the government school in Mulhalkelle (Watumulla Maha Vidyalaya). This visit, I must say, was a real revelation to me. Until that time, the Sinhalese leadership had me convinced that the Tamils do well in academics because of the "good schools" they have, "given to them by the British." They were saying this, more than twenty years after the independence, and it was believed universally by everyone in Sri Lanka including the Tamils. Even today most Sinhalese and a good many Tamils believe this to be true.

Let us pause and look at this in some detail. What is it that makes a good school? Is it the "buildings", and the "facilities"? Or is it the "teachers"? Or is it the "motivation of the students"? Could the "parents" have made a difference? Which of these different components determines as to which school would produce better graduates?

The Watmulla Maha Vidyalaya, which I visited in 1970, was certainly not lacking in buildings, facilities or qualified teachers. The grounds were beautiful, the buildings were immaculate, and the school was very accessible to students in the area. The laboratories were well equipped, but they showed hardly any sign of usage. There were qualified science teachers, who complained to me that they couldn't get the students interested in the sciences. The English teacher, (with a degree in English literature!) grumbled about the absence of any interest in his subject.

This young highly motivated English teacher, with whom I have had many a discussions about the disparity in the performance of the Tamil and Sinhala students, was an admirer of the motivation of the Tamil students. He would speak for hours extolling the virtues of his fellow Tamil students at the university, (sometimes bordering on jealousy), and as a patriotic Sinhalese he was very frustrated with his own students.

The sports equipment they had in this school was what blew my mind. There was a storeroom full of unused soccer balls, cricket balls and bats, etc., that brought memories of my own school days of only seven years earlier. During my school days, my parents had to pay what was known as facilities fees, with which the school bought sports equipment. In spite of this my school was eternally short of sports gear, and we had to do with second rate or broken equipment. And here in Watumulla, I saw a roomful of brand new material, provided by the government free of charge, and they wouldn't use it. And yet, when a Sinhala politician says, "the Tamils do well because they have good schools," even the Tamils believe them!

There is another group in Sri Lanka who have had it worse as far as education is concerned. It is the Tamils who live in the tea estates. I have personally visited some of these schools, which had only class room for the entire school of students, ranging from kindergarten to

high school. No equipment (except for a blackboard, of course); No laboratories; No play grounds or sports material; And no one to champion their cause!

## Racism at its worst...

Well, one thing leads to another, and this reminds me of the most racist statement I have ever heard in my life. I was present at a District Coordinating Committee meeting, where a proposal by the Australian government to donate 26 heads of cattle, to be distributed among the estate Tamil population, was discussed. The Australian team that had visited Sri Lanka had done a pilot study, and had determined that this was where their donation would produce the best results. The Junior Minister for Communications of the Sri Lankan government, Mr. T.B.M. Herath, who was present at this meeting, however, would have none of this. He was so infuriated by this windfall to the Tamils that he openly and without shame, and in my presence said, "If they are going to give it to them, we don't want it." (*Oontia Thenavanang Apita Epa!*).

I could not believe my ears. There was this Cabinet Minister of the Sri Lankan government, whose hatred for the Tamils was so deep and abysmal that, he was willing to reject a valuable donation that would have benefited the whole country, just because it was going to benefit the Tamils also. What sort of equality could the Tamils have expected from this unitary system of government that permits this - a system, according to the government in Sri Lanka, that is non-negotiable.

This type of discrimination of Tamils as a group is quite widespread in Sri Lanka. In addition to the areas depicted by the examples given, it goes on in other areas too, such as in employment, developmental programs etc.



What better example does one need than the one afforded by the manner in which the Sinhala governments have dealt with the two recent (Tamil and Sinhala) rebellions. The Sinhala insurgency, ruthless and savage as it was, never evoked the response of aerial bombardment or shelling of civilian targets or deprivation of food, fuel and medical supplies. What explanation is there for this discriminatory treatment of the Tamils in this instance, than racism itself?

## Legislatively...

Discrimination at the legal level is widely known, and I really don't need to elaborate. In fact the apartheid government of South Africa can learn quite a few things from the Sinhalese. The Sinhala only act is a prime example of the discrimination at this level, and the fact that this legislation was *ultra vires* of the Sri Lankan constitution is worthy of mention.

It is also pertinent that, the Sri Lankan government, faced with a legal challenge on the constitutionality of this discriminatory act, changed the constitution to suit the law, rather than the other way around!

Examples of the discriminatory administrative orders which are legal within the Sri Lankan system are also plentiful. The orders governing admissions to the universities, and those relating to distribution of land to alter the ethnic composition of the Tamil homelands, the re-demarcation of electoral districts to favour one over another, etc. are just a few examples among many. The Tamils have no legal recourse against discrimination at this level because, because Sri Lanka has no laws against it. The Sri Lankan government's administrative publication, *The Gazette*, is full of such administrative orders and decrees, and despite their iniquitous nature they have the full force of the law.

entirely from its society, but it has at least rooted out its practice in the open, and if at least this could be accomplished in Sri Lanka, it is worthy of consideration. After all one of the larger problems faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka is open racism.

Singapore accomplished what it did with a strong leadership, that single minded set out to promote inter-racial harmony. The leadership in Singapore realized early on that this was an absolute necessity for the advancement of Singapore as a country. Faced with a situation where the different racial groups do not live in geographically demarcated areas (unlike in Sri Lanka), the only avenue they had was to outlaw racial demagoguery, and this they did with remarkable success.

If Sri Lanka were to adopt it, it would require enactment of laws against all forms of racism and bigotry. Such laws should have enough teeth to discipline and punish anyone (Sinhalese or Tamil) who exhibits pre-

"good" and "reasonable" Sinhalese people. Those who came to the rescue of the Tamils, when attacked by the Sinhalese thugs during the pogroms are a good example of this category of Sinhalese.

The problem is that the Sinhalese as a nation of people have not been able to demonstrate their goodness or reasonableness, in a cohesive manner, and as a political force. Even the upright and the righteous amongst them have not shown any willingness to come forward with their criticisms of the manner in which the Tamils have been treated thus far. While I acknowledge with gratitude the actions of that Sinhalese family in Wellawatte in 1958, who rescued my family from the thugs (and the many who similarly rescued other Tamils in 1958, and in the subsequent pogroms), I cannot, in all honesty, refrain from faulting this lack of political action.

After all, even today, the entire German populace is living under a cloud of condemnation for what Hitler and his henchmen did more than fifty years ago. Most Germans did not actively participate in the holocaust, and in fact there were many who, despite the personal danger to themselves, rescued and help escape many of the victims. But, it is their general passive acquiescence to the events of the day, which is very similar to what the Sinhalese are doing today, that brought them this disgrace.

If the good and the reasonable among the Sinhalese had come forward to demonstrate their opposition to these pogroms, I would have agreed that there is at least some hope for a Singapore model in Sri Lanka. With the political apathy and indifference exhibited by even the most reasonable among the Sinhalese to the recurrent anti Tamil pogroms, leave along the lack of their political opposition to the other discriminations, one cannot have such hopes for Sri Lanka.

