

Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

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The Salt of the Earth

There is the story of an editor of a small newspaper in the "wild West" in America who was one day sitting in his swivel chair, sucking his pipe and musing pleasantly of life. Suddenly, a bullet crashed through the window and embedded itself in the wall in the back of his head. A happy smile lit up the editor's face. "Ah", he said complacently, I know that column of ours yesterday was going to be a success".

We would have preferred to bow to tradition and not bring in a tone of seeming levity into the editorial comments of the inaugural issue of SATURDAY REVIEW - in what should probably be a ponderous, pompous, unilateral declaration of the paper's intentions. But levity or no levity, we have also to bow to a certain popular view from Colombo that does not exclude such "wild West" scenarios, happening in the "wild North" of Jaffna. That is a pity, because the issue is not one of violence; violence is not a pleasant happening anywhere, nor is it anyone's exclusive pre-occupation. Violence takes various forms - violence to Truth, violence by speech, violence by political design, violence by the gun, the knife and the sword. The issue is really one of mental approaches and one's individual preferences for mental images. We often believe what we choose to believe.

One of the saddest facts of contemporary Sri Lankan life is that the habit of rational logical thinking on public issues, particularly in relation to Sinhala-Tamil relations, has almost ceased to exist; except in the case of a minority of men, who are prepared to carry the Cross, say it and be damned, branded as eccentrics or anti-nationals, or both.

The Tamils in Sri Lanka had over the past twenty six years gone through the gory experience of being at the receiving end of spasms of mob violence, with more than two generations carrying the scars with them yet. But yet mob violence recedes into comparative insignificance when looked at against the mob thinking of the human mind; a trait surprisingly present among men who are otherwise decent, respectable, educated, holding high positions in life, professionals, journalists, academics,... What had gone wrong with them? Some of them show surprising clarity of thought, a great liberalism of outlook, sound common sense, clean values on all matters EXCEPT on the question of Sinhala-Tamil relations!

How does one explain this phenomenon? How did the mental block occur? Successive politicians both in and out of power, had certainly laid the foundations for it, and continued to build on them. But the more damaging development was the crumbling of the mass media, which along with an independent and fearless Judiciary constitutes the bulwarks against the erosion of free thinking in any democratic society. This is where the SATURDAY REVIEW comes in.

As far back as 1796, Coleridge wrote: "In an enslaved State the Rulers from and supply the opinions of the People. This is the mark by which Despotism is distinguished for it is the power by which Despotism is begun and continued..." The SATURDAY REVIEW's primary function will be to encourage its readers to think straight, form their own opinions; not to shy away from Truth even when it is unpleasant; to be steadfast in their convictions and be proud of them, even if they find themselves in a small minority. Such men are the salt of the earth, and in them lies the hope of preserving the sanity of the nation, the decencies of life, and the character of a people.

Cement Factory or Death Factory?

Seven workers dead, two paralysed for life, one blinded in one eye, several others permanently injured. This is the grisly record of the Kankesanthurai Cement Factory's third stage work site since work started on it a little over one and a half years ago, in May 1980.

The latest victim, N. Loganathan, 21, of Karaveddy died on the spot on 19th January, when the loader in which he and fellow workers were transporting limestone from the quarry, overturned. K. Arudpiragasam, 21, of Karaveddy and A. Sittamparanathan, 60, of Kankesanthurai have been hospitalised with serious injuries.

On December 10, 1981, K. Neelamegan, 18, of Kankesanthurai and R. Jeganathan, 29, of Ariyalai died when the cable of a hoist with no handrails, snapped, sending them hurtling to the ground from 180 feet up.

Neelamegan died instantaneously while Jeganathan died half an hour later before he could be rushed to hospital.

Workers say the frequent accidents, including the fatal ones, are taken for granted by the management who have done nothing to prevent them happening again and again.

The workers view the project manager as their arch-enemy. They allege that he was brought down here from the Puttalam Cement Factory for the express purpose of squeezing the maximum out

of the workers, regardless of human cost, so that construction will be over by April this year as scheduled.

The 5000 strong labour force has been supplied by the Job bank and Rural Development societies. Since the men are hired as casual workers, they have no Union, nor even a welfare organisation, to collect money to help the victim's family with the funeral expenses.

To this day not a single cent has been paid as compensation by the Corporation, workers say.

They allege that if a worker dares to protest, some excuse will be fabricated to fire him or he can be found guilty of 'slacking' during the twelve hour shift. This offence carries a fine of up to Rs. 1,000/-.

The management has so terrorised the place, according to the workers, that when a worker dies at the site in an accident fellow workers are chased back to their posts even while the mangled body is still warm.

The workers' spokesmen claim that all the deaths occurred due to poor scaffolding, faulty machinery, no proper insulation of the electricity supply, and absence of per-



K. Neelamegan



R. Jeganathan

Victims of a double tragedy

iodic checks on machinery and equipment. All this stems, they allege, from the absolute callousness of the management which forces the workers to take unnecessary risks when it is fully aware of the shortcomings but has done nothing to remedy them.

It is learnt that Lanka Cement Limited will eventually take over the plant, installed at a cost of Rs. 720 million. The Cement Corporation will hold 51 percent of the shares in the Company while the balance will pass on to private share holders. Tycoon Upali Wijewardana is heavily tipped to be the major partner of the Government in this joint venture.

Protest Fast

Ten members of the LANKA TRADE UNION FEDERATION, including the Public Service Trade Union's President L. A. AMARA DASA, fasted for three days at the Federation's Office, Hospital Road, Jaffna, demanding that government servants sacked for taking part in the July 1980 General Strike be reinstated.

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Being Singapore's one-man Opposition is no fun

It's no fun being a one-man opposition anywhere, but especially so in Singapore where the ruling People's Action Party argues that opposition politics is 'time-wasting and destructive.'

PAP is determined to make life as tough as possible for Mr. J.B. Jeyaretnam, the one-man Opposition in Singapore's parliament.

Since 1966 there had been no opposition member in Singapore's parliament till Jeyaretnam's upset win over PAP candidate Pang Kim Him in the Anson by-election held in late October 1981.

The seat fell vacant when the sitting member Mr. Devan Nair was elevated to the presidency.

In the by-election, Mr. Jeyaretnam, a 55-year old lawyer and Secretary-General of the Worker's Party won by 653 votes.

A triumphant Jeyaretnam declared 'I'm going to make the fact of opposition felt. I'm not going to be lost among the PAP members.'

Jeyaretnam wanted a radical change in seating arrangements in parliament (the chamber to be divided in half — with 74 government MPS one side and him on the other) and an office in parliament where he could meet members



J. B. Jeyaretnam

of the public and conduct political business. "In other words, the government must give official recognition to an opposition in parliament," Jeyaretnam said.

The government's response was a brusque 'no'. His request for a radical change in seating arrangements was flatly rejected. As for an office, he was told he could use a room in parliament to meet members of the public but could not have an office for his exclusive use.

These are not the only roadblocks the government has set up: a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said Jeyaretnam would not be appointed adviser to six grassroots organisations in Anson, as is normal practice with the sitting MP. The statement said "The grassroots organisations are government agencies and advisers are chosen

for their commitment to government policies."

Jeyaretnam retorted "I intend to get on a committee that will represent the residents and not the Prime Minister." "He's planning to set up his own volunteer grassroots organisation in Anson which he will try to transform into an elective body."

Jeyaretnam has also complained that in his constituency he has run into 'lots of little niggling difficulties' put in his way by the government. He says working conditions for him and his helpers in Anson are 'not very comfortable.' He alleged that "every time I go for my meet-the-people sessions there are Internal Security Department detectives hanging around."

Jeyaretnam's troubles did not end there. When he made his maiden speech in parliament, dealing with the second reading of the amendment to a bill on prevention of corruption, Jeyaretnam charged that the ruling party had made improper and corrupt use of facilities and services paid for by public funds. This triggered off a row, with Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew himself wading into Jeyaretnam with a two-fisted attack. According to a diplomat in the galleries, Jeyaretnam suffered a 'technical knock out.'

ROW WITH LEE

Jeyaretnam questioned the terms and conditions under which PAP used state land for its headquarters in Napier Road, and the alleged use by Lee of police vehicles and personnel in the December 1980 general election campaign.

Lee challenged Jeyaretnam to substantiate the first charge. The opposition loner said somewhat lamely, amidst a chorus of jeers and groans

from PAP MPs, it was the subject of "rumours circulated around town." Pressed on his second allegation, Jeyaretnam agreed he could see that it made no difference whether the Prime Minister used police transport in elections or was simply accompanied by police vehicles.

