

• How the L.G. monitored the crisis '83—'87 •

— *Dayan Jayatilleka*

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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## **ACCORD AND AFTER**

**Can official pact  
bring a  
people's peace ?**

— *Mervyn de Silva*



- \* **Rajiv as actor, director, producer** — *Natwar Singh*
- \* **G.P. — the profile of a mediator** — *Neelan Tiruchelvam*
- \* **The Sangha and secularism** — *C. A. Chandraprema*

**Premadasa — protecting the UNP's flank**  
**J.R.'s ace — dissolving Parliament ?**  
**Sirima — a message from the 'HINDU'**

**Telecommunications: the case against privatisation**

— *Upali Jayasekera*

**Also:** A joint appeal:  
India's regional concerns **and**  
Reagan's Rambos





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## U. S. RESOLUTION

Rarely do the two Houses of the US Congress meet to pass a joint resolution that calls upon its government to participate in a multilateral effort supporting "rehabilitation and reconstruction" in a Third World country. The US Congress has just done that in the case of Sri Lanka. The resolution which requests President Reagan to commend President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Gandhi follows a statement by Congressman Stephen Solarz, a prominent Democrat and Chairman of the Asia and Pacific Affairs committee that he would support the nomination of the two leaders for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The report says:

"The resources would be given particularly in those areas most seriously affected by the long-standing ethnic conflict a press release from USIS said.

The release also said that it urges the President of the United States to convey to President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Gandhi the congratulations and best wishes of the American people as these leaders proceed to implement the accord, and usher in a new era of harmony and mutual respect between the Tamil and Sinhalese populations in Sri Lanka."

## FARWELL TO ARMS

While groups other than the LTTE, the strongest, and EROS, EPRLF, TELO and PLOTE, have started to surrender arms (the last 'Three Stars' is described as a bitter foe of the 'Tigers'), a parallel process has begun in the South. In keeping with the Accord, as many as 10,000 'Home Guards' have done so in all

parts of the island, the police say. The 'Home Guards' have also been disbanded as a militia. Tamil spokesmen had always described them as the most undisciplined of the para-military and militias which came into being since 1983.

## DAMAGE FACTOR

Throughout the undeclared war which has now ended, official sources and Tamil sources disputed furiously the extent of the damage in the North and East. Tamil citizens committees, and expatriate groups claimed the damage was extensive and official spokesmen replied that these were 'highly exaggerated'. Now, some idea of the terrible costs of war to ordinary families can be founded on an assessment that can hardly be challenged. Mr. Roulle de Mel, speaking to Colombo representatives of non-Aid giving countries (i.e. those who are not members of the World Bank sponsored Consortium), asked for help to rebuild 75,000 small houses in the North and East. The owners not only lost their homes and became refugees, but cannot afford to rebuild them on their own. Meaning, they are the poor.

TRENDS  
+  
LETTERS

## JAFFNA RE-VISITED

On the 13th August 1987 by 4 p.m. we reached Jaffna. From Colombo to Killinochchi we travelled by train. From Killinochchi we journeyed to Jaffna in a C.T.B. bus. There were no check points either by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces or by the militants. Before the accord was signed between Vavuniya and Jaffna there were more than 10 check points upto Elephant Pass manned by the Sri Lanka Security Forces. At each check point people had to get down and walk. After Elephant Pass militants used to check all vehicles very often. Anyway checking has stopped by both sides.

To me it was re-visiting Jaffna after five months. When I left Jaffna in April 1987 it was a battle zone. The militants and the Sri Lankan forces were engaged in fighting and shelling. And there was strafing by helicopters at random. Planes used to bomb militant camps.

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# Can a fragile peace be converted to a "people's peace"?

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

The U.N.P. lost the war. Can it win the peace? The day that censorship is lifted, the U.N.P. will be entitled to claim that the answer is "Yes". Henry Kissinger, the brightest if not the best, of American intellectuals who had a chance to exercise power, used to sneer at the Soviet Union's "peace offensive". Since its birth in 1917, the Soviet Union was presented to the world as the "Red Devil", the source of all evil.

When the Western alliance, with all its economic and military power, discovered it could not defeat or de-stabilise the Soviet Union, it took up the weapon of propaganda, its mightiest weapon. Though the military balance was changing, the West still retains dominance over the global communications system.

It was Winston Churchill the fiercest and most formidable of old imperialist bulldozers who coined the phrase the "Iron Curtain". Roll back the curtain was the new war cry. The message was that the Soviet Union was the most aggressive state in the world, determined to unleash war and impose 'communism' everywhere.

The UNP government can learn the art of propagandising and popularising peace from Mr. Gorbachev. Like it or not, large sections of the Nonaligned community, and considerable segments of western opinion including important governments and influential western leaders, believe that it is the Soviet Union that wants peace, not the U.S., or more accurately not the Reagan Administration. The American people desire peace. It is Mr. Gorbachev who is winning the 'Peace Offensive'.

The U.N.P. learnt the A.B.C. of foreign policy the hard way. It cost the U.N.P., and Sri Lanka, dearly. Will history repeat itself?

U.N.P. propaganda is still trying to convert the converted, mostly its own ranks! The UNP hard-liners still regard the Left as its ideological challenger, and therefore 'main enemy'. It is a monstrous irony because the UNP also believes, and in this at least, correctly, that the old Left is a spent force, and the 'new' Left confined to the lunatic fringe. The UNP does not seem to realise that the main anti-peace force is the 'Hard' Right or what Left ideologists call the 'racist Right' or and others more politely the chauvinist Right.

In the present situation, this is an even more dangerous error than its monumental mistakes over foreign policy and geopolitics. In any country or society in the world, a peace that is imposed is a fragile peace. It is certainly so, in a highly politicised society with an exceptionally high level of literacy. We boast about the fact that Ceylon was introduced to universal suffrage even before women in some European countries did not have the right to vote. We parade our unusually high levels of education, 'free education'. Yet, sad to say, we do not draw the obvious conclusion from it. These are thinking people. They have to be convinced. They have to be convinced by argument. There lies the advantage and disadvantage. If your arguments are strong enough, it is an asset.

The next question then is the presentation of your arguments — propaganda in the best sense

of the word. But how to propagate peace?

The hard-core of chauvinist opinion is the middle class, perhaps more hardly the lower-middle class. This is an influential stratum of Sri Lanka society, and yet only a stratum. What of the masses?

The new, progressive "Developmental" school coined the term "basic needs strategy" — a development policy and program that served the basic needs of the people. In socialist vocabulary, there is the broader phrase 'the basic needs of the basic masses'. In a word, "grassroots", a term to which every seminar on every conceivable subject, pays ritual homage.

Prominent UNP'ers like Lands Minister Gamini Disanayake and Finance Minister de Mel show that they are at least aware of their 'target audience'. But what of the others in the government and the UNP's supportive cohorts. Their thinking still remains elitist, and their message still tries to convert the converted.

If this is a real peace, a peace that is worth protecting and preserving in a perilously fluid situation, and opinion climate, then this 'peace' must win over the 'basic masses'. And that can be done only if the people are convinced that this peace promotes their real material interests; that their daily life is going to be easier, if not wonderfully better. The challenge before the government, and it is a tremendous challenge fraught with danger not only to the regime but to the social fabric of the South and political 'stability', is how effective

(Continued on page 4)



# Premier Premadasa — rearguard action?

Let's re-phrase the question. The L. O. of course must take the blame for starting the game. And the names of the game were Bandaranaike and Aquino, Sirima and Cory. Can Sirima do a Cory? "Never" interrupted one of our regular readers and vigilant media-watcher, Prof. Carlo Fonseka.

And now, Can R. P. do a S.W.R.D., meaning of course can Prime Minister Premadasa do what S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike did in 1952?

Certainly the main parliamentary opposition and the anti-Accord forces from the newly recognised E. L. J. P. of Rukman Senanayake (a little bud of Senanayakist UNP dissidence) to the J.V.P. constituency must hope that he can and will. S.W.R.D., Leader of the House, quit the U.N.P. along with his half a dozen supporters, and formed the S.J.F.P. It won a few seats in 1952. It swept to power in 1956, in a loose alliance called the M.P. The M.P., as any social historian or political scientist knows, represented an emergent bloc, in fact, it was self-styled the authentic voice of a new 'balavegaya' (force or social force). The five forces, like Soekarno's 'new emerging forces' on the world scene, were the workers, peasants, teachers, monks, and ayurvedic physicians. Broadly termed radical nationalist, the nationalism was the new power bloc's cutting edge, its real spokesmen were the monk, the Sinhala school teacher and the ayurvedic doctor. But behind them were the Sinhala mudalalis and the petty trader. At that time the Marxists styled the event as the assertive advent of the national bourgeoisie (as against the comprador) while popular political commentators preferred to call it a 'cultural revolution'. Revivalism would have been a more exact description — a post-colonial development arriving belatedly in the cultural sphere. The Marxist, given to 'class ana-

lysis' accentuates or over-states the economic interests which propelled the new movement.

But S.W.R.D. was the leader of his party, the Sinhala Maha Sabha, and a faction of the newly formed U.N.P.

Mr. Premadasa has been associated with the Labour party of A. E. Gnanasingha, but he has been a solid UNP'er from the start, working his way up by sheer energy, and full-time dedication to party politics. First real internal issue in which he was involved was the post Dudley succession. Would the conservative UNP, dominated by the westernised elite in Colombo, with its caste and other prejudices, deny him the rewards of his dynamic contribution? He won that battle easily. Recognition of his No. 2 position was the inevitable result of his party work.

His persistent and bold criticism of the Indian role in the Sri Lankan conflict and his obvious reservations on the Accord negotiated in his absence, has drawn a huge question mark after his name, and therefore about his decisions in the near future.

But if you examine his speeches carefully — much of it is an analysis of the constitutional structure, post-1978 — it is obvious that he is trying to cover the UNP exposed flank, a flank now openly attacked by Mrs. B. In short, the UNP's failure to consult the people over an issue which the Sinhala electorate thinks touches on Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity, and on the question of franchise enshrined in the constitution. His recent speeches, especially in Parliament and to the Colombo Party caucus, may be interpreted by the Opposition as a frontal assault on the Accord, and taken by fellow UNP'ers as an embarrassing exposure of basic differences in the UNP hierarchy. In fact, is cautious, carefully crafted dissentient view. The basic and the only immediately significant

issue is whether he is anti- or pro-Accord once President J.R. and the Cabinet decides to place the consequential draft laws in Parliament.

What is likely is that the UNP will close ranks from now on. It is already happening. The MP's have made up their minds to stay aboard the party ship, to use President J.R.'s metaphor, rather than jump ship and reach for life belts — which may not be there.

S.W.R.D. had a special problem. He had a shrewd suspicion that the Senanayake dominated UNP and Colombo's power-brokers had convinced the governor general that his son and heir was the legitimate successor to D. S.

M. de S.

## Can the peace...

(Continued from page 3)

tively and speedily, it can convert the peace which the UNP says it has won, to a "peoples' peace"

What is the basic issue? It is devolution. It is so abundantly clear that even 'Devolution', much less 'federalism' is regarded and presented to the people as 'Rata Bedonaya' — dismemberment. If "Devolution" is the issue then the ranks must be divided in that manner — "pro-Devolution" and "anti-Devolution". But the spokesmen for 'Devolution' cannot be drawn from the same social group, which "thinks" for the U.N.P.

By definition, devolution means power or more power, and more right to participation, by the people. Why is there no participation then by groups who are closer to the Sinhalese masses than Colombo's liberal-radicals, who are in fact part of the UNP constituency, and probably vote for the UNP?



## Release detained youth – SLFP

The S.L.F.P. has asked the government to release the the Sinhalese and Muslim youths and Buddhist monks who have been detained under emergency and other special laws and show them 'the same consideration' that has been extended to Tamil youths under an amnesty which is part of the 'peace accord'. The Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners has also issued a statement saying that all prisoners under the PTA should be freed since the PTA has been 'an instrument for the suppression of political dissent that denied to the victims the safeguards of the normal law. CROPP describes the 'Peace Accord' as a positive step towards resolving the ethnic conflict in this country. The statement was issued by the Joint secretaries, Mr. Dushyanta Samarasinghe and Mr. Redley Silva.

### C.R.O.P.P.

Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners (CROPP) notes the accord that has been entered into

between the governments of Sri Lanka and India as a positive step towards resolving the ethnic conflict in this country.

CROPP has consistently campaigned for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and the release of the all political prisoners held under it on the basis that it was an instrument for the suppression of political dissent that denied to its victims the safeguards of normal law.

CROPP is therefore happy that the accord promises a general amnesty to political and other prisoners now held in custody under the PTA and other emergency regulations, whether such persons are in detention or have been charged and/or convicted. CROPP hopes that the government will make no attempt to circumscribe in any way the principle of a general amnesty and that it will apply to all persons held under these pernicious laws.

The government originally justified the PTA as a temporary

strategem for meeting with the problem of Tamil militancy. CROPP now calls upon the government to repeal the PTA and withdraw the Emergency Regulations forthwith.

