

LANKA

GUARDIAN

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TRENDS

LTTE infiltrates city

Police suspect that the LTTE has infiltrated numbers of informants and activists, including suicide bombers, into Colombo. One suspected female spy was arrested on May 18 at Sri Saranankara Road, on the southern outskirts of the city. She was found to be a native of Mandathivu, in Jaffna.

Don't sell arms, EU told

The European Parliament in a recent resolution urged member states of the European Union not to sell arms to the LTTE. The European Parliament also called on SAARC countries and other nations of the Indian ocean region to bring pressure on the LTTE to return to the negotiation table.

The Union was urged to support the peace efforts of the Sri Lanka government. The resolution deplored the LTTE's unilateral breach of the ceasefire.

A war Council?

Moves to set up a war council which would include Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, instead of the existing National Security Council, is being resisted by powerful persons in the government, according to a story in "The Island". The war council idea is being pushed by a former Air Force chief, according to this newspaper which has recently had differences with the government in war news reporting.

Editor in court

"Sunday Times" editor Sinha Ratnatunga has been charged by the Attorney General with criminal defamation of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. The editor has been noticed to appear in court on June 13.

First on the hit list

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga told *India Today* during her recent brief visit to Delhi that she was on the top of the LTTE's hit list. The president also said that LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran had earlier decided in cold blood to kill former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The Indian press took note that this was the first time the Sri Lanka government had categorically blamed the LTTE for Rajiv Gandhi's murder.

Meanwhile, *India Today* in an editorial said that there should be no hesitation (by India) in providing material and other help to Sri Lanka to combat the LTTE. Referring to the recent missile attack on the Sri Lankan aircraft the editorial said:

"These missiles in the hands of the Tamil Tigers is not only a threat to Sri Lankan military air operations but may also endanger civil air traffic in Sri Lanka and even in Tamil Nadu".

Subsidies only for the needy

Donor nations at the Aid Group meeting in Paris told Sri Lanka that subsidies should be targetted only to the needy. Specific reference was made to the wheat flour subsidy; bread is available in Sri Lanka for the rich and the poor alike at the subsidised rate of Rs. 3.50 per loaf.

Following the Aid Group advice the government is to re-think subsidy schemes to help only the poor.

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THE LTTE'S TOTAL WAR

Mervyn de Silva

Although she launched an attack on some newspaper groups, it was an unusually subdued and serious President Chandrika who addressed the large gathering at the inaugural meeting of the National Media Centre. The killing of the much respected Dimbulagala monk, had stunned the nation. For all his seemingly eccentric ways, the venerable monk was a symbol. He was more than a colourful character. He was "the frontier monk" in an undeclared war. The boundary between the separate "EELAM" that the Liberation Tigers fought to carve out from Sri Lankan territory, and the land over which Colombo's writ ran, was the central issue. In a way, the question had become frontpage news because Dr. Jayalath Jayawardena MP had raised it in the House.

Explaining the matter, the IGP Frank de Silva said that the special security had not been withdrawn. "It was replaced in accordance with a Defence Ministry policy directive. This directive related to the provision of security to individuals and institutions hitherto supplied by the Sri Lanka army. The security duties were to be undertaken by the Police in order that army personnel be released for their essential combat duties".

While the explanation seems quite reasonable, it led to a bitter dispute between the P.A. government and the UNP-led opposition — a striking sign of how the war in the north-and-east has resulted in another kind of civil war in the South, the traditional UNP-SLFP battle. This battle is no longer confined to Parliament.

It is everywhere and anywhere — in village or municipal council, on all types of public platform, and on nearly every public question.

That many-sided war in the South has become more incessant and much broader after the last parliamentary elections. Most of the time, the UNP had a strong president and a secure, if not overwhe-

lming majority in the house. And it governed the country for 17 years. It was only with the advent of the Wijetunga Presidency that things started to change. The time had come for change, a new administration. It was made possible once a fiercely divided SLFP, a family-based party where the bitter family in-fighting had caused serious rifts, discovered a new leader, albeit another member of the family but "a new face", a person with a clean slate, known to be a dynamic leader. Thus, the "Chandrika revolution".

The parlous condition of "the establishment" party was dramatised by the decision of President Wijetunga to retire from politics. This gave way to an open fight for leadership between the acting leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe, and the new challenger, Mr. Gamini Dissanayake — who had joined Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali in forming the D.U.N.F., an anti-Premadasa front. Despite the usual rumours, there was little doubt that the former National Security Minister who personally led the Vadamaarachchi operation, was assassinated by the movement that held him guilty.

If there were any lingering doubts, the assassination of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's trusted friend, cleared these doubts several weeks before the November Presidential polls. The new UNP leader was killed in precisely the manner in which Mr. Gandhi was assassinated — a woman suicide-bomber at an election meeting.

Mrs. Gamini Dissanayake was hardly a serious rival to Mrs. Kumaratunga, the widow of superstar Vijay Kumaratunga whose courageous stance on the "National Question" had won thousands of Tamil admirers and angered the ultra-nationalist Sinhala movements.

It is in such a background that the daring assassination of Mr. Vijay Kumaratunga, a presidential candidate, has to be placed

by students of southern or national politics in the past thirteen years, years in which the LTTE's dramatic interventions have been a major shaping force of Sri Lanka's contemporary history. And in this, the dominant personality has been Velupillai Prabhakaran — second in importance only to President J. R. Jayawardene. And yet it was Prabhakaran who made our the Jan. 1st 1990 cover. The L.G. had to choose between President J.R. and supremo Prabhakaran. The "past" voted strongly for J.R. the past and the future suggested the LTTE leader. He continues to make history.

Military missions have visited Russia, Ukraine, China, Czechoslovakia etc. The defence vote, poor Prof. Pieris admits, will soar. He had already reduced it from 27 billion to 24.7 billion rupees. He now fears it will exceed 30 billion rupees (600 million dollars) two hundred and fifty million less than what the donor consortium pledged in Paris for 1996. He promises not to print money or go to the Central Bank. So what will he do? No Santa Claus is likely to knock on his door. New taxes, subsidy cuts, a wage freeze or sell off State corporations to foreign investors under the PERC scheme.

In the meantime, anti-aircraft guns have been installed in vital areas of the city, says the S.T. in its frontpage lead story. The parliamentary complex, the President's official residence, Sapugaskanda and Kolonnawa oil refineries. The HINDU reported that the LTTE had been shopping for microlight aircraft, and had bought six in France. The buyer was a sports firm. The short take-off and landing could prove lethal for suicide bombing, the report said.

Meanwhile the P.A. — U.N.P. "war", once a low-intensity conflict shows all signs of a "no holds barred" battle that is likely to increase in intensity in the coming months. And that of course, suits the LTTE strategists perfectly.

Back to the Battlefield

As Sri Lankan jets pound Jaffna peninsula, the wheel has turned full circle in relations between the Government and the LTTE, with Colombo seeking international help to fight the Tigers

Nirupama Subramanian

For Chandrika Kumaratunga, the transition from a dedicated peacemaker to a determined fighter has been swift and decisive, but certainly not painless. For a leader who got elected on a one-point agenda to bring peace back to strife-torn Sri Lanka, this must have been a terrible disappointment. Tougher still is the prospect of doing battle with a foe that seems to out-gun and out-think her armed forces by a considerable margin, bottling up a fifth of her armed forces in isolated garrisons and much emboldened after killing at least 200 of them in just a fortnight of one-sided fighting.

The Sri Lankan President found herself ill-prepared to wage war as the LTTE unleashed the deadly surface-to-air missile on April 29. In a desperate image-boosting effort, she authorised her air force's tiny jet force on May 10 to bomb Jaffna peninsula despite the risk of civilian casualties. Even Sri Lankans, long used to the failure of peace negotiations, were taken aback by the quickness with which the process disintegrated this time round.

Despite the Government's persistence over a negotiated settlement to the ethnic crisis, it was clear that without the participation of the intransigent Tigers, such a settlement would be in vain. LTTE supremo V. Prabhakaran, on his part, claims that hostilities were renewed because the Government failed to live up to its promises to the Tamils, primarily the lifting of the economic embargo imposed by the previous government (see interview).

"This Government has been trapped by the public promises it made. But it is now time for a clear rethink on how to prevent the country from being divided," says Kingsley De Silva, biographer of former president J.R. Jayewardene. As the Government prepares for war with the Tigers, Kumaratunga is being asked to separate the LTTE from the aspirations of the Tamils in order to save Sri Lanka's territorial integrity.

"For the Government to make any head-

way politically, it must deal with the LTTE militarily, and combine it with the announcement of its political package," says Sunil Bastian, political analyst with the Colombo-based Institute of Ethnic Studies. According to him, a package which devolves substantial powers to the ethnic minorities may even bring the LTTE back to the negotiation table. That such a package is in the offing was hinted at when the Government announced it was having talks with other Tamil groups and parties.

But divisions within the Government over the political package have to be sorted out first. The point of disagreement: the proposed merger of the northern with the eastern province, both Tamil majority areas with pockets of Muslims and Sinhalese. In fact, the DUNF, one of the constituents of the People's Alliance Government, has openly criticised such a move, arguing that it would mean giving up control of one-third of Sri Lanka's land area and two-thirds of its coastline. In this case, Sinhalese ire may well be aroused.

And it is clear that the LTTE wouldn't be complaining. "What the Tigers would like right now is a Sinhalese backlash that would once again convince all Tamils that the LTTE is their only lifeline," says EPRLF spokesman. Ketheeswaran. At the end of the day, even if Kumaratunga does manage to carry Sinhalese opinion, there are more serious obstacles to such a process.

First, it will be near on impossible to implement it in the north, where a majority of the Tamils live. At present, the region is virtually a quasi-state under the LTTE's control. Second, the LTTE could easily jeopardise the process in other parts of the country too, especially in the east. Prabhakaran's outfit has demonstrated time and again its ruthless ability to dispose of leaders who have tried to sideline it — former president Premadasa, Rajiv Gandhi and K. Padmanabha of the EPRLF, for instance.

The only hope that any peace process

sans the LTTE has of success is if the Sri Lankan security forces are able to beat the Tigers in their own territory. Right now, that looks like a very tall order.

If the attack on the gunboats in Trincomalee harbour on April 19 demonstrated the efficiency of the Black Sea Tigers, the missile attack on the Avro plane carrying men and supplies to the northern base of Palali demolished the myth that the country's air force was invulnerable. In its belated rush to overcome a shortage of men and material, the Government has embarked on a major drive to fill the shrinking ranks of the 100,000-strong army and to acquire military equipment overseas. What the military might still be short on, however, are inspiring leadership, strategy and motivation.

Unfortunately, the present set-up has evoked only dread and despair. Army Commander Gerry Silva is on record saying a military solution to the ethnic crisis is "not possible". Though the statement is largely true, coming from the army chief it has had a demoralising effect. "If that is indeed the case, the man on the front wants to know what he is doing there," remarked a brigadier.