Lee offered to appoint a commission of inquiry to probe both charges but Jeyaretnam didn't accept the offer. Some what self-righteously Lee went on to say that his government had established a reputation for integrity since it came into office in 1959 and he wouldn't tolerate innuendoes and insinuations: "two allegations have been made of misconduct. I offer an open forum for all details. Instead I have an unseemly, disgusting, wriggling retreat!"

After his by-election victory, Jeyaretnam announced he wanted to work closely with other opposition parties whose support had partly helped him to win, and to build his party into one with a mass base.

The question is whether the government, apart from giving Jeyaretnam a torrid time in Parliament, will permit an opposition group — has been taken into custody under the Internal Security Act. The charge? Plotting to overthrow the government. Sounds a familiar refrain, doesn't it?

How long Jeyaretnam will be allowed to function as a one-man opposition is a moot point. PAP's track record is not very re-assuring, to put it mildly.

Lee's reference to 'obstreperous' opposition and a recent statement made by him to party workers are perhaps ominous pointers to coming events. Said he "There is a vast difference between the benefits of good government and the amusement of parliamentary theatre."

Jeyaretnam had better watch his step.

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Aussie Mayor, a Tamil lover

No, your eyes aren't playing any tricks: it is a paleface (see picture left) with a **santhane pottu** on his forehead. None other than Mr. G. Burkett, the Mayor of Stirling in Western Australia.

His initiation — the sprinkling of fragrant **pannier**, the cool touch of sandalwood paste on the forehead — was part of the official opening of Tamil House in Brisbane Street, Perth.

Having gone through these rites, Mr. Burkett became one of a group of 85 families in the Tamil Association of Western Australia, who are interested in Tamil culture.

These members — some from Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia and Britain — gave lavishly of their time and money to renovate the House they bought from the Polish Association.

The House was formally opened by the Deputy Premier, Mr. Ray O'Connor.

Congratulating the Tamil Association on its foresight which benefits the whole community, the Deputy Premier said there were nearly 5000 Tamils in Western Australia, some with high qualifications and none without a job.

Both Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Burkett congratulated the organisers of classes to teach Tamil culture to Tamil and white children. Six ladies teach them the Tamil language every Sunday. One of the teachers, Mrs. J. Ponnuthurai, says that many of the children following classes are Australians.

Children who do well in the language classes are awarded trophies.

The Jaffna Campus Scene

Onwards, Public-Spirited Undergrads:

Hardly anyone has a good word for undergraduates these days: the mass media, egged on by the Establishment, carries on a systematic campaign of vilification against them and a conditioned public laps it up. Of course there are black sheep (and ewes) among them, as in society. But that hardly justifies the media hacks taking pot shots at the whole undergraduate community.

It's pleasant, therefore, to focus the spotlight on the undergraduates of the University of Jaffna who fanned out to every nook and corner of the Jaffna Peninsula, trudging from house to house, all for a common cause — the restoration of the Jaffna Public Library. In just two days — the time span they set themselves — they collected well over Rs. 2 lakhs, apart from donations of books. A record by any standards and what made it possible — apart, of course, from the enthusiastic and generous public response — was superb organisation. Nearly 2000 students took part and they were divided into about 125 groups which in turn were sub-divided into groups of 5-7 each. This minute attention to detail was the secret of success.

This is not the first time that Jaffna undergrads have

shown their devotion to a public cause. When Batticaloa was battered by a ferocious cyclone, Jaffna University undergrads went round Jaffna, collecting food, clothing and even cadjans: their relief operations were highly appreciated by the victims.

The Student's Union has decided — wisely — to use the money they have collected to buy books for the Public Library. A 9-member Book Selection Committee has been set up: it includes the University Librarian and the Public Librarian.

WINS IN A CANTER

Knowledgeable book-makers predicted a photo-finish in the Vice-Chancellorship stakes, which was a straight fight (the third aspirant for the post was a non-starter) between the outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Prof. S. Vithiananthan, and Prof. V. Tharmaratnam, Dean of the Faculty of Science. But as things turned out, Prof. Vithiananthan won in a canter. He will hold office for three years.

RE-NOMINATED

The outgoing University Council, at its last meeting, re-nominated all the Heads of Depts. of the Faculties of Arts, Science and Medicine, on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor, for a three-year term.

Undergrads burn White Paper

About 2,000 undergraduates of the University of Jaffna boycotted lectures on 25 January and staged a protest against the White Paper on Education. At the end of the march, Student Council leader K. N. Rajanayagam made a ceremonial bonfire of a copy of the White Paper.

Police and Army personnel were conspicuously absent from the scene and the demonstration ended peacefully.



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34
YEARS
AGO
today

GANDHI was KILLED

Here is the
Story of
the killing
and the
conspiracy
as pieced
together
from the
pages of
"FREEDOM
AT
MIDNIGHT"
by
Larry
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Dominique
Lapierre

The last fast of Mohandas Gandhi's life began at 11.55 on the morning of Tuesday, 13 January. As all his days that chilly winter had, that one had begun with a pre-dawn prayer. 'The path to God,' Gandhi had sung in the darkness of his unheated room, 'is for the brave, not cowards.'

At 10.30 he ate a final meal: two *chapatis*, an apple, sixteen ounces of goat's milk, and three grapefruit sections. When he had finished, an impromptu religious service in the garden of Birla House marked the formal beginning of his fast. Only a few close friends and the members of his community were there: Manu, whose straw pallet was still stretched out each night beside his on the floor of Birla House; Abha, another great-niece who was his second 'walking-stick'; his secretary, Pyarelal Nayar, and Nayar's sister, Sushila, the doctor who would care for Gandhi during the fast; his spiritual heir, Jawaharlal Nehru. The service ended with Sushila singing the Christian hymn whose words had never ceased to move Gandhi since he had heard them for the first time on the veldt of South Africa: 'When I survey the Wondrous Cross.'



The face, frozen in the still Serenity of death

Seven hundred miles from the capital of India, in the white-washed shed in which barely ten weeks earlier they had inaugurated the new offices of their *Hindu Rashtra* newspaper, two men stood transfixed before the glass window of a teletype machine. The flow of urgent bulletins pouring from their teleprinter would alter irrevocable the destinies of Nathuram Godse and Arayan Apte. They announced the beginning of Gandhi's fast and the conditions he'd set for ending it. One of them catalysed the virulent emotions of the two Hindu zealots and thrust them on the road to a crime that would horrify the world. It was Gandhi's demand for the payment of Pakistan's 550 million rupees.

Nathuram Godse paled. It was political blackmail. The man for whom he had once gone to jail and whom he now loathed with such intensity was trying to coerce India's government into surrendering to the Moslem rapists and murderers. Like Apte, like all the other Hindu fanatics of Poona, Godse had often proclaimed it would be a blessing if Gandhi were forcibly removed from the Indian political scene. His words, as theirs, had been nothing more than the ravings of a political fanatic.

Godse turned to Apte. All his grandiose plans for guerrilla campaigns in Hyderabad, for killing Jinnah, were 'sideshowes', he said. Only one act should concern them now. They must concentrate all their energies, all their resources, on one supreme objective. 'We must kill Gandhi,' Godse declared.

From the *Hindu Rashtra*, the four men Godse, Apte, Karkare and Madanlal Pahwa went to the home of the arms peddler who walked about Bombay Province disguised as a *sadhu*. Like a jeweller laying out his earrings and necklaces on his black velvet cloth, Digamber Badge set on to a rug on his floor the choicest items in his armoury. He had everything except the most vital tool of all—an easily concealable automatic pistol. They made a selection of hand-grenades, detonators and high explosives. Apte asked them all to meet him after dark on Wednesday, 14 January, in the office of the *Hindu Mahasabha* in Dadar, a working-class quarter of Bombay. Then they discreetly slipped off into the night.

The last day in the life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi began as all his days since South Africa, by his praying in the dark reaches before the dawn. Cross-legged on his pallet, his back to a cold marble wall, he and the members of his curious little company chanted together for the last time the verses of the celestial song of Hinduism, the *Bhagavad Gita*. For this Friday their morning recitation comprised the first and second of the *Gita's* eighteen dialogues. Gandhi's high, soft voice blended with those of his followers singing out the familiar stanzas.

For certain is death for the born
and certain is birth for the dead:
Therefore over the inevitable
Thou shouldst not grieve.

