

# New Saturday Review

## SRI LANKA

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New Vol. 1

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# GOODBYE, SWEET MAHARAJAS!

The so-called Indian Peace Keeping Force (I. P. K. F.) finally pulled out of Sri Lanka on 24th March after a round two and a half years stay, during which it played mayhem in the North-East for much of the time, under the guise of ensuring the implementation of the discredited Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 29th July 1987.

The Indian Troops left like dogs with their tails tucked up under their legs. Not as heroes with their mission fulfilled, as claimed by their Commander, Lt. Gen. A. S. Kalkat.

What was their mission? To disarm *all* the Tamil militant groups led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (L.T.T.E.), who were fighting for a separate state of Eelam and pave the way for an orderly civilian government under which the Tamils would enjoy a measure of regional autonomy.

What happened? The fourth largest Army in the world suffered its most humiliating defeat at the hands of a small band of dedicated youths fighting for a place in the sun for their people.

According to Indian official reports, the I. P. K. F. lost 1,155 men and another 2,984 were injured. Again going on Indian reports, the L.T.T.E. lost 2,220 of its cadres. But according to our information the I. P. K. F. killed nearly 4,000 people, mostly innocent civilians, the bulk of them in the October 1987 operation in Jaffna alone, most of them categorised as terrorists.

Among them was the aged sister of the late Mr. S. Nadesan, QC, at Annacottai.

The excuse: How can we discern between the terrorists from the law-abiding citizens.

An old lay can be discerned as an old lady by anyone with hare's brain.

There were no real brains behind the I. P. K. F. operations. Most of the soldiers, including some of their commanders, were real mutts. Some of the soldiers did not even know how to use a public toilet. (They desecrated the Jaffna University Campus, as reported in the "Saturday Review" of 17th October, 1987).

The outgone Preident, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene never wanted the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. It was virtually thrust down his throat by Rajiv Gandhi in pursuit of India's ambition for regional power.

Mr. Premadasa, as the then Prime Minister, was not even consulted on the matter.

As President, Mr. Premadasa asked the Indians to get out in a hard-hitting speech in June 1989. He wanted

This was made plain from the annexures to the Accord, in the form of letters exchanged by Gandhi and Jayewardene.

Gandhi's letter said: "Conscious of the friendship between our two countries stretching from two millennia and more, and recognising the importance of nurturing this traditional friendship, it is imperative that both Sri Lanka and India reaffirm the decision not to allow our respective territories to be used for activities prejudicial to each other's unity, territorial integrity and security.

"In this spirit, you had, during the course of our discussion, agreed to meet some of India's concerns as follows:

"Your Excellency and myself will reach an early understanding about the relevance and employment of foreign military and intelligence personnel (in Sri Lanka) with a view to ensuring that such presences will not prejudice Indo-Sri Lanka relations.

"Trincomalee (naval base) or any other ports in Sri Lanka will not be made available for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India's interests.

"Sri Lanka's agreement with foreign broadcasting organisations will be reviewed to ensure that any facilities set up by them in Sri Lanka used solely as public broadcasting facilities and not for any military or intelligence purposes.

"Kindly confirm, Excellency, that the above correctly sets out the agreement reached between us." And Mr. Jayewardene confirmed.

The big problem now is what the modern Elara, Velupillai Prabhakaran is up to.

Described by his critics and cronies as a megalomaniac thirsting for power, he has not disclosed his stand nor even surfaced. He is still in hiding while his cohorts are engaged in a direct dialogue with the Government.

Prabhakaran is on record as having said. "Tamil Eelam will be a socialist state. By socialism, I mean an egalitarian society where human freedom and individual liberties will be guaranteed, where all forms of oppression and exploitation will be abolished. It will be a free society where our people will have maximum opportunity to develop their economy and promote their culture."

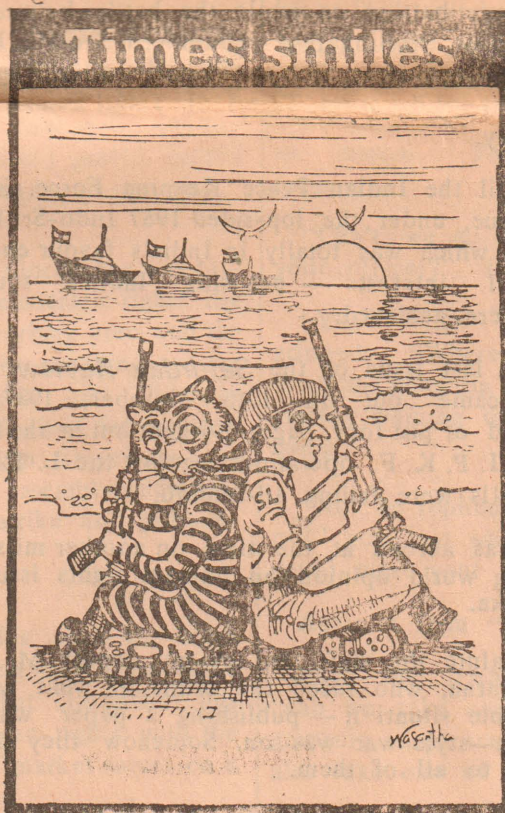
Asked by an interviewer how long in his estimate it will take to establish Eelam, he said: "There cannot be a blue print or a time-limit for a freedom struggle. Everything depends on the situation in our homeland and happenings on the international scene."