In the coming days, morale will play an important role for the army. Holed up in the Pooneryn camp in Jaffna are over 4,500 soldiers, dependent for their supplies on air force transport planes. In Palali, there are another 15,000 men in a similar predicament. With the air force virtually neutralised after the missile attack and the navy apprehensive about entering the area, the troops are completely bottled up. After squeezing the army's supplies, the LTTE may well launch an offensive the camps. LTTE has to weigh long-term implications of such a move since it would invite opprobrium from the international community.

One thing that is clear is while the Government's peace agenda prompted the armed forces to go on a virtual hiatus, the LTTE used the time to build its

strength. Its successful strikes in the east bear testimony to this — the LTTE had been more or less flushed out of the area in 1993 but it used the three months of ceasefire to make inroads into the area once again. After the renewal of hostilities, all its ambushes have occurred in this province.

However, it is the LTTE's possession of missiles — said to be Russian-made SA-7 missiles obtained from Ukraine — that has really got the Government worried and strengthened the belief that the crisis can't be resolved by Sri Lanka alone. The recent meeting between Kumaratunge and Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in New Delhi during the SAARC summit fuelled speculation on India's possible involvement. It is believed that Kumaratunge raised the issue of a "common threat" to both countries from the LTTE.

Indeed, there is a growing feeling that India could offer valuable assistance to the Government. "India can do a lot to help our country, without stepping into Sri Lankan territory. For instance, patrolling the waters to ensure that the LTTE does not get its supply of weapons," says Air Vice Marshal Harry Goonetilleke, former air force chief. Even die-hard India-bashers, like Dinesh Gunawardene, president of the Sinhala nationalist Mahajana Eksath Perumina, feel Sri Lanka needs India's help. "It is no longer just a Sri Lankan issue. The problem concerns the boundaries of India as well," he says.

But it is unlikely that India will be drawn into the conflict — considering the IPKF experience, and with the upcoming general elections and assembly elections in Tamil Nadu — even though renewed fighting may step up LTTE activity in the state. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, in fact, has categorically denied that Sri Lanka asked India for military help and termed it an "internal dispute." The Indian Government, however, may be forced to change its mind if Sri Lanka were offered assistance by a third country, say, Pakistan.

But with no international help immediately forthcoming, the pressure is on the Government to get its act together and formulate a consensual package for peace. Failing which, the alternative is another long drawn out battle in which the LTTE has been first off the blocks.

"We have lost faith"

— V. Prabhakaran

Anandhi Surya Prakashan of the BBC was in Jaffna within 48 hours of the LTTE's renewal of hostilities. LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, who rarely grants interviews to the press, agreed to meet her at one of his camps. In military fatigue with a black cord holding a cyanide capsule around his neck, and surrounded by bodyguards, he remained unfazed by persistent questioning on why the LTTE decided to unilaterally withdraw from the peace process. The exclusive interview, in Tamil, was recorded on tape. Excerpts:

Q. Why did you decide to withdraw from the peace negotiations at a time when there was hope that peace will be restored in the north?

A. We made this painful decision at a time when our people had lost all hope. In the beginning, we entertained the hope that the Tamil national question would be resolved through political negotiations.

The Tamil people have been subjected to enormous suffering as a consequence of the economic embargo, fishing bans and the blockade on traffic imposed by the previous government. We requested nothing other than the removal of these bans. Instead of viewing these issues as problems of the Tamil people, the Government took them as specific demands of the LTTE. Furthermore, we were told that any attempt to resolve them would spark off military repercussions. We pointed out that the continuation of the peace negotiations would serve no purpose if the problems of our people were not resolved. The Government assured us that it would remove the bans. We extended our deadline by three weeks. But the Government delayed the implementation of its decisions. It is because of this that we and our people have lost faith in Chandrika's Government.

Q. Why did you decide to discontinue the peace negotiations even though President Kumaratunge lifted the economic embargo and offered several concessions?

A. Giving pledges and implementing those pledges are two different things. It is true that President Chandrika gave us

pledges. But she has not taken constructive measures to implement them.

Q. Shouldn't you have been a bit patient since the delay could have been caused by administrative hurdles?

A. We reached the brink of tolerance. The Government dragged its feet for more than six months. If there was a genuine will, the Government would have lifted the bans and proceeded with the implementation within 24 hours.

Q. What do you feel about the decision to reimpose these bans?

A. It has made one thing very clear: as far as the Tamil issue is concerned, there is no fundamental difference between the present Government and the UNP regime.

Q. Several foreign governments have condemned you for terminating the peace negotiations.

A. We are fully aware that the international community is genuinely concerned about the Tamil issue and wants a political settlement. Some foreign countries have chosen to condemn the LTTE on the basis of the one-sided story provided by the Government before studying the issue in depth.

Q. Chandrika has made it clear that she is determined to pursue the peace process with or without the cooperation of the LTTE.

A. If it is practicable to achieve peace without the cooperation of the LTTE, let her continue her effort.

Q. The International Secretariat of the LTTE in London issued a statement recently that the Tigers have not closed the doors for peace. What steps do you expect the Government to take?

A. Our doors for peace are still open. We are dissatisfied and disillusioned with the Government approach but we haven't lost hope. If the Government makes favourable decisions on the issues we raised, we will be prepared to cease all hostilities and return to the peace process.

On the prowl

The President of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Kumaratunga, was elected in November with a large majority partly by promising to bring peace to the country. She is now bitterly contemplating the ruins of her quest. Not only have the rebel Tamil Tigers rejected her peace feelers, but the military advantage has swung in the Tigers' favour.

The government was rattled by the sinking of two naval gunboats which marked the resumption of the civil war on April 19th; but its reaction ten days later to the shooting down of two military aircraft over Jaffna, where the Tigers are strong, was more like panic. Regular flights to the army's isolated bases in Tiger-controlled areas have not been resumed. Now that the air force has lost its confidence, a Tiger onslaught on the base of Poonareen, close to Jaffna, may be imminent.

Since the 100,000-strong security forces appear to be incapable of inflicting a decisive defeat on a rebel force a tenth of their size, the government has turned abroad for help. The defence attaches of friendly countries in the region have been invited to Colombo for talks and the government has reversed its ban on arms

purchases. It is planning to buy warships, aircraft and armoured vehicles from a number of countries, among them Israel, China and Russia.

But, even with new equipment, the government is not confident that it can defeat the Tigers alone. It particularly wants India to help cut the Tigers' life-line to Tamil Nadu, India's southern state. Supplies of weapons, fuel and other essentials are still smuggled across the Palk Strait to Jaffna. Wounded Tigers are looked after in private hospitals in Tamil Nadu. Tiger uniforms are made in the state. In addition to suppressing such services, Sri Lanka would like India to share intelligence with it, and to agree to a joint naval patrol of the strait.

What India is prepared to offer, however, is rather different. Both countries refuse to disclose the substance of discussions held during two visits to Delhi by Mrs Kumaratunga: one just before the peace effort collapsed, the other after the Tigers fired their anti-aircraft missiles. But, according to unconfirmed reports, the Indian prime minister, Narasimha Rao, raised the possibility of a joint raid by Sri Lankan and Indian commandos to capture the Tiger leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran.

In an election year, arresting the man suspected of arranging the murder of Rajiv Gandhi, Mr Rao's predecessor, would help Mr Rao. Snatching Mr Prabhakaran from his jungle hideout would placate Rajiv loyalists in Congress and undercut Mr Rao's main rival, Arjun Singh, who looks to Rajiv's widow, Sonia, for support.

But beyond sending a snatch squad, the signs are that India will not help. Once only too eager to get involved in Sri Lanka, it is now wary of getting sucked back into the mess. Although a strike against Mr Prabhakaran himself might prove popular, co-ordinated action against the Tigers would be deeply resented in Tamil Nadu, where the main Tamil parties sympathise — either openly or covertly — with the Tigers. And memories are still fresh of 1987-90, when a 100,000-strong Indian peacekeeping force occupied the north and east of the island, but failed to tame the Tigers and suffered many casualties. Now, with the Tigers posing a more serious threat than ever, the government in Colombo looks likely to be left to its own devices.

— Economist

LTTE missiles may be of Russian origin

Dinesh Kumar

Indian defence and security agencies are trying to trace the type, source and origin of the surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) used by LTTE militants in Sri Lanka recently since this could have a direct bearing on the Indian security scenario.

The LTTE had brought down two Avro aircraft belonging to the Sri Lankan Air force in the Jaffna peninsula with heat-seeking SAMs on two consecutive days last weekend. The issue was also discussed by leaders of SAARC, excepting the Sri Lankan Prime Minister who had returned earlier on. Although no consensus had emerged from the discussions, Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao had while describing the weapon system as "frightening" observed that it was an issue of "serious concern".

Informed sources say that this incident has added a new dimension to the security scenario since this is the first time that heat-seeking missiles have been used by a militant or guerilla group against flying

aircraft in the sub-continent. In this region only Afghan mujahideens have so far used such missiles. But then, the highly-capable heat-seeking Stinger missiles had been supplied by US government agencies to the mujahideens to fight the armed forces of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Present indications are that the missiles the LTTE used are of Russian origin and have probably been procured from Afghan mujahideen groups. There has also been some talk of the LTTE procuring these missiles through unofficial channels from Ukraine. Initial reports, for example, had said that Sri Lanka had been warned by the Ukrainian government some months ago that an illegal arms shipment was heading towards the island nation. Interestingly, following this tip off Sri Lanka had alerted Indian security agencies thinking that the consignment was intended for use against India rather than Sri Lanka itself which was then engaged in peace talks with the LTTE.

But what would also be of relevance to Indian security agencies is the type of middlemen (if any), sourcing of funds, and the route taken by the LTTE in carting this lethal missile system to Sri Lanka. Insurgent groups in the north-east, notably the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), is known to have established in international arms bazars in South East Asia as had even Punjab militants. There have been unconfirmed reports of the LTTE establishing contacts with Punjab militants in Canada as also with the Peoples War Group (PWG).

Although no militant or insurgent group in India has till now used surface-to-air missiles, an Army patrol had recovered a Russian made SA-7 (Strella) close to the Line of Control in Kashmir's Kupwara border district in April 1994. The SA-7 compares similarly in capability and performance to the type of SAM used by the LTTE. "Any such weapon system should be a cause of concern."

— Times of India

Kashmir once more

In the age of identity, armed conflicts have a spill-over effect. Identity does not respect borders. It was the flow of refugees to Tamilnadu that gave Delhi the right to be "concerned" and then involved. The state of Tamilnadu itself was carved out after a re-drawing of borders because Pandit Nehru, confronted by the force of linguistic nationalism and the threat of suicide by Pottu Sri Ramalu, the respected friend of Mahatma Gandhi, was forced to intervene to prevent a national tragedy. In Sri Lanka, language was the root cause of conflict.

Religion rather than language is the source of the region's generic conflict — Kashmir. British India became two states under the supervision of the departing colonial power. Here is a comment on the current conflict from the *LONDON TIMES*.