### S.L.F.P.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party calls upon the Government to extend to the Sinhala and Muslim youths and the Buddhist Monks now detained by the Government on anonymous petitions and information given by Government politicians under emergency regulations and other special laws, the same considerations it has shown to the Tamil separatist youths some of whom have been tried and convicted of offences against the state who are now released from detention by Government and amnesties extended to them.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party therefore calls upon the Government also to release the Sinhala and Muslim youths from detention forthwith.

## SLFP asks for full inquiry

The SLFP has asked for a 'full, exhaustive and impartial investigation' into the grenade attack in Parliament on Aug. 18. It wants the investigation to leave 'no stone unturned'. The SLFP urges that the legal directions be entrusted to the Attorney General, the government's chief legal adviser.

The present investigation is in the hands of the D.I.G. (CID) Mr. Frank Silva. Special assistance has been given by 2 senior Scotland Yard officials, sent to Colombo by the British government on President Jayewardene's request, and by former D.I.G.

(C.I.D.) Mr. Tyrrell Goonetilleke and Dr. H. W. Jayewardene PC, as legal adviser.

The statement reads:

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party calls upon the Government to carry out a full exhaustive and impartial investigation into all the circumstances leading to, and persons directly or indirectly involved in the incident on 18th August, 1987, within the precincts of Parliament where lethal explosives are thrown into the Committee Room when the Government Parliamentary Group met, killing two persons and seriously and grievously injuring several

others including Ministers and Government Members of Parliament.

The SLFP is further of the view that the legal directions of this investigation should be conducted by the Attorney General's Department which is the chief legal adviser to the Government.

The SLFP as a Party committed to Parliamentary Government is of the view that the security of Parliament is a matter of public concern and interest, and therefore this investigation should leave no stone unturned to find out the culprits and deal with them according to law.



# LET US UNITE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

**W**e, the undersigned, belong to different religions, races, political parties and institutions in Sri Lanka. However, we are acting in our capacity as individuals and not as official representatives.

Let us all face realistically the situation we are in. There is a tragic conflict in our country. The spirit of hatred and cruelty is increasing. People are dying. Property is being destroyed. Morals are disintegrating. There may be temporary gains from time to time on either side. But there is no end of the conflict in sight. The situation is aggravated by international complications. There is a prospect of unending misery. Many people are desperate and say that nothing can be done to stop it.

In such a difficult and complex situation, we need to come together and pool our resources — the best in our religious, cultural, social and political resources, which are so rich and varied — and find a way of stopping the slaughter.

Let us be determined that none — whether as individuals or parties — should seek political or any other gain — over or against others — in resolving this conflict. Let the victory belong to the people as a whole especially those on both sides who have suffered and made sacrifices.

Let us come together to save Sri Lanka and her peoples from ruin. Let us get together to work out a settlement. Let us all be prepared to acknowledge the rights of one another, even at cost to ourselves, for the common good.

So, we can stop the violence and proceed with re-building Sri Lanka. We can develop the life and institutions of our peoples, which is such an urgent task, considering the serious daily problems the common

people face. In this work, different parties will have the right to pursue and struggle for different political and economic goals, according to their convictions. But, in arriving at a settlement of the conflict, we will have learnt to respect and accept one another as persons, however different our ideas may be. This is necessary for the preservation of law and order and for ensuring democratic processes so essential for social and economic progress of any kind.

With regard to the way towards a settlement of the present conflict, we suggest the acceptance by all parties to the conflict of the democratic principles of devolution of power to the people, which will enable all sections of the people of Sri Lanka to safeguard their own rights and participate in their own development, while safeguarding and building the unity of the country as a whole. There are some draft proposals for this process which have been worked out from 30th August 1985 to 19th December 1986 through negotiation between the Sri Lankan and Indian Governments. These, in turn have evolved out of much previous negotiation in which many parties and groups have participated. There are, no doubt, those on both sides of the conflict who find certain features of the proposals unsatisfactory and difficult to accept. Therefore, there will have to be certain modifications in a spirit of give and take on both sides. Bearing this in mind we urge all parties to the conflict to come to the conference table to negotiate a just settlement.

Some of us, as an informal group representing the signatories, intend to personally approach the Government and the opposition parties and groups and urge them to work towards a consensus. We then hope it will be possible to visit Jaffna

and East to approach groups and parties there, including the militant groups and urge them to work towards a consensus. Arrangements will also have to be made to arrange a mutually accepted ceasefire and an effective ceasefire monitoring body. We hope all this will help to bring the contending parties and groups to the conference table to achieve a reasonable settlement acceptable to all.

Finally, we appeal to all those in authority as well as to all the peoples of this country to make a supreme effort, in this grave hour of crisis, to come together with unflinching determination and hope to bring peace and thus enable creative progress in Sri Lanka.

1. Ven Batapola Anandadasa Thero, Mahanayake, Sri Kalyaniwan Maha Nikaya.
2. Ven Udalumada Gunarātana Thero, Chief Sangha Nayake, Northern and Eastern Provinces, President, Movement for National Harmony.
3. Ven Pallatara Sumanajothi Thero, Chief Sangha Nayake, Southern Province.
4. Ven Saddhammacharya Theripala Dhammananda Thero, President, Kandy District Bhikshu Organisation, Gurudeniya.
5. Ven Wellawatte Gnanabhaya Thero, Viharadhipathi, Suwasiripaya, Colombo 6.
6. Ven Kaviragamawwa Revatha Thero, Viharadhipathi, Sri Siddhartharamaya, Gampaya, Moraditha, Kurunegala District.
7. Ven Uduwara Saddhananda Thero, President, Vimukha Dharma Kendra.
8. Ven Ampitiya Dharmadiri Thero, President, Central Province Peace Committee.
9. Ven Silyambelagawwa Winimalara Thero, President, Wannu Peace Foundation, Vavuniya.
10. Ven Badagiriya Madhananda Thero, Janatha Bhikshu Sammelanaya.
11. Ven Puwakpitiya Ananda Thero, Secretary, Janatha Bhikshu Sammelanaya.
12. Ven Karmacharya Reddagada Saranankara Thero, Korossa Raja Maha Viharaya, Dodangaslanda.
13. Ven Buddhigayama Chandraratna Thero, Secretary, Bhikshu Peace Foundation, Kahandawa Viharaya, Ranna, Hambantota.
14. Ven Batapola Nanda Thero, Janatha Bhikshu Sammelanaya, Subagaramaya, Batapola.



15. Ven. Karanba Gunananda Thero, Janatha, Bhikkhu Sammelanaya.
16. Rt. Revd Vianney Fernando, Bishop of Kandy.
17. Rt. Revd Jabez Gnanapragasam, Bishop of Colombo.
18. Revd Fr Paul Caspersz, S.J., Sacrydaya, Kandy.
19. Revd Fr Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I., Centre of Society and Religion.
20. Revd S.K. Perera, Principal, Theological College of Lanka, Piliyatallawa.
21. Revd Yohan Dissanayake, Director, Lay Institute, Theological College of Lanka, Piliyatallawa.
22. Revd Kenneth Fernando, Director, Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, Colombo.
23. Revd Canon John Isaac, Christ Church, Kandy.
24. Revd Sr Winifreda, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.
25. Shelton Ranaraja, Senkadagala M.P., Deputy Minister of Justice, United National Party.
26. A.R. Mansoor, Kalmunai M.P., District Minister, United National Party.
27. D.E.W. Gunasekera, Kalawana M.P., Communist Party of Sri Lanka.
28. Vijaya Kumaranatunga, Sri Lanka Mahajana Party.
29. Professor Carlo Fonseka, Medical Faculty, Colombo University, Lanka Sama Samaja Party.
30. Abdul Aziz, President, Democratic workers Congress.
31. Jayaratne Mahipala, Lanka General Services Union, Kandy.
32. M.M. Abdul Cader, Retired Judge of the Supreme Court.
33. V. Manikavasagar, Retired Judge of the Supreme Court.
34. Dr. A.M.M. Sahibdeen, former Civil Servant, Colombo.
35. Underwood Manivasagan, Vice-President, Citizens Committee for National Harmony.
36. Professor Ediriweera Saratchandra, Professor Emeritus, Peradeniya University.
37. Professor Ashley Halpe, Department of English, Peradeniya University.
38. Professor Gananath Obeyesekere, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University, U.S.A.
39. Dr. Ms. Kumari Jayawardana, former Associate Professor of Political Science, Colombo University.
40. Dr. Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo.
41. Ms. Monica Ruwanpethirana, Poet, Coordinator, Women's Activities, Asian Cultural Forum on Development, Colombo.
42. Ms. E.M. Bandaramenike, President, Progressive Women's Front.
43. H.A.I. Gonetilleke, former Librarian, Peradeniya University.
44. Reggie Siriwardene, Writer and Critic, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo.
45. Vasantha Obaysekere, Film Director.
46. Geminip Hachintuwegama, Director, Open Street Drama Group, Morana.
47. J. Younos, Cartoonist, Adirha.
48. Kulliyapitthe Sri Prasada, Secretary, Vimukthi Dharma Khanda.
49. Dr. W.M.S. Ratnapriya, General Secretary, B.M.O.A.
50. Sarath Fernando, Moderator, Development Centre, Ibbagamuwa.
51. Charles Abeysekera, President, Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE).
52. S. Balakrishnan, Lanka Social Institute, Kandy.
53. Kularatne Wickramasinghe, President, All Lanka Peasants Congress, Polonnaruwa.
54. Sri Dharmapriya Jayakodi, Vice-President, All Lanka Peasants Congress, Minuwangoda.
55. D.W. Appuhamy, General Secretary, All Lanka Peasants Congress, Secretary, Movement for National Harmony, Kantakki.
56. Patrick Fernando, Organising Secretary, All Lanka Peasants Congress, Kurunegala.
57. Nimal Senanayake, Attorney-at-Law, President's Counsel.
58. Nimal G. Panchikewala, Attorney-at-Law, President, Local Government Service Union.
59. Ainsley Senarathna, Attorney-at-Law.
60. S.G. Panchikewala, Attorney-at-Law, Associate Secretary, Movement for Defence of Democratic Rights.
61. Dr. Frank Jayasinghe, Principal, Wycharly International School, Colombo.
62. Johan Pedera, Harvard University, U.S.A.

#### N.B.

The signatures represent a cross-section of people in the South of Sri Lanka, from where the document emerged. They do not include signatures from the North and East.

The statement was signed before the Peace Accord of 29th July 1987. So it cannot be said that the signatories necessarily approve of the Peace Accord. The Statement, which was about to be released

before the Peace Accord, is being released now because of its continuing relevance to the present situation (refer Postscript following).

#### POSTSCRIPT 30th JULY 1987

The above Statement was signed before the recent announcement and subsequent signing of a Peace Accord between the Governments of Sri Lanka and India, which goes beyond the proposals of 30th August 1985 to 19th December 1986.

Despite this sudden turn of events the thrust of the Statement would still be relevant for the following reasons. The need for people of all religions, communities and political parties in Sri Lanka to come together, without consideration of sectarian gain or political advantage, to achieve a just and durable peace settlement, is as urgent as ever. So also is the need for strengthening and further articulating and developing the negotiation process on such matters as the substance of devolution of power, especially with regard to the effectual balance of power between the centre and the provinces, the setting-up of an effective cease-fire monitoring body and working out realistic guarantees, both external and internal, for the implementation of the terms of the final settlement, in keeping with the sovereignty of Sri Lanka.

A small group from the above signatories visited Jaffna from 8th to 13th July, 1987, and discussed the above signed Statement with representatives of Jaffna Society, including the militants. Discussions were also held with concerned groups and other organisations and visits were made to a number of refugee camps and to areas affected by the devastation of war. The opportunity was also taken to visit and talk to the 12 Sinhala prisoners in the hands of the militants. It was altogether a time of deep and moving encounter and dialogue. Despite the overwhelmingly tragic climate of adversity, the resilience of the human spirit and courageous response of people

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# Rajiv monitors Sri Lanka situation

NEW DELHI Aug. 18

The Minister of State for External affairs, Mr. Natwar Singh, assured the Lok Sabha that there was no question of complacency on the part of the Government on the problems of the implementation of the Sri Lanka accord.

Winding up the special discussion on the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, Mr. Singh said that the whole thing was a 'delicate and sensitive exercise' given what had gone on in Sri Lanka in the last four years and the signing of the accord was a 'near miracle'. He told members who had spoken in the discussion that many of the doubts they had expressed had been taken note of by the Government as well. The Prime Minister was, therefore, monitoring the situation himself virtually on an hourly basis and a group under the Minister himself was meeting daily to assess the developing situation. He admitted that there were many imponderables and there was possibility that the 'unexpected could occur', but he observed, 'we have planned for contingencies and we will not be found wanting or unprepared' on this score.

**"It is P.M.'s show"**

Mr. Singh recalled that the Government had been 'pilloried' in the earlier debates for not having a clear cut Sri Lankan policy. 'We had all along taken the stand that we desired a political solution. The agreement signed on July 29 fulfilled that desire as also the aspirations of the minority Tamils. He disclosed that the Government had come close to a solution on December 19 and after that the Prime Minister had come up with this idea. He is the author, director, producer and conductor of this exercise,' he added.