## Regional Autonomy...

Having thus eliminated this "Singapore model" at least as an immediate or practical possibility, the only remaining one is some form of "Regional Autonomy". It is in this context that all those terms referred to at the beginning of this article become relevant. A clear understanding of what these terms and phrases mean is of utmost importance, for a number of significant reasons, one which is the avoidance of confusion.

"Regional autonomy" is a loose term that doesn't define the powers to be shared with any degree of precision; and so are terms like "Regional Councils", "Provincial Councils" and even "District Councils". The lack of precision leads to confusion about what powers these regional bodies would have, and also about the degree of control the central government could exert on the exercise of these powers. For instance, a certain power given to the regional body could be absolute, meaning that it may be exercised without any interference. Or, on the contrary, the exercise of such power may be subject to a varying degrees of meddling by the central government, which in an extreme instance could completely nullify that power. All of these terms possess this ambiguity and the lack of precision.

(continued overleaf)



## 1. Personal Level

## 2. Group Level

## 3. State Level

### The system has to change...

From the foregoing, it is obvious that this apartheid system in Sri Lanka, that selectively robs a racially or ethnically identifiable segment of the population of its fair share, is institutionalized. It is praetorian; it is widespread; it is legal (in a perverse sense, of course); and the victims do not have any (legal, political or any other) recourse.

Thus if there were to be a redress, which is what this strife is all about, it stands to reason that the system itself has to change. It is also obvious that this discriminatory maltreatment of Tamils is so regnant and so chronic that patchwork solutions and half measures would be inadequate to deter individuals and groups, if not the government itself, from continuing with this loathsome practice.

### The Singapore Model...

The Singapore model is an alternative to consider. It really is not an alternative, but one that could complement and enhance other solutions described below.

Many of my Sinhalese friends have said to me that, "we are all Sri Lankans", and that "we should stop fighting and learn to live together." A very noble idea, something worthy of consideration, and the Singapore model would certainly fit this bill. Singapore is a multiethnic country where different racial groups live in relative harmony. Not that Singapore has eradicated racism and bigotry

judice, partiality, racism or bigotry, either by words or deeds.

It would mean that henceforth in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist monks who publicly exhort the "Sinhala patriots" to "throw the Tamils into the Indian ocean" have to be jailed; Thugs who selectively attacked Tamils, including the Cabinet Ministers who egged them on, have to be meted special punishment (execution?); The likes of Professor Rajasooriya have to be fired from their jobs, prosecuted and incarcerated; The Cyril Mathews, S.D. Bandaranayakes, Rajaratnes, and even J.R. have to be put away!

Is the Sinhala society ready for such a radical change? Do they have the political will to enact comprehensive laws against racism and bigotry, in whatever form it is practiced? Even if enacted, do they have a sufficiently independent judiciary to uphold and enforce such laws? I don't think so, but if the Sinhala society were to ever become civilized again, they should consider it at least for their own sake!

A Sinhalese friend who proof-read a draft of this article for me felt that there is a contradiction here. This person said to me that many of the Sinhalese people whom I have mentioned in this article are "good people", meaning reasonable individuals, at least with whom the Tamils should be able to work for such an arrangement. I don't really see this as a contradiction; in fact it is my opinion that there are many, possibly millions of,



# DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TAMILS

(Continued from Page 7)

By saying that we will accept any of these as alternatives, we have been allowing the Sinhala governments to come up with solutions like "the District Council Bill" and the "Thirteenth Amendment." On the surface, these statutes certainly created regional governments, and also gave some powers to these regional bodies, thus creating a general impression that the Tamils have been given their own regional government. A closer look at these statutes, however, reveals that the powers granted to these regional bodies are subject to substantial and undue control by the central government. Interested readers are referred to the excellent analyses of these statutes by Nadesan Satyendra and Wakely Paul, who have proven these to be nothing but convoluted schemes to strengthen the stranglehold of the Sinhala dominated central government over the Tamil region. Subsequent events have proven the fears expressed by these authors to be true. The powers granted to the Provincial Government under the thirteenth amendment was such that, the chief minister of this body had to beg the central government for a desk and a chair to conduct his business!

These statutes were so craftily phrased and drafted that many of us (myself included), at least initially, thought that the Tamils have finally been freed from the Sinhala grip. Rajiv Gandhi still cannot understand why Tamils are not satisfied. The international media continues to say that, "despite the government's effort to provide a measure of regional autonomy, the Tamils continue to fight." All because we have allowed, and participated in the use of, such ill defined terms to represent solutions to our problem.



## Devolution of Power...

The phrase "devolution of power" means that all powerful (and of course, Sinhala dominated) central government retains all the powers, and that some of these functions would be bequeathed to a lesser, inferior and subservient state government. This also means that the powers, so bequeathed, can at a future date be taken back!

This is the exact opposite of the philosophy of Federalism referred to below. In a true federalism the power to govern resides with the people and their states, and it is the states that devolve or delegate their powers to the central government.

The Tamils of Sri Lanka by all international norms and standards qualify as a "people". By all such standards they have the right to devolve or delegate their power to a state government, with the mandates for this body to either retain all the powers, or in the alternative, devolve some of these powers to a central government. Such a sequence of devolution is what democracy is all about, and is certainly not the other way around as the Sinhalese seem to understand.

I think it is best to remove this phrase, devolution of power, also from our lexicon.

correctly the hierarchy of power in the US system. This amendment categorically asserts that the powers reside with the people and their states; and that they (the people and the states) have delegated some of these powers to the Federal (Central) government. It is not the other way around as the pundits in Sri Lanka are trying to make out there. Furthermore, the powers of the central government are limited and restricted to those enumerated in the constitution; and, those that are not so itemized and detailed, (even if not defined as that of states) remain as powers of the states.



## Federalism...

The term "Federalism" basically and simply means a form of government, in which power is divided between a central government and several formerly independent regional governments. The use of this term in an unqualified manner is also not very precise, because of the variances seen in the numerous "models" throughout the world, that all claim to be "Federated States". The Federal model in India, for example, is not the same as that of the United States or Canada.

Federalism as a system of government dates back to 2nd millennium B.C., where the tribes in early Israel practiced it, mainly to deal with common enemies. Later it was practised by the Greek cities in the 2nd and 3rd Century B.C., the Swiss Cantons in the 13th century, and the United Provinces of Netherlands in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Modern Federalism stems from the type of government instituted by the founders of the United States of America. The method of the sharing of power between the central government and the state governments in the U.S. is quite precise, this precision being effected by the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment specified that, those "Powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

This amendment is considered as the cornerstone of the US constitution. The adept choice of words in this amendment to the US constitution describes well and delineates

The central (Federal) government in the U.S. is vested with powers that relate to the country as a whole, the areas of activities being restricted to matters such as, foreign relations and war, currency, interstate commerce and foreign trade. The internal matters of the individual states and the people, such as education, employment, healthcare, industry, agriculture, law and order, social welfare, etc. etc., are all left entirely to the individual states, with no control or interference by the central government. And, if any are not defined or delegated they remain as state powers.