Kashmir Flames

No solution in sight as Delhi drifts and Pakistan meddles

Char-i-Sharif, a sleepy village in Kashmir was the scene of fierce fighting between Indian troops and armed Islamic militants. What is striking is not that there should be fires and bloodshed in an obscure hamlet, Kashmir and its civilians have suffered more than their fair share of both in the course of an intense civil war now in its sixth year. The arresting feature of the battle was that it was fought inside Indian-administered territory, against Indian soldiers by Pakistani gunmen.

As our South Asia correspondent reports from Kashmir, more than 60 Mujahidin are entrenched in a Muslim shrine in the village. The shrine was occupied by them — and immediately encircled by Indian troops — some months ago yet only now has it emerged beyond dispute that the majority of the occupiers are not local Kashmiris but heavily armed infiltrators from Pakistan. This will have the effect of boosting the consistent Indian claim that separatist violence in the disputed province is "sponsored" by its neighbour, and of weakening the consistent Pakistani protestation that its involvement in Kashmir comes only in the form of moral support to the area's beleaguered people.

The unmasking of Pakistani fighters at Char-i-Sharif will surely make India's international diplomatic offensive on the Kashmir issue less difficult to conduct than it has been for some time. Delhi would err, however, if it were to attribute all violence, and all calls for Kashmir self-determination, to the machinations of the bogeymen in Pakistan. There is compelling evidence that many Kashmiris are now unprepared to accept their present political status as citizens of the Indian republic. Insofar as many are unprepared also to accept the accession of their disputed province to Pakistan, the only lasting way to end the conflict would be to search for solutions that would accommodate the Kashmiri quest for self-government.

The battle of Char-i-Sharif could result in yet another postponement of provincial elections in Kashmir by the Indian Government. But these elections are likely, if ever held, to be the source of even more conflict virtually every Kashmiri political organisation has refused to participate arguing instead for a referendum on the nature of Kashmir's political association (or other wise) with India.

But the force of Indian public opinion,

as it now stands, makes it inconceivable that the Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, would even begin to address the question of Kashmiri self-determination: to do so would be tantamount political suicide and would play directly into the hands of the Hindu nationalist opposition Bharatiya Janata Party. Equally, the fragility of the Government in Islamabad has meant that Benazir Bhutto has had to be more shrill on Kashmir than is helpful for the people who live under Indian administration. There is mounting evidence also, that Miss Bhutto has little control over those Pakistani agencies — such as the sinister Inter-Services Intelligence — which aid, abet and supply radical armed Islamic groups in Kashmir.

As events at Char-i-Sharif now demonstrate, such support is not confined to money and material. The Indian Government is entitled to deliver a sharp rebuke to Miss Bhutto and to call on Pakistan to stanch the flow of infiltrators into Indian-administered Kashmir. Yet Delhi must not regard the crisis in Kashmir as a simple case of infiltration from across the border, the roots of Kashmiri disaffection still lie firmly in Indian soil.

War Amidst Peace Talks

K. M. de Silva

The increase in the number of spokesmen for the Tamil minority had some predictable consequences, beginning naturally enough with a struggle among them for dominance, and a quest for the position of sole spokesmen. The TULF, the most moderate of the Tamil groups, found itself edged out of any position of influence. Instead the lead went at various stages to other groups, with a bewildering range of acronyms, People's Liberation Army of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE); the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) all of whom were assiduously cultivated by the Research and Analysis Wing of the Indian Prime Minister's office. Better known by its acronym RAW, it was the Indian equivalent of the CIA. RAW provided Tamil groups located in India with arms and training with the knowledge, if not under the aegis, of the Indian government. The TELO group was a special favorite of the RAW. The LTTE eventually pushed ahead to a position of dominance largely because of its strong and expanding base in Jaffna. The three leaders of the strongest of these groups, Prabhakaran, Uma Maheswaran, and Sri Sabaratnam, were soon engaged in a bitter and increasingly violent rivalry for the position of principal spokesman of the Tamil cause. Prabhakaran eventually won the day. But that is another story.

Two sets of talks between representatives of the Sri Lanka government and the various Tamil groups, claiming to speak on behalf of their ethnic group took place in July and August 1985 at Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. These talks did not yield any positive results, but Bhandari used the opportunity they provided to continue negotiations with the Sri Lankan delegation in New Delhi. These talks were more fruitful. The new agenda for ethnic reconciliation which emerged from them yielded a framework for a realistic devolution of power in Sri Lanka intended to meet some of the principal Tamil demands.

One of the most significant features of this meticulously crafted agreement was that the unit of devolution was to be a province, no longer a district. Secondly, the powers to be devolved on these provincial units were

much wider than those offered earlier by the Sri Lanka government in discussions with Indian mediators and Tamil representatives. The complex new structures agreed upon constituted a major concession on the part of the Sri Lankan government to the demands of the Tamils of the north and east of the island. The draft accord which came to be known in official circles as the Delhi Accord of August 1985 was based on the consensus reached on that occasion and the TULF's views were part of that consensus. Initialed on 30 August this draft accord became the basis of all future negotiations between the two governments on Sri Lanka's ethnic problems concerning the Tamil minority.

The actual signing of the accord which Bhandari hoped would crown his mediatory efforts confronted a major obstacle in the reluctance if not refusal of the other Tamil groups who were represented at Thimpu to give their consent to it. The longer they held out the more difficult it became for the TULF to publicly commit itself to an agreement in the formulation of which they had been consulted and to which they had given their concurrence in Delhi.

In December 1985 the TULF withdrew its support for the Delhi Accord under pressure from their more aggressive rivals, in particular, the LTTE. By the time Bhandari left office in early 1986 only the two governments remained committed to the agreement reached and initialed in Delhi.

Meanwhile sporadic outbursts of ethnic violence, especially in the north and east of the island, and clashes between the security forces and Tamil guerrillas and terrorists groups disturbed the peace of the island. Greatly improved relations between the two countries did not extend to any serious efforts on the part of the Indian government to prevent Indian territory being used by Tamil guerrillas and terrorists for attacks on a friendly neighbor, much less to close down the training facilities and camps. Rajiv Gandhi, so much less dependent on the southern Indian political base than his mother, and intent on taking a more even-handed approach than she did to the problems posed by Sri Lanka's ethnic conflicts, found his options more limited than he would have liked them to be. The constraint lay in the ethnic politics of Tamil Nadu. The Tamil guerrillas and terrorists groups continued to have training facilities and bases there.

The Tamil separatist groups in Sri Lanka

all had their supporters among the political parties of Tamil Nadu, the government and opposition parties alike, each of whom was determined to demonstrate that its commitment to the Sri Lankan Tamil cause was stronger than the other's. In locking themselves into the politics of Sri Lankan Tamil separatist agitation, they were also drawn into the fierce factionalism that was part of the Sri Lankan Tamil political scene. None of the Tamil Nadu political parties could keep the peace among the rival Sri Lankan Tamil groups whose internecine warfare often took more Tamil lives than their frequent clashes with the Sri Lankan forces. Tamil Nadu continued to serve three purposes: as a sanctuary; as a base for training and supply of arms; and as a source of funds. Thanks to the support they had in and from Tamil Nadu the Tamil separatist groups, and especially the LTTE and its ally the EROS group, had become a formidable guerrilla force, much stronger than their Indian mentors thought they would ever be.

The LTTE was also helped by a decision taken by the Sri Lanka government in July, 1985, as part of an understanding reached with India, that its forces in the Jaffna peninsula would be kept within their barracks or camps. Originally this arrangement was to last for two months, but it was later extended, in response to Indian pressure, for three months. The LTTE took advantage of this to mine all the roads leading out of the camps and proceeded thereafter to barricade them. These makeshift barricades were converted into concrete bunkers. The result was that the LTTE established effective control over the town of Jaffna if not the Jaffna peninsula itself, since the Sri Lanka army's movements were seriously hampered thereafter by these barricades. The units of the Sri Lanka army stationed in the fort of Jaffna could only be supplied by air.

The LTTE was emboldened by this shift in the military balance to embark on a vigorous campaign against the Sri Lankan forces, and attacks on softer targets; as well as a ruthless program of eliminating its Tamil rivals. They seldom directed their attacks against the security forces in open confrontations. When they did so their attacks were generally easily repulsed. But one of the consequences of such confrontations was that quite often civilians were killed, either caught in the cross-fire or — on occasion — by soldiers on the rampage seeking to avenge the loss of their comrades in land-mine blasts. The LTTE, for its part, began to

choose easier and softer targets such as an attack on the city of Anuradhapura in May 1985 in which 150 civilians were killed, or more frequently thereafter on Sinhalese peasants in the remoter areas of the north-central and eastern regions. These attacks became a major political embarrassment to the government.

The internecine warfare between the separatist groups reached its peak between September 1985 and April 1986. On 1 September 1985 the LTTE assassinated two TULF stalwarts — two former MP's — who had, unlike the bulk of the colleagues, continued to live in Jaffna. It was a move designed to compel the TULF in Madras and elsewhere to toe the line, that is to say, to refrain from signing the Delhi Accord.

The Sri Lanka government began to divert an increasing proportion of its annual budget to the expansion and equipping of its armed forces. Along with it there was an escalation of military action against the Tamil separatist groups in the north and east of the island. The Sri Lankan armed forces were now better equipped and better trained than before. Much of the training was done in Pakistan, while small groups of Israelis and British mercenaries honed the skills of special counter-terrorist units in the army and police.

As clashes between the security forces and the Tamil separatist activists became more frequent and casualties increased in number India's mediatory role gave way to a return to the Indira Gandhi policy of a diplomatic offensive against Sri Lanka; thus a propaganda campaign was launched through its embassies and High Commissions abroad, accusing the government of human rights violations. Sri Lankan and Indian diplomats clashed at the UN in New York and Geneva, all part of a policy of "moral" sanctions aimed at persuading Sri Lanka to return to the bargaining table. The Indian Embassy in Washington and the High Commissions in Ottawa and London, in the meantime, continued to be centers of support for Tamil separatist groups operating in those countries.

Had the Indian government been more sensitive to the Sri Lankan government's difficulties, and made some unambiguous and noticeable effort to stop the use of Indian territory by the LTTE and others for their military activities, there may have been greater political support within Sri Lanka for a resumption of negotiations with the Tamil groups, or greater readiness to stop military action against the LTTE. The Sri Lankan government had treated the Delhi Accord initialled on 30 April 1985 as an important step forward in reaching a settlement with the Tamil minority, and described it as "a reasonable basis for negotiation and settlement."

Neither the TULF or the other Tamil groups

had responded positively to the proposals in the Delhi Accord. It took several months of negotiations with them by Indian officials before the Indian government could send an official delegation to Sri Lanka for further discussions on possible adjustments and modifications of the Delhi Accord. By the time the delegation arrived in Sri Lanka Bhandari had left office. The delegation was led by a Minister of State not in the Cabinet, P. Chidambaram, a young (40 years at the time) Tamil who aspired to a Congress-based leadership of Tamil Nadu, and Natwar Singh, Rajiv Gandhi's Minister of State for External Affairs. The delegation arrived in Colombo on 30 April 1986 and held very intensive talks over the next five days. Their arrival coincided with the LTTE's massacre of the TELO leaders and the killing of Sri Sabaratnam in the course of this clash.