Referring to the doubts raised on the issue of the referendum for the merger of the Eastern and Northern Provinces, the Minister remarked 'If it takes place well and good. If it doesn't then well and good'. The Northern and Eastern Provinces will then stay together. In any case he observed,

in the coming months some demographic change would take place and 'the ethnic composition being what it is in the area, there should be no problem over it (the referendum)'.

**Prabhakaran's role helpful**

At the outset, Mr. Singh rejected suggestion that the Tamil militants particularly the LTTE leader, Mr. Prabhakaran, had not been consulted. He said that the LTTE leader had met the Prime Minister as well as Indian officials before the accord was signed. Reviewing the situation on the ground, he said that he had scrutinised Mr. Prabhakaran's statements as well and it was clear that he did not oppose the accord. He said that the LTTE leader's role had been 'helpful and constructive'. He said that the security of the LTTE personnel as well as of the other groups would be ensured. He informed the House that the Indian Army was in Sri Lanka at the invitation of the Sri Lankan Government and was as such under the command of its President. He told members that there was no report of any friction between the two armies though there was some tension between the various militant groups.

He asserted that the Government was not 'euphoric' over the accord, but at the same time 'we should not minimise its achievement or its significance'. 'The removal of outside forces from the island was a good thing as was the fact that India was now committed to meet Sri Lanka's civil and military requirements. He reminded the members that the agreement was arrived at between two non-aligned countries and 'full marks' should be given to the courage and foresight of the two leaders who signed it. He clarified for the benefit of one member that the letters exchanged between the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, and the Sri Lankan President, Mr. Jayewardene, had the status similar to that of the agreement proper as they had been written

in their official capacity as the Prime Minister of India and the President of Sri Lanka. 'This is an open-ended agreement' he added.

Mr. Singh informed the members that the 1984 contract for the Trincomalee oil tank farm between the Sri Lankan Government and a Singapore/West German/Swiss consortium had lapsed in October 1985 and as such there was no problem with regard to the proposed Indo-Sri Lankan joint venture to run the tank farm.

**'Internal matter'**

The Minister asserted that the agreement had been holding so far though there were some difficulties in Sri Lanka but these were their internal matter. However he said that Mr. Jayewardene was doing his best to sort out the problem. He observed that opposition to the accord had eroded in the past six or seven days. There is a desire on all sides to see that the accord works', he added.

In conclusion, the Minister said that the accord was not a party issue but a national matter. The Government was fully alive to the problems inherent in such a sensitive issue. However, he declared, 'We have taken a risk. Nothing venture nothing have'. If an end had to be put to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, if the security environment around India had to be prevented from getting worse, if the refugees in India had to be sent back, if the prisoners in Sri Lanka had to be released and the trail of agony and strife terminated, then such an agreement had to be produced. The agreement he said 'meets the fundamental basic demands of the problem'.

UNI reports: Mr. Natwar Singh noted with happiness that out of the 19 members who participated in the discussion, 17 spoke in favour of the Agreement which showed that it had overwhelming support.

— *Hindu*



# 'Accord takes care of regional interests'

MADRAS, Aug. 18

The former Union Minister, Mr. C. Subramaniam, today expressed the hope that the Indo-Sri Lankan accord would be the beginning of greater co-operation among countries in the region and pointed out that for the first time an accord which took care of the interests in the region had been arrived at. He wanted similar agreements to be worked out between India and Pakistan, India and China, India and Nepal, etc.

Mr. Subramaniam, who presided over a meeting on "India-Sri Lanka Accord: making it work," organised by the Mylapore Academy, Madras, appealed to the Tamil militants not to have reservations about handing over all their arms. If all the arms were handed over, no country could escape the moral responsibility of safeguarding the Tamils' lives. He also wanted them to get together on a peace platform. He appealed to them to give up the demand for Tamil Eelam once and for all.

Dealing with the provision in the agreement on the repatriation of plantation Tamils, Mr. Subramaniam appealed to the Government of India to make available to the repatriates one of the islands in the Andamans, which they could develop into a prosperous colony. Besides, it was the duty of India to help restore the economy of Sri Lanka.

Referring to the attempts made on the life of the Sri Lanka President, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, and his Ministers today, he said the incident highlighted the complexities in the Sri Lankan ethnic issue. He paid warm tributes to THE HINDU for focussing attention on the ethnic crisis.

**No reservations:** The TULF Secretary-General, Mr. A. Amirthalingam, said the Tamils had no reservations on this agreement. There should be a spirit of give-and-take in any agreement and,

therefore, the Tamils had agreed to the compromise envisaged in the agreement and given it a chance to work. The agreement might not have conceded to the Tamils all their demands, but it had satisfied some of their aspirations and removed some of the apprehensions they had been harbouring for the past 30 years. He pointed out that the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 marked the beginning of the ethnic conflict. The present agreement, however, had made Tamil one of the official languages.

Mr. Amirthalingam said that for the first time since 1983, the Tamils in the Northern and Eastern provinces were breathing the air of freedom. They welcomed the agreement and the arrival of the Indian peacekeeping force. A proper law and order machinery under the control of the Tamil people was absolutely necessary if the accord were to work well, he said.

He appealed to the people of India to see to it that the accord succeeded because the future of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the future of peace in the region depended on the success of the agreement. The accord was "a great achievement on the part of Indian diplomacy" after India's independence, he said.

The attack on the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, in Colombo on July 30 and the attempt on the life of Mr. Jayewardene today exposed the forces that were up against the agreement. They should be countered if the accord were to survive and work, Mr. Amirthalingam added.

**Heavily committed:** Mr. N. Ram, Associate Editor, THE HINDU, said it was an excellent agreement and there was no question of allowing the agreement to fail since India was so heavily committed to it. It was not an agreement between two indivi-

duals, but an international agreement involving two countries. It had to be implemented in a many-sided way.

Mr. Ram pointed out that the peace had held so far and people had not lost their lives. Stage 1 of the agreement constituting the handing over of arms, was being completed. It would be completed if it could be ensured that the Sri Lankan army would not constitute a threat to the Tamils now or in the near future.

The accord had three major component parts: (a) it aims at demilitarising the ethnic conflict in a deep going way on both the sides through the cessation of hostilities and laying down of arms by the militants; (b) it envisages autonomy and unity proposals, which are yet to take shape on the ground; and (c) it addresses bilateral issues of wider nature such as the non-availability of Trincomalee to external forces that would threaten India's interests and removing India's concerns on the induction of foreign military personnel on the island. On the whole, it was a friendship agreement in a balanced and far-going way.

**Historic role:** Referring to the attempt on Mr. Jayewardene and his Cabinet Ministers, Mr. Ram said there was no question of allowing the agreement to fail, now that there were pressures and setbacks. He paid warm tributes to the political statesmanship of those involved in the policy-making exercises both at the Central and State Government level which ultimately led to the agreement. Mr. Jayewardene had performed a truly historic role and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi also had shown great moral courage in forging this accord.

Mr. Ram appealed to Mr. Amirthalingam and other Tamil organisations to give up the de-

(Continued on page 11)



## What Sirimavo must ponder

The implementation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, which has strong popular and political support in this country, has gone very well thus far — although, for obvious reasons, complacency would be misplaced. The peace has held over a very sensitive period, which has included some bumpy moments, against efforts by enemies of the peace plan literally to blow it up on the Sinhala side. It is a tribute to the moral and political courage, the tactical skills and the overall quality of leadership that the Sri Lankan President, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene — who has certainly been aided by an element of the fortuitous — has demonstrated at a historic juncture that the side which has been under the greatest pressure from the forces of chauvinism has been able to adhere firmly to a course that is a remarkably bold departure from the past. Regrettably, however, the line adopted by the main Opposition party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, (SLFP) led by the redoubtable Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, amounts to attempting to return to a political practice that belongs to a benighted history of handling the ethnic issues.

The former Prime Minister, who is spearheading her party's strategy to replace the UNP Government in the next election, has taken a stand that suggests adherence to "the traditional course of action that Sinhala political parties have been following, when in Opposition, of opposing everything the Government of the day proposes to solve the Tamil problem" (as the TULF leadership has pointed out, in a letter dated July 29, to Mrs. Bandaranaike). She is understood to have replied in detail to this appeal, from the moderate Tamil camp, to her political sobriety and sense of fair play and to have recorded the reasons for her stand against the Agreement, against the specific devolution proposals and against India's strong or decisive role in the solution being implemented. Mrs. Bandaranaike might take a position that sounds hard-core, strident and unrelenting from a Sri Lankan Tamil or an Indian standpoint, but she is a serious politician whose views and stand must be reckoned with.

For the purpose of current analysis, Mrs. Bandaranaike's stand on the basis of the political solution to the Tamil question can be differentiated from her position on bilateral relations with India. On the first question, her formal position is that she too wishes to do away with the negative legacies of the past and to build unity, ethnic amity and peace, but politically she targets the autonomy and unity proposals incorporated in the Rajiv-JR Agreement as a "sell-out" to the Tamils. Indeed, the SLFP leader resorts to the factually unsustainable claim that these proposals bringing together the North and the East amount virtually to creating a separate state of Eelam. This far-out element in her stance goes along with denying essentially that the Tamils have historical grievances which need to be addressed in a democratic and progressive way; indeed in Mrs. Bandaranaike's current world view, the Tamils constitute a privileged minority of a practically unique kind in the world. She chooses also not to see the central feature of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957 — abrogated in April 1958 unilaterally by the then government in the face of an aggressive challenge spearheaded by the then Opposition party, the UNP — which was the concession, in principle, to the Tamils of the proposition of linkage of the Northern and Eastern provinces. The former Prime Minister chooses to interpret the ethnic question as centring on "terrorism". On all these matters, the facts demonstrate that the SLFP's present position has no real strength. As for India coming into the picture in a decisive way, Mrs. Bandaranaike has used some harsh language in the recent period — "national surrender", "a betrayal of the vital interests of the country", "an undermining of Independence and sovereignty" and so forth — that one hopes will not become a permanent element in the SLFP's stance vis-a-vis bilateral relations with India, the nonaligned movement and regional relations. Given the aggressive and provocative nature of the opposition to the Indo-Sri Lankan peace plan, Mr. Jayewardene has shown exemplary

moderation and political sophistication in not putting all the adversaries into one kind of bracket. His criticism of Mrs. Bandaranaike's posture on the Agreement has made a careful distinction between her inability to see the dangers from Sinhala chauvinist extremism and terrorism and to adopt a democratically correct attitude and the tendencies of those who have resorted to vicious violence, in particular the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP). Recalling the traumatic experience of the 1971 Insurrectionary crisis, he made the point (in an interview to THE HINDU the day after the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement was signed) that those who believed in terrorist violence were "using this as an opportunity. They used it against Mrs. Bandaranaike earlier. I helped her then. She is not doing it now. . . . She should not do it now for political reasons". He has promised that "if this (Agreement) is implemented, there would be no opposition. I can't see any opposition. I can't see any opposition by Mrs. Bandaranaike or anybody in this country — except those who believe in violence." "India, like the Sri Lankan President, makes a distinction between Mrs. Bandaranaike's opposition to the Agreement which can be responded to through reasonable argument and persuasion and eventually minimised in a constructive way and the activity of chauvinist extremists, terrorists and the lunatic fringe on the Sinhala side, including a few Bhindranwale-style figures among the Buddhist clergy. India sets store by democratic values and the principle of equality and respect for national independence and sovereignty in South Asian and international relations. Mrs. Bandaranaike must rethink her stand on the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, on the autonomy and unity proposals which represent a substantive response to the Tamil demands but are a far cry from conceding Eelam, and on India's friendship role in this whole exercise which is a big response to what looked like an intractable problem in a small country.

**Hindu Editorial**  
(25/8/87)



## Letters . . .

(Continued from page 1)

In April one early morning I got into a bus leaving for Colombo. Heavy crossfire began between the soldiers at Jaffna Fort and the militants. I saw how the commuters who were at the Bus Stand running helter skelter and avoiding bullets.

This time when I reached Jaffna along with my friends it was entirely a different atmosphere. Life has returned to normal. Even the people who travelled along with us in the Bus to Jaffna seemed quite relaxed. After learning that I was a Sinhala speaking person from the South, one Tamil speaking commuter even volunteered to help us to reach our destination in Jaffna. I thanked him profusely and said I am very familiar with the Jaffna environment.

I went to the Bank of Ceylon Branch, Jaffna to meet a friend. My friend took us to the canteen and introduced us to some of his fellow employees. That day they were expecting a superior official (a Tamil speaking person) from Colombo who himself has not visited Jaffna after July 1983. This was the first occasion that one of their superiors was visiting Jaffna after 1983. So my friend at the Bank later told me that one of his fellow employees made a remark that "Every Tom, Dick and Harry comes to Jaffna now but there was no one when we were in difficulties." Then my friend defended us.