When the prayer was over, Manu led Gandhi into the spare room in which he worked. He dreamed of walking to Pakistan but he was not yet strong enough to move from one room to another unaided. Sitting down at the truncated table that served as his writing-desk, he told Manu he wanted her to chant for him throughout the day two lines of a hymn. 'Whether tired or not, O man, do not take rest!'

As they had agreed the evening before, Apte and Karkare returned to Retiring Room Number Six at the Old Delhi railroad station shortly after 7 a. m. to find Godse already awake.

For two hours we were sitting together in the room (the story as related by Karkare later) having chats, drinking tea and coffee together. We were joking, talking, discussing. Then we started getting serious. The reasons for this seriousness was that, although Nathuram had decided to kill Gandhiji that day in the evening, we still had no idea at all how he was going to do it.

Accordingly, we had to find a plan. We imagined that after the bomb explosion of the 20th, the place around Gandhiji at Birla House would be heavily guarded and it would be difficult for us to get an entrance. Probably the people going to the prayer meeting would be searched for arms and so we knew we must find the safe, sure way to get the gun in and do the deed.

We discussed for some time and then Nathuram had this idea. We would go into the street and buy from a photographer one of those old-style cameras on a tripod with a black hood under which the photographer works. We would conceal the pistol inside the base of the camera. Nathuram would set his camera before the microphone where Gandhi would be speaking. He would put the hood over his head, take out the pistol and while Gandhiji was taking, shoot him from under the concealment of the hood.

Accordingly, we went down into the street in search of a photographer whose camera we might buy. We found one near the station, but after we studied him for a while, Apte announced it was a bad idea. He said nobody used cameras like that any more, and anyone going to Gandhiji's prayer meeting to take his picture would use a small German or American camera.

We went back to the Retiring Room to think of some other idea. Someone suggested we take a *burqa*, the garment that is generally used by Moslem women to move about in the streets. There were many Moslem women coming to Gandhiji's prayers in those times because he was their saviour. In addition, the women were usually closest to him, so that way Nathuram could get in for a close shot. We were very excited by this idea. We went to this bazaar and purchased a *burqa*, the biggest one we could find. We brought it back to the Retiring Room.

When Nathuram put it on, he found out instantly that the idea would not work at all. The folds kept getting in the way and hindering him. 'I will never be able to take out the pistol,' he said, 'I will be caught in this woman's dress to my eternal shame without having killed Gandhiji.'

So now we had to think of some other idea. We had wasted most of our morning on bad ideas. We had only six hours left before the time of the killing and we still did not have our plan. Finally, Apte said: 'Well, Nathuram, sometimes the simplest things are the best.' He said we should dress Nathuram in a kind of greyish military suit very much used by the people at that time. It had a loose shirt which hung at the sides of the pants which would cover the bulk of the pistol on his hip. Somewhat in despair, we decided that was our best idea. Accordingly, we returned to the bazaar and purchased this outfit for Nathuram.

(Continued next page)

34 Years ago today...

Then we went back to the street of the cameraman we had seen earlier in the morning, and whose camera we had contemplated buying. There we made the overwhelmingly stupid, amateurish and sentimental gesture of having a picture taken.

We returned to the room to relax and decide on our plan. Nathuram would go first to Birla House, and Apte and I would follow. When the time for the deed had come, one of us would stand on each side of Nathuram. In that way, if anyone tried to interfere with his shooting, we might stop them and Nathuram would have time to take careful aim before shooting. It was by then time to vacate the Retiring Room according to the rules of that place. Nathuram took out the pistol. He carefully put seven bullets inside. Then he placed it on his hip and we left.

To our relief and surprise (Karkare remembered), we found the entrance of Birla House posed no problem at all. The guard had been increased, but no one was searching the crowd coming in for weapons. We were relieved. We knew then Nathuram had made his entrance safely. We walked out to the garden and there we saw Nathuram mingling with the crowds. He seemed composed and good-spirited. We of course, did not speak to one another. The crowd was scattered around the lawn. As five o'clock and the time for the prayers grew near, the people began to move together. We took our places on either side of Nathuram. We did not speak or glance at him so as not to reveal our secret. He was so much in himself, he seemed to have forgotten us, to have forgotten we were there.

Our plan was to kill Gandhi after he had sat down on the little prayer meeting platform facing the crowd. To do it, we stationed ourselves at the outer rim of the crowd towards the right as we faced the platform. It would mean an accurate shot of about thirty-five feet. Sizing up the distance I silently wondered 'Can Nathuram do it?' He was not an experienced or particularly good shot. Will he be nervous and lose his aim, I wondered? I glanced at Nathuram. He was staring straight ahead, seemingly calm, all wrapped up in himself. I glanced at my watch. Gandhiji was coming late. I began to wonder why. I was a bit nervous.

I turned. Nathuram, too, made a half turn to the right. Suddenly, we saw a parting in the people and coming straight towards us through that little voluntary path in the crowd was Gandhiji. Nathuram's hands were in his pockets. He took out one hand, his free hand. He kept the hand in which he had hidden his weapon in his pocket. He flicked off the safety catch of the automatic.

In a flash he had made the calculation: 'now is the time to kill him.' He knew he had been given a providential opportunity, far greater than the chance he would have had if Gandhiji had been seated on the prayer platform. He knew he needed to take only two steps to the edge of the little human corridor. Two steps. Three seconds. Then the killing would be easy, a mechanical thing. What was difficult was driving himself to the act of will to start the action, to take one step that made the killing inevitable.

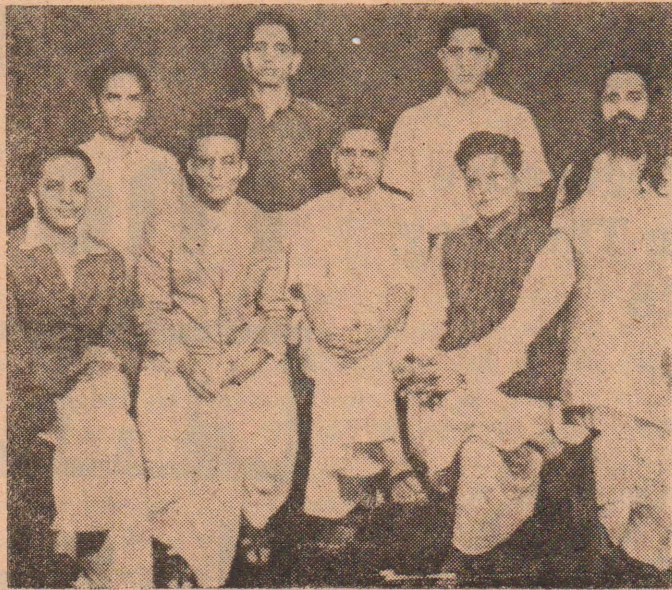
Manu saw him 'a stout young man in khaki dress' taking that step. It brought him through the last ranks of people to the edge of the parting in the crowd through which their cortege was moving.

Karkare's eyes were on Nathuram. 'He took the pistol from his pocket and passed it between his palms. He had decided to make obeisance to Gandhi for whatever useful service he had rendered his country. When Gandhi was only three strides from us, Nathuram stepped into the corridor. He had the pistol concealed between his hands. He bowed slowly from the waist, and he said to him: "Namaste Gandhiji."

Manu thought he wanted to kiss Gandhi's feet. Gently, she extended an arm to motion him away. 'Brother,' she murmured, 'Bapu is already ten minutes late.'

At that instant Nathuram's left arm shot out, thrusting her brutally aside. The black Beretta pistol lay exposed in his right hand. Nathuram pulled the trigger three times. Three sharp reports shattered the stillness of the prayer ground. Nathuram Godse had not failed. All three rounds tore into the chest of the slender figure advancing towards him.

Manu, groping to recover the spittoon and notebook Nathuram had knocked from her hands, heard the shots. She looked up. Hands clasped in greeting, her beloved Bapu seemed to be



Seated, left to right, Narayan Apte, 34-hanged; Veer Savarkar—acquitted; Nathuram Godse, 39, the killer, a fanatic newspaperman—hanged; Vishnu Karkare, 34, anti-Moslem proprietor of a tawdry traveller's hotel—life imprisonment, Standing, Shanker Kistaya, Badge's servant—convicted, but acquitted on appeal; Gopal Godse, 29, the killer's brother—life imprisonment; Madanal Pahwa, 20, a Punjabi refugee who'd sworn to avenge his mutilated father—life imprisonment; Digamber Badge, 37, the arms peddler who disguised himself as a holy man—turned state's witness, released.

still moving forward, chest bare, trying to take one last step towards the prayer platform ahead. She saw the red stains spreading over the gleaming white *khadi*. Gandhi gasped, 'He Ram—O God!' Then a lifeless little bundle, he slowly sank to the ground beside her, his hands still frozen in the final gesture to which his spirit had commanded them, a greeting to his assassin. In the folds of the blood-soaked *dhoti*, Manu saw the eight-shilling Ingersoll watch whose loss had so pained Gandhi ten months before. It was seventeen minutes past five.