For the first time since Indian mediation began in late 1983 the principal negotiators for the Indian government were politicians and not bureaucrats or diplomats. On the departure of the Chidambaram delegation on 4 May it was announced that "the Sri Lanka government had agreed to make further concessions beyond the terms of the Delhi Accord." The decisions reached on this occasion were published on 4 May 1986.

Bhandari's successor as Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran had much less rapport with Rajiv Gandhi than had Bhandari, and greater sympathy for the Sri Lanka Tamil cause.

He placed his trust in the TULF and virtually pushed them into taking the lead in negotiations with the Sri Lanka government. The TULF leaders living in exile in Madras, were not unwilling to play the role that Venkateswaran had devised for them but they were terrified at the prospect of antagonizing the more aggressive Tamil groups. Venkateswaran called representatives of these latter groups to Delhi and persuaded them to let the TULF take the lead in the discussion with the Sri Lankan government scheduled to be held in Colombo later in the year.

Venkateswaran hit upon the idea of giving the Delhi Accord great acceptability to the Tamils by using the Indian state system as a model for Sri Lanka's devolutionary schemes. He believed that this subtle but nonetheless significant transformation of the devolution package negotiated by Bhandari would appeal to the TULF because it used the Indian federal system as a model, while it would be acceptable to President Jayewardene and his advisers because the central government in India was much more powerful than in most federations. Besides there was sufficient ambiguity in the refinement of the Delhi Accord made by Venkateswaran to allow for bargaining and give and take, and for more compromise.

By the time the TULF arrived in Colombo

for negotiations with the Sri Lanka government in June 1986, President Jayewardene had embarked on a new initiative, the Political Parties Conference (PPC) at which the Delhi Accord and the changes in it agreed to by the two governments April 1986, would be discussed. Once again the principal opposition party, the SLFP refused to join the conference, but seven other parties, including the vocal but uninfluential parties of the Marxist left participated. The TULF joined in the discussion at the Political Parties Conference, but even more important they had no fewer than 37 formal meetings with President Jayewardene and his senior Cabinet Ministers between 13 July and 26 August 1986.

The negotiations between the government of Sri Lanka and the TULF, and the discussions and debates within the conference continued over three months. In general the conference endorsed the proposals submitted for discussion by and through its committees, clarified some complex issues, and identified potential points of difficulty and ambiguities, all of which made it possible to widen the scope of the powers conferred on the provinces in the schemes of devolution submitted for discussion. These modifications and extensions were incorporated in the proposals sent to India in September 1986. They included draft constitutional amendments, a draft Provincial Councils bill, schedules setting out the "Reserved, Concurrent and Provincial" powers, as well as detailed memoranda dealing with law and order, land and land settlement and education. The subjects of finance and administration were discussed in detail but no final agreement was reached. An official statement to this effect was issued by the Sri Lanka government on 26 November 1986.

It was widely recognized that there were no insuperable difficulties in the way of reaching agreement on the financial and administrative aspects of the scheme of devolution that had emerged from the discussions of the PPC. The real difficulty lay in the fact that the TULF and the Tamil separatist groups in general continued to press for the creation of a single regional unit encompassing the northern and eastern province as a Tamil ethno-region. The Sri Lanka government was unwilling to consider this, much less to concede it, because of its political implications. The opposition to this from large and vocal sections of the Sinhalese would have resulted in an extensive erosion of the government's electoral base, leading in turn to a rapid undermining of its stability.

There was also another problem. Although both governments were anxious to treat the TULF as the main representatives of Tamil opinion in Sri Lanka, it was evident that there was an element of unreality in giving them this status. By living in self-imposed exile they had cut themselves off from the Tamil people. The separatist groups led by the

LTTE had filled the vacuum caused by the TULF's absence. The longer they stayed away their chances of a political rehabilitation were more of a chimera than they already were. Thus the negotiations with them were exercises in futility. The crux of the problem that confronted the two governments was that the LTTE was in no mood to accept anything short of a separate state. Nor were they inclined to respect the new status conferred by the two governments on the TULF.

Throughout the second half of 1986 Indian mediators were engaged in a sustained effort to break the deadlock caused by the TULF's insistence on the creation of a Tamil ethnoregion linking the northern and eastern provinces. Venkateswaran came up with a proposal to divide the eastern province into three units, one Muslim, one Tamil and one Sinhalese, with the Tamil unit being linked to the northern province by a narrow land corridor. When this proposal won no support, least of all from the Tamils, the Indian negotiators prevailed upon the Sri Lankan government to consider the excision of the Sinhalese parliamentary electorate of Ampara from the Batticaloa district of the eastern province so that the Tamil ethnic component there would reach a level of parity with the other ethnic groups. The LTTE, however, rejected the formula as wholly unacceptable. Nor was the Muslim minority who formed over 40 percent of the population willing to accept it.

The proposals agreed to in September 1986 formed the basis of negotiations between President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi when they met in Bangalore at the summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) on 17 and 18 November. Indian officials were generally unhappy at letting Rajiv Gandhi get involved in the minutiae of the negotiation process with the much more experienced Sri Lankan president whose grasp of the principles and details were much greater than his. They had succeeded up to this point in keeping the negotiations under their control, but now they could only watch, apprehensively, as the two heads of government began and continued the discussions on their own. These heads of government negotiations were accompanied and followed by discussions at a ministerial level.

Rajiv Gandhi and his advisors were also engaged in frenetic negotiations to persuade the rival Tamil separatist groups, and in particular the LTTE, to accept the proposals that had emerged from several years of quiet diplomacy as the basis of a workable framework of an honorable peace in Sri Lanka. Most of these groups were willing to accept these proposals or at least to give them a try. The LTTE alone refused to do so.

The Indian government showed its displeasure with the LTTE by imposing restri-

ctions on Sri Lankan Tamil activists operating from Indian territory. This was the first time that such restrictions had been imposed despite Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assurances to President Jayewardene in New Delhi in 1985 in that regard.

The progress made in the Bangalore discussions owed a great deal to the personal intervention of the two heads of government. They agreed on a tentative time-table for the signing of an accord by the two countries in January 1987. Chidambaram and Natwar Singh visited Colombo — their second visit — on 24 November for further discussion with President Jayewardene, an admission that the time-table for the signing of an accord had to be readjusted. The political future of the eastern province remained the most intractable problem. No headway was made, in regard to this, on this occasion as well. When President Jayewardene called a meeting of Muslim organizations on 11 December to discuss the future of the eastern province, their opposition to any merger of the two provinces, or an excision of the Amparai electorate, much less the Amparai district, was made abundantly clear. Chidambaram and Natwar Singh visited Colombo for the third time on 17 December for discussions with the Sri Lanka government. While agreement was possible on all other issues, this contentious problem defied settlement. Not a single group saw any positive advantage in it. Muslim MP's who met the leaders of the Indian delegation expressed their firm opposition to any changes in the boundaries of the eastern province or to linking it with the northern province.

There was no way out of this impasse. The Indian government sought to prevent Prabhakaran, then operating from Tamil Nadu, from leaving India for Jaffna. They succeeded in this until the beginning of 1987 when Prabhakaran and the LTTE ideologue Balasingham slipped across the Palk Straits to the Jaffna peninsula to continue their fight from there. As expected their return to the island marked the beginning of a more activist and violent phase in the ongoing conflict between the Tamil separatist groups and the Sri Lankan forces.

In early 1987 the LTTE was believed to be on the verge of making a unilateral declaration of independence in the north of the island. Treating this as a gravely provocative move, the government sent troop reinforcements into the eastern and northern provinces with instructions to clear these areas of the LTTE and other separatist groups. Contrary to expectations, the LTTE did not put up much of a fight. The LTTE's retreat was anything but orderly. They fled to the Jaffna peninsula.

The Indian government, apparently much perturbed by this turn of events, urged the Sri Lankan government to abandon these

military moves and to continue with a search for a political solution. In response to this, the Sri Lankan government offered a ceasefire for the duration of the national holidays in April. The LTTE spurned this offer and responded with the Good Friday bus massacre where 130 people were killed by machine-gun fire on the road from Trincomalee to Colombo, and their allies, the EROS group followed it up with a bomb explosion in Colombo's main bus station in which over a hundred people were killed.

Faced with the prospect of a serious erosion of political support as a result of these outages, the government decided to make an attempt to regain control of the Jaffna peninsula. "Operation Liberation," which began on 26 May 1987 in the Vadamarachchi division in the north-eastern part of the peninsula, was directed at preventing the hitherto easy movement of men and materiel from Tamil Nadu. By the end of May Sri Lankan forces had gained control of this area. The LTTE, the most formidable Tamil separatist group, had suffered a major setback and in a region they had dominated for a long time. It was this demonstration of the LTTE's failure as a fighting force that triggered off the chain of events that resulted eventually in Indian military intervention in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

At this point India moved swiftly to prevent the capture of Jaffna by the Sri Lankan forces. The first move came from Tamil Nadu with a well-publicized monetary grant of US\$3.2 million to the LTTE and its allies. The Indian government, for its part, announced that it was sending shipments of food and petroleum products to Jaffna, which, it claimed, was facing a severe shortage of these items through a blockade imposed by the Sri Lankan forces. Despite the refusal of the Sri Lankan government to accept this offer, or concede the need for it, a first shipment in a flotilla of about twenty Indian fishing-vessels was dispatched on 3 June 1987 but was turned back by the Sri Lankan navy. When this happened, the Indian air force in a blatant violation of international law and of the Sri Lankan airspace dropped food and medical supplies in Jaffna on the following day. All these actions constituted an unmistakable demonstration of Indian support for the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka. The Indian supply of food to Jaffna continued over the next few weeks by sea with the formal but clearly reluctant agreement of the Sri Lankan government. The result was that by the end of June, Indo-Sri Lankan relations were mired in mutual recrimination and deep suspicion. And the island's ethnic conflict seemed headed for prolonged and debilitating deadlock. However, the LTTE had been saved from humiliation by the intervention of India.

(To be Continued)

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The Indian Ocean Region: An Australian Perspective

Australia and the Indian Ocean Region

I am currently on an eleven day visit to eight countries around the Indian Ocean. I have just come from the Maldives; after leaving India, I will move on to Pakistan, then Sri Lanka, the Seychelles, Madagascar, South Africa and, finally, Mauritius. Several years ago there would not probably have been any apparent unifying rhyme or reason to such a visit. Such a visit would have been largely seen as simply a collection of bilateral calls on a number of friends who happen to live around the same ocean. There would not have been much to talk about with regard to expanding regional cooperation or, even more grandly, building a regional community.

Things are, as we all know, of course, changing. There are many people who live around the Indian Ocean now starting to speak with a good deal of conviction about the possibility of building meaningful regional cooperation. In the past year or so, many commentators, politicians and academic experts have begun to speak of Indian Ocean regionalism — once a preserve of lonely Indian Ocean regional affairs scholars — in a key that has never quite been heard before. Some have put forward schemes for such cooperation, including a triangle of linkages between our two countries and South Africa. In an important first step at the inter-governmental level two months ago, Mauritius hosted a meeting of a small group of officials from seven countries — Australia, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Oman, Singapore and South Africa — at which broad agreement was reached to pursue the whole question of regional economic cooperation. I am very enthusiastic about the possibilities, for reasons I will spell out in this address. One thing is clear from the outset however: it is now very conceivable to plan and undertake such a visit as a regional visit in its own right, and as a visit with an organising and unifying theme — that of looking at ways of building an indigenous Indian Ocean region-wide process of cooperation.