From the Bank we walked to the Jaffna Bus Stand. Whenever I came to the Jaffna town from Tirunelveli, a Tamil speaking friend accompanied me. Now with two other Sinhala speaking friends I was walking in Jaffna all alone without any help from a native of Jaffna. My memories went back to the pre-July 1983 Jaffna, when I used to roam its length and breadth freely.

We travelled to Tirunelveli in a C.T.B. bus. Even in that bus people seemed to be very relaxed and happy. For them at last peace has come. When I reached my friend's

home, they were very happy to see me after 5 months and they said that they were expecting me at any time. They related the harrowing experiences they had undergone in Jaffna soon after April. After the so-called Liberation Operation was launched by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces people of Jaffna and the suburbs were getting ready for an imminent onslaught. Fortunately peace has been restored.

**H. N. Fernando**  
General Secretary  
Ceylon Teachers Union

### "NO ALTERNATIVE BLUES"

With over two weeks having passed since the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, a lamentable tendency is emerging among the intelligentsia of ignoring the possible adverse consequences of the Accord, by merely taking up the attitude that there was no alternative but to go for the accord.

While it is now patently clear that the country had over the past six years or more run into a position where there seemed no alternative but to accept the Accord, this certainly does not mean that anyone in his anxiety to jump on the "Accord Bandwagon" should turn a blind eye to the negative aspects of the accord.

The Accord has been signed whether we like it or not. Peace too has been at least temporarily achieved. If for these reasons a mood of smug complacency is creeping in, it should be stopped and instead, it is the duty of the Sri Lankan political, business and academic intelligentsia to forcefully address themselves to the basic question of how this country in the long term is going to extricate itself from the corner it has got into in terms of possible economic subjugation and threats to our sovereignty, our unitary state and our Sri Lankan way of life.

**S. C. Ratwatte**

Colombo 7

## 'Accord takes. . .

(Continued from page 4)

mand for Tamil Eelam under the new situation and accept the proposals for unity and autonomy.

**Responsibilities:** Mr. Cho S. Ramaswamy, Editor, *Thuglak*, said the Indian Government had done the best it could do in arriving at the settlement under the present circumstances. Mr. Gandhi had acted wisely by making India one of the two signatories to the agreement and this had vested India with certain responsibilities. India should not be terrified of them. Even if the agreement were to fail, the attempt made in arriving at the accord should be congratulated, he added.

Mr. S. V. Narasimham, President of the Mylapore Academy, welcomed the gathering. Mr. N. C. Raghavachari, Chairman, proposed a vote of thanks.

— *Hindu*

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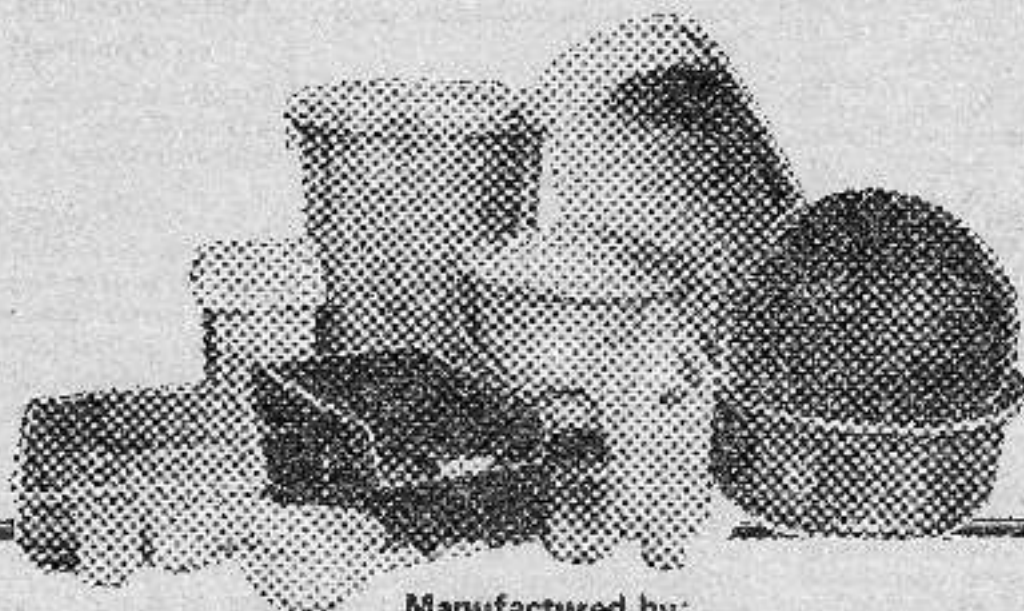




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# Reagan's Rambo 'Contras' on the run

FOREIGN  
NEWS

Fifty percent against the Reagan administration's policy toward Nicaragua, and about 25 percent in favor -- that has been roughly the public opinion scorecard for years. Now, after the emotional pleas of Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, there has been an evening out. It is probably a blip. But what if the surge in support for the Nicaraguan rebels holds?

The short answer is that sustained support would help President Reagan's policy in Congress and in Central America. But that is only a necessary and far from sufficient condition for his aim of toppling the Sandinist government. Indeed, the illusion that capturing Capitol Hill is tantamount to taking Nicaragua is perhaps the central fallacy in the case for the contras so glibly spun by Colonel North.

Despite his performance, a New York Times CBS News Poll found 51 percent of respondents still opposing aid to the contras, and 35 percent approving, right after hearing Colonel North. His partisans prefer to cite other surveys that show Americans almost evenly split. "The polls now suggest that the American people are waking up to the threat of a communist power grab in their own neighborhood," the president said. What polls cannot measure is the depth and stability of the new backing for the contras -- especially when, as the Times survey found, only 32 percent even now were able correctly to locate Nicaragua as part of Central or Latin America.

Mr. Reagan's inability to arouse real backing over Nicaragua is among his most striking failures as Great Communicator. Majorities have consistently opposed

aiding the contras, which explains and justifies the anxious ambivalence of Congress. "A large number of Americans see the Sandinistas as a very unfortunate government," notes Senator Richard Lugar, a key supporter of contra aid. "What hasn't jelled yet," he adds, "is any enthusiasm for the contras as the remedy."

This lack of approval has underscored the truth of Henry Kissinger's axiom, that domestic support is the acid test of a successful foreign policy in a democracy. Only in the short term will even a popular president get the benefit of doubt on risky ventures.

Suppose, however, that the missing support has finally turned up, then what? It could tilt a close vote in Congress to the contras, and give the rebels a propaganda boost. The Sandinists do care about American opinion as well, and they might think twice about tightening repressive screws. But otherwise, there is little reason for believing anything dramatic would happen.

Indeed, obsession with North American opinion has been the curse of the contra cause. Its leaders spend more time in Miami and parts north courting Americans than in the camps. This only bolsters the notion that the contras should most want to dispel -- that they are the creatures and creation of the United States.

Smuck in the middle of Colonel North's testimony, the contras proclaimed yet another great offensive, only to be swiftly beaten back, leaving a pile of civilian dead. By contrast, El Salvador's leftist rebels have for years ruled

at least a third of the country, despite battering attacks of a tough, U.S. armed and trained Salvadoran Army.

After six years, the contras have yet to capture a single village, and persist in killing the very civilians whose support is vital. That is what matters in Nicaragua, far more than Colonel North's sanitized version of the war, or polls showing the contras moving up on the charts, at least this week.

— *The New York Times*

## LET US . . .

(Continued from page 7)

to the challenges of the situation were remarkable. It was equally clear that there is a heartening readiness to work towards a viable political settlement in which the basic rights of all communities are secured, which would ensure progress towards justice and peace.

There is an obvious need for continuing dialogue, growth towards mutual understanding and corporate action for peace. It may be hoped that there will be increasing opportunity for exchange of visits of representative groups between the North and East and the rest of the country, which would facilitate this process. Those interested may contact the addresses given below, to which comments and criticisms may also be sent.

Revd Yohan Desamunda  
Theological College of Lanka  
Piliandala

Revd Karunika Gunawardana Thero  
Sri Nagan Rajanaha Viharaya  
Thimbayaw  
Mahagalla



# Indo-Lanka Accord : The beginning of secularization ?

C. A. Chandraprema

Last week the Cultural Affairs Minister decided to issue identity cards to monks, with the permission of the Maha Sangha.

An interesting situation has arisen in recent times vis a vis the role of the Maha Sangha in local politics. Buddhist clergy have since independence shown a great deal of militant intrusiveness with regard to the rights and aspirations of the Tamil minority to the extent where a Nayake Thero in a sortie with President Jayewardene recently declared that he would not take in any Tamil into the folds of the Buddha Sasana. (Thus effectively vitiating everything the Buddha Dharma teaches). When the late S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike signed a pact to accede a degree of self government to the Tamil minority with the late Tamil leader S. J. V. Chelvanayagam in 1956, Buddhist clergy stormed the Prime Minister's official residence 'Temple Trees' and refused to leave until Mr. Bandaranaike gave them an assurance that the pact would not be implemented.

## "Bikkhus" on the Rampage

Some weeks ago, nearly three decades after the BC Pact, we saw again the dismaying spectacle of saffron-robed monks taking to the streets against the granting of the rights of the Tamil people. In the recent mob violence and vandalism which proceeded and followed the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, they were seen to play a leading role. In certain places they were seen to incite and lead the mobs to acts of violence and vandalism.

Though large scale organised violence has now died down, we see that certain monks are far from inactive. Sophisticated weapons have been found in Temple premises and many monks have been arrested for attempts to incite violence. The latest police reports indicate that certain people are attempting to swell the ranks of the Maha Sangha by impersonating Bikkhus. One

commodity that has enjoyed boom conditions in the wake of the peace accord is saffron robes.

It would be interesting to see how the Buddhist laymen react in the long term to the present activities of certain members of the Buddhist clergy and the projected (probably short duration) influx of bogus ascetics into the Sasana. The I.G.P. has for his part requested that all Bikkhus carry their I.D.s so as to be able to identify imposters. Throughout our history, Buddhist clergy have played a prominent role in local politics as trusted and respected counsellors to both the ruled and the rulers. It was thought that they were capable of being impartial and objective in their approach because they were individuals who had embarked on the path of conquering greed, prejudice, ignorance and everything else which obscures the correct judgement of the average layman. Thus the Buddhist monk is closely bound up with our whole cultural ethos as a symbol of integrity. The enormous influence wielded by the Buddhist clergy among the common masses is due primarily to this image.

## Disenchanted Laity

The question we have to consider here is whether the recent trends would erode this privileged place the Bikkhu enjoys within our polity. Whatever the opinion laymen may have about the Indo-Lanka peace accord, the sight of Bikkhus openly inciting people and participating in acts of violence certainly will not appeal to the average Buddhist laymen's sense of propriety. Our cultural ethos has trained people to normally expect staid, level headed opinion or counsel and corresponding personal conduct from the Bikkhu. Photos of marauding monks seem to have put off the middle classes already. Accord-

ing to information received, some middle class Buddhist families in the suburbs of Colombo have refused to give "dana" (Alms) to some Temples.

If this disenchantment lasts and develops, within the middle class mentality, it won't be long before it filters down to the rural areas as well. The middle class is generally the pace setter for value systems in our overwhelmingly petit-bourgeois society. This would hasten process of "secularisation" that has already advanced to a considerable extent throughout the whole country. The current plans for the organised impersonation of Bikkhu for political purposes reflects the cynical attitude towards what was at one time regarded as sacrosanct.

To dress up as a Bikkhu was quite common as a disguise. But the fraudulent use of the saffron robe as a mass scale political tactic is a new development. In the short term, projected political objective may be achieved. But in the long term, the cynicism reflected in such an act will have a snowballing effect as the esteem for the Bikkhu gets eroded. Since Independence, no political leader has been able to either come into power or retain it without the explicit or implicit support of the Maha Sangha. The sight of a saffron robe on a political stage was at one time a symbol of acceptability. Even professing secularists made certain that a Bikkhu would be seen sitting on the same stage at political rallies. If the tremendous ideological influence wielded by the Buddhist clergy is eroded by the processes taking place now, it would be interesting to see the repercussions it would have on local politics.

In spite of the open hostility of sections of Sangha

(Continued on page 16)



# "I have never mistrusted India"

— J. R. Jayawardene

THE barricades and frequent security checks outside his private residence at Ward Place, Colombo's most exclusive residential area symbolise the threat to his life. But there is little tension or fear inside the modest house where a confident Junius Richard Jayawardene, 81, the frail looking President of Sri Lanka receives his guests. While conversing, he monitors the progress of the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. As time for the TV news approaches, he ushers guests into the TV room so that he can watch the daily surrender of arms by the Tamil groups. The news over, he expresses satisfaction over the developments. For over a month, he has kept away from the media. In an exclusive interview with *India Today*, Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA, last fortnight, Jayawardene speaks about the role of the Indian Army and his domestic problems. Excerpts:

*Q. Till recently, you have been pursuing a military option against the Tamil militants. What made you change your strategy and sign an agreement with India?*

*A.* We were always for a political solution. But the terrorists never agreed to it. We knew we wouldn't be able to solve this problem except through a political dialogue. Now, they have also agreed. On our own part, we never gave up the political option. We had discussions at Thimpu, New Delhi and Colombo and these discussions were not military discussions. But the terrorists never even looked at our documents.