Louis Mountbatten received the news Gandhi had been shot as he trotted up to Government House from a ride. His first words formed a question millions would ask in the next hours: 'Who did it?'

'We don't know, sir,' the ADC who had given him the news answered. Mountbatten rushed to change. Minutes later, as he dashed out of Government House, he spotted his press attache, Alan Campbell-Johnson. He ordered him into his waiting car.

By the time the two men reached Birla House an enormous crowd had already engulfed its grounds. As they pushed their way through the throng to Gandhi's quarters, a man, his face contorted with frenzy and hysteria, shrieked, 'It was a Moslem who did it.'

A sudden silence froze the crowd. Mountbatten turned to the man.

'You fool,' he shouted as loudly as he could, 'don't you know it was a Hindu?'

Seconds later, as they passed into the house, Campbell-Johnson turned to him. 'How can you possibly know it's a Hindu?' he asked.

'I don't,' answered Mountbatten, 'but if it really was a Moslem, India is going to live one of the most ghastly massacres the world has ever seen.'

Mountbatten's concern was shared by thousands. The certainty that a disaster would engulf India if Gandhi's assassin turned out to be a Moslem prompted the director of All India Radio to make an extraordinary and responsible decision: instead of interrupting the radio's nationwide circuits with India's scoop of the century, he ordered programmes to continue as normal. While they did, the headquarters of the police and army, employing their emergency telephone circuits, put every major army, and police command in India on emergency footing. From Birla House, the police relayed to the radio the most vital news of all: Nathuram Godse was a Hindu of the Brahmin caste. Precisely at six o'clock, in an announcement every word of which had been carefully studied, the Indian people learned of the death of the gentle man who had brought them freedom.

'Mahatma Gandhi,' the radio announced, 'was assassinated in New Delhi at twenty minutes past five this afternoon. His assassin was a Hindu.'

The slaughter had been avoided: it now remained to India to mourn.

LETTERS

23, Canal Row,
Colombo-1

The Editor,
"Saturday Review"
Dear Sir,

Sri Lanka's diversities of race, creed and language, it has been said, can be its destruction or its glory.

Tragically, far too frequently, particularly since 1977, these diversities have been the source of needless and senseless strife and bloodshed.

The prime cause for this unfortunate situation has been identified in some quarters as the lack of understanding between the various communities.

I would go further and say that it is the deliberate spread of misunderstanding by dastardly elements in all the communities that has largely contributed to keep the communities apart, suspicious and apprehensive of one another.

By "dastardly elements", I have in mind mainly politicians past and present, in power and out, who have unashamedly exploited communal passions to serve their own political ends.

Thanks to these politicians, the main communal problem, that between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, which was virtually solved with the Bandaranaike—Chelvanayakam pact of 1958, still continues to be the biggest stumbling block to peace, unity and progress in Our Common motherland.

In this context, I am heartened by the efforts to launch an independent journal from Jaffna whose main objective will be, as far as possible, "to meet the challenge of establishing two-way communication between all peoples and nationalities within the country"

I pray that this cherished objective will be realised even in part through the columns of the "Saturday Review".

Yours respectfully,
Gamini Navaratne

111, Pickering's Road,
Colombo-13.

Dear Sir,

I understand that you are in the process of editing a new News Weekly called the SATURDAY REVIEW, the first issue of which is scheduled to be released on 30th January, 1982.

I welcome wholeheartedly the **Saturday Review** and hope that the paper would maintain a high standard not merely in language and appearance but as much in its contents.

I do hope your paper will stand up for justice, fairplay and impartiality; call a spade a spade and champion the cause of the down-trodden and the fallen and the injured; shower praises where praise is due, and criticise, not the persons but in ideas, without fear or favour and with malice to none.

Yours faithfully
Arul M. Rajendran

From the pages of Hansard - 50 YEARS AGO

Debates in the Legislative Council of Ceylon-Thursday, November 8, 1928

PRESENT

The Honourable Sir JAMES PEIRIS, Kt. (Colombo Town South), Vice-President.
 The Honourable Brigadier A. C. GIRDWOOD, C. B. C. M. G. D. S. O., Commanding The Troops, Ceylon.
 The Honourable Mr. A. G. M. FLETCHER, C. M. G., C. B. E., Colonial Secretary.
 The Honourable Mr. M. T. AKBAR, K. C. Acting Attorney General.
 The Honourable Mr. F. G. TYRRELL, C. M. G., Controller of Revenue.
 The Honourable Mr. W. W. WOODS, C. M. G., Treasurer.
 The Honourable Mr. F. A. STOCKDALE, C. B. E. Director of Agriculture.
 The Honourable Mr. N. H. M. ABDUL CADER (Second Muslim Member).
 The Honourable Sir PONNAMBALAM RAMANATHAN, Kt. K.C., C.M.G. (Northern Province, Northern Division)
 The Honourable Mr. W. DURAI SWAMY (Northern Province, Western Division).
 The Honourable Mr. E. W. PERERA (Kalutara Revenue District).
 The Honourable Mr. E. R. TAMBIMUTTU (Batticaloa Revenue District).
 The Honourable Mr. A. C. G. WIJEYEKOON (Nominated Unofficial Member).
 The Honourable Mr. C. W. W. KANNANGARA (Southern Province, Western Division)
 The Honourable Mr. K. BALASINGHAM (Nominated Unofficial Member).
 The Honourable Mr. A. CANAGARATNAM (Northern Province, Southern Division).
 The Honourable Mr. C. E. VICTOR COREA (Colombo Town, North).
 The Honourable Mr. C. H. Z. FERNANDO (North-Western Province, Western Division).
 The Honourable Mr. H. R. FREEMAN (North-Central Province).
 The Honourable Mr. T. B. JAYAH (Third Muslim Member).
 The Honourable Mr. H. M. MACAN MARKAR (First Muslim Member).
 The Honourable Mr. G. E. MADAWALA (North-Western Province, Eastern Division).
 The Honourable Mr. A. MAHADEVA (Western Province, Ceylon Tamil).
 The Honourable Mr. A. F. MOLAMURE (Kegalla Revenue District).
 The Honourable Mr. I. X. PEREIRA (First Indian Member).
 The Honourable Mr. S. RAJARATNAM (Northern Province Central Division).
 The Honourable Mr. D. S. SENANAYAKE (Negombo District).
 The Honourable Mr. M. M. SUBRAMANIAM (Trincomalee Revenue District).
 The Honourable Mr. V. S. De S. WIKRAMANAYAKE (Southern Province, Eastern Division).
 The Honourable Mr. G. A. H. WILLE (First Burgher Member).
 The Honourable Mr. W. A. De SILVA (Central Province, Urban).
 The Honourable Mr. P. B. RAMBUKWELLE (Central Province, Rural).
 The Honourable Mr. T. M. SABA RUTNAM (Northern Province, Eastern Division).
 The Honourable Mr. T. L. VILLIERS (European Urban Member).
 The Honourable Mr. K. NATESA AIYAR (Second Indian Member).
 The Honourable Mr. W. E. WAIT, Principal Collector of Customs.
 The Honourable Mr. L. MACRAE, Director of Education.
 The Honourable Mr. S. OBEYESEKERE, Acting Solicitor-General.
 The Honourable Mr. GEORGE BROWN (European Rural Member).

The First FRANCHISE debate

The Honourable Mr. H. A. BURDEN,
 Acting Controller of Indian Immigrant Labour.
 The Honourable Mr. M. J. CARY (Commercial Member).
 The Honourable Mr. G. R. De SILVA
 (Ratnapura Revenue District).
 The Honourable Dr. V. VAN LANGENBERG
 Acting Director of Medical and Sanitary Services.
 The Honourable Mr. C. E. De VOS
 (Nominated Unofficial Member).
 Mr. C. C. WOOLLEY, Clerk to the Council.
 Report of the Donoughmore Commission.