It is true that this area of the world, and of diplomacy, has not hitherto been the focus of Australia's international outlook,

which has been overwhelmingly focused to our north and east, rather than west and north-west across the Indian Ocean. It has been the Pacific Ocean and the regions associated with it — South-East Asia, North-East Asia, the South Pacific and North America — that have commanded our external attention. From one point of view this is hardly surprising, given the economic, political and strategic importance of these regions to Australia — and perhaps also the reality that the east coast is where Australia's population (and its foreign policy establishment) is concentrated. However, Australia does have real interests, actual and potential, in the Indian Ocean, and in South Asia particularly — and no less with India than, say, with China.

Address by Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans QC, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, India International Centre, New Delhi, 19 May 1995

One should not, of course, exaggerate the extent to which this region has in fact been neglected by Australia. We had extensive early contacts with the South Asian sub-continent through the Imperial link, and have had continuing links through our mutual passion for certain Imperial sports; we were influential, in the early years of post-colonial nationalism, in establishing the Colombo Plan, one of the first and most successful development assistance schemes; we were active as a mediator in the early stages of the Kashmir dispute, when Sir Owen Dixon, Chief Justice of our High Court, accepted appointment in 1950 as the United Nations representative for India and Pakistan; we have maintained a close interest in the concept of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace during the long (and so far fruitless) years of discussion under UN auspices on that topic; and we have maintained good personal relations with South Asian leaders — and a number of others elsewhere in the Indian Ocean islands and littoral — through the Commo-

nwealth, working very closely with India in particular during the long years of campaigning against apartheid. However, if trade statistics are any guide to the real intensity of relationships, the facts speak for their modest selves: in 1993 Australia's trade with India amounted to just \$ 1.3 billion — and with all South Asian countries together constituted just \$ 2 billion, or 1.6 per cent of our total trade.

Notwithstanding that, Australia is an Indian Ocean nation, with considerable strategic and commercial interests in the region. Our trade with Indian Ocean countries as a whole in 1994 constituted a more sizeable \$ 17.1 billion, or 18.4 per cent of our total trade. Our overall goal in discussing and advancing Indian Ocean regional policy is to ensure a stable and more prosperous cooperative regional environment which provides the maximum scope for economic development and trade, and where difficulties are resolved peacefully.

However, it has been difficult for Australia (or any other state in the region, for that matter) to bring any of its bilateral or sub-regional Indian Ocean relationships within a supportive regional institutional framework. Part of this comparative neglect of the concept of Indian Ocean regional policy and regional institution-building — on our part, no less than on that of others — is due to the fact that the Indian Ocean region is so diffuse. The once 'British lake' contains around it now a score or more of new states with little or no apparent natural contemporary cohesion. It contains, moreover, a variety of sub-regions. Its ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is extraordinary, as is its economic disparity, not least when one extends the region — as one should — to the Gulf littoral. It contains sovereign states ranging in size from India with over 900 million people, to Seychelles with fewer than 80,000 people. Economies range in size from over \$ US 250 billion for our two countries, to less than \$ US 400 million for the Maldives and Comoros. Income levels range from \$ US 15,000 per capita in Australia and the United Arab Emirates to less than \$ US 250 in Mozambique, Tanzania, Madagascar and Bangladesh.

There have also sometimes arisen, to be frank, sharp differences of view around the littoral on a range of international issues, including to do with global and regional peace and security. By and large, the various sub-regions around the littoral — Southern Africa, East Africa and the Horn, the Gulf littoral and the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia, the Indian Ocean portion of South East Asia and, of course, Australia — have looked to tend their own affairs in the Indian Ocean region.

Indian Ocean Regional Cooperation: A Brief History

Before coming to whatever modern dynamics there may be to support regional cooperation in such a diffuse region, we ought to remind ourselves that Indian Ocean regional cooperation has also quite ancient foundations. For at least 4,000 years, the Indian Ocean has been the scene of a thriving network of trade and people-to-people links which, for many centuries, gave it a distinct regional identity. The world's earliest urban civilisations in the Middle East, the Gulf littoral and South Asia were linked by sea-borne commerce. The rise of numerous empires acted as catalysts for the often rapid growth of trade and a complex network of maritime trade routes which linked the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean littoral and the western edge of the Pacific. Following this trade, peoples, ideas and beliefs spread throughout the Indian Ocean, leading to a cross-fertilisation of cultures. Indeed, before the arrival of Europeans in the late fifteenth century, the economic, political and cultural world of the Indian Ocean was largely self-sustained and inter-woven. The major stimuli for human movement and economic activity came from within the region, and South Asian and Middle Eastern merchant diasporas spread from Mozambique to southern China.

As we all know, increasing European economic penetration — spurred on by European commercial interest, which had changed by the eighteenth century from demand for relatively small quantities of the exotic (spices and peppers, for instance) to demand for large quantities of goods for mass consumption (particularly textiles and tea) — combined with the decline of indigenous military power and the rise of great power rivalry to make the Indian Ocean an arena for European co-

mpetition. This led to various European powers carving out territorial empires in the Indian Ocean region. Age-old sources for self-sustained economic activities were eroded as the region was integrated into the world economy, and Indian Ocean economies were restructured according to extra-regional economic dynamics, most often as peripheral suppliers of raw materials for the industrialised areas of the North. This tended to fragment any regionalism that might otherwise have existed during the colonial period.

After the Second World War, superpower rivalry was, for many decades, a persistent feature of the Indian Ocean strategic environment, and inhibited the evolution of cooperative regional arrangements, security-related and otherwise. The Indian Ocean was, in the Cold War years at least, conceived by everyone almost entirely in geo-strategic terms. This was because it lies at the strategic intersection of three continents; its underwater topography is ideally suited for locating submarine-based strategic nuclear systems (at least those in service from the 1960s to the early 1980s); the bulk of the Western world's proven oil resources were, and are still, located in recesses of its littoral; and its surface waterways carried, and still carry, the strategic raw materials and trade products of much of the industrialised world. For all these reasons, the Indian Ocean was accorded fundamental geo-strategic importance during the Cold War. Due to their respective locations, a particularly significant status devolved upon many of the islands and sometimes the territories within the region — for example Djibouti, Reunion, Socotra off Yemen, and, of course, the British Indian Ocean Territory: Diego Garcia has been particularly important since the 1970s to the United States' strategy in South-West Asia, in terms of equipment pre-positioning, logistics, transportation and communications.

During this time — prior to 1968 with the British presence "East of Suez", and subsequently with a growing US military presence aimed, initially at least, at offsetting Soviet ambitions in the region — Australia comfortably accepted the balance-of-power model of security in the Indian Ocean region, notwithstanding our support for a Zone of Peace in the mid 1970s and subsequently. Particularly

under Labor's predecessor conservative government, Australia tended to see in the Indian Ocean instability and threat. In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, then Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser sought to attract greater US security interest in our strategic circumstances in the region: as is well known, although the offer was not taken up, his Government offered Cockburn Sound in Western Australia as a homeport for United States naval vessels at a time when the United States was formulating its concept of a Rapid Deployment Force capable of intervention in the Indian Ocean littoral.

The Cold War environment created a stalemate with regard to creative thinking about regional cooperation. This condition is well illustrated by the protracted negotiations over the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace (IOZOP) proposal, which have been partly due to the difficulty in actually defining the Indian Ocean "zone", but more to the absence of any real consensus about basic objectives. The IOZOP proposal dates back to ideas originating in 1964 and to a conference of non-aligned states in Lusaka in 1970, which adopted at the urging of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) a declaration calling upon all states to exclude from the Zone "great power rivalries and competition". The Whitlam Labor Government took a positive view of the initiative, and ensured our presence in the forums established to consider it. Today, the UN Ad Hoc Committee, established in 1973 to consider the proposal, is no nearer its goal. While it has continued to meet, it has been stalemated by the withdrawal from its deliberations of all Western states except Australia (we remain a vice-chair), and by differences of substantive views (often concealed within procedural arguments) among regional states.

Other regional consultative processes which have emerged more recently are thin on the ground, and narrowly focused. There is no broad, inclusive grouping. The one regional consultative body embracing all of the major South Asian countries — the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) — does not have dialogue relationships with any outside countries, unlike the situation with dialogue partners in the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference, the Asia Pacific's most important political discussion body, out of

which has recently emerged the ASEAN Regional Forum. This does not make SAARC suited for carrying forward broader, Indian Ocean-wide agendas, although its critical importance in enhancing regional cohesion in and around the sub-continent is value enough. Perhaps developing dialogue relationships is something the countries of South Asia might wish to consider in future, particularly now that SAARC has gathered new momentum this year by acting to give substance and effect to its Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) by the end of 1995.

The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), formed in 1982 as a result of a conference in Mauritius with the general aim of fostering economic development through regional Cooperation, has a membership confined to the island entities of Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros and Reunion. Whatever its early hopes may have been, it has not broadened its reach and capacity to carry forward a region-wide agenda. The Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation Council (IOMAC) was initiated by Sri Lanka in 1985 and formally established in 1990 to provide a framework for dealing with marine resource, science and environment issues: six countries are now formal members (Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Mozambique, Kenya, Indonesia, and Mauritius), but IOMAC has been slow to gather momentum, and it is not yet clear that it is an idea whose time has come.

The Basis for New Forms of Regional Cooperation in the Indian Ocean

So the tradition of formalised regional cooperation is rather modest. There have been a number of recent changes, however, both in the region and externally, that may make the development of an Indian Ocean regional dialogue more of a prospect now than it has been in the past. The emergence of the global economy and the global market-place means that the Indian Ocean region will not return to some kind of ancient economic self-sufficiency and internal cohesion. However, the economic revival and dynamism apparent in some regional economies (conspicuously correlated with the spread of market economic forces) and manifest potential for growth in intra-regional trade and commercial interaction — coupled with the removal of Cold War-inspired

influences upon the region — is encouraging an emergence of interest in regional cooperation.

Three developments are particularly significant. First, the ending of the Cold War and attendant superpower rivalry has clearly removed a significant obstacle to intra-regional cooperation. Secondly, since 1991 India has embarked on an impressive program of reform and opening of its economy to outside participation. And thirdly, South Africa has been welcomed back into the international community as a democratic state and a potentially important regional player. Certainly the sense of community among

the Indian Ocean littoral and island states is still weak when compared, for example, to the economic and other ties that draw the countries of the Asia Pacific together, and the continuing difficulty of developing a dialogue on economic, security or any other issues in the Indian Ocean region should not therefore be underestimated. Nevertheless, the prospects are now better than at any time since the end of World War II for developing, in a low-key way, Indian Ocean cooperation, and it would be appropriate for inhabitants of the region to now start exploring more actively what might be possible in this respect.