*Q. Do you feel that India has played an important role in bringing the Tamil Tigers to the negotiating table?*

*A.* Till recently, India was playing the role of a mediator. Now, for the first time, India has discussed this problem directly with us. India's role in this whole problem has changed from a mere mediator to that of a participant.

*Q. Do you think that this pact would have come about if the Tigers had not been part of the dialogue?*

*A.* I have nothing to do with them. I have never seen Prabhakaran.

*Q. Have you gained anything politically?*

*A.* One major gain is that terrorism is over. If the accord is sincerely implemented by these parties—the Indian Government, the Sri Lankan authorities and the separatist groups—peace will return to the island. The violence is over.

*Q. Keeping in view the mistrust between the Indian Government and your government, do you think this accord will be implemented seriously?*

*A.* I never had mistrust in the Indian Government. In fact, I never had mistrust in the separatists. What is there to mistrust. They (the separatists) are for violence, they are for murder—what is the kind of mistrust you are talking about in this kind of situation. On the other hand, I have been accused of trusting everyone too much.

*Q. If you had trust in India, why didn't sign a similar accord earlier?*

*A.* I don't have a reason myself for this. But the only explanation which I can possibly think of is that it is the first time that India is prepared to tackle this terrorism problem as an active partner with me.

*Q. If the accord has led to the end of violence in the north and east, then why has it not been welcomed by the Sinhalese?*

*A.* Violence never lasts long. It has now died down. There was some opposition to the accord in certain parts of the island. It was motivated by the Sinhalese terrorists. During the opposition to the agreement, voiced by the Buddhist clergy and the SLFP, they found that the JVP was taking active interest in the violent activities. Others have backed out of the anti accord agitation, but the JVP is still continuing.

*Q. Don't you think you will find it difficult to sustain this accord if your prime minister and minister for national security are opposed to it?*

*A.* In a democracy you have these freedoms. But when I bring legislations for the accord to Parliament, they will have to support them or they have to leave. I have signed a treaty and under the Constitution, I have the right to make treaties with any country. I need not to get cabinet support or approval for it. But when I have to go to the Parliament for legislative measures, they will all have to support them.

*Q. If they don't, what will you do?*

*A.* I will dissolve Parliament.

*Q. In the wake of opposition, how are you going to implement the accord?*

*A.* Most of it has already been implemented. The terrorists have surrendered arms. Laws are almost ready for the devolution of powers to the Provincial Council and subsequent elections. The referendum for the merger of the east with the north will take place. For all these, I need parliamentary approval. We will have interim



administration for north and east.

*Q. But how are you going to sell this accord to your people who consider it a total surrender?*

A. I will do it with propaganda in favour of the advantages of the accord. I will use all democratic means to convince the people that this accord is in the best interests of our country. This might be an issue for the next elections but it would have been completed by that time. I am not going to have referendum on this accord.

*Q. What are the economic gaps?*

A. We have nothing to lose. Peace will return to the country which, in turn, will help in reviving economic activity.

*Q. Are you sure that the Sri Lankan people approve of Indian forces?*

A. That is immaterial. The only way they can question it is by votes. And that will be clear during the elections. There are ways in the democracy of seeking the people's support for one's actions as President. If we go to the people for every action, then the Government can't function. Unfortunately, the Opposition is not opposing this government by democratic means. They are resorting to violence and this should be suppressed.

*Q. What is the specific role given to the Indian peace-keeping forces?*

A. They are acting under my supervision and directions and they will carry out those instructions. They have to supervise the surrender of arms by terrorists maintain law and order with our troops. They have to take part in all peaceful operations.

*Q. Will they be present till the accord is fully implemented?*

A. Well, that will take a long time. Provincial elections will take place at the end of the year. Till normalcy is restored not only the Indian but also our forces are necessary.

But if there is peace, the forces are not necessary. We have enough troops of our own during peaceful times. I would like the Indian forces to remain as long as there is trouble in the north and east.

*Q. If you have Indian forces here, why are you asking for American military help?*

A. I have asked America, England and Pakistan for help.

*Q. What kind of help or assistance you have sought from them?*

A. Whatever help they can give. I didn't make any specific reservations. But we have not asked for any military help. They may offer us helicopters, spare parts. I don't need any military assistance but only material assistance from friendly countries. And I have informed India about these as well. One reason for asking those countries for aid is to show the world that I have not only asked India for assistance, but others as well. Mrs Bandaranaike also received assistance from various countries for containing secessionists in 1971. She got MIGs from the USSR, helicopters from the US and aid from the UK and India. I have not done anything beyond that.

*Q. Since you are dependent on the West, both militarily and economically, don't you expect problems from them in implementing the accord?*

A. Sri Lanka does depend on the West for economic aid, and nothing else. But they can't influence our decisions. I am pro-West even now because there is democracy there. I am for democracy wherever it exists.

*Q. But why are you seeking help from anti-India countries like Pakistan and Israeli? Will it not affect your relations with India as well?*

A. Earlier, I sought help from all of them I could't have trained my people in India. They were training the terrorists.

*Q. How are you going to deal with JVP. Weren't they crushed by Bandaranaike with foreign support?*

A. It is very difficult to give reasons for the revival of the JVP. Many people blame me for it.

When I took over, I released a majority of their cadres and leaders.

For over five years they were quiet. And I was under the impression that they had accepted the democratic norm of behaviour. They contested the municipal and local elections. They contested the referendum and lost in all these elections. But in 1983, my security informed me that these people are again militarily active. They were preaching violence, I proscribed them. They had a hand in the 1983 riots in Colombo. Since then, they have been working underground amassing a lot of support. I don't know how they've done this.

*Q. With all these problems, don't you feel exhausted at this age?*

A. They say the brain never gets tired, only the muscles get tired. I can switch off my powers of concentration. At the moment, I am thinking of you and nothing else. That is the way I am made, I can compartmentalise my problems.

*Q. Aren't you thinking of retiring from active politics now?*

A. My term will end in 1989. I can't re-contest without a referendum.

## Indo-Lanka...

(Continued from page 14)

to the Indo-Lanka peace accord, President Jayewardene has managed to stay in power. A feat which would have been inconceivable some time ago. The initial political storm raised seems to have spent its force now despite the desperate efforts of certain people including some monks to keep the fires burning. Does this portend the waning political influence of the Maha Sangha? Have the people lost faith in Buddhist opinion as a point of reference in forming their own attitudes and ideas? The undermining of such a prominent feature of our cultural ethos will of course not take place overnight. But the symptoms of decay are already in evidence.



# The ethnic conflict and the crisis in the South

Dayan Jayatilaka

**O**ur topic today is the "Ethnic Conflict and the Crisis in the South". Here I would like to focus on the national question as it exists in the North and East of the country, and its inter-action with the crisis in the predominantly Sinhala areas.

I would like first of all to say that today we are enveloped in a 'general national crisis' to use Lenin's term, or what Antonio Gramsci calls an 'organic crisis'. I would like to deal first of all with the key characteristics of this organic crisis as well as the various responses to the crisis. This latter aspect we can call the conjunctural aspect of the organic crisis.

The crisis in Sri Lanka is one of relatively long duration. One could go back to 1971, but then that too was only a symptom of a deep-seated malaise. You could really go back as far as 1963, with the rapid changes of Finance Ministers, the formation of the United Left Front and the decision of the Left parties to join the SLFP government, which were all manifestations or responses to a crisis that was present in Sri Lankan society as far back as that time. So far the last two decades we have been "cooking in crisis" and it is against this backdrop that the ethnic question has manifested itself. We must understand that this crisis which is one of long duration is a structural crisis. This crisis derives from the crisis of the world capitalist system of which we are a peripheral part and also from the contradictions of our own dependent capitalism. The other characteristic of the crisis that I would like to remind you of that it is a multi level crisis — it is not simply an economic crisis, nor a political or ethnic crisis as much. It operates at all these levels of the social formation — each level is distinct, you cannot reduce the political crisis to the economic crisis — but they are inter-related and interactive. Then we have the responses

to this crisis on the part of the successive regimes and the masses. These responses themselves aggravate and change this or that aspect of the crisis.

Now what are the key characteristics of the organic crisis we find ourselves in? There are of course the economic and the political and military and the social aspects. I will dwell only very briefly on the economic aspect of the crisis as such: I have spoken twice within an hour or so on the "World Capitalist Crisis and its Impact on the Dependent Capitalist Economy of Sri Lanka". So I will deliberately avoid dwelling at length on the economic crisis but you are welcome to ask questions in the course of the discussion.

I would just say that the economic crisis is a reflection of rapid dependent capitalist growth (particularly in the post-1977 period in the context of global crisis).

The examples of Iran, Philippines and Central America have brought home to us this social contradictions engendered by the rapid expansion of dependent capitalist relations. And this is all the more so when this takes place in the context of a global economic crisis and the burden of this crisis is transferred from the metropolitan centres to the periphery. So we see all those exacerbated social contradictions, increasing unemployment, which is expected to reach 1 million in 1985, and inflation running at 22% — It may remind you that in Nicaragua just two years before the revolution inflation was running at only 11%. We have declining real wages estimated by top economists as 30% during the last few years. We have a massive, and mounting debt, and factory closures — the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills — and flight of capital. However, as I said, I am not going to dwell on the economic crisis and would much rather dwell on the political and the military aspects of the organic crisis of the Sri Lanka social formation.

This article is based on a talk delivered in July '84 in the Bishop Leo Nanayakkara Memorial Lecture Series.

I think the political crisis could be traced to what I would call the contradictions of maintaining a racist capitalism. Capitalism or the capitalist mode of production is supposed to have its own internal logic — the logic of capital accumulation. But what we have is not a pure capitalism — not that there can be such thing but when what we have is not even a dependent capitalism with all its contradictions as in El Salvador, here we have a racist capitalism, where the need of the dominant sector is not just to preserve the bourgeois or class hegemony, but the hegemony of the Sinhala-Buddhist bourgeoisie. Therefore the political crisis I would reiterate is rooted in the contradictions of racist capitalism, and the need to preserve Sinhala bourgeois hegemony, and if one may be flippant, I would say that the political crisis would be summed up in two words — 'secession' and 'succession'. We have succession crisis atop the crisis faced by the state due to the secessionist struggle.

Let us dwell a little more on the political crisis and try to identify and enumerate the components of this political crisis. In the first place we have a historical situation in which the representatives of the old ruling classes cannot rule 'in the old way'. The old way is the bourgeois democratic way or the bourgeois liberal way, the way of representing social tensions and containing them within an institutional framework i.e. the Parliament. The Referendum, which I think is the culmination of a process beginning as far back as 1972 at the very least, was a watershed. It made it very clear that it was impossible for the dominant social groups to continue to maintain parliamentary democracy the way that we have known it. The student crisis of the past few weeks made it quite clear — the very low threshold of tolerance. The response to dissent in a very coer-



cive fashion, I consider to be a sign of weakness.

If I remember right there were very few people killed — may be one or two — during the May 1968 upheaval in Paris. That was a sign of a system albeit in crisis which had a leadership which in turn still had considerable reserves. The leadership of course was of Gen. De Gaulle. But in Sri Lanka we have a situation in which the ruling classes have no other way of ruling than by firm domination. That is the first aspect I see of the political crisis. That, I reiterate, is a sign of weakness and not of strength.

## INTERNAL DISSENSION

Secondly, we have the phenomenon of internal fissures, factions, tendencies and divisions even nearing breaking point. This is a phenomenon everyone is quite well aware of. We observed two senior ministers of the government openly disagreeing on a fundamental principle of the foreign policy of our government — our relations with our biggest and closest neighbour. This is a clear sign of internal dissension. Another instance was when another minister albeit not of the UNP, took his place on the opposite side of a negotiating table from that of the government after leading a strike, as a representative of the estate workers. Several months ago Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, had angry exchanges with Mr. Bill Devanayagam and Mr. S. Thondaman — this is yet another instance. So we have the inability of the regime to come up with a concerted response to the current crisis.

The third aspect of the current political crisis — this is one that impinges very directly on the ethnic conflict — is the inability to come up with the reform component of viable counter-insurgency strategy. Now I am deliberately not going to argue here the rights and wrongs of Tamil self-determination.

I am taking, momentarily, the stand-point of the incumbent regime itself. What I would say is that if a guerilla threat is to be defeated, if a viable counter-insurgency strategy is to be implemented, it

has to have, apart from the repressive component, a reformist component. This was most clear in one of the most successful counter-insurgency movements in the post-war period, that of Ramon Magsaysay of the Philippines. Magsaysay managed to defeat the insurgency of the Hukbalahap in the fifties by eliminating the military abuse of power — (torture) — by having free general elections by declaring an amnesty, by stealing in fact some of the planks of the platform of the guerillas — that of land reform. He offered an attractive package to guerillas who surrendered. A plot of land plus amnesty and financial inducements were part of the package offered, while opening political negotiations. Benito Aquino the young Mayor of Tarlac was Ramon Magsaysay's envoy to meet Luis Taruc, the guerilla leader in the mountains. But in Sri Lanka the regime has been unable to offer a strong reformist package that would win over the support base of the Tamil guerillas, at least neutralize the majority of Tamil people. In the absence of such a strategy the only strategy left would amount to nothing but genocide.