Other countries that have adopted the federal system of government have not all embraced such strict delineation of powers between the central government and the state governments. Some countries (Eg: Canada and Switzerland) have similar profiles as the US, and others (Eg: India) have central governments with broader powers.

The controversy that exists among the constitutional experts about the delineation of powers in the US is also worthy of mention. There are groups that support Thomas Jefferson's strict interpretation, which allows the federal government only those powers explicitly enumerated in the constitution. There are others who have adopted Alexander Hamilton's loose interpretation which grants the central government with broader implied powers.

## Conclusion..

As stated at the beginning, the purpose of this article is to try and clarify the meanings of the terms and phrases that are being used as alternatives to Eelam. It was not my intention nor was it my place to find a solution, or to determine if any of these alternatives are acceptable to either party, or even to judge if these are feasible under the circumstances. My intent was (and I hope I have been successful) to clarify the very basics of what these terms mean, or at the very least, stimulate thoughts and deliberations along these lines, so that we may not be misled and cheated by confusion.

## Communications

# HELP PREVENT A "NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM IN LANKA"

Lt. Col. A.J. Nevins Selvadurai of 8, Blenheim Court, Alsagar, Stoke-on-Trent St7 2BY, Chairman of the Shropshire/Stafordshire Tamil Association, UK, has sent the following communication to Lord Reay, House of Lords, London :-

9th April 1991

Dear Lord Reay,

House of Lords Debate on Sri Lanka - January 1991.

"We are so glad that the House of Lords was kind enough to debate about our stricken land. We are grateful to you, my Lord, for promising to do your best in persuading her Majesty's Government to assist in whatever way possible.

"In answer to Baroness Ewart-Biggs you stated "We support the government of President Premadasa in its efforts to defeat terrorist threats from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the North and East of the country". While it is generally accepted that the J.V.P. Marxist terrorism was a senseless one, we wish to point out that in the case of the Tamils it is a completely different thing altogether. They are essentially freedom fighters who are being erroneously labelled as "terrorists".

"As pointed out by the Lord Bishop of Ripon, "For 35 years, Tamils in Sri Lanka have been pressing their demands for the integrity of a Tamil homeland, substantial autonomy for the Tamil region, equal rights for the Tamil language and rights of citizenship. Successive Sinhala governments had agreed to some or all of these principles, but of whatever political complexion they consist, they have not implemented them. The will to do so is lacking." He goes on to say "I have deplored the steady growth of violence by the Tamils, but have to say I understand the reasons which have driven members of the Tamil community to take that course."

"He further said "Although it was the LTTE who commenced hostilities in June, it seemed until recently the Sri Lankan Government was intent on a military solution of the conflict. Having succeeded in the South against the J.V.P., they believed they could do so in the North."

"The LTTE have offered a cease-fire but the Government have refused to accept it and are still intent on a Military Solution. We wish to point out that the reason for the LTTE resuming hostilities in June was purely for defensive reasons in order to pre-empt the Government which was massing forces with the clear intention of killing Tamils, in the same ruthless way they killed over 40,000 Sinhalese civilians in the South.

"It would be easier to appreciate the problem of the Tamils if the British Government would not let itself be inhibited by the Irish problem nearer home. We Tamils appreciate that the Irish problem was not really created by you, but by your fore-fathers in a different bygone age. It has been thrust upon you. We

Tamils having seen you suffer are only trying to avoid such a problem, a problem the Sri Lankan Government is determined to create by changing the demography of the North East, acting on the advice of the Israelis who have now succeeded in creating the Palestine problem....

"Ironically, we Tamils felt more free and more happy under British colonial rule because there was justice and peace and no racial discrimination between Sinhalese and Tamils and other minorities. The Sinhala colonialism of the Sri Lankan Government is racist, with fundamentalist Buddhism dictating to the Government. It is the politicising of the Buddhist clergy that is causing all the problems in Sri Lanka. Now we also see the military getting politicised and the civilians getting militarised with untrained trigger happy para-militia of the Government wielding guns even in remote jungle villages.

"The Tamils have been in the island long before the arrival of the Sinhalese, and there is evidence of the megalithic civilization common with South India which is about 10,000 years old. The traditional homelands of the Tamils before European occupation have been the North and East of the island and so it was, when Sri Lanka received independence....

"We are happy to note that her Majesty's Government have been the first to send humanitarian help for the Kurds and look forward hopefully that you will put pressure on the Sri Lankan Government to save our souls and give us freedom which is our inalienable right.

"What seems to require immediate attention is the incessant bombing of civilians by the Sri Lankan Air Force and the embargo of food, medicine, fuel and other essentials which make life intolerable to the starving Tamils of the North and East of Sri Lanka. This certainly seems to have genocidal intention.

"So it seems logical that the only way to solve this problem in a pragmatic way and bring peace and stability to the island is by giving the Tamils their legitimate and inalienable rights of freedom and self-determination. May I therefore request you to please kindly make every effort to convince her Majesty's Government to intercede in this matter and help prevent another Northern Ireland type of problem in Sri Lanka.

"We wish to thank you noble lords and ladies for your interest in this matter and for the assistance you are rendering and pray that the genocide of the Tamils will soon stop.

Yours Sincerely,  
Lt. Col. A.J. Nevins Selvadurai

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## Communications

# The Letter that went to Radio Australia

Mr. D. Balan of P.O. Box 2079, Victorville California 92393 U.S.A., has sent the following letter to The Director, News & Public Affairs, Radio Australia, GPO Box 428 G, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia :-

"Dear Sir/Madam :  
"Today (April 13th 1991) at 13.00 and 14.00 hours (Coordinated Universal Time - UTC) your lady announcer and Mr. Brian Burgel respectively while mentioning about Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa's New Year message erroneously used the words "Sinhala New Year" and "Sinhala Holidays". This is entirely wrong. They should have used the correct words "Sinhala and Tamil New Year". I have my gravest doubts that the Tamils have now changed their Tamil New Year.

### 65 million Tamils

"For over 10 years I have been listening to Radio Australia everyday and my frank and candid observations are that you have excellent staff who give fair and unbiased news reports. Today's slip must have occurred because they must have got the wrong information straight from the news bulletins issued by the Sri Lankan false propaganda machines (disinformation service) located in Colombo.

"From times immemorial the Tamil New Year was celebrated by the 65 million Tamils of Tamil Nadu (South India) and Tamils living in Sri Lanka and other countries. When I say times immemorial it means at least three thousand years ago. The Sinhalese adopted their New Year from the Tamil New Year.

### Borrowed & copied

"The Sinhalese people came into being very much later on and borrowed (copied is the right word) their customs, traditions, festivals etc. from the Tamils and the North Indians. Even the traditional dress-both men's and women's are copied from Tamils. Sinhalese traditional dress is 'sarong' for men and may be the Kandyan style cloth for women - not the Indian Tamil 'Sari'. Their Buddhist religion was borrowed from India. The Sinhalese alphabet and the Sinhala language were evolved from the various languages of India such as Tamil, Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, Bengali etc. They went to the extent of borrowing words from the Portuguese language etc. By marriage, the Sinhalese got mixed with South Indians. Even the last king of Kandy was a Tamil.