(To be continued)

LETTER

J. R.'s Challenge

J. R. has challenged President Kumartunga to contest him in "an island-wide election" on the acceptability of her interview with *"India Today"*. An election, as every school child knows, is to an office or seat in some public body. What J. R. is really seeking is an opinion poll and he does not need to challenge the president, he can hold one himself. However, having regard to the manner in which he conducted the famous referendum there will be the question of how much credence an opinion poll conducted by him would receive.

Replying the president's reported characterisation of him as "the dirtiest of politicians" J. R. has said: "If I am the dirtiest of politicians how did I win many nation-wide elections? The U.N.P. under my leadership did not lose a single island-wide election".

This statement cannot be left unanswered. There is a clear and simple reason why the U.N.P. under J. R. did not lose a single island-wide election: **J. R. did not hold a single parliamentary general election in the eleven years and more he was in power.**

You cannot lose elections that do not take place.

J. R. won the 1982 presidential election having first taken the precaution of depriving his most charismatic rival, Mrs. B. of her civic rights. He also immobilised her

ablest political adviser, Felix Dias, by depriving him, too, of his civic rights. To make assurance doubly sure, emergency laws were passed making it an offence for persons deprived of their civic rights from so much as **supporting** any candidate at the presidential polls. Winning the presidential election in this way can be compared to beating Muhammed Ali in the boxing ring having first shackled him hand and foot and blindfolded and gagged him. It was not a performance to be proud of.

As for the referendum, which, too, J. R. won, it was according to the Commissioner of Elections, characterised by mass impersonations and thuggery. Guns were brandished in polling booths by U. N. P. politicians and presiding officers threatened.

J. R. held both the presidential election and the referendum under emergency law in contrast to the 1977 general election which was under the normal law. Mrs. B. lifted the emergency long before the election.

If someone were seeking to substantiate the statement president is reported to have made about J. R. he could scarcely have done better than to cite these two deplorable "victories" which he won. One is bemused to find them cited by J. R. in his own cause!

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Sri Lankan Farmers Vs. Structural Adjustment

Kalinga Seneviratne

Australian journalist Kalinga Seneviratne writes from Sri Lanka's rice farming heartland in Galgamuwa on how Sri Lankan farmers are mobilising to challenge the IMF's structural adjustment policies.

The election of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her Peoples Alliance (PA) government has injected a new lease of life into this rice farming heartland of Sri Lanka. Although farmers here openly express disappointment at the lack of action by the six-month old government to help solve their problems, their anger is increasingly being directed at the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This area encompasses the ancient Sinhalese kingdoms of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, during which period Sri Lanka with its advanced hydraulic irrigation system was known as the 'Grainery of the East'. Today, the farmers here are fighting a do or die battle to make a living off the land. Thanks to the 'Green Revolution' and more recently the IMF's structural adjustment programme (SAP), the rice farmers here are coming under increasing pressure to give up rice farming and transfer to cash cropping like gherkins, peanuts and tobacco for the export market. But, farmers are now questioning the advice given to them by local agricultural officers and their foreign advisers, and are beginning to turn to the traditional farming of their ancestors in a bid to survive.

'The agricultural policies forced on the government by the IMF and the World Bank have brought farmers to a stage where they hate farming' says Piyasiri Bulumulla, director of the non-government National Development Foundation's (NDF) district development programme here. 'They are being taught that rice farming is not profitable today in Sri Lanka, because, they can't take the type of harvest they used to take from one acre of

land. So government officials and advisers tell them to grow other crops which could be exported and thus be more profitable'.

Bulumulla argues that rice farming is not profitable here because the government has systematically withdrawn assistance traditionally given to farmers and points out that thousands of acres of land which were earmarked for rice cultivation under the Mahaveli development programme has now been turned over to foreign transnational companies (TNCs) to grow gherkins for export. Even some rice fields have been converted to gherkin plantations.

It is not the lack of water that is the main problem for farmers in the area, but the increasing cost of farm inputs like fertiliser, seeds and pesticides. 'The prices for these are always going up and in addition, people who used to have bulls to work in the farms don't have them anymore. They have been taught to use tractors, the hiring costs of which increase from season to season' Bulumulla explains, adding that a major reason for farmers' disillusionment has been the withdrawal of government assistance in marketing their produce.

In 1993, 11 farmers in nearby Polonnaruwa committed suicide because they could not pay back their debts after selling their harvest. This was a reflection of the previous United National Party (UNP) government's ruthless suppression of any dissent to their IMF inspired agricultural policies. Over the last few years many farmers have been arrested and some have disappeared or have been murdered.

Thus it is now left to the poor farmers to fend for themselves. In Maliyadevapura, a remote farming hamlet about 20 kilometres from Galgamuwa, the local Janadhaya (peoples awakening) group has set up a collection centre in the village to collect the produce and take it to the town for sale. 'What we did here was that we collected all the produce of the local farmers and gave them a receipt showing that we collected so many kilos of rice or chillies or whatever. Then we took it to

town and sold in the open market and gave money to the farmer' explained M.G. Wijeratne, a member of the group. Their example of how to save the farmer from the middleman has encouraged other farmers in the area to form associations. 'There's already 9 such groups and very soon it will grow to 25 or 30' predicts Wijeratne.

However, Sarath Wickremaratne, Programme Officer of the Sri Lankan arm of Community Aid Abroad (CAA — an Australian NGO grassroot development aid agency — doesn't believe that the rural farmer could succeed in the long run without government assistance. 'However much the farmers mobilise to store their produce and fetch a better price later, the question arises at some stage as to where to sell it. Without government intervention I can't see a solution to the farmers problems. This I think is the reality in the Third World' he says.

Meanwhile the NDF and the CAA have also opened up another front in the mobilisation of the rice farmers. They are introducing them to organic farming techniques. While Wickremaratne admits that getting farmers to take up organic farming is like rehabilitating a drug addict, they have nevertheless met with some remarkable success judging by farmers' response to a pilot training scheme introduced by them recently.

G.K. Upawansa, founder of the Eco Conservation Organisation (ECO) and the holder of a postgraduate degree in agriculture, conducts a three day and one week training programmes for farmers, at his model organic farm in Nawalapitiya in the central hill country. 'What we have learned for generations, we want to apply it back in the field' he explains.

During the last two years, assisted by CAA funding, Upawansa has trained over a thousand people. 'We train from farmers right up to professors' he says, adding 'The number of professors who visit our farm has improved... for instance, the head of a training institute once said, that he still, can't understand why they are teaching what is being done in other countries'.

Kalinga Seneviratne is a Sri Lankan-born Australian journalist, broadcaster and media researcher. He writes for the Inter-Press Service (IPS) news agency and teaches Development Journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Malkanthi Puthiranage, a university trained Plant Quarantine Officer with the Department of Agriculture, is now a convert to organic farming. She spends her weekends and other holidays with the ECO, training farmers in organic plant protection techniques. 'We have found over 35 natural pesticides in this area and in any forest area in Sri Lanka, at least 4 or 5 of these grow naturally' she says.

Since farmers have been used to chemical fertilisers and pesticides, Puthiranage says that it is difficult to turn them around straight away. Also, you have to be careful that once they start to use organic farming methods, their harvests are not reduced. 'If that happens, the farmers may not accept organic farming,' she warns.

The farmers of Kellesiyabalawa, another rural hamlet nearby are taking up organic farming in a big scale after taking part in the pilot training project. 'One of the reasons for taking up organic farming was the costs of chemical fertiliser and also the devastation of the soil' said D.M. Karunaratne, the President of the local Janodhaya group. 'We have been introduced to what is called modern methods but these are really underdeveloped methods. Now we find that the methods used by our ancestors were more advanced'.

'After we have learned about how our ancestors farmed the land, what they used for farming, now we think that what we have been made to believe is a myth' added fellow Janodhaya member A.G. Jayatileka. 'We use chemical fertiliser and pesticides and poison the soil. If we don't go back to our ancestors' methods we will ourselves end up in the soil soon'.

Jayatileka pointed out that last year, farmers in the area had to abandon acres and acres of chillie plantations because no pesticide could kill the pests. 'The reason is too much pesticides' he says, adding that every time a new pest appears, they find a new pesticide for it in the market. Observing that the chemical companies introduces a new product even before the pest arrives he says: 'We are beginning to suspect a conspiracy now'.

Jayatileka and his fellow farmers are now convinced that the Green Revolution technologies and the Mahaveli development scheme have only helped to destroy the self-reliant economic system

their ancestors have built up. 'Not only economic, there's been no social development either' observed Karunaratne, 'but one thing is certain, the traders here have developed. At the end of every season we see them buying 10 to 12 trucks. That's the money we should have got'.

Talking to farm groups in the area, it is clear that many of them have begun to realise that for their longterm survival they need to make themselves less dependent on chemical inputs. The transnational corporations (TNCs) which sell these to the farmers have got a good network of local agents and they advertise heavily on rural radio and even on national television. The field officers of the agriculture department have become de-facto agents of these companies as well. But the increasingly politicised farmers are now tying their cows in their own gardens at night to collect the cowdung for fertiliser. They are growing more of the compost producing trees which they used to cut and burn before.

In the first budget of the PA government in February the fertiliser subsidy was reduced. When asked how this will affect their livelihood, local farmer Wijeratne who is a recent convert to organic farming said: 'They can raise the fertiliser price further.

There's no problem at all. Now we have realised that we have enough fertiliser of our own on our land.'

'To hear farmers say this is a big victory for us' says Wickremaratne, who argues that the main reason for this is that farmers can no longer afford the chemical inputs and they are looking for alternatives. 'Really this is not a new direction, its really going back to their traditional practices'.

'We have more or less shaken the country within two years' claims Upawana and predicts, 'in another two years time, it is the agriculture we promote that will be adopted in Sri Lanka'.

Wickremaratne agrees that there's now a whole popular movement of peoples associations working towards the goals of collective action in the rural farming sector. But, if the PA government is not able to deliver on their election promises — which would mean challenging some of the IMF policies — Wickremaratne is worried that this mobilisation may turn into a violent agitation against the government, as that which occurred with the JVP uprising in the South in the 1988-89 period, resulting in over 60,000 deaths.

— T. W. N. Features

Clowns Cantos — 12 Munich

*One thing to be said for Chamberlain
Is, he didn't mount his brolly
Munichwards
During the Battle of Britain.
If actually his Class and his folly
Brought him to commit that act
At this point and not that
All the Grace of Canterbury
Couldn't have stopped History
Putting him in the oft repeated Tale
Of the Simpleton, the Maniac, and the
elusive Grail*

U. Karunatilake

Politician — Heal Thyself !

Dayalal Abeysekera

We would like to propose that the MPs take at least two of these seven days to visit on site the more important development initiatives and have dialogue with the people who are either affected or benefitted by such initiatives. Once again, as wide a coverage over mass media should be given to such dialogue with a view to encouraging the questioning spirit and reinforcing the very essence of civic society. These nine-monthly provincial sessions of the NP should seriously think of having a mobile national secretariat running concurrently where all ministries/departments are represented and the people of that province could get their matters attended to.