The dead-lock at the Round-Table Conference is another very, very clear indicator of the weakness of the regime. There is so much of shadow-boxing. It is not clear who they are afraid of. First we are told that the Sinhala people will not accept devolution. Who has asked the Sinhala people? A regime which has deprived the Sinhala people of everything they held dear, from the ration-book to the ballot, now seeks to make the Sinhala people a scape-goat for its inability or unwillingness to come up with a solution, which would marginalize the guerillas and make it easier for the security forces to deal with them from a security point of view! Because of the reasons I mentioned earlier, the factional infighting, and also the inability to accommodate dissent, the inability to be flexible, and because it is perceived that any devolution of power would be construed as a sign of weakness — it is impossible for the regime to come up with a reform component of a counter-insurgency strategy. It has mistaken

brittleness for firmness and strength!

## APEX

Then we have another aspect of the crisis discontent has been focussed at the apex. That is yet another sign of an unsuccessful political system. A successful system manages to deflect and diffuse discontent. Because we have a structure that intentionally concentrates all power at the apex, an apex that is "free from whims and fancies of the legislature", rendered a rubber-stamp" by the Referendum, we therefore have all discontent directed in a very unmediated fashion at the apex of power itself viz: the executive.

I would now like to bring into the picture, the institutional crisis. That means the crisis of the state apparatus — the bourgeois state apparatus. It is supposed to function according to a certain class logic. The logic is that of the extension and the maintenance of bourgeois relations of production. What we have is a bourgeois state apparatus that is cross-cut with ethnic divisions. Therefore its class logic does not function in the relentless fashion that it does, say, in India. And of course you have a legal crisis. The rather sordid manoeuvring to frustrated magisterial inquiries concerning the student issue, the criticisms levelled by the Chief Justice a few months ago, the resolutions passed by the Bar Association, also indicates that the crisis is not only at the level of politics but also at the level of the state apparatus and juridical and institutions.

## BONAPARTISM

Summing up the crisis of the regime, I would agree with a definition that was popular for about ten years, for all the wrong reasons. My friend Dr. Wickramabahu Karunaratne who is at the moment giving a lecture at the new Town Hall on the occasion of the 4th anniversary of his proscribed party, was one of those who incessantly describes President Jayewardene as 'Bonapartist'.



Five years before that from about 1971 upto 1976 he and others like Rohana Wijeweera were describing Mrs. Bandaranaike as Bonapartist. I found the characterisation most non-rigorous, because 'Bonapartism' according to Marx and Engels is a very unstable and temporary situation characterized by an equilibrium between contending classes or contending factions of a single class. So by definition you cannot have a Bonapartism from 1972 to 1984. However, right now, at this point of time, I feel that description is valid. Right now the Executive Presidency is engaged in a balancing act not between contending classes but between contending factions of the regime. In fact President Jayawardene reminds me of a juggler under whom the ground is moving. Or a juggler trying to run up a downward moving escalator. This situation of Bonapartism—Antonio Gramsci had another word for it, 'Caesarism', is best described using another Gramsci term as one of catastrophic equilibrium. I think that is a very exact description of the state of affairs today. A situation of catastrophic equilibrium, by definition cannot last long.

## TOTAL CRISIS

Now this is the political crisis as manifested at the level of the regime. What of the alternatives? I think that one of the chief defining characteristics of the present crisis is that it is not limited to the present regime. It is a total crisis. It is that which envelops the regime as well as the opposition. So this is not something that you can call a UNP crisis. It is an all-enveloping total crisis. And this is very clearly manifested in that there is no viable alternative. Because if there was a viable alternative, the crisis would not be all that deep. The depth of crisis rests also in that there is no viable opposition that is making its presence felt. I don't know but there may be somebody out there who may be thinking that he has the answer to the crisis. Nobody had heard of Rohana Wijeyaweera until 1970 but he had been working for a number of years by then. Certainly he or she has not made his or her presence felt

as yet. But as far as the available political forces are concerned there is no viable bourgeois alternative. If you take the SLFP I think President Jayawardene was perfectly correct in saying as he did just before the Presidential Election that the SLFP has no alternative but to go along with the open economy. He said 'I have made economic changes which are irreversible'. The crisis in the SLFP is exactly that. The interest of the class — the national bourgeoisie — born in the fifties and which had arised in the seventies as a dependent bourgeoisie in the path of dependent state capitalism, has its economic interests fulfilled in the UNP's economic project. One of the characteristics of an organic crisis according to Gramsci is that class factions detach themselves from their earlier political representatives. The SLFP also cannot shift leftwards. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike's ideology makes this very clear. The SLFP simply does not have an alternative to offer.

As far as the new opposition bloc led by the Mahajana Party is concerned, it is demonstrated in the context of the student struggle, its inability to convert itself into a mass movement using political or economic clout to wrest democratic concessions from the regime. What I am trying to say is that the opposition bloc led by the Mahajana Pakshaya has not been able to do what the opposition parties have been able to do in the Philippines. I am not talking of the new Peoples Army (i.e. the Communist movement) in the Philippines. I am talking of businessmen, professors, lawyers and beauty queens and film stars i.e. the liberal bourgeois opposition, who were able to take to the street and to trigger enough alarms in Washington to get Washington to put enough pressure on Marcos to hold an election. Neither the SLFP nor the four Party bloc have been capable of this. As for the revolutionary anti-systemic alternative, if exists, it has not made its presence felt on the terrain of mass politics.

So we have a situation of catastrophic equilibrium or Bonapartism. If you like, as far as the regime is concerned and inability of the opposition forces to present a coherent

alternative. We had a deafening silence as far as the Allen affair was concerned on the part of the regime and we have had a more deafening silence on the part of the opposition parties as far as the ethnic conflict is concerned.

## MILITARY ASPECT

Now from the political would like to move to the military aspect of the current crisis. We have a situation of low morale in the armed forces. Also lower discipline. The Golden Temple episode is a very instructive counter point, where you had a Sikh general among the three generals who commanded the forces and also Sikh soldiers. In other words the logic of the capitalist state transcended ethnic loyalty, despite sporadic mutinies. Professionalism and discipline are very necessary for successful implementation of a strategy. You have to have an instrument to implement your strategy. When the instrument itself is in not very good shape, then of course you have a real problem. Of course we all wonder if there is a sudden escalation of Tamil guerilla activity in the North and East in the coming months, whether the armed forces would go berserk. It would not be possible to stop that. There has been, as far as I know, no severe and exemplary disciplinary action to ensure restraint and discipline on the part of the Forces.

Then you have the different attitudes on the lower, middle and upper most sections of the forces. There is a well trained and educated cadre of young officers who were in the field in 1971, and have received foreign training since then. There are Majors, Lt. Colonels and Colonels who are quite professional. You have lower ranks recruited on the MP's chits — either UNP or SLFP MPs — for the last ten years. These latter sections are absolutely incapable of understanding that if one joins the army there is at least the possibility of being shot at. Then you have the upper echelons, perceived by the lower and middle ranks, as being closely tied to the regime. But I must say that there have so far not been any identifiable factions



within the armed forces. It has not come to that. But it is not a very happy situation for those who are concerned with the security of the capitalist state.

There has been an escalation of the war — from the Oberoi to Amparai. The war has come South. This has hit the tourist industry. The attack on the Central camp police station at Amparai means there has been an extension of hostilities, geographically. It is widely known that Amparai is regarded by most Sinhalese as Sinhalese territory. It is of course largely due Mr. D. S. Senanayake's colonisation policy in 1984. According to the 'SUN', the attackers had disappeared via Padiyatalawa to the central highlands. I don't know how far this is true, but if it's true then it is some think significant. That means that the reach of the Tamil guerillas has now lengthened. What the regime was presenting as essentially a **peninsular phenomenon** has definitely extended outwards. I think the crux of the military crisis is that it also is in a situation of stalemate. A stalemate in guerilla war is quite different from a stalemate in politics or in a game. As Dr. Kissinger has pointed out — he is not the only one who has pointed this out, but he has done so most recently in the bi-partisan Kissinger Report on Central America — that in a guerilla war, a stalemate means in fact victory for the guerillas. If the regime does not win, then in fact they are losing. On the other hand if the guerillas have not lost, they are winning. Time is on the side of the guerillas. This is the nature of a war of attrition, a protracted war. A war of the incremental accretion of strength. A war of wearing down the enemy or depleting the enemies economic resources and so on. So we have the situation in which, simply because the Tamil guerillas have not lost they are winning. That is the nature of guerilla war. They have the inherent advantages that guerillas usually have, a degree of support, or understanding, sympathy, from the people of the area. This is an advantage that the government armed forces lack. In this case the **Armed Forces do not have a social**

**support base in the area of operations.** This is one advantage that the guerillas have, and the other is that of surprise. Now here we are waiting anxiously for the anniversary of the 'unfortunate events' of last July. You cannot guard every inch of rail track, you cannot guard every police station, you cannot guard every government installation and do it round-the-clock, too. So the guerilla chooses his target and his time. The military crisis has deepened and I don't think that the regime has managed to turn it around, qualitatively.

## FOREIGN POLICY

Next we have the foreign policy crisis. As regards foreign policy I don't aim to go into all aspects but will only remark that our foreign policy has caused the diplomatic isolation of Sri Lanka. The fact that India chose to take up the case of the ex-SAS trainers and Mossad with Britain, and that Geoffrey Howe and Maggie Thatcher chose to reply — they could have asked what business is it of India's — is significant. India chose to make a issue of a third country problem. It is not as if India asked the US what planes they were selling Pakistan. India's traditional foe. This is a question she had asked concerning Sri Lanka which is not a traditional foe. And Britain had chosen to reply. This morning's papers say that Howard Schaffer of the US State Department had told a visiting Tamil Nadu delegation that the US had expressed concern about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and that a Congressional Sub-Committee will take it up next month. Due to massive strategic mistakes on the part of the regime, foreign policy mistakes — like the Israeli affair — we have a situation in which Sri Lanka is being diplomatically contained. According to opposition sources we are in trouble with at least 3 Arab states — the Iraq Ambassador is supposed to have gone away, the Saudi Ambassador has not come. Our relations with Arab countries cannot certainly be improving!

Let us not forget that "international mavericks" like Libya, and and South Yemen cannot do much

damage against big countries like Britain, but against a state like Sri Lanka, a couple of million dollars worth of Katarinikovs or whatever can do a deal of damage. It isn't intelligent for Sri Lanka to antagonize a country like Libya, which is not normally constrained by the conventional modes of conduct of the inter state system. So much for foreign policy. In a couple of years if not months, our rulers might echo Cardinal Wolsey and say 'if we had served non-aligned foreign policy with half the zeal with which we served Asoan and Israel, the international community would not have left us naked to our enemies'.

Concerning the social crisis, I should observe first that there is an ethnic axis of fissure — the Tamil ethnic formation, the Sinhala ethnic formation and now increasingly the Muslim ethnic formation are drifting apart. And of course in the vertical dimension there is much social dissent, from the Chief Justice to the plantation workers.

What I want to dwell on is the **intertwined and inter active nature** of all these crises. The economic, political — in its domestic and international aspects the military and the social crisis. Let me give three examples.

The political crisis means instability, flight of capital and therefore the enhancement of the economic crisis. The economic crisis means greater burdens on the masses and that means greater social discontent and the worsening social crisis also causes a worsening of the political crisis.

## INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Let us also see the relationship between the military crisis and foreign policy. Let me be very cold-blooded. One possible short term way out — and this is being said by many in private conversation — is, 'another 1971'. After all, if about 5,000 Sinhalese young men, women and Buddhist monks could be killed, why can't the UNP do the same to the Tamils? Why don't the Forces just go in, seal off the peninsula and zap them?



The fact that the Tamil issue has been internationalised on the one hand because of the Tamil diaspora and the ethnic and human rights nature of the conflict, (it is not an overtly ideological conflict), and on the other hand has also been internalised in India's politics, means that the regime cannot adopt scorched earth tactics. It cannot adopt 'strategic hamlets', napalm bombing and other sort of quasi-genocidal methods that many regimes adopt. The SLFP did adopt such methods to a degree in 1971. Someone can of course try. But then the repercussions in Tamil Nadu will be such that Delhi will be forced to take extreme action.

So here we have the inter-active nature of foreign policy and the military crisis.

Then you have the inter-action of the military crisis and the economic crisis. The military build up and the maintenance of the military presence in the North and East regime is a great drain on our economic resources. Then the government has to ask the people to tighten their belts. This would mean again social discontent. So the whole situation is one several crises feeding on one another.