Report of the Donoughmore Commission

FRANCHISE

The Hon. The VICE - PRESIDENT:- We will now proceed to the discussion of the group of motions under the heading Franchise. I believe the Honourable Member who represents the Ceylon Tamils of the Western Province is in possession of the House.

The following motions stood on the Agenda Paper under the heading Franchise:-

To continue the debate on the motion of the Hon. Mr. H. R. Freeman—

The House is of opinion that the age for exercising the franchise should be 21 for all.

To continue the debate on the motion of the Hon. Mr. A. F. Molamure—

This Council accepts the recommendation of the Donoughmore Commission as regards the extension of the franchise subject to the following amendments:-

(a) That in the case of females the age for qualification as a voter should be 21 and not 30,

(b) That in the case of non-Ceylonese British subjects a literacy qualification should be added to the proposed five years residential qualification;

or in the alternative the qualification should be that the applicant to be registered as a voter should—

- (1) have resided in the Island for a period of one year,
- (2) be possessed of immovable property of the value of Rs. 500,
- (3) or be in the receipt of an income of Rs. 50 per month,
- (4) and be able to read and write one of the languages of the Island, e.g., English, Sinhalese, or Tamil.

To continue the debate on the motion of the Hon. Mr. G. A. H. Wille—

That at present and in the absence of any system rendering politics at all intelligible to the masses, the franchise be not extended further than by a lowering of the existing income qualification and the inclusion of females on similar terms to those for males.

To continue the debate on the motion of the Hon. Mr. T. B. Jayah—

That in the opinion of this Council non-Ceylonese British subjects should be placed on a footing of equality with the Ceylonese in respect of status and rights of citizenship.

(Continued next page)

C. R. M. on the Voteless plantation workers— 1981

The continued existence in Sri Lanka of some several hundred thousand stateless persons, drawn almost entirely from the workers on the plantations whose labour creates the major export income of our country, has been a grave blot on the human rights record of successive governments since independence. Many of these persons had the vote during colonial times but were actually disfranchised by subsequent legislation passed by the free and sovereign legislature. To these persons, originally brought from India by the British as cheap labour, the independence of Sri Lanka meant the loss of their civil rights through no fault of their own.

CRM has taken the position that such stateless persons lawfully present in Sri Lanka and their dependents who wish to make this country their permanent home should be granted citizenship.

In this connection it may be relevant to note that in 1979 CRM came to know that when the police are asked to investigate persons who have applied for citizenship, one of the questions they must report on relates to the political and party allegiance of the applicant.

CRM wrote to the government in May 1979 asking it to discontinue immediately this practice, which it described as obnoxious and a misuse of the powers of the police.

‘From “The Franchise — can we do better?” — s Civil Rights Movement Publication issued on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Universal Franchise.)

The Hon. Mr. V. S. de S. Wikramanayake to move—

This Council urges the necessity for registration of voters being undertaken by Government and that registration be not restricted to those who apply for it only, as recommended in the Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution.

The Hon. Mr. M. M. Subramaniam to move—

That in the rearrangement and redistribution of the territorial electoral areas every revenue district, though not possessing a population of 50,000 should form a unit for the election of a member.

To continue the debate on the motion of the Hon. Mr. W. Duraiswamy—

This Council is of opinion that it is not necessary to extend the franchise to women of our country, but in view of a desire expressed by the educated section, franchise may be granted to those above 21 years of age and possessed of a literacy qualification equivalent to the School-Leaving Certificate Standard in English, Tamil, or Sinhalese.

The Hon. Mr. A. MAHADEVA:—I come now, Sir, to the most controversial part of the subject, the question of Indian franchise. As a preliminary I would like to make a few comments on the wording of these motions as I am not at all clear as to how the resolutions are to be put to the House.

The Hon. The VICE-PRESIDENT:—I indicated that I could not alter the terms of the motions, but I also indicated that we would have to come to an understanding as to how the motions should be put, and in putting them whether they are to be altered.

The Hon. Mr. A. MAHADEVA:—My difficulty is the order in which they are going to be put.

The Hon. The VICE-PRESIDENT:—That will have to be considered.

The Hon. Mr. A. MAHADEVA:—If I may make one suggestion, the position is this. There are some of us on this side of the House who feel that there should be no discrimination against Indians, but we are divided on one point as to the franchise that ought to be granted. Some say that manhood franchise should be granted, while others say that both in regard to Indians and Ceylonese the franchise should be limited. So, when it comes to the matter of voting I shall be very sorry to see owing to a division of our forces over that question, the Indian cause suffering. I would therefore submit that it would be fairest to put the resolution of Mr. Jayah first. His resolution is a comprehensive one, and I am merely suggesting it.

The Hon. The VICE-PRESIDENT:—That is quite right.

The Hon. Mr. A. MAHADEVA:—The words of his resolution are:

That in the opinion of this Council non-Ceylonese British subjects should be placed on a footing of equality with the Ceylonese in respect of status and rights of citizenship. I trust that in whatever order they are put—supposing my suggestion is not adopted—those Members who feel that there should be no differentiation, would vote with Mr. Jayah even though some of my honourable friends, like the Honourable the First Burgher Member, might feel that the Indians in common with the Ceylonese should not be given manhood franchise.

I now come to the question of the Indians and their franchise, and I cannot help remarking that the debate furnishes a very illuminating commentary on the statements of those who gave evidence before the Donoughmore Commission. My honourable friend, the Member for Kegalla, has been very candid. He said his sole object is to differentiate. If the Commissioners read this innocent resolution of the Member for Kegalla they would still be under the impression with which they left our shores, namely, that the majority community in Ceylon is so reasonably-minded when judged by the evidence they gave before them, that they would never dream of differentiating between Ceylonese and Indians or any other communities in Ceylon. Even if they read this resolution as worded, if it is not supplemented by the speech of the Honourable Member, it would still leave them under that impression: but with that candour for which my honourable friend is noted, he does not want to take advantage of anybody—not even of this House—and he says: "I am out to differentiate against a particular community in Ceylon." Now, I wonder what

The Hon. Mr. A. F. MOLAMURE:—I wish to interrupt the Honourable Member Sir. I never used those words.

The Hon. The VICE-PRESIDENT:—You did not use those words, but I think the Honourable Member is drawing an inference.

The Hon. Mr. A. MAHADEVA:—The speech is there for those who wish to know what he meant. I would wish to know what searchings of heart there will be among the Commissioners when they read this debate. They went away convinced by the evidence given before them; with one stroke of the pen they abolished communal representation. And, in coming to that conclusion, were they not influenced by the past record of the Congress, by the professions of its accredited leaders? Take one Member, a prominent figure in all assemblies in this Island, who gave evidence before the Commissioners. He is a past President of the Congress. I refer to the Honourable Member for Colombo District. What did he say before that Commission? He said: "I am personally in favour of manhood suffrage, but unfortunately, that would lead to a large number of Indians coming in, and, as I will not suggest a differentiation between Indians and Ceylonese, I am prepared to penalize the Ceylonese and make the conditions equal for both Ceylonese and Indians. Therefore, I say, introduce a literacy test." If the people in this country are prepared to penalize their own people for the purpose of giving equal treatment to everyone who comes within the hospitable shores of Ceylon, what country, I ask, is more fitted for self-Government immediately, without any safeguards whatever, than Ceylon? That is the conviction the Commissioners went away with; that is the frame of mind in which they made their recommendations for the abolition of communal representation.

Then, with regard to the National Congress, this House was reminded that I myself was associated with Congress. But from the day the Commissioners arrived and up to the day they left the Island, there was never a word said against differentiation against Indians. When the first session of the Congress was held the franchise that was suggested for the Ceylonese and for the Indians was to be identical. That same attitude was adopted at session after session without alteration. Until the Commissioners left our shores I never heard of any talk of differentiation in the franchise; and yet the ink on their report is hardly dry before a resolution is introduced into this Council, and emissaries from the leaders of the country are going about the villages raising an agitation against the entry of the Indians, unmindful of the disastrous results of similar preaching which resulted in very unfortunate consequences to this Island. As I said, they have repeatedly said that there is not going to be differentiation, but as soon as the shoe pinches them, at the very first opportunity they get in this Council, they get up and shout their loudest that they must differentiate, and that they will not have the Indians in their midst. No wonder we who belong to minority communities feel that if this danger looms ahead of the Indians the professions on which some of us have too great hopes might be falsified in the future.