"The Sinhalese Buddhist government says that they want a Unitary form of government but the Sinhalese people have got into the Non-Unitary hotch-potch by copying from other races.

"The North East Province (8,000 square miles) is larger than Kuwait (6,000 miles) and has over 2 million people whereas Kuwait has only about

300,000 people. The North East Province is a Nation by itself in view of the language, race, religion, culture etc. There are several scores of countries that are very much smaller than the North East Province. The Tamils should be left alone to mind their own business without any interference from the Sinhalese Buddhists.

"If your announcers want any information about Sri Lankan Tamils I would suggest that they contact one of the Tamil Associations located in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Wellington, Auckland or contact the Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations. The names and telephone numbers of the office bearers are given overleaf in the newsitem which appeared on page 9 of the Tamil Nation dated January 20th 1991.

### UN Peace Keeping

"The Sinhalese Buddhist Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE-the Tamil Freedom Fighters) should negotiate under the auspices of the United Nations without any prior conditions attached. Australia, Canada, U.K., U.S.A., India etc. should play a big role to prevent the atrocities and unwanted killings of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and bring peace to the North East Province. A United Nations peace keeping force should be stationed in the North East Province (like in Cyprus) to keep away the Sinhalese Buddhist armed forces from their carnage. I am sure you agree that the Tamils in Sri Lanka had suffered enough since independence in 1948.

## 'SUBTLE SHIFT IN PREMADASA'S STAND'

Mohan Ram in New Delhi

Sri Lanka president Ranatunge Premadasa's new offer of a dialogue to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) dilutes the conditions he had set earlier. Since June 1990, (over 10 months) the Sri Lankan security forces have been fighting the resumed Eelam war against the LTTE with no end in sight.

Premadasa's had earlier insisted that the LTTE lays down its arms. In January last, this was watered down to asking the LTTE to declare itself against the possession and use of arms by unauthorised groups. The latest condition - if it can be termed one - is that the LTTE declares itself against the use of arms for political ends.

The new offer on the eve of Indian elections, with Tamil Nadu electing a new assembly along with the Lok Sabha seats, might lend itself to a whole range of political conjectures, one of which is that Premadasa is keen on settling matters with the LTTE before a new government is installed in New Delhi or before the AIADMK or DMK gains power in Tamil Nadu.

### Worry about Congress-I

Nothing rules out the possibility of the AIADMK settling for the posture identified with the DMK on the Lankan issue. To Colombo, the victory of either of the two makes little difference. But, possibly, a greater worry is the return of the Congress-I at the centre in view of the strident tone of its manifesto vis-a-vis the Indo-Sri Lankan government and the perceived Indian security interests in the region.

There is no question of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) returning to Sri Lanka which regards the 1987 agreement as dead and would like it replaced by a long-term friendship treaty delinked from immediate issues. On the

ground, however, the Sri Lankan government cannot afford to fight a long drawn war with the LTTE, which is still on top of the situation in the north where Tamils account for over 90 percent of the population.

The LTTE had announced the formation of a shadow cabinet to protect the Tamils though it does not think it is time yet to proclaim an independent Tamil Eelam. The LTTE thinks a large scale Sinhalese colonisation of the eastern province is under way. This perhaps explains the massacre of 17 Sinhalese villagers by the LTTE last week to make a point.

### Defending its camps

Premadasa's dilemma is clear. He got the IPKF out in March 1990 to please the Sinhalese opinion, especially the Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (JVP), but has not yet arrived at a modus vivendi with the LTTE, who broke off the negotiations and resumed fighting, this time against the Sri Lankan forces.

The Sri Lankan army hoped to clean up the situation within a week but failed to do so in spite of its increased strength (about 60,000) and better equipment. The army, while having worked its way up the east coast, is now content to defend its major camps - about half a dozen including in Kanakesanthurai, the Elephant Pass and Palaly. They are not on the offensive. Even the use of the airforce (planes and helicopter gunships for strafing), especially in early March, failed.

The army action only drove the Tamil population into supporting the LTTE, to make the Sri Lankan ground forces extremely vulnerable to attacks by the LTTE. The army needs at least 100,000 troops to launch an offensive of the kind the IPKF mounted against the

Tigers without success, according to a diplomatic source here. Moreover, the Tamils were less hostile to the IPKF than they are to the Sri Lankan forces now.

Premadasa might like a political settlement as this might not be linked to elections in Tamil Nadu. If can come even later. So he is thinking of an open approach and devolution of powers to the Tamils.

But Premadasa committed a major blunder in negotiating with the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front which had fled the island and was no consequence when he was talking to the LTTE. So it is a question of lack of trust and the LTTE cannot take Premadasa seriously unless there is a positive gesture from him.

The president had said in January that LTTE leader V Prabhakaran and its military wing should be involved in the talks. The reason is that Colombo suspects the credentials of the LTTE representatives at the last talks as the latter went back on the commitments its representatives had made, which means they did not have the mandate.

There is a subtle shift in Premadasa's stand now. In his declaration on Friday, he dropped his earlier condition that Prabhakaran should personally represent the LTTE at the talks. Nor did he reiterate his condition that all the political parties be invited to the negotiations. He simply said, "All parties and groups should be represented by their effective leaders. They must be leaders who are able to subscribe to agreements that will be honoured."

The LTTE's response is not known. Its formal commitment to Eelam stands. Any tactical shift in ending the fighting and resuming talks broken off in June 1990 should be viewed against this canvas.

## YAWNING WITH HIS MOUTH CLOSED

### Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,  
One could appreciate the underlying humour in which the Sri Lankan High Commissioner-designate to India, Neville Kanakarathne claimed that "he had no details of the bombing of the Tamil areas (in Sri Lanka) excepting what he read in the newspapers" (TN, Apr. 1), as reported in the Hindu of Mar. 29. Neville Kanakarathne certainly qualifies as a good example of an old definition of a diplomat which states, 'A person who gets pushed abroad to lie about the country he or she represents'. Another variant of this definition, as stated in the Left Handed Dictionary of L.L. Levinson (1963), is 'One who can yawn with his mouth closed.'

Neville K states that 'the (Sri Lankan) Government did not know to what extent the LTTE represented the people in the

North. This could never be found out, when there were no elections.' I, for one, certainly cannot buy this canard. Long before the LTTE made its appearance in the Tamil territory, the Sinhalese governments had been telling this same story since 1956. Even between 1956 and 1983, when the Tamils voted for the FP and TULF to represent them, the successive Sinhalese governments have been trotting out this lame excuse at regular intervals. They contended that the FP and TULF did not represent the Tamils and continued to plant a few Tamil puppets who could shake heads and limbs to the strings pulled by the Sinhalese decision makers. And the Tamils never bought this 'puppet play' either.