## OPTIONS

So what are possible responses to this crisis? One of the responses is that of the opposition — the populist response that all this is the fault of the open economy, that everything would be all right if we go back to the golden era of 1970s when we were on the road to socialism. One thing that is clear from the Presidential elections of 1983 is that the masses in their wisdom don't consider that era as one of great progress comfort. They were fairly keen to avoid a reversion to the state — capitalist closed economic of unequal hardships and privation.

More seriously, the Sri Lankan economy during the last few years has been so tightly integrated into the world capitalist system and a reversion to import substitution will cause tremendous turmoil. People are so hooked on to consumerism that if you try to put the clock back I am sure there will

be riots. So a populist state capitalist option is really a non-option.

So we have a much more serious possibility which I think we should consider more closely: A recomposition of the power-bloc and a reorganisation of the state apparatus. To be more specific I am referring to what social scientists in Latin America call the State of National Security. The Chilean social scientist says Ruy Mauro Marini calls the counter-insurgency state. I am not going into this question, but what it means is the placing of the state apparatus on a permanent state of war and the militarization of society. The decision making being done by a National Security Council and the dictates of National Security as perceived by the regime taking precedence over almost all the other considerations.

This could really happen. Given the crisis in our situation we could really have a 'creeping coup' or 'internal coup'. It is not the classic coup scenario, rather it is a scenario in which the increasing accommodation of the military into our national political decision making processes. I was horrified a couple of weeks ago by posters similar to the 'Uncle Sam wants you' type — urging the people not to aggravate the student agitation as the armed forces were busy containing terrorism in the north. That appeal coming from a civilian politician is understandable. But when you have a direct appeal either by the armed forces or by somebody on the behalf that is a significant and ominous sign. One does not whether the present crisis will lead to this type of creeping coup. This might come about in order to implement a specific project with regard to the ethnic conflict. But will that solve anything?

In other words could we have an authoritarian regime, but one which is rational? One which will effect some kind of devolution and after that go and kill off whoever is opposing it. Since the Sinhala people are opposed to it they cannot have elections. So a dictatorial regime could cut itself off from any kind of electoral constraints but engage in some kind of 'engineering'

or crisis-management as the Malaysians do and put into place some kind of compromise between the Sinhala and Tamil bourgeois. Will a recomposition of the power bloc succeed in defusing the ethnic crisis? If so there was to be a strong reformist component to their package. Then I can imagine a condominium of the United States and India which would support the individual or sectors who put that into operation. But I have serious problems in thinking that would work. In the first place this is a reshuffling of the power bloc or a recomposition. The same people and the same institutions who are actors in the present crisis and who are not coming up with a solution, are going to be the people in this recomposed power bloc. I don't know whether they are able or willing to come up with a solution some way down the road when they are frustrating any solution at the moment. To be more specific, whether or not they will have a strong reformist package in this bureaucratic-authoritarian solution depends on a cluster of variables. It depends on the strength of the clergy — who are opposed to a political solution of this crisis — and to what extent they are involved in this state apparatus. Whether such bureaucratic authoritarian solution would be a secular one I greatly doubt. I think the clergy is too locked in to the state apparatus and the bourgeoisie for that to happen. It also depends on the strength of the right wing chauvinism in the military and will they agree to any serious devolution of power? It will depend on the strength of the secessionist movement. It has been possible for the guerrilla movements of the world to frustrate this kind of palliative, this kind of milk and water reforms. Camp David does not work. The Sandinista movement was able at critical times to outflank any reformist movements in the course of the revolutionary upsurge.

## EXTERNAL FORCE

So can you get the military to support these moves? Which factions of the regime will support such a measure? There is a whole cluster of variables. This includes the very



real racism within the ruling class itself. To give an example: reading Mr. N. U. Jayawardene who writes in the Sunday Island ad infinitum, it strikes me that even top capitalists in this country are not just capitalists but also racial and religious chauvinists. So given the racism of the ruling class and their religious chauvinism I don't think they will be able to go through with anything except very cosmetic reforms such as enhanced DDC's or whatever. So it does not seem possible that a recomposition of the power bloc will be able to come up with a solution unless it is an externally propelled recomposition of the power bloc.

In other words if there is no local actor, no endogenous force capable of refashioning the power bloc in such a manner as to resolve this ethnic conflict, and if the ethnic conflict escalates to such a pitch that it is intolerable to our great and friendly neighbour then it is possible that our great and friendly neighbour might take a somewhat more active hand in the proceedings. In such an event one could envisage this externally propelled or induced recomposition of the power bloc. To put it much plainer fashion some kind of national consensus achieved by cracking a couple of heads together. A Round-table Conference kind of constellation of forces and Annexure "C" implemented. Implementation needs a degree of coercion and if the local state apparatus is incapable of providing that coercion, perhaps the element of coercion brought to bear will be external. So that is one scenario that I would want us to bear in mind very clearly.

Really the only way I can think of resolving this crisis is through a process of democratisation. Devolution in the North and democratisation in the South. Call it electoral decompression. 'Decompression' because what we have now is a pressure cooker. The system needs a leader — a number of leaders — with the courage and flexibility a General De Gaulle to effect such a decompression. It is a calculated risk. Any leader will have to make this subtle calculus of risks. Do you allow electoral dis-

content? Do you allow your 5/6th majority in parliament to be eroded? Then do you take your chances cobbling together some kind of coalition in Parliament? Take those chances and let the ethnic tensions drain out and other (socio economic) issues will surface. Keep the lid on and you risk tremendous explosion.

Let us in conclusion remember that we have here a Sri Lankan crisis against the backdrop of a deepening global crisis. So we have in Sri Lanka, economic crisis on the one hand 'internal war' on the other. If you cast your eye back on all the revolutions from the Russian revolution onwards you will see that there is either one or both of these variables.

### LEBANON SCENARIO

We have other salient factors as well — internal fissures of the regime, inability of the regime to rule in the old way — the recourse to

open domination the increasing inability of the exploited masses to live in the old way due to the deepening economic crisis and the disruption of the normal way of life (bombs going off here and there). The classic ingredients for mass upheaval. If the system is not capable of coming up with a solution or recomposing the kind of power bloc to implement a solution. Then one of two things are possible — either an externally propelled solution or a challenge to the system itself. Even an externally propelled solution is not likely to be long lasting — Lebanon is a case in point. As for a challenge to the system, this is not a immediate possibility but if the ethnic conflict aggravates and more and more are killed and neither Govt or the opposition comes up with a solution, so there may be people who would realize that friendship between the nations can be achieved only by some macro-level systemic change.

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# TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Why privatise ?

Upali S. Jayasekera (President, Union of Post and Telecommunication Officers)

**W**e, in Sri Lanka, are facing the prospect of deregulation of the hitherto Government monopoly over the Telecommunication Services and the eventual privatisation of this economically viable industry. There has been, of course, no definite Government announcement in regard to what is going to happen but indications are that the Telecommunication Services will not remain under a Government Department and that a Joint-Stock Company will be floated to run the industry.

## Telecommunications Importance

Telecommunication is the pivotal industry which provides the infra-structure for information business. The fact that Telecommunications and Computers are interlinked and that those two combined could provide the most viable international interlinks should not be overlooked or ignored. Information is detected, monitored, transmitted and collected through Telecommunication. Telecommunication Services are networks of control and hence are nerve ends of modern society.

Thus who controls the Telecommunication system could control the flow of information and even have access to State information which is a security risk. Even the economic policy of Government could be circumvented or torpedoed with the connivance of foreign agencies.

Telecommunications make global control of not only costs, pricing and expenditure but also of Government decisions and tariff possible. Even the short term money market could be controlled through manipulation by multinational companies which control the Telecommunication network.

In view of the strategic role it plays Telecommunications should be under State control. Any form of deregulation or handing over to the private sector is not in the national interest.

## The Private Sector

The private sector whether local or foreign exist for private gain. Their main concern is commercial profitability and amassing of wealth for individual benefit.

The private sector does very little re-investment. Little or no benefit accrues to the country's economy on a long term basis. Profits earned are drained out of the country in various forms. This is more so where multinationals are concerned.

Since the private sector has no public accountability, it can do anything they want and in fact this is what is happening. With the Telecommunications in the hands of the private sector, a very dangerous situation can arise. The private sector will then fully control the economy and with the multi-nationals coming in the economy will be colonised.

I would quote one example to show how the Telecommunications in the hands of the private sector will be ant in the country's interest.

The Citibank in the United States was taken to task by the U.S. Congressional Committee for keeping two sets of accounts to minimise foreign exchange earnings in Europe and shift the profits to tax free Bahamas. The mastery of Telecommunications networks enabled the Bank to

bypass Government regulation and avoid payment of taxes whilst reaping massive profits from currency transactions. That's talking of corruption. In Sri Lanka too the performance of the private sector and our industrialists is not so clean.

Economic Power in the hands of the private sector will lead to the wealthy trying to grab political power. It happened in Chile where the American Telecommunication Company (ITT) helped in toppling the democratically elected Allende's Government. Closer to us in India, there was talk sometime back that the business giants - Birlas — were involved in a move to oust the then Indian Government.

In Sri Lanka 80% of the wealth is in the hands of about 10% of the people. It is this minority who holds economic power. With the Telecommunications passing over to them, the situation will become worse. This, in turn, will lead to their gaining political power, as is happening in certain countries where the capitalist system exists.

A new Right has emerged in America and it is so in Great Britain. This is due to the manoeuvres of the private sector — the industrialists in whose hands economic power lie.

In the context of a developing country we cannot afford such a situation. Our limited resources and the widening gap between the haves and have-nots cannot allow the private sector to expand too much and especially the take over of the Telecommunication industry, due to reasons of economic strategy, national security and well being of the people.



## Telephone and Telegraph Services

### Telephones

We have, in Sri Lanka, nearly 1,19,340 telephones. This is the figure for 1986. This means that only 1.2% of the population have telephones installed in their homes. Of this 1.2% about 40% belong to the Government sector. It will thus be seen that only 0.60 per cent of the population which constitutes the affluent class, have telephones.

### Telegraph

The vast majority of the people in Sri Lanka use the telegraph service to send messages. The telegraph service unlike the telephone service, is subsidised. The fee for a telegram counting 10 words is one rupee when expenditure for acceptance, transmission and delivery exceed twenty rupees.

The telegraph could be considered as a poor man's service and cannot be done away with at least for another 50 years where our country is concerned, though it has been scrapped in developed countries.

The Telecommunication Services have to be operated on cross-subsidy basis at national level. This would mean that profits from metropolitan areas have to be utilised to offset losses from rural areas. The private sector will not do that. They will either neglect the rural areas or increase charges for rural subscribers. In either case the rural areas will not receive the service they require. On the other hand, the telegraph service, if not subsidised, will be beyond the reach of the poor and the average citizen.

The privatisation of the Telecommunication industry in England has resulted in the increase of charges and the removal of subsidies. The not-so-affluent section of the society have been badly affected. Thousands have lost their jobs. In America the break up has also resulted in increase of charges. Thus privatisation will result in increase

of charges which in turn will result in the Telecommunication Services turning out to be the preserve of the rich and a luxury for the others.

Communications are essential for the furtherance of the freedom of the individual. Any restrictions placed by withdrawal of subsidies and increase in charges will therefore not be in the interest of the community as a whole.

Vast sums of public money has been spent to improve the Telecommunication Services in the country. STD facilities have been extended to a large part of the country and further extension is being made effective. This financial input, new technology introduced and the vastly improved Telecommunication network will be utilised by the private sector — local industrialists and multi nationals to earn large profits, which profits will not, in any large measure help the country's economy. Privatisation of the Telecommunication industry could as such be considered as robbing the public for private gain.

### Dissatisfaction

There was public dissatisfaction over the poor standard of Telecommunication Services.

The lack of funds was found to be the main impediment to the proper maintenance of telephone lines and equipment. The cable network needs replacement and hence is subject to constant breakdowns. The theft of overhead wires is another problem.

However, the situation is over emphasised and magnified. The private sector lobby — national and international industrialists backed by International Agencies and suppliers and distributors of communication equipment are all out to take over the Telecommunication Services.

These vested interests parading as telephone users or user groups maintained a sustained campaign to whip up support for the privatisation of the Telecommunication Services. Genuine telephone users too no doubt joined but the

campaign was backed by such vested interest. Such campaigns have sprung up even in countries in Western Europe and in Australia and New Zealand. In spite of such campaigns, except in England privatisation was not resorted to.

Improvement to services could be done and the equipment could be updated, if the Telecommunication authorities are given some independence to do so and even to find the money. Guide lines should be set and they should be allowed to follow such guidelines and improve services as targeted.

It is often argued that under private ownership a better service could be provided promoting technological innovations whilst eliminating Government expenditure. This thinking is a myth. The public sector can function to peak efficiency if the right atmosphere is created, objectives are clearly defined and the means of achieving those objectives are not influenced by extraneous reasons. The management should be allowed to function without outside intervention and show results.