Provincial Peoples' Commissions

It is also proposed that a continuously sitting commission be constituted in each province of professionals of high calibre who will represent the people's will and voice. Each recognized political party having at least one RP within the provincial council will be eligible to nominate a maximum of four commissioners who will be drawn for their proven expertise in different fields of activities as well as for their record of public service. Some effort should be made to ensure that there is an ethno-linguistic balance between the commissioners nominated and the populations served by them. The commission must have the capacity to function, trilingually in each province. The commissioners will have a dual role to perform. The people will be entitled to bring up their grievances of both an individual and social/communal nature which will be presented by the commission to both the bureaucracy as well as the political machinery which will demand attention within a specified period. The second, and perhaps the more important role of these commissioners is to function as a pro-poor think cum action tank. The reservoir of grievances of the people could function as potential stimuli for delving in-depth into the sources of these community-based grievances and they will be expected to formulate practicable solutions to eliminate them. Through their closer links with the political parties, these proposed solutions should necessarily find its way into subsequent development agenda.

A special duty that will be performed by these commissioners will be a nine monthly critical review of the full gamut of development initiatives undertaken within the province. This will be presented over all possible mass-media as a development dialogue and forum and will be timed to occur one week before the NP will conduct their nine-monthly sessions in a particular province. This could provide valuable base material for the MPs to press for action and redress at the highest levels of power.

Locating Ministries Provincially

Yet another heretical proposal we would make is in terms of locating the ministries. Until now, all Ministries in independent Sri Lanka have been situated in and around Colombo. Personally, this writer does not see why the ministries should not be dispersed through out the nine provinces. After all, these institutions are meant to serve the people and people do live in all nine provinces of the Island. (Why should it be that the residents of Jaffna, Matara or Monaragala have always to come to Colombo to get their matters attended while the resident of Colombo is always spared of this long journey from home?) With the NP in a continual state of mobility, and each minister having to nurse his particular electorate (just like any other RP), it is vital that in addition to performing his/her ministerial duties, s/he be given a reasonable chance to work in his/her electorate as well. Thus, we propose that the ministries falling under the purview of any minister be situated in that province from which s/he hails. Likewise, the entire bureaucracy associated with each ministry will have to be resident within that particular province. I do not see much of a problem in this since all (most?) public servants are in a transferable state. This will at least push the power elite of the country to be mindful of differential development situations in these provinces and bring in the necessary political and bureaucratic will to bear upon pressure points of action. When these elite begin to experience on a firsthand basis the pot-holed roads, lack of teachers, buildings, equipment in schools for their children, scarcity of medicines, doctors and paramedical personnel in provincial/rural hospitals, lack of teleco-

munication facilities, pipe-borne water, inadequate sanitation facilities etc., the provinces are bound to reap a bountiful harvest of improvement in these areas due to the direct intervention of these elite on a personal basis.

National Panel of Professional Expertise

Another commonly heard lament directed at the current state of political affairs in the country is the relative non-utilization of vast reservoirs of human resource potential available within the country. More specifically, why aren't the professional expertise available within the country harnessed to conceive, formulate, plan and implement pro-poor development initiatives in a people and environment friendly manner? Similar to what we proposed at the provincial level, we propose the establishment of a bank of such professional expertise at the national level as well who will function on call, as and when one's area of expertise is called into focus. The proposal is that each political party with at least two RPs in provincial councils nominate a professional of high calibre with a proven near-impeccable public service record for each of the ministerial subjects dealt by the cabinet. For instance, if a particular ministry is irrigation, power and highways, then, there should be three professionals selected by each of the qualifying political parties for each of the subject areas. These professionals can be nominated from within the public service, the corporate or private sector, the judiciary, foreign service, armed services or from those currently enjoying retirement. If they are currently in some situation of employment, such a person's employer will release the professional concerned to the nation on a full-time basis (no pay leave) with no prejudice to the individual concerned for the entire duration of a particular assignment. During the period of assignment, the state will provide a good honorarium to the professionals. If any political party would like to oppose the nomination of a particular candidate on bona fide grounds, they should file a case in an appropriate court of law and seek adjudication on the matter. It will be obligatory on the part of the courts to deliver judgement on the matter within one month of filing the case.

Thus, if a particular issue is on irrigation, for example, and there are seven political parties qualifying to nominate professionals in a particular parliament, there will be seven experts looking into the issue from as many angles as possible. If a particular issue demands expertise from several disciplines, the need of the nation is to be fulfilled. The cabinet will set the terms of reference and a reasonable time period for undertaking investigations into the issue. At the penultimate stage of deliberations, the panel of professionals will be called upon to present their recommendations and a debate should ensue among the professional vis-a-vis their points of disagreement over as many of the mass media. The final recommendations should look into the reconciliation of points of divergence and dissenting notes to any aspects of the final report are to be encouraged if consensus is impossible to achieve. The professional nominated by the party in power will function as the chairperson and should strive to obtain a consensus on any point of disagreement. When this appears impractical, s/he should formulate the optimal consensus and request the dissenters to provide appropriate notes to be appended to the final report. The NP is expected to give serious recognition to these recommendations and the points of dissent and provide legal stature to these in the best interest of the nation.

Continuity of Supportive Role Played by Pradeshia Sabhas in the Devolutionary Process

What of the Pradeshia Sabhas? We feel that in the general thrust towards ushering self determination for the habitat (*gramarajyaya*), the Pradeshia Sabhas (PSs) will have a definite role to perform as it could further the devolution process of decision making and implementation. However, the PSs should further strengthen the mobilization process of different ethno-linguistic and religious groupings as well as that of economic interest groupings. Provincial council electorates should not overlap across PSs and the RPs within the geographic area of a PS should coalesce to work in cooperation with each other to tackle the common problems in the area. A PS seat should also not overlap across a provincial council electorate and we propose that there be 5 PS seats within a provincial council electorate, with approximately 3,000-4,000 voters to each seat. The RP and 5 PS members will be expected to function as the political core of change agents within the electorate and should strive their utmost to bury the petty party differences among themselves and work

towards the general betterment of their constituents.

Definite mechanisms for the allocation of funds to the PSs should be worked out in respect of worked out development plans. The same residence, age and gender criteria we have proposed earlier should prevail in respect of granting nominations to contest PS seats. The elections to the PSs should be timed to occur after 2 years from the date of elections of the provincial councils and scheduled to take place after the nearest recall option has been exercised. Since the tenure of both the provincial councils and that of the PSs are four years, the timing of PS elections thus could be viewed as a kind of national referendum on the two years' performance of the party in power. This could provide valuable inputs for a concerned government to effect midcourse corrections.

Of Perks etc.

Perks for the representatives should be at the very minimum and at all times be determined on the functional necessity of each proposal. In respect of transport, for instance, we would be unable to recommend more than a motor cycle for a PS member, a pick-up for a RP and a Pajero be considered only in the case of an MP. The member of a PS has to serve a restricted constituency of no more than 4,000 people and an RP, no more than 20,000 voters. The latter's official travelling is mostly restricted to within the electorate and on a monthly basis to the provincial council. It is the 50 MPs and the PM who will have to travel island-wide at least on a monthly basis and hence, 51 4-wheel drive pajeros. Interest-free loans should be provided to each of these representatives to purchase one's vehicle of eligibility at duty-free price levels and installments deducted monthly on their pay sheets so that by the end of each one's tenure of four years, they would have paid back at least 75 percent of the c.i.f. value of the vehicle. The balance could be paid outright or else paid in 12 equal monthly installments whereupon the true ownership will be transferred to the person concerned. If any representative ceases to become one due to the recall option being exercised by the people, the vehicle will automatically revert back to the government stores and the representative paid back the monies deducted against the vehicle on his pay sheet. An adequate fuel and vehicle maintenance allowance should also be provided. Sale of such vehicles purchased under this scheme will not be possible until true ownership is obtained.

The bureaucracy too will be provided appropriate vehicles under a similar scheme. Vehicle eligibility will be pre-determined according to functional necessity and responsibility attached to the position held and an interest-free loan provided which will be fully deducted on the pay sheet within a maximum period of 8 years. Departments should possess an adequate pool of appropriate vehicles which will be mobilized on the necessity of the terrain that needs to be covered on an individual visitation basis.

Chances of Success for Adoption of 'Heretical' Proposals

What are the realistic chances of these heretical proposals being adopted? If we are to take stock of the power wielded by the elite whether they be of the political, bureaucratic, mercantilist, religious or of any other dimension of valid social status, the unequivocal answer would be that these proposals are doomed to a still birth. One can hardly find a social interest group commandeering power of any social significance committing altruistic suicide on the altar of social justice. But hope springs eternal in the human breast. The faintest of that glimmer of hope lies in the fact that though standing as the most unorganized sub-sector of society, the large majority of the people whose basic human rights are ridden rough shod over are the most lethal force in history that has precipitated changes of dramatic and significant stature. Undoubtedly these upheavals have been few and far between. The question in our mind is whether at least a few 'enlightened' elite will perform a historic role and give leadership to this social cleansing which is, to say the least, overdue. While most of us talk glibly of empowerment in the economic realm, we live in a blatantly repressive environment when we scrutinise our political institutions, especially in terms of the functional operationalization of these processes. With politics assuming the role of the most critical instrument of individual and societal liberation within the context of the developing world, the rhetoric that most of us indulge in the day-to-day gesticulations assume cynically pathetic proportions of self-deception. The cardinal question is if we have among any of our elite, a hard core of self-analytical dynamism which is capable of standing up in the open and challenge all and sundry to judge them for their performance rather than hide behind the veneer of what they have inherited. Proponents of many a heretical thought have also been incurable optimists. Perhaps this writer is no exception to the rule.

It is the basic contention of this writer that the violence that has conspicuously escalated during the course of the last three decades is a joint function of the growth in aspirations on the one hand coupled with the growth in the non-realizability of same. These two potentially non-reconcilable processes give rise to a perception of denial of what is legitimately due. Within a developmental context where no magic wands are available to be waved and utterances of abracadabra are incapable of unleashing the genie of mass prosperity, a more promising option to prevent a holocaustic catastrophe of an explosive kind is to bring in as many of those who feel hamstrung by the 'denial syndrome' within a sincere embrace of participatory social justice. There just might be a fighting chance of success for an equally potent perception of conscientious participation to overcome the destructive forces of fission unleashed by a devastating perception of denial. It is this optimism that we would like to belabour in the interests of a smoother transition

of our society which appears to be almost at a point of no return.

The solution to the current impasse which has been highlighted as the 'ethnic problem' does not, in our opinion, lie in a political package of devolution for the Northeast alone. It must be a package which is eminently applicable across length and breadth of this Island, especially meaningful to the vast majority of people who are politically marginalized and without access to potent sources of patronage. The ultimate goal of this pro-people mode of representation package should be to facilitate the means for every individual within society to have an equitable stake in defining one's desired social reality and to make available realistic modus operandi for achieving same. It is the denial of this basic human right to the large majority of people which has made an absolute mockery of the democracy as practiced within Sri Lanka (and many other developing nations which boast of a democratic tradition). The operant

system is basically an oligarchic stranglehold on power by a microscopic minority of elite which is dressed up as a 5-star democracy through the exercise of universal suffrage at regular intervals. That suffrage loses its potent as soon as it is exercised is conveniently lost sight of.