The reasoning that the LTTE does not represent the Tamils is also a spurious one. Even if there has been no "properly

held-elections" for the past decade or so (the vote tampering carried out by the UNP in the district development council elections of Jaffna in 1981 is another story Neville K. has to conveniently ignore), aren't there any other barometers by which the UNP can measure the support LTTE commands amongst the Tamils? How about reading at least the field reports written by the impartial foreign journalists who have assessed the situation perceptively? Hasn't he (who has served as the Sri Lanka's ambassador to the USA and USSR) read the New York Times newsreports on Sri Lankan ethnic crisis written by Barbara Crossette? Even a couple of weeks ago. Julian West reporting for the Asia Week (see TN of April 1) noted, "support for the Tigers in Jaffna seems genuine, even fierce. Indiscriminate bombings and an economic blockade on the North have inevitably driven people into the Tigers' arms". The Newsweek (Mar. 25) has published another report which assessed the milit-

From  
Sachi Sri Kantha  
of Osaka Bio Science  
Institute, 6-2-4 Furuedai  
Suita, Osaka 565, Japan.

ary strength of LTTE in the North-East Sri Lanka very precisely. According to Tony Emerson and Steve Le Vine reporting from Trincomalee, "The apparent Army crackdown (in Trincomalee) has not improved its position on the battlefield. The rebels still hold sway over much of the northern and eastern provinces, except in big cities where government forces guard roadblocks by day and usually retreat to barracks by night".

An old adage states, "We can wake up a sleeping person, but not the one who is pretending to sleep". Neville the Nincompoop, for all his diplomatic decorum, nevertheless is a person still pretending to sleep.

Sincerely yours,  
Sachi Sri Kantha



# RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SWAMI PLEADS FOR TAMIL SELF-RULE

His Holiness Swami Chidrupananda, the Swami-in-Charge of the Sri Ramakrishna Sarada Sevashramam at Point Pedro whose mission has undertaken relief work among refugees continuously from 1981, has pleaded with the various Heads of Governments the Eelam Tamil cause.

In a letter addressed to the British, Canadian, Australian and Indian Governments through the respective High Commissions and to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, he has said that the Tamils have the right to decide for themselves their own government.



The text of the Swami's letter reads as follows :-

"It is with deep sorrow, anguish, pain of mind and full of pathos I am forced to send this letter for immediate redress and action. This letter must not be viewed in any way political or critical. These propositions are the natural outcome or outburst from a monk of the Hindu Order. The purpose of any Government in power is to follow a code of conduct approved by higher ethics, morality and truth. Even here some of our religious leaders have failed to guide this Government in a righteous way. Life is very precious for all of us irrespective of race or country. A decent living for all of us is a must, sine qua non and no politics or political power can withhold this from being enjoyed in this small one time peaceful Island.

From time immemorial the Sinhalese politicians and the Tamil politicians (not the present freedom fighters) have spread the fire of communalism for their own ends and finally all those who have done so paid the price. If we have to stop this vicious circle the important task for the Government is to clearly intimate to the majority that the Tamils have a rightful place to live and decide for themselves a Government for them.

"This crucial issue must be above all party considerations. Neither the Government nor the Opposition should cash. In this issue for their power politics. Both of them should put their heads together calmly or free themselves from inordinate passions in chalking out a frame work. If this is delayed the future is very bleak.

"We the common lot - the Tamils have suffered the under mentioned hardships all these 8 months.



1. We have no electricity for more than 6 months. A litre of Kerosene oil is between Rs. 100-150/- A litre of petrol is Rs. 500/- All major operations in the Government Hospitals are cancelled and some have died due to this non availability of reasonable medical facilities.

2. Even when basic medicines are brought from Colombo by passengers, these are confiscated by the army. Torch batteries, camphor and many such items are confiscated too.

3. Sudden imposition of the curfew without much notice and the removal of it is again not notified to us.

4. The indiscriminate aerial bombing where several innocent civilians including infants and school children have not been left out. In a very recent bombing which I have witnessed 5 innocent civilians were killed on the spot. More than killing us, it has created a fear psychosis among all of us.

5. Recently at Vankalai, Mannar a few Principals and teachers were killed and dumped in a dilapidated well. These Government Servants were there to draw their salary.

6. Beside all these inhuman atrocities, the shortage of food, the absence of the midday meal and the postponement of final examinations have curtailed the career prospects.

We have suffered for many years and we will never be prepared to accept any piece-meal solution or approach. We appeal to all those in power or in high places to act most judiciously to grant a structural government for the Tamil for self-rule.

With the Lord's choicest Blessings to all of you.

Swami Chidrupananda  
Swami-in-Charge

## Catholic Bishop assaulted by Army Men

The members of this Council, representing the entire Catholic population of the three Administrative Districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu are shocked to hear that His Lordship The Bishop of Mannar, Rt. Rev Dr. Thomas Savundaranayagam was subjected to filthy abuse and repeated assaults by military personnel at the check point near Sarvodaya at Vavuniya in the afternoon of last Saturday the 16th of March," says a protest letter sent to President Premadasa by the Jaffna Diocesan Council of the Laity.

Copies of the protest letter have been sent to the Apostolate delegate and other Bishops.

The letter says :- "We need not describe to you how a Bishop is revered and esteemed both by Catholics and others.

"He worked among us before he became a Bishop. We know him to be unquestionably humble and cooperative with all officials. The only mistake that he may have unknowingly made might have been to take with himself some items for personal use or for worshipping services, but which may have appeared to a military person to be unlawful.

"Under any circumstance, it is definitely a serious infringement of his human rights and highly desecrative to have abused and assaulted him. We learnt from reliable sources that even filthy words were copiously used at him.

"We hereby register our strong protest at this heinous act and demand that an impartial inquiry be made and remedial measures be adopted.

"In fact under our constitution any individual is assured of the right to be free of physical and mental tortures, harassment or assault. If a Bishop could be thus treated, one can understand how the poor, ordinary citizens are handled. There is ample provision in the ordinary and emergency laws of our land to deal decently with any type of unarmed offender. It is sad that law enforcement officers themselves turn unlawful.

"We also wish to bring to your kind notice that the banning of even limited quantities of essential household items like candles, torch cells, medicines, soaps etc., increase the hardships of the people. We therefore appeal to you to lift the ban especially in view of the lack of power supply here.

"We take this opportunity to express our deep concern and needless loss of lives, wealth and property on both sides and the ever widening gap between communities. We appeal to you to pave the way for an early settlement, by :

1. an immediate and impartially supervised ceasefire.
2. initiating effective negotiations with a Government proposal of a tentative solution that would be reasonable and acceptable considering all the past talks, developments, election manifestos and expert opinions expressed in the media and at all party conferences."

## DEATHS

**Ramanathan Thiyagarajah**, (Accountant, Universal Enterprises, Male) son of Late Kanagasabai Ramanathan (Ariyalai), husband of Kamaladevi, father of Tharmini, Manohari, Baiaumurugan and Dilani. 13/2, Alexandra Rd., Wellawatte.

**Kanapathypillai Mylvaganam** Ret & Electrical Engineer, Chunnakam Power Station and of Mynathanay, Karaveddi.

**Saravanamuthu Kandasamy** (Proctor, Hulftsdorf, Colombo), son of late Dr. S. Saravanamuthu and Mrs T. Saravanamuthu, father of Chandra Mohan, Dr. (Mrs) Chandra Jothy (UK) & Mrs Chandra Shree, Kaddudai, Manipay.