The Telecommunication Services should serve the following national requirements:

- Provide communication services to the people as part to the nation's social development
- Introduce more sophisticated and advanced systems of communications especially to the corporate sector
- Ensure an efficient customers' service

These requirements on the other hand have to be considered on the basis of the inter-connected realms of science, technology and economics that add to national power and material progress. Telecommunications cannot therefore be used for profit making alone. It should be considered as a service to the people. The private sector cannot meet these national requirements as its main objective is profit making.

*(Continued on page 28)*



# G.P.'s decisive role

Neelan Tiruchelvam

The President's House in Colombo had originally been the private residence of the last Dutch Governor Johan Corard van Angelbeek, and formed the nucleus of the Fort of Colombo. It is an architectural treasure, gracefully designed with polished canewood ceilings and its floors covered by a mosaic of tiles. Seventeenth century shell patterned Dutch chests, wooden cabinets, ebony sofas and concrete tables adorn the reception areas and the Conference room.

On July 29, a row of distinguished Indian politicians and senior bureaucrats stood nervously in the Conference room awaiting the arrival of the two heads of government. They included Union Ministers Mr. Narasimha Rao, Mr. Natwar Singh looking solemn in their formal sherwanis, and Mr. P. Chidambaram, Mr. S. Ramasubramanian, Tamil Nadu Minister and Mr. G. Karupiah Mooppanar, AICC General Secretary, clad more informally in their spotless white dhoties. All of them had played their part in the complex and tortuous negotiations which preceded the formal understanding between India and Sri Lanka. Also present was Mr. Dinesh Singh, the former Foreign Minister, whose fleeting visit to Colombo apparently stalled a military offensive on the Northern Peninsula. There was, however, one person who played a decisive role in defining the framework of the accord who was conspicuous by his absence.

## Three criteria

In August 1983 the Sri Lankan President accepted Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's offer of good offices to facilitate a political solution. This was a watershed in Indo-Sri Lankan relations and the search for a special envoy to Sri Lanka to undertake the delicate and complex mediating efforts was intensified. There were three criteria that had been articulated within the higher reaches of the

Government for this position which was highly prized within the political and bureaucratic establishment. First, the negotiator must be a skilled diplomat who was sensitive to the geo politics of the region. Secondly, he must be a lawyer capable of coping with the Byzantine complexities of Sri Lanka's constitution, and the riddles in carving out an autonomous region within a unitary State. Thirdly, he had to understand the domestic politics of India and be capable of commanding the confidence of political opinion within Tamil Nadu, which had expressed solidarity with the Tamils of Sri Lanka in their predicament. Mr. G. Parthasarathy clearly met all of this criteria given his legal training and distinguished diplomatic career spanning several decades.

Mr. Parthasarathy had other advantages. He enjoyed total access to and the complete confidence of the then Prime Minister of India, and was frequently consulted on sensitive issues of both foreign and domestic policy. He was thus able to symbolise the authority and concern of the Government of India at the highest levels. A lesser known fact was that Mr. Parthasarathy knows Sri Lanka and had forged personal friendship and linkages which had grown over the years with the middle class western educated elite in Colombo. He had led a cricket team from the Presidency College in Madras, and played against such stalwarts as F.C. de Saram, the Cambridge Blue who dominated Sri Lankan cricket in the postwar years.

His Cambridge associates included Raju Coomaraswamy, the international civil servant, and Pieter Kueneman, President of the Sri Lanka Communist Party (a contemporary of Mohan Kumaramangalam both of whom were Presidents of the Cambridge Union). He had also known the political power broker, Esmond Wickremasinghe, who had controlled Lake House

for many years, and was close adviser to the political leadership within the United National Party.

Mr. Parthasarathy soon grasped the complexities and the many pitfalls in the tasks ahead. The traumatic events of July 1983 had so deeply polarised the two communities that the prospects of ethnic reconciliation seemed dismal. Each community's perceptions of the problem had become so deeply embedded in their respective psyches that there was little common ground on which he could work. He had to familiarise himself with history, contemporary political events and developments, and with the personalities and attitudes of the key actors on the Sinhala and Tamil sides. Above all, if perceptions were to be altered, he had to work on the consciousness of the two communities, and their leadership.

## Humility and good humour

GP's first few visits were directed towards familiarising himself with the key political actors on the Sinhala side. He briefed himself on the background of the senior and more influential cabinet ministers, and Opposition leaders. He then met them individually and listened patiently to their perceptions, fears, anxieties and obsessions. He consulted with the widest cross section of Sinhala opinion, including Mr. Gamini Ariyaratne, the President of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, and the Venerable Walpola Rahula, the scholar-monk who was the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha. Although some of their views were emotionally charged they were invariably deferential to the stoic older statesman. He brushed aside small discourtesies with his characteristic humility and good humour. A youthful opposition leader had insisted that GP call on him, and conform strictly to the norms of protocol. GP cheerfully complied, but could his



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measure of the man have gone up in the process? He realised that the vanities and personality quirks of the key actors were as important as their substantive beliefs.

He moved more easily with the old Left, such as the Trotskyite leaders — Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and Mr. Bernard Soyza, and his old friend Piter Keeneman. He had immediate empathy for their secular outlook, and their instinctive response to the aspirations of national minorities.

### Focal point

He soon became the focal point of the anguish and hopes of the Tamil side. He was generous with his time: he met innumerable delegations of expatriate groups and he met personally with leaders of the different militant organisations. He advised them, admonished them and constantly pushed them to explore and recognise the limits of their political options. Struggle and negotiate was his response to those who obstinately adopted fundamentalist positions on even the process of negotiation. His task was a difficult one. While he frequently counselled restraint, he was distressed by the escalating violence and the incalculable suffering of the ordinary people. He was moved by the sense of deprivation and passion which underscored the sacrifice of the youth. He often had little more than sympathy to offer to those who complained of the excesses of the State, the gross and persistent violations of human rights. Denied legal or political redress the Tamil mood soon turned to despair.

Inevitably, GP developed a special relationship with the TULF leadership. He engaged them intellectually, while remaining emotionally detached. He questioned the conceptual underpinnings of their political demands. Concepts such as 'self determination' and 'traditional homelands' were probed in depth so that they could clarify and refine their own thoughts. He pointed to the contradictions between an approach which emphasised autonomous regions for

national minorities (as contained in the Ceylon Workers Congress proposals before the All Parties Conference in 1984) and that which sought federal or quasi-federal forms of devolution within a democratic polity. Each arrangement presupposed distinct constitutional models which were not easily reconcilable. He drew on his immense political and diplomatic experience to draw comparisons with the negotiations on Kashmir, Mizoram and the Vietnamese liberation struggle. He counselled that the Tamil negotiating position should be guided by internally consistent principles, and not on the expediency of the moment.

GP's substantive contribution was in negotiating the set of proposals for devolution of power to regional councils, more popularly known as Annexure 'C'. He completed this exercise within a span of four months from August 1983 to December 1984, over several meetings in Colombo and New Delhi with President Jayewardene. He brought to bear all the skills of a consummate negotiator in mediating between the Tamil political leadership and the Jayewardene Government. He asked the TULF to formulate a scheme of devolution which would fall short of the ultimate demand of a separate State, while being responsive to their aspirations.

### Reformulated draft

The initial draft envisaged a Union of States, an overtly federal arrangement with the major areas of socio-economic development, education and cultural policy and land settlement and law and order being devolved to the States. GP reasoned that the substance of the Tamil demands would need to be woven into a scheme without the emotive content or the terminology which could trigger Sinhala resistance. The scheme was reformulated and presented as one which would acknowledge the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. The Union of 'States' was altered to a Union of Regions. Besides the sharing of power bet-

ween the centre and the regions, provision was made to ensure that Tamils enjoyed an adequate, if not proportionate share in the recruitment to the armed forces, the police and the public service. GP felt that the Tamils would need to share power at the centre if they were to join the mainstream of national development.

Mr. Jayewardene readily conceded many of the elements of the scheme, but the unit of devolution remained intractable. The Government was wedded to the notion that the district should be the basic unit of devolution, and even a proposal to permit districts within a province to combine into larger units was considered too radical a concession to Tamil demands.

GP began to feel that he was reaching the limits of his own persuasive powers. A new negotiating strategy was called for. He decided to make a direct appeal to Mr. Jayewardene, and arranged to see him at the President's House late in the evening on or about August 6, 1988, in the company of Mr. S. Thondaman and one other. The case for a larger unit was dispassionately presented. "It would result in an augmentation of power and resources. Tamils would need to be offered a package of proposals which seem a reasonable alternative to their basic demand". Mr. Jayewardene seemed tired and exhausted. He listened to the presentations without comment. He seemed listless, and it was not clear whether he had absorbed any of the points made. As the meeting ended and the delegation descended down the wrought iron staircase at the President's House, GP observed reassuringly "I am 73, Mr. Thondaman is 70, but the old man upstairs is in his eighties. Age must take its inevitable toll". Mr. Jayewardene, however, remained enigmatic. He had in fact followed the arguments advanced, and agreed next morning to the creation of Provincial Councils.

Later during Mr. Jayewardene's visit to New Delhi in December



1983, G. P. mobilised the support of Prime Minister Indra Gandhi to present the case for a single linguistic region. GP's devotion to detail was such that he even endeavoured to ensure that the meeting had the right ambience to facilitate a full and frank discussion of the contentious issues. Mr. Jayewardene demurred. He could not erode his base of support. He, however, agreed to compromise. Annexure 'C' would confine regional councils to Provincial limits. The Tamil leadership would, however, be free to advance the case for merger before the All-Party Conference. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene reviewed the proposals at the Ashoka Hotel and asked GP, "Where do I sign," and GP responded that this was not an agreement and no signatures were required.

It was anticipated that Annexure 'C' would form the basis of the All party Conference, summoned in January 1984 and that the Conference would provide the opportunity to forge a consensus around the proposals.

On the contrary, the Conference proved to be disastrous, and its participants rejected Annexure 'C', and refused even to focus on its contents. Amidst mounting criticism from Sinhala organisations, Buddhist groups and some opposition parties, even the Government distanced itself from Annexure 'C', and denied any responsibility for its contents. Every dilatory tactic was used to avoid serious discussion of substance, and meetings were adjourned at the slightest pretext. The Conference dragged on endlessly amidst escalating violence and the continuing excesses of the security forces. The Tamil groups became exasperated, but GP counselled caution and encouraged them to remain with the Conference. Finally, in December 1984, the Government presented proposals in a highly attenuated form for a limited scheme of power sharing which fell far short of Tamil expectations. The All Party Conference was wound up on December 21, 1984.

In early 1985 there were new diplomatic initiatives with New Delhi actively pursuing a policy of improving its bilateral relations with its neighbours. These policy initiatives coincided with attempts to question GP's role in the negotiating process. Two factors contributed towards this trend. First, the Tamil political leadership had become increasingly dependent on GP for guidance and advice on its political strategies. Their frequent consultations with GP were widely publicised in the Indian and Sri Lankan press, and began to alter progressively Sinhala perceptions of his role. Secondly, GP soon became vulnerable to bureaucratic and political intrigue in New Delhi and it was whispered in Colombo that a consistent campaign to discredit his role would prove effective.

### Costly absence

GP was deeply pained by these intrigues, and his role was progressively eclipsed. He remained however the institutional memory within South Block of Sri Lanka and its ethnic question. His absence proved costly in terms of the quality of attention that was devoted to the complexities of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. Decision making process within New Delhi and the process of negotiations suffered a setback with tragic consequences for Sri Lanka.

### Ethnic identity

The accord recognises that the Tamils of Sri Lanka possess a distinct ethnic identity and that the Northern and Eastern Provinces — where the conflict has occurred — have traditionally enjoyed a Tamil preponderance. The accord envisages a scheme of devolution of power to a single linguistic entity in this region, thereby conferring political autonomy to the area. For the first time, Tamil will be an official language of the country along with Sinhala. This will facilitate the use of Tamil also as a language of administration throughout Sri Lanka. Further, the accord provides for the release of political prisoners

the return of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees currently in India and the restoration of civilian government to war-ravaged areas. The significance of the accord lies in its comprehensiveness and that it represents, for the first time, a formal agreement between the two governments.

The dramatic turn of events resulting in a formal agreement between the two governments, and a peace keeping force would probably have outstripped even GP's expectations of India's good offices role. Many comparisons have been made between Annexure 'C' and the subsequent proposals made since 1983. It has been contended that Annexure 'C' embodied general principles, while the later drafts contained detailed arrangements. Whatever be the merit of those comparisons there can be little doubt that much of the credit for laying out the constitutional foundations of a multi-ethnic policy must go to GP.

Other efforts were no doubt important, but GP's role in defining the basic ideas which are integral to the accord was clearly the decisive one.

— Hindu

## The Threat . . .

(Continued from page 21)

Telecommunications have the potential to improve the quality of life of everyone or to collect massive profits for a few. The question is whether the industry should be exploited taking into account national requirements and priorities or left in the hands of multi-nationals or a few industrialists for private accumulation of wealth.

The future of the all important Telecommunications Services should not be vested at an auction sale where the local industrialists and multi-nationals will be the only bidders. A decision whether to privatise or not should be taken by public debate and on national considerations and not through back room negotiations.





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