Now, the question which I wish to ask myself is, whether this menace of which my honourable friends have spoken so much and which they have made so much of does really exist, because I wish it to be clearly understood that some of the speakers have stated—although they stated it in mild language—that if only the Indian will make his domicile permanently here and throw in his lot with the Ceylonese, they will not show any differentiation. There is either a lack of sincerity in these expressions or they are not following up their arguments to their logical conclusions. What is it they object to when they talk of the Indian menace? They mean nothing more nor nothing less than that Indians are coming into this Island and are taking the bread and living out of the mouths of the Ceylonese. Would it make any difference, Sir, if the Indian comes here, settles down permanently, and takes the living out of the mouth of the Sinhalese villager? My honourable friend realizes that, and he has already given notice of a motion in which he asks that the Indian be stopped from coming here. The fear is not what some of them would have us believe, but the real one is: "We do not want you here even if you are prepared to throw in your lot with us. We do not want you to swamp this country". That is the cry.

(To be continued in the next issue)

Fr. PAUL
CASPERSZ

writes on

The plantation areas: People and Problems

THE TAMIL ESTATE WORKERS (1)

(The following is a revised version of an article written for, and published in, the NEW INTERNATIONALIST (U K), November 1981. It is the first of a series of articles that will appear in the SATURDAY REVIEW on the Plantation Areas and the Plantation People of the island.)

In an extremely readable, almost light-hearted, piece "The opening of the Kandy Road", the eminent Ivor Jennings wrote:

"As soon as the Kandy road was opened, it was realized that a new source of profit, greater than cinnamon, offered itself. The first coffee estate was opened by Mr George Bird who was known as 'Gampola George' During the same period, the emancipation of slaves in the west Indies caused a heavy fall of production (of coffee), and Ceylon stepped into the breach. People poured into the Kandyan hills. Usually they were British, for they alone had the money to invest and the initiative needed. They imported labourers from South India' (The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, 1, 1958, p. 103).

The reference to British investment and British initiative is, of course, loaded with the familiar clichés and biases of Westerners writing about the peoples they subjugated and exploited. But let that reference pass.

What interests us here is the import of Indian labour, so necessary for the success of the colonial plantation enterprise in Ceylon.

The story opens with the coffee plantations begun by the British on land sold for a song to any British army man or archdeacon. Indigenous Sinhalese labour was not forthcoming. But no matter. From impoverished South India, which Britain also ruled, imports of cheap labour could be dragged into the island.

(Continued on page 9)

a window on INDIA

NEW DELHI - The government poster being circulated to Indian missions abroad carries the caption "India among the nations of the world" and proclaims that this country is "among the 10 most industrialized nations, among the only seven countries that have launched their own Earth satellites, and among the three countries that have the world's largest pools of technically trained manpower"

The poster is part of a government campaign to project India as a relatively rich and prospering poor country with scientific abilities and the potential for accelerated growth and development.

This image is intended to counter what many Indians in government feel is the inaccurate stereotype of a country wallowing in abysmal poverty and surviving through charity. In citing the technical achievements, the poster declares that the evaluation of a country "depends on how you look at it."

Other Criteria

The World Bank does, indeed, have other criteria and another perspective. In its recent World Development Report, it places India 15th from the bottom of 124 nations in per-capita income. With average yearly earnings of \$190 a person, India is rated just

"India among the nations of the world"

above Upper Volta and Afghanistan and below Rwanda, Malawi and Sri Lanka. In other key categories, such as average life expectancy (52 years) and the degree of adult literacy (36 percent), India also falls within the lower ranges.

The contradictory sets of indicators cited by the Indian Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity, which created the poster, and the World Bank are equally valid. Taken together, they reflect the staggering diversity of Indian society, which seeks to embrace and accommodate hunter-gatherer tribesmen, cultivators and herders, modern farmers, mercantile capitalists and erudite groups extending the frontiers of science.

Uneven development is not, of course, unique to India or

even to developing countries and the chasm between rich and poor in the Third World has often been diminished to a cliché. But India, with 685 million people divided into classes, castes, tribes, sects, and language groups, the disparities are greater. With so many people, the



Mrs. Gandhi

poverty is both more intensive and more extensive than in other countries; similarly, the wealth and the intellectual capital are also more abundant than in even many developed countries.

So far in India's 34-year history of independence, the gulf between what is often called the two Indias has bedevilled all planners and ideologists. Communists, for instance, who once looked to land redistribution as a mobilizing cry, have now come to realize that because of the huge reservoir of landless people they cannot command simultaneously the allegiance of those who want land and those who have some, even a little bit, and that once the landless become landed they regard the dispossessed with suspicion.

Mrs. Gandhi has told a succession of Western visitors, most recently President Luis Herrera Campins of Venezuela that her government favors foreign investments. In fact, in terms of economic priorities, Mrs. Gandhi's domestic program is very similar to that of both President Regan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain. The weight is now on stimulating entrepreneurial incentives. The approach is to loosen the web of regulation and lure some of the capital circulating in a vast illegal economy into the open.

In general, the feeling among key elements of the urban elite, the most politically influential sector, is that the freeing of the economy will push India into what many believe is its rightful place in the sun. "We are like Japan was" said Vinod Kapoor, a shawl manufacturer. "If we weren't strangled by the politicians the Indian industrialists could follow the Japanese example. We have the capacity, the manpower, the skills."

This thinking ties in with the strategy behind the poster. India, the thinking goes, should not be perceived as a poor nation but as a rich poor country-like Brazil. It is in the process of transformation and is gaining in economic strength, and its prospects are improving. ...

India, which last year was able to produce only 22,000 automobiles with 20-year-old European dies, is now producing its own coin-operated video games for arcades not only in the major cities but also in provincial towns.

Stadiums, pools, and hotels costing several hundred millions of dollars were built here for the two-week-long Asian Games, by a work force of men and women who slept on the sites, in ragged tents or amid heaps of bricks. The structures are architecturally striking: the building techniques seem to date from the time of the Pharaohs.

As the government poster says, it "depends on how you look at it."

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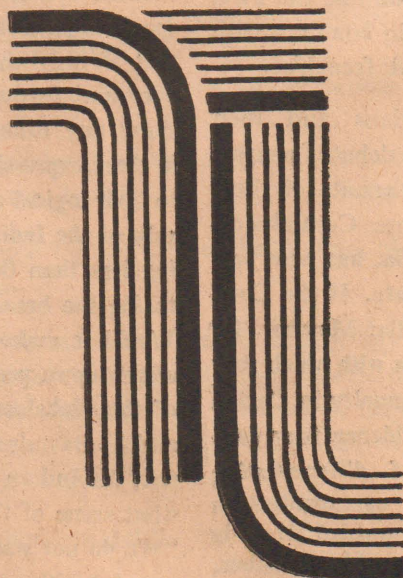
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Fr Paul Caspersz writes on- The Tamil Estate workers(I)

(Continued from page 7)

Wages were very low and in their payment there were gross irregularities which continued into the 1920s and persist - in attenuated forms - to the present day. Housing was atrocious. Disease was rampant. Mortality was high.

The darkness began to grow a little less fearsome when from the late 1860s coffee, succumbing to coffee blight, steadily yielded place to tea. Tea is labour-intensive. On estates in Sri Lanka, the famous 'two-leaves and a bud' have to be plucked all through the year. There was therefore the growing imperative of a resident labour force. Barrack-type rectangular sheds which came to be called 'coolie lines' were constructed. Largely migratory in the coffee phase, South Indian labour began to permanently settle on the estates. This marked the beginning of the 'Indo-Ceylon Problem'.

Sri Lanka attempted to solve it unilaterally in 1948. In that year Sri Lanka, after four and half centuries of foreign rule, felt the first winds of a new freedom. But, tragically, they did not blow over all her people. In the population - then about 7 million - some 800,000 were classified as Indian Tamils only because they were the last of several waves of immigrants from India into the island. By the Citizenship Act of 1948 these, almost to a man, were declared non-citizens and by the 1949 Franchise Act were deprived of the vote.

The Age of Statelessness had begun. So long as Nehru lived, India had held firmly to the position that the 19th century immigrants were the responsibility of Sri Lanka. However, only a few months after his death in 1964, the two Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and India signed the first of the Repatriation Agreements. The second followed in 1974. Estimating that in 1964 there were at least 975,000 stateless persons in Sri Lanka, the Prime Ministers agreed that India would give citizenship to, and take away, 600,000 while Sri Lanka

would give citizenship to, and keep, 375,000 in either case, with the natural increase. The Great Uprooting was the consequence of a game of numbers played in high places.