**Winslow Wijaratnam**, Retd Snr Asst. Commr. of Labour, husband of late Rose Ariyamalar nee Barr Kumarakulasinghe, father of Daya (Hotelier, Germany) and of Anandan, brother of late W W Muthuraja, late Rev G A Winslow, late Thangarane Barr Kumarakulasinghe and of Rajakone (formerly of Irrigation Dept/FAO). Funeral Uduvil. Hotel Perienau, 5108 Monschau, Germany.

**Rosalin Santhipillai**, relict of the late S.B. Santhipillai of Naranthanai, Kayts, mother of Anton Jesuthasan (Singapore), Guy de Fontgalland (London), Dr. S.P. Gratiaen (Adelaide), S.C. Dickens (Sydney) expired Australia. 12, Gowrie Cres, Westmead, NSW 2145.

**Kanmani Cumarasuriam**, wife of late Cumarasuriam (Royal Navy), mother of Nalavel and Sivapalan. 214, Dyke St., Trincomalee.

**V. Alagaratnam**, Retd Chief Telecommunication Engineer Murguan Veethi, Urumpirai East.

**Muthaiya Muthubalasuriyar** (Retd General Manager, Dept of Govt Electrical Undertakings).

**Ignatius David**, husband of Gloria Mano, father of Lakshi (UK), Deepa (Nigeria), Lakshman (Major Sri Lanka Army), Dr. Ramji (UK), Skandharaj (UK), brother of late Rev. Dr. Singarayay David. 38/12, Huludagoda Rd, Mt. Lavinia.

**R. Jeganathan** (Retd A.C.C.D., Jaffna) husband of Kumareswary (Vimala), father of Prabalini, Prabaharan, Ratanaharan, Sriganesan & Niranjini; brother of Sugirthaluxmy Muthucumaraswamy, Anadanathan (UK) & Jeyaluxmy Nadarajah. Funeral March 24 at Kompaianmanal Cemetery, Kokuvil.

**Sivanantharaja Navaratnam** of Lawton Rd, Manipay, husband of Beatrice, brother of Susilarajan (UK). Expired March 25. Funeral London. 113, Watling Av, Edgware, Middx HA 8 OLY.

**Thavaratna Singham**, Proprietor of Colombo Medical & Equipment Co., husband of Selvamani, father of Premnath (Germany), brother of Grace Arundpragasam Expired March 29. 27, Pathiba Rd, Colombo 5.

**Margaret Thangamah Rajaratnam** 18 July 1906 - 8 April 1991. Mother of Mabel Selvendran, grandmother of Samuel & Paul Selvendran, sister of the late Sabapathy Thambipillai, late Nesamah Suppiah, SST Duraisingham (Jaffna), late R T Ariyaratnam & Grace Thomas. Burial Epsom Cemetery. 41, Preston Drive, Ewell, Surrey.

**Sabalingam Uthayalingam** Born 28.12.49 Died 4.4.91

The young husband, father, sportsman and charity worker, was killed when riding his push bicycle to work in British Telecom in the early hours of April 4. Uthayalingam took to his bicycle that ill-fated day in order to keep fit: he was going to join in a marathon walk in the cause of Tamil orphans.

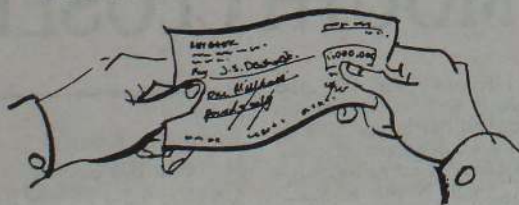
The funeral on Sunday April 7 at Golden Green Crematorium was attended by several hundred friend, and relations.

He was the son of E. Sabalingam, Principal of Jaffna Hindu College and later of Jaffna Central College, Uthayalingam married Premarube Navaratnam in 1977 and was father, Sarangan and Saravanan. He also leaves behind three brothers - Dr. Jothilingam (Hitchin), Jeyalingam (Northwich) and Abayalingam (London) - and four sisters - Rajini Poovendraraja (KL), Ranjini Ananthapaskaran (Southampton), Shanthi Mahendran (Bahrain) and Kalaichelvi Navendran (London).

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# BHARATHIDASAN - POET, REFORMER & REVOLUTIONARY

## *This is Bharathidasan Centerary Year*



However this transformation or a near meta-morphosis came early in his life and in the rest of his career, his goal was clear and unchanged; the path was definite; and the journey was uninterrupted. He remained an uncompromising crusader against social evils, superstitions, exploitative practices and economic injustices.

Bharathidasan the disciple or the follower of Bharathi as the name indicates, is very different from his master in many respects. There are more things where they are, atleast apparently, not merely different, but at the opposite end of the spectrum. Bharathidasan took his pen name while young and under the umbrella of Bharathi, both with regard to the style of writing and the substance of the thoughts.

However, he changed his outlook and approach rather radically in the later years when he came under the influence of Periyar's social reform movement. Nevertheless the esteem he had for Bharathi, leading to his adopting the pseudonym Bharathidasan, did not undergo any change. His regard and reverence, appreciation and acclaim remained till the very end, not merely unchanged but even unshaken. The basis for this relationship between the two great poets of the Tamil world in this century deserves a deeper study, than what has been attempted so far.

In the beginning of his career, Bharathidasan extolled the freedom struggle, Khadi movement, religion and God. Later he departed completely and consciously from his earlier interests and became quite indifferent or even antagonistic to many of the things he earlier preached and pleaded for.

He held definite views on vital areas of life and expressed them with clarity and conviction. In political belief a democrat; in economic organisation a socialist; in social system a crusader against divisions and disparities; in the field of language a near puritan; in part politics and ardent follower of all that the self respect philosophy and Dravidian movement stood for; he was a man of indomitable spirit of independence, and fierce individuality. Nevertheless, the influence of Periyar on his social thoughts and that of Anna on his concepts of Tamil language and race were substantial; almost complete. Notwithstanding the master-disciple relationship, these three rode on the political and social scene of Tamil Nadu like colossuses for half a century each in his own right. The enduring changes that this combination brought about in Tamil Nadu, socially and politically, is yet to be fully discerned and evaluated in terms of their immediate and long term consequences.

During the first half of the twentieth century, there were two dominant thoughts that moved people in India. One was the movement for political independence and the other, less in importance, was the fight against economic exploitation. Tamil Nadu was some-

what singular in projecting an additional third dimension, namely a crusade against social inequalities based on caste system and traditions of the Hindu society. Periyar was the founder and propagator of the thought and philosophy that political freedom and economic justice would be of no great consequence in India unless social justice was also achieved. Anna added to this, the spirit of Tamil nationalism, no doubt consistent with Indian nationhood. Bharathidasan's poems were a mighty weapon lending support and sustenance to a new kind of class struggle waged in Tamil Nadu.