These heretical proposals made by us is a first step towards transferring power back to the people. It is also attempting to recreate the representative of the people in the role of an ascetic who has renounced one's cravings for worldly aggrandizement and derives one's satisfaction through deliverance of one's people to their promised land, a far cry from what it is as practiced today. In fact, what we are trying to say is, 'Politicians! heal thy body politic! Establish rules and regulations to restrain your excesses and build up a system of rewards and punishments that are regulated by your masters, the people.'

(Concluded)

SRI LANKAN CONFLICT (5)

Balance of Power

Humayun Kabir

Forging relations with the countries of Asia was another strand of Sri Lanka's foreign policy. After the British withdrawal of military bases from Sri Lanka, Bandaranaike's government accorded a high priority to a regional balance of power strategy. He genuinely attempted for an enlarged Colombo Powers organization, to be established in Colombo, to jointly voice their common concerns.⁵⁵ Having received scant response from the potential members of the proposed political organization, Bandaranaike repeatedly called in 1958 and 1959 even for regional economic conferences⁵⁶ to be called to deliberate on various regional economic problems, and devise means to overcome them to the mutual benefit of all concerned. Although these attempts were not crowned with success, the essence remains that he made efforts to redress the balance against India through seeking a regional counterpoise.

As part of its regional balance of power strategy Sri Lanka also attempted to forge close relationships with India's rivals, such as Pakistan and China. In the context of Sino-Indian power rivalry in Asia, China appeared to Sri Lanka as a natural counterbalance to India. Under Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike Sino-Lanka rela-

tions became more extensive, cordial and purpose-oriented.

An apprehensiveness of potential danger from India continued to condition the foreign and security policy of Mrs Bandaranaike's government. Felix Bandaranaike, Parliamentary Secretary to Mrs Bandaranaike, stated in Parliament that Sri Lanka's security did not "depend merely upon goodwill towards and friendliness towards India and an assumption that we will never get into difficulties with India..."⁵⁷ Writings and pronouncements of Nehru, Panikkar, Appadorai and other Indian leaders and opinion makers continued to be quoted in the Sri Lankan Parliament,⁵⁸ as these still contributed to Sri Lankan leaders' threat perceptions. So, from a strategic point of view, China's importance to Sri Lanka continued to be considerable. Sri Lanka further developed its trade relations with China involving rice and rubber, the island's two major import and export commodities respectively.⁵⁹

In the light of the above views and compulsions, Mrs Bandaranaike offered her good offices to seek an end to the Sino-Indian border war that broke out in October 1962 and refused to brand China as the aggressor. Instead, she took the

initiative in summoning the Colombo conference of six non-aligned nations with a view to exploring ways and means of bringing India and China to the conference table and settling the boundary dispute. The proposals which emerged from this conference, together with their clarifications, were personally explained in Peking by Mrs Bandaranaike and Subandrio of Indonesia in January 1963, and in New Delhi by her and representatives of Egypt and Ghana the same month.⁶⁰ India accepted the proposals in toto, while China did so with reservations.⁶¹ Although no concrete achievement resulted from these proposals, Mrs Bandaranaike's initiative displayed her skill in avoiding giving offence to India while not condemning China as the aggressor.

Sri Lanka's relations with China were consolidated with the signing of a Maritime Agreement on 25 July 1963 between the two countries, granting each other the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status. But Mrs Bandaranaike's government did not accede to the request of the Chinese counterpart that Sri Lanka should use only ships approved by China for Sino-Lankan trade.⁶² What follows from the above is that Sri Lanka's policy of building a counterpoise against India is not to be at the

expense of the island's national interests, and that the counter-balancing strategy should not be made too obvious to jeopardise Colombo's friendship with New Delhi. This is the essence of the pilot fish policy.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka had common threat perceptions as far as India was concerned. Sri Lanka looked upon Pakistan, a country which had the will if not always the means to challenge India's predominance, as a countervailing force against India. That explains why during the Bangladesh crisis in 1971 Sri Lanka was not so sympathetic to the cause of Bangladesh; the island-nation was opposed to an eventuality of Pakistan being dismembered. Following India's ban on Pakistan's overflight of its civilian aircraft, which transported Pakistani troops in civilian disguise from Karachi to Dhaka, Sri Lanka granted air transit facilities through Colombo to Pakistan's commercial aircraft. Such Sri Lankan posturing indeed offended Indian susceptibilities. Under such changed regional circumstances, Sino-Lanka relations acquired a more prominent role in Colombo's strategic calculus. Relations between the two countries during Mrs Bandaranaike's United Front government (1970-77), therefore, became closer than ever before, notwithstanding China's suspected complicity in the 1971 Guevarist insurrection of the JVP in Sri Lanka.⁶³

Nonalignment as Security Strategy

The nonaligned foreign policy of Sri Lanka has been another major plank of her security strategy since 1956. Although Bandaranaike's nonaligned foreign policy was not always to the liking of the West, it was generally intended to ensure security for the small island state by keeping itself aloof from both power blocs. With respect to India, Sri Lanka's nonalignment also served as a diplomatic instrument which was used to avoid provoking its northern neighbour. At the same time, this policy was intended to be pursued as a security insurance, as the island's membership in the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) was conceived as a broad security umbrella. This security dimension of Sri Lanka's membership in the NAM was highlighted by Mrs Bandaranaike herself in the NAM summit at Lusaka in 1970.⁶⁴

Demilitarisation and Peace in the Indian Ocean as a Guarantee of Sri Lanka's Security

Due to its strategic location Sri Lanka has always been aware of dangers to its independence and security that may emanate from the Indian Ocean area. All the colonial invasions since the early 16th century by the then major European sea powers, such as Portugal, the Nether-

lands and Great Britain, came from the Indian Ocean. In addition to extra-regional powers, India, with its strategic aspirations in the Indian Ocean region, has also been a major source of concern to Sri Lanka. The British military presence on the island in the 1950s acted as a deterrent to both these perceived sources of threat. The superpower presence in the Indian Ocean since the 1960s had considerably heightened the tension in the area. Since then demilitarising the Indian Ocean and guaranteeing peace in the area has been a major foreign and security policy objective of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's Indian Ocean policy has, therefore, been, on the one hand, to remove foreign military presence from the area, particularly its nuclear component, and to ensure, on the other, that the resultant 'power vacuum' was not filled by a regional power. While the first part of this policy objective has been conveniently shared by India, the second part went against its own Indian Ocean policy, symbolising a gap in security perceptions between India and Sri Lanka.

In October 1971 the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Mrs Bandaranaike, appeared before the UN General Assembly to present the IOPZ proposal. Here she laid down for the first time what the peace zone would mean in detail.⁶⁵ When the proposal was being considered in the UN First Committee there arose differences between the positions of Sri Lanka and India. Sri Lanka's proposal was fairly comprehensive as it related as much to the naval forces of the littoral states as to the forces of the outside powers. But India was against the military presence of external powers only. Following behind-the-scene pressures from India,⁶⁶ Shirley Amerasinghe, Sri Lanka's permanent representative to the UN, accordingly had to modify his proposal "...in deference to the restrictions expressed by our critics."⁶⁷ On 16 December 1971, the General Assembly passed the resolution on the proposal of the IOZOP.⁶⁸ In the course of deliberations on this issue, India's intentions in the Indian Ocean area became crystal clear so Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, therefore, eventually grew lukewarm to the implementation of its own brainchild — the IOZOP proposal. This inhibition of Sri Lanka vis-à-vis India, combined with the fact of India's emergence as more powerful as a result of the break-up of Pakistan in 1971 and the creation of Bangladesh, contributed to Colombo's softening of its attitude towards the West, particularly the USA.

Sri Lanka's fear of India became stronger when the latter went nuclear on 18 May 1974 with a successful detonation of a nuclear device at Pokhran in the Rajasthan desert. The emergence of a nuclear power from among the Indian Ocean littoral states had radically changed the strate-

gic landscape in the Indian Ocean. Consequently, the context of the IOZOP proposal also changed after 1974, and Sri Lanka formally changed her position regarding the IOZOP vis-à-vis that of India. For example, Shirley Amerasinghe stated in the First Committee that: "We do not want any great power there. By the same token, we do not intend that we should drive out Satan by Beelzebub and allow some other powers within the group of littoral and hinterland states to take the place of the superpowers."⁶⁹ He had also stated on 11 November 1974 that "if a new nuclear power were to emerge in the Indian Ocean region, the denuclearisation and also the demilitarisation of the area would be seriously jeopardised."⁷⁰ Because of her concerns about India's Indian Ocean policy, Sri Lanka gave her support to Pakistan's proposal in 1974 for a nuclear free zone in South Asia, and with the further mellowing of her attitude towards the West she permitted more US ships at Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's Indian Ocean policy is, therefore, concerned not only with the outside powers but also with the ambition and power of India.

(To be Continued)

Notes

55. Morning News, Colombo, 13 November 1956; Times of Ceylon, 14 November 1956; The Statesman, New Delhi, 15 November 1956.
56. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike: Speeches and Writings, Information Division, Department of Broadcasting and Information, Government of Ceylon, Colombo, 1961, pp. 419, 412, 456.
57. Ceylon: H.R. Debates, Vol. 53, 29 August 1963, Col. 1012.
58. De Souza, Ceylon: Senate Debates, Vol. 19, 23 January 1964, Col. 2373; Siriwardene, *ibid.*, Vol. 19, 21 January 1964, Cols. 2110-13.
59. See for details, F.R.D. Bandaranaike, Ceylon: H.R. Debates, Vol. 49, 7 November 1962, Col. 2112.
60. For interesting details of the mediation process see Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Anchor Books, London, 1972, pp. 459-65.
61. The Hindu, Madras, 30 January 1963 and Ceylon Daily News, Colombo, 16 March 1963.
62. Ceylon Daily News, Colombo, 20 May 1964.
63. Mrs Bandaranaike was quick to dismiss the allegation of any Chinese complicity by stating in a broadcast to the nation that foreign powers were not involved in the insurrection. Ceylon Daily News, Colombo, 25 April 1971; Ceylon: Senate Debates, 1972, Vol. 32, Col. 823.
64. See Press Release by the Information Ministry of Ceylon on the Lusaka Address of Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, September 1970, p.2.
65. Ceylon Today, Vol. 20, September, October 1971, pp. 13-14; Ceylon Daily News, 13 October 1971.
66. Philip Towle, *Naval Power in the Indian Ocean: Threats, Bluffs and Fantasies*, The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, p.
67. UN First Committee, 1834 Meeting, 23 November 1971.
68. Official Records of the General Assembly (GAOR), 26th Session, Supplement 29, Resolution 2632 XXVI, 16 December 1971, pp. 36-37.
69. UN General Assembly, Doc A/C. PV. 2096, November 1976, p. 36.
70. UN Doc. A/C PV. 2015, p. 12.

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