For most of the workers, it was not to be repatriation, but expatriation and in some cases deportation. Even in a world where there has been so much else to hit the headlines, it is surprising that the Agreements, which heralded the largest organized worker migration of the 20th century, have gone so largely unnoticed.

Why, it may legitimately be asked, have the estate Tamils been subjected to so much hardship, humiliation and discrimination? To them, more than to any other single section of the country's inhabitants, Sri Lanka owes a debt for having given the country so much for so little. Every year tea is the largest single earner of foreign exchange which the country so direly needs. Taxes on tea account for a large percentage of government revenue: 8, 13, 28 and 21 per cent in 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979 respectively. By means of these taxes there can be no doubt that the estate workers help to finance the whole range of welfare services in the country. These include free education even for the children of the ruling economic and political elites in Sri Lanka's most prestigious schools recall the hullabaloo of the Old Boys when it was suggested a few years ago that Royal College was a disgraceful howler in Republican Sri Lanka! and in the Universities. It would also do us all good to remember that the imported luxury goods - currently abundant in the country because our Government has bowed low to the World Bank's dictates of an open door economy - are goods paid in part by the foreign exchange earned by the forgotten tea worker.

(To be continued)

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Sinhala-Tamil relations: the most crucial problem of Sri Lankan society

Sinhala - Tamil relations or the National Question as some like to call it, has become today the most crucial problem of Sri Lankan Society. It has claimed many lives and also has given rise to situations where state power is confronted with violent means. Therefore it is a question that any organisation concerned with Justice or Peace cannot ignore. It is important to face the issues that this question poses fairly and squarely and evolve a programme of action. The issues involved consist of the following sections.

- (a) Tamil grievances
- (b) Social basis of the Sinhala - Tamil question
- (c) Post '74 — a qualitatively new stage of the question
- (d) Basis for a solution.

a. Tamil Grievances

In the post-independent period the political demands of the political parties representing the Tamil people had escalated from a '50-50' sharing of power to a demand for a separate state. In between these, there was a stage when a party demand-

ded a Federal solution to the problem. Parallel to these demands one can note the aggravation of the situation regarding the major grievances of the Tamil people which were mainly in the areas of (1) Land Colonisation (2) Language (3) Education and (4) Employment. These grievances form the objective historical conditions that had given rise to the Sinhala - Tamil problem and therefore have to be understood first to get a clear picture of the question.

Tamils claim that the state policies in each of these areas had discriminated against them. We shall proceed now to examine these grievances and at the same time try to understand the position in each of them at present.

(1) Land Colonisation

Colonisation of the land in the North-Central and Western provinces had been a part of the development strategy of all Governments. Other than the development of these areas the governments hoped to solve the problems of agricultural development and landlessness through these policies. In implementing them families were settled in these areas after the government had developed infrastructure facilities for cultivation. In this process the population composition of these areas changed by increasing the proportion of the Sinhala population who were settled here from the other areas.

schemes like Gal Oya such a process of land transfer had taken place. In the already settled areas of the Mahaveli the same is happening albeit at a faster rate.

In the Harea land has been allotted to the Ceylon Tobacco Company and the idea of agricultural free trade zones with involvement of foreign capital is already in the air. All this would mean that the amount of land available for distribution among the people will be less and the minority communities, always discriminated against, when available resources are distributed, will have even a lesser chance of getting land.

The present economic policies are therefore aggravating the discrimination against the minorities that had been a feature in our earlier policies of land allocation. Even during the implementation of the Land Reforms of 1972 and 1975 and in the allocation of land under the NADSA Scheme there has been discrimination

by **SUNIL BASTIAN**

Settlement under the Gal Oya Scheme is one instance where such changes in the population composition had taken place. Muthur and Trincomalee also are two electorates where the Sinhala population had been increased over the years.

At present there is settlement of people under the Mahaveli Scheme. But there seems to be no awareness of this historic injustice done to the Tamil people and therefore no attempt to redress it.

Data on the ethnic composition of the settlers in the Harea for example, shown that it is almost 100% Sinhalese. These settlers had been drawn from different electorates and no attempts had been made to create new settlements comprised of people of the North and East which would have redressed some of the earlier discrimination against the Tamil speaking people. One wonders whether the future settlements in the Eastern part of the country covered by the Mahaveli programme will change the ethnic composition of the population in these areas, as had happened in the past.

But the major question that arises from the present development efforts in agriculture is whether a process of land concentration in a few hands, will take place. With the scale of the investments in Mahaveli, to get an adequate return within our capitalist system, the government has no option but to encourage large scale capitalist farming which would mean a consolidation of land in a few hands. Research shows that in earlier

against the minorities. Here the victims are the Indian Tamil population. We shall discuss the social basis of these policies in a section that will follow.

(2) Language

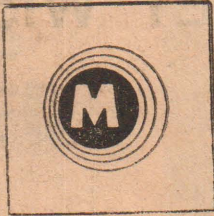
Sinhala was made the only official language of this country by the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956. Although The Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act No. 28 was passed in 1958 the regulations required for its implementation were passed only in 1966. The 1978 Constitution made Tamil a National Language.

In their day to day life, Tamil people were and are discriminated against because they did not know Sinhala, in two important ways. First they had to satisfy certain language requirements to get government jobs and secondly they were put into difficulties when having dealings with the state because all communications were in the official language. The status of the Tamil language as a National language has not done much to reduce this discrimination. Even now, a Tamil person serving even in a Tamil speaking area has to comply with the requirements of the Official Language Act and Tamil people have to know Sinhalese if they are to deal with the government successfully.

The latter is more prevalent in the areas where Sinhalese form the majority. But the Tamil people claim that although there are legal provisions for the use of the Tamil language for administrative purposes in the Eastern and Northern provinces steps are not taken to make it a reality.

(To be continued in next issue)

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON

SRI LANKA 1981

Amnesty International was concerned about the wide powers of arrest and detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and about people arrested under its provisions and held incommunicado. The fate of three Tamils who "disappeared" in 1979 has still not been clarified.

A major development in 1980 was the government's decision to sign and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The government acceded to the covenant on 11 June 1980 and made a declaration under Article 41 of that covenant recognizing the competence of the Human Rights Committee to hear interstate complaints about violations of the covenant. On 3 June 1980 Amnesty International cabled President J.R. Jayewardene welcoming the government's decision. In a letter of 17 September 1980 Amnesty International expressed the hope that this important initiative would be followed by an early decision to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as Amnesty International had recommended in its memorandum submitted to the government in May 1980. The government has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol.

Amnesty International said it was encouraged to note that the Proscription of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Other Similar Organizations Law had lapsed in May 1980, a law which Amnesty International had criticized. It expressed concern however that the PTA remained in force, which similarly suspends legal safeguards. Several arrests were reported under the PTA, which allows for detention without trial for up to 18 months "in such place and subject to such conditions as may be determined by the Minister". Under the

PTA detainees need not be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours of arrest as is the normal rule, and there are no safeguards against incommunicado detention. Detainees have been denied any access to their lawyers and relatives for long periods.

On 5 June 1980 several opposition parties and trade unions organized a demonstration to protest against rising living costs exacerbating the earlier cut in the food subsidy program. Pro-government unions organized a counter-demonstration, and one man died in the ensuing violence. On 16 July the government imposed emergency rule and invoked the Public Security Act. It banned the general strike called by the Joint Committee for Trade Union Action for 18 July and then dismissed 40,000 public sector employees who went on strike nevertheless. Officials said opposition parties had planned the general strike to overthrow the government and obstruct its development program. Opposition sources claimed 150 people were arrested, but all were released shortly afterwards.

On 8 August 1980 opposition parties and trade unions demonstrated in Colombo Fort against the dismissals of workers who participated in the 18 July general strike. The demonstration ended in violence and the police arrested 32 trade union leaders and left-wing political leaders. On 17 September 1980 Amnesty International wrote to the President asking the government to confirm that the arrests made under the emergency imposed in July 1980 had been short-term and that those arrested were being released. It expressed concern about reports that some might face trial under the Emergency Regulations, despite the fact that the emergency had been allowed to lapse on 15 August.



Yogachandran, alias Kuttimani (right, bare-chested) was one of those taken into custody in connection with the Neerveli hold-up. He remains in custody to this day.

Amnesty International later learned that all those arrested had been released within two months of their arrest except G. I. D. Dharmasekera, the General Secretary of the Lanka Democratic Front. Amnesty International has not been able to establish under what legislation he was being held and what the specific charges were against him. It is investigating his case.