All the writings of Bharathidasan in one way or the other, were directed at crusading against social inequalities; economic injustices; blind faiths and beliefs and fighting for the recognition of Tamil language in the cultural maps of India and for the renaissance of Tamil heritage. He sang tirelessly the glory of the Tamils; the greatness of their language and the richness of their culture. He also wept with tears of blood over the later decadence and degeneration and the present humble state of existence of the Tamil race and he strove unceasingly to bring about a climate of change in that state.

Unlike many other Tamil poets of this century,

Bharathidasan was very deeply read in Tamil classics of the ancient past. He was quite at home with the rules of grammar as well as the literary traditions of his forefathers starting with the Sangam age. Though he built on the reform and change that Bharathi initiated, his base was firm and broad and he stood on the foundations of Tamil literary tradition. His was a revolution in Tamil literary style, without an abrupt break and he maintained the continuity while marching forward.

Perhaps in no part of the history of Tamils, has any poet devoted so much of his writings, poured so much of his emotions, pleaded so fiercely and vehemently and over such a length of his literary career, for the protection, claims and development of Tamil.

The land of his birth and the language of his forefathers moved him beyond words. He exercised no great caution in criticising those that he considered, inimical to his language and culture; maintained no restraint in praising and blessing those whom he thought were working for the cause of Tamil. He spared no efforts and no time in exhorting the Tamils to work for the development and glory of their language.

A theme that received attention more than in the writings of other of his period is the status of women in our society. Bharathi gave vent to his feelings of disapproval, and indignation over, the plight of women in this country. Bharathidasan carried forward this crusade and pleaded forcefully and ceaselessly for the emancipation of women. Of the many things that made Women dependent and restrained in movement, one is frequent pregnancy, bearing and bringing up of children. Contraception perhaps is the greatest liberator of women, and Bharathidasan was the first to give it the dignity to deserve a place in a poem and to praise it and plead for it. His courage of conviction has been unusual and has always been in keeping with the traditions of Periyar's precepts and practices. Bharathidasan never refrained from giving expression to a thought for fear of criticism and courting unpopularity. Fighting enthused him and energised him; popularity was never to him a temptation.

The trio, Periyar, Anna and Bharathidasan, will go down in the history of the Tamils as a great team of giants who brought about an awakening unparalleled; uprooted beliefs and faiths as never before; created a following that endures; destroyed superstitions and dethroned traditions that held sway for centuries. Bharathidasan, a great poet, a reformer, a revolutionary and above all, a crusader against all forms of injustice and iniquity can be fully understood only when seen as part of this great team in the history of the Tamils.

## PEOPLE EVENTS

### Academy of South Indian Arts (ASIA)

Asia, founded last year by Lakshmi Ganeson, civil engineering graduate from Imperial College and a talented Bharata Natya dancer, presented 14 of her pupils at a colourful and fast-moving programme of dancing at the Com-

Karaikudi Krishnamurthi's inspired playing of the Mirudangam, Mathini Sriskandaraja's outstanding and well-modulated singing, Kamala Pathmanathan's loud clear accompaniment on the flute and Thiruvallur Kothanda-

aplomb. Nahid Siddiqui, the popular Kathakali dancer, was Guest of Honour, and the Chief Guests were Mr. C.J.T. Thamotheram, Founder and now Headmaster of the West London Tamil School where Lakshmi started her dance lessons, and Mrs Thamotheram.

Asia, will be presenting a Charity concert in the summer for the deprived children of Eelam.

On May 3 the Tamil Orphans Trust will be staging a variety performance in the Brent Town

## APPRECIATION

### DR. VELUPILLAI RASANAYAGAM

Several Sri Lankan expatriates in Canada, including my own self, read with a measure of surprise and sorrow in the obituary column of your paper of 5th January, of the death in Australia of Dr. Velupillai Rasanayakam, a former orthopaedic surgeon of the General Hospital, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Dr. Rasanayakam left Sri Lanka for New Zealand in 1971. Dr. Rasanayakam's wife Malini and their sons joined him a few months later. In the interim period Malini and the children lived with their father, the late Mr. M. Sri Kantha, in Jaffna. It was during this time that I tutored Malini's sons in their home. That is how I came in contact with Malini.

After working in New Zealand as orthopaedic surgeon for a few years, Dr. Rasanayakam moved over to Australia with his family where he continued his work as orthopaedic surgeon. His death at the age of 65 years is premature to a degree.

Dr. Rasanayakam was emotionally involved and committed to the task of alleviating the distress, and suffering, of the Tamil community, back home. In Australia too, he energetically activated himself in promoting the welfare of the Tamil community living there. As informed by his wife he suffered from gall-bladder complications which he had neglected because his involvement in the

welfare of the Tamil people in Australia received first priority.

He organised the Australia - Tamil Foundation for the benefit of the Tamil people in Australia and their future generations. True enough, Dr. Rasanayakam practised a noble profession the medical profession. But by nature he was nobler far, in his thoughts and deeds for his countrymen both in Sri Lanka and in Australia. Endowed with overwhelming energy and practicality he spared no pains, in carrying out what he thought was his bounden duty in every sphere of activity.

Patriotism is strictly not love for one's country. True patriotism is love for one's countrymen living in a common homeland. That way Dr. Rasanayakam was a patriot of excellence. All honour and glory to him!

sympathy will be felt for his bereaved and disconsolate wife and children at this time of tragedy and trauma, not by the Tamils living in Australia alone, but by all Dr. Rasanayakam's friends and relatives in Sri Lanka and his many compatriots scattered today the world over, who had known him and loved him. He will continue to live in their hearts till time lasts for them. Death doth hide but not divide. May he enjoy eternal bliss in Nirvana!

Augustine Saverimuttu  
Ontario, Canada.



monwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London on Saturday, April, 6. Lakshmi herself performed three lively and vibrant dances in the second half of the concert.

pani's superb display with the Violin provided ecstatic delight to a full and overflowing house.

Dr. Manju Sivanathan compared the show with great

Hall, proceeds earmarked for the relief of the many orphans in the Tamil Homelands, TOT has already raised several thousand pounds from earlier fund-raising events.



# TAMIL NATION

## BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS

by Arjuna

### The case of the hunted ex-Minister

Sri Lankan M.P. Gamini Disanayake is in trouble.

Suave, debonair, youthful-looking, Gamini Disanayake is no chicken in Sri Lankan politics. Once a high-profile Minister in former President Jayewardene's Cabinet in charge of a high-financed portfolio - Lands, Land Development and Mahaweli Development, - he was even tipped at one time to be Jayewardene's favourite to take over from the old fox. He was the Sri Lankan counterpart of the equally suave Indian politician Madhavarao Scindia - both heading the Board of Control of Cricket in their respective countries. Besides, Disanayake was one of two Cabinet Ministers who was a favourite with New Delhi's South Block. The other, significantly enough, is also now in political oblivion: the roving Ronnie de Mel who set up a world record as the longest surviving Finance Minister flying round the world carrying Sri Lanka's begging bowl for eleven years. Today he faces charges of embezzlement of public funds.