Thirty members of the Tamil minority were reported to have been arrested in April and early May in connection with an armed robbery at Neerveli in the northern region on 25 March 1981. Two policemen were killed in the incident. Amnesty International wrote and cabled to President Jayewardene on 30 April 1981 to verify reports of the arrests and to urge the government to meet the minimum standards laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. While acknowledging that those responsible for violent incidents should be brought to justice, Amnesty International expressed concern that the arrested people were apparently held incommunicado, and that relatives were not informed about their whereabouts. It stressed that the removal of safeguards against incommunicado detention by the PTA facilitated human rights violations. Amnesty International named seven people reportedly arrested and asked the government to publish the names of all those arrested, to allow them immediate access to a lawyer of their choice, to inform the relatives of the place of detention and allow them immediate and regular visits to the prisoners. It urged the government to publish the charges against the 30, or to release them.

The effective provision of minimum legal safeguards to detainees was one of the main concerns outlined by Amnesty International in its memorandum presented to the government on 23 May 1980 (see

Amnesty International Report 1980). The memorandum dealt with events in the northern Jaffna region after the declaration of an emergency on 11 July 1979. Many young Tamils were arrested under the Emergency Regulations, the PTA or other special legislation. It detailed allegations of torture and reports that six Tamils had died in the custody of the police. The memorandum was sent to the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Justice, asking for

(Continued over leaf)

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Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

PARANTHAN STRIKE ENTERS 3RD MONTH

(By a Staff Writer)

"The Island" Sinhalese Sister Goes to town!

"PLOT BY MILITANT GROUP IN NORTH UNEARTHED" said the screaming Page 1 lead headline in the Upali Group's Sinhala Sunday newspaper of—'Divaina' January 17, 1982. BID TO KILL PEOPLE BY POISONING DRINKING WATER", it added.

The news item signed by Stanley Premaratne said: An attempt by a terrorist group in the North to kill several people between January 12—January 15 in the North and the East, was foiled.

The Police have learned of a secret plan to murder military personnel, policemen and thousands of others by poisoning drinking water supplies and planting time bombs.

This conspiracy has been unearthed by the crack C.I.D. team which is investigating the killing of Sivasanmugamoorthy on January 2 at a printing press at Clock Tower Road, Jaffna. It came to light due to the split in the terrorist movement in the North. It is also learned that EROS, an organisation with a foreign base, had planned this killing.

The Media Scene

Greeting Cards instigating people to help carry out this plot, numerous documents and a paper called "Pudhiya Pathai" (New Path) were found by the Police from the deceased's belongings.

The Police team has ferreted out many secrets from S. Balasingham, a close associate of Sivasanmugamoorthy.

The deceased was closely linked to Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran, the architects of the violence in the North. He had later broken away from these two and joined another organisation, it is understood...

"THE ISLAND" of the same day—Sunday 17th January 1982, however carried an innocuous story as its Page 1 Lead. MUSLIM LAW-MARRIAGES OF CONVENIENCE OUT".

The workers at the Paranthan Chemicals Corporation are struggling with much resourcefulness and resilience against a government that is trying to hit two targets with one stone. The government is trying to break the back of the only independent trade union organisation in the public sector. Secondly, it is successfully planning its moves in effecting the natural death of yet another industrial complex in a Tamil area.

The Paranthan workers' struggle is unique in that the workers are not struggling for narrow economic demands alone but are fighting on an issue that stems from a larger context of national discrimination and national oppression.

The background to the present crisis originated in the early part of 1980, when the Paranthan Joint Trade Union Action Committee voiced protests to the management against establishing a second factory at Embilipitiya, fearing the running down of Paranthan and consequently, the natural death of the factory.

Feasibility Study

The government had spent much needed funds to have a comparative feasibility study done on either the expansion of Paranthan or the installation of a new plant at two proposed sites, Embilipitiya or Sapugaskande, by the British consultants, Warner and Cramer. The consultants' report had emphasized the definite economic advantage in expanding the factory at

Paranthan over starting a second factory at Embilipitiya. The report had also said that Paranthan, in absolute terms would be the best choice out of the three sites even without taking into consideration the factory that is already there.

More than a mere worker — Management confrontation

The JIUAC later on discovered that the Ministry had decided to drop the recommendation of the consultants since other 'policy' matters had to be given priority. Cramer and Warner being informed of such policy matters were required to submit a supplementary to their final report dealing only with the Embilipitiya site, with out reference to either Paranthan or the earlier comparative study. But even in their supplementary report the consultants have emphasized the much higher potentialities of Paranthan and the bare feasibility of Embilipitiya at the expense of Paranthan.

The CMU, the biggest trade union at Paranthan, in its letter to the President on this subject hints that the choice of Embilipitiya as a site may be due to the fact that Embilipitiya is an electorate represented by the Industries Minister's son, Nanda Mathew.

The question therefore arises: What are these, 'policy' matters override the one vital issue of economic feasibility?

At this point, we have to look into another one of the allegations against the management which eventually triggered off the present confrontation between the workers and the management.

Vacancies were not advertised internally, but were filled by people from outside, mostly from districts under the Minister and the Chairman of the Corporation. Even unskilled labour were being recruited from outside districts. The workers protesting these irregular recruitments went on a partial work to rule in October 1981. The management reacted to this by transferring one of the union leaders to the head office and interdicting a worker after he refused to abandon work to rule. Workers report that harassment of the workers by the management during work to rule become so intense that workers had resorted to violence against some of the executives. The management pounced on their opportunity to look the workers out. More interdictions followed. Seven union leaders were arrested for theft of fowls, in the house of a member of the JSS the UNP union. When chlorine production was drastically affected the Chairman sent out an appeal to the workers to return to work, over the radio and the press. The workers agreed to go on condition that the interdicted workers reinstated. The managements response to that was to interdict some more on the charge that they organized trade union activity. A special police post was installed in the factory premises to harass and intimidate the workers with the help of some of the executives. The workers went on full scale strike on November 27th.

Vindictive Arm

The management's vindictive arm has been even extended to the workers' families. Their quarters have been declared out of bounds for the workers and their families but they have defied the management since they have been paying rent to the Corporation. Police personnel from the special post go along with some of the staff and intimidate not only the worker's families. Several have been assaulted. Power and water supplies have been cut off to striker's quarters.

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Amnesty International Report.....

Continued from page 11

the government's comments and observations, and was also sent to the Minister of Trade and Shipping who is the Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry into the six deaths, the Inspector General of Police, the Military Commander for the Jaffna district and the Deputy Minister of Defence, the officials met by the Amnesty International delegate visiting Sri Lanka in August 1979.

In its letter of 17 September 1980 Amnesty International expressed concern that it had still not received the government's comments on the memorandum submitted in May. On 25 November 1980 Amnesty International discussed the memorandum with the Acting High Commissioner in London. Amnesty International was told that it would receive

a full reply from the government. It was informed that the Parliamentary Select Committee, set up to inquire into the allegations that six Tamils had died in the custody of the police after allegedly being arrested in July 1979, was expected to finalize its report in January 1981, and that the report would be published. The bodies of two of the men were found on the morning of their arrest and one died later in the prison hospital. The Jaffna magistrate returned a verdict of homicide in the case of Iyathurai Indrarajah, one of the Tamils who died after his arrest, and found "evidence of police violence." The government denied that the other three, Ramalingam Balendran, Sellathurai Rajeswaran and Sellathurai Parameswaran, had been arrested. Their bodies have not been

found although relatives have testified to their arrest and believe they subsequently died in police custody. Amnesty International was informed that the government believed the three men were in hiding afraid of interrogation in connection with criminal charges.

On 27 February 1981 Amnesty International wrote again to the government asking for the report of the Parliamentary Select Committee. It drew the government's attention to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 33/173 of 20 December 1978 requesting governments to undertake speedy and impartial investigations into all cases of "disappeared" people. Amnesty International has not received a reply and knows of no published information about the

progress made in the Parliamentary Select Committee's investigations or about its findings. The fate of the three "disappeared" Tamils has not yet been clarified.

Amnesty International also asked the government for details of any proceedings against individual police officers implicated in torture. Amnesty International has not received a reply from the government nor any indication of proceedings being instituted against individual officials.

Although death sentences are known to have been passed since the United National Party (UNP) government assumed office in 1977, Amnesty International understands that no executions have taken place since that date.