Gamini Disanayake is temporarily a politician-turned-scholar - an interesting phenomenon in Asian politics. Since being stripped of his cabinet post by President Premadasa, he has been dividing his time between Sri Lanka and UK, where he is doing a post-graduate degree on Development Studies at Cambridge University. Recently, on the night of April 18, he returned to Colombo via Bangkok by a midnight flight, but the airport seemed to be buzzing with a lot of expectancy even at that odd hour of the night. Two Pajero jeeps with armed personnel were in the airport premises. Mediamen, both local and foreign, were also around. The former Minister's personal bodyguards were on high alert. Why all this fuss over a Cambridge scholar, you might ask? The answer is, for a whole fortnight previously, Colombo was full of rumours that Gamini Disanayake was to be arrested on arrival in the country! As to why, no one seemed to know for sure.

But there was no arrest. Mobbed by mediamen, Disanayake looked unruffled. "You have to face this kind of thing. I have faced bigger crises", he said. He would be attending that day's ceremonial opening of the Third Session of the Second Parliament at Sri Jayawardhanapura, Kotte, he said, and he would be around in the country for sometime.

Two days later, something did happen. The CID questioned him for two and a half hours, threatened him with arrest, and produced him



before the Colombo South Magistrate who allowed him bail. What was the charge? One would have presumed it had something to do with his tenure in office as the Mahaweli Minister. (He was once described in an Asian journal as one of the richest men in Sri Lanka). The Mahaweli project had not only come in for considerable flak from the Opposition, but was also the subject of some startling disclosures in ex-Mossad man Victor Ostrovsky's sensational Book - *By way of Deception: The Making and Unmaking of a Mossad Officer* (Tamil Nation - Oct 15, 1990). But the charge against Disanayake apparently had nothing to do with the Mahaweli. It seemed to be connected with the Theatre of the Absurd!

The story of the play goes back to about three years - 26th June 1988 to be exact - when a then U.S. based Professor, Ralph Buultjens, reputed to have been a personal friend of the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and much in demand at that time among the Colombo elitist circles, was abducted on his way to deliver the Felix Dias Bandaranaike lecture at the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall. The title of the lecture: "The Price of Power".

The Professor was in the front seat of his car with driver Lester Ranatunga at the wheel and secretary Miss de Silva in the rear. Getting out of his Skelton Road residence, a Red Lancer car suddenly swerved from somewhere and intercepted his vehicle. Three men armed with revolvers dragged out the driver and shoved him into the rear seat. Prof. Buultjens was threatened and told to remain where he was. He was quickly blindfolded. One of the armed youths took the wheel, while the Red Lancer followed.

Close to the traffic lights at the Havelock Road intersection, the driver and secretary were dropped. The car then drove on to an unknown destination. The Professor was treated well by his abductors, and even offered a soft drink "Fanta" for his pains. "You are a fine chap", the abductors told

## JAYALALITHA FOR A BANGLADESH-KIND OF INDIAN INTERVENTION

If genocide of Tamils (in Sri Lanka) goes unabated, there will be nothing wrong if India thinks of a military option as Indira Gandhi did in the case of Bangladesh. This is the view expressed by AIADMK leader Ms. Jayalalitha Jayaram in an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*, published in its issue of April 29.

She told *The Hindu*: "The mood in the AIADMK is totally upbeat and most of the party cadres are looking forward with eager anticipation to the restoration of an MGR Government in Tamil Nadu".

When asked by *The Hindu* correspondent K. Raghunathan during her electioneering tour in Thanjavur: "What is your party's latest thinking on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue, particularly



the LTTE.", the AIADMK leader avoided a direct reference to the LTTE, but said:-

"We are for a new, honourable agreement which has to be worked out by the Govern-

ments of India and Sri Lanka. As we have been saying all along, we want the Tamils of Sri Lanka enabled to live on an equal footing with the Sinhalese. As long as the genocide continues in Sri Lanka and Tamil youth rounded up and killed, refugees will be pouring into India. We cannot turn them away because it is our duty to provide them relief and rehabilitation. But the ultimate aim should be to let them go back to their own country, because they have a right to live there. They must be able to live there with dignity and honour and without fear. If the genocide continues unabated, I think there will be nothing wrong if India thinks of a military option as Indira Gandhi did in the case of Bangladesh."

## TAMIL EELAM THE ONLY SOLUTION, SAYS PMK



P. Nedumaran



Dr. S. Ramadoss



"Panruti" Ramachandran

The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), leading the third front in the forthcoming elections in Tamil Nadu, says that declaration of "Tamil Eelam" is the only solution to the Lankan ethnic issue.

Releasing the Front manifesto in Madras on April 28, party leader Dr. S. Ramadoss said the Front will press the Centre to recognise Tamil Eelam and pass a resolution in the Assembly reiterating this stand. The Government of India should recognise the Lankan Tamil liberation struggle

just as it had accorded recognition to Nelson Mandela and Yasser Arafat. The PMK will help the Lankan Tamils without affecting India's integrity. Two other Front leaders, P. Nedumaran and "Panruti" Ramachandran were associated with Dr. Ramadoss. Mr. Nedumaran is the leader of the Thamil Desiya Iyakkam.

In answer to a newsman's question whether the PMK Front felt the need for a separate Tamil Nadu as well, Mr. Nedumaran said the situation in India was in no way compara-

ble to that in Lanka. "We will not be responsible if such a situation arises in the future, however", he said.

Mr. "Panruti" Ramachandran who is contesting the Panruti constituency with the support of the PMK, in justifying the Front's stand on respect of the Lankan Tamils, referred to the UN declaration that a people with their own separate identity could not be denied the right of self-determination.

The PMK is contesting all the 234 Assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu.

him, "but don't get involved with this crowd. And don't give any lectures on Felix Dias Bandaranaike".

At 7.15 p.m. he was told: "It's too late now for a resumption of your lecture. Listen for the sounds of a car driving away, give it a few minutes, remove your blindfold, and please get back home." The Professor did as he was told while a distinguished but bemused gathering including the widow of the subject of the lecture, waited at the hall, nursing dark thoughts of the Professor's absent-mindedness.

Well, that was Act I. Act II was the one where Gamini Disanayake appeared in the Magistrate's court, as one of nine persons suspected to have been the dramatis personae in Act I.

Act II Scene II gets more dramatic with the introduction of a totally unexpected new member of the cast - former Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, Mr. Mani Dixit. The script says that Prof. Buultjens had once said in a lecture at Kandy that the quickest way to ensure popularity in Sri Lanka was to kidnap Mr. Dixit, and the



Dixit: back in the picture

latter had reportedly complained to the then President Jayewardene. Instead, the one who was actually kidnapped was the Professor himself.

It is also said that the Professor had mentioned the name of Gamini Disanayake as one of the people involved in the abduction.

What is of interest to the Tamils is not the ex-Minister's alleged involvement in a farcical abduction, but his alleged involvement (in the company of another Cabinet Minister Cyril Mathew) in the burning of the biggest cultural possession of the Tamils - the Jaffna Public Library - in May 1981, with the help of goondas "imported" from the south; an act of cultural genocide that would never be forgotten when the history of Tamil Eelam comes to be written.