Has he resiled from his objective to establish Tamil Eelam.

His spokesman, Dr. Anton Balasingham said very recently that the LTTE will not give up arms until the Tamils feel safe and secure in their traditional homeland.

At the LTTE's behest the Sri Lanka Army remains in the North-East still remains confined in the barracks, just as under the I.P.K.F. regime, while the LTTE lords over the region. The Sri Lanka Government's writ still does not run there.

Where do we go from here? It is anybody's guess.



Courtesy "Sunday Times", 25th March.

India committed the biggest blunder by trying to prop up some minor militant groups headed by the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation (EPRLF) and installing them in office in the North-East Provincial Council by passing the L.T.T.E. which really mattered.

Even before the I. P. K. F. withdrawal the Council had become dysfunctional and its Chief Minister, Vadrarajah Perumal, leader of the E.P.R. L.F., had to flee the country. Let us get a few facts straight.

them out by 29th July, 1989, the second anniversary of the Accord. But the Indians stuck on for another eight months. It not for the change of Government in India the I.P.K.F. might have remained for far longer.

The Accord was devised not to serve the interests of the Sri Lanka Tamils but those of India - to safeguard its southern flank from any powers which it regarded as hostile to it.

Sinhalese and Tamil New Year Greetings to All our Readers



## New Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

No, 23, Canal Row  
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Telephone : 21507

Editor - in - Chief

Gamini Navaratne

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## Homeward Bound

"The Times of India", commenting on the  
Indian troop withdrawal, said :

The decision to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka a week before the 31st March deadline closes a controversial chapter in Indian foreign policy. At the end of the day, with hundreds of soldiers killed and hundreds more injured, what did the engagement achieve?

On the negative side, the intervention, although wholly legitimate under the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka accord, made India generally unpopular in Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese resented it from the start, while the Tamils, or rather the LTTE, whose cause India had consistently championed, became, ironically, the IPKF's antagonist.

Politically, New Delhi's attempt to create a rival Tamil group supportive of it proved abortive. Despite having won the first elections to the new North-East Provincial Council, comprising the merged Northern and Eastern provinces, the EPRLF was unable to build a popular support base. The elections themselves were boycotted by the LTTE and could be held only in the East where the turnout was poor. As a result, the EPRLF was denied the full legitimacy it sought.

The IPKF's involvement in Sri Lanka was also domestically divisive, a disagreement that spilled over into

last year's general elections which saw the party favouring an early pull-out emerging the victor. Even Tamil Nadu opinion did not favour the IPKF's presence since it was Tamils the IPKF was battling against.

But there are positive gains as well, and no one should be more aware of them than the Sri Lankan people. If today there is a reasonable prospect of a settlement of an ethnic dispute which has torn Sri Lanka apart, that is largely because of India's action. President Jayewardene sought India's support when he realised that Sri Lanka's ragtag-and-bobtail army was not up to taming the Tigers. Had he not sought it the country would in effect have been partitioned and plunged into a bloody civil war. Had the

Tigers not refused to hand in their weapons to the IPKF, no blood need have been shed at all, even as the two sides could have engaged in negotiations with Indian mediation. Eventually, the Tigers and Colombo did start talking to each other, and it was the IPKF's action against the LTTE that finally made the latter see reason.

Finally, before the 1987 accord, Sri Lanka had been involving all manner of foreign parties outside the South Asian region in its effort to crush the LTTE. This affected India directly and adversely. The IPKF's entry enabled India both to protect its interests and help out a neighbour. Happily, that phase is now over and Colombo appears to have a better appreciation of legitimate Indian concerns in the region.

## We are Back Again!

A consortium of liberal minded citizens concerned about the future of Sri Lanka has come forward to re-activate the *New Saturday Review*, successor to the Jaffna-based *Saturday Review*.

The *Saturday Review* was started on 30th January 1982 with Mr. S. Sivanayagam as Editor. It was not only the first English newspaper to be published from outside the media citadel of Colombo but also a vigorous champion of human liberties especially pertaining to the minority Tamil community. (See its first editorial on page 6)

On 1st July 1983, with the escalation of the conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, the paper was banned by then President Jayewardene's United National Party Government under Emergency Regulations for allegedly giving sustenance to the Tamil separatist movement.

This was a false allegation in the Goebbelsian manner. The paper was fighting for lost causes, especially those of the Tamils whose legitimate aspirations had been suppressed by successive Sinhalese Governments and to which the national media which were and still are mostly under state control or influence gave little prominence.

Mr. Sivanayagam had to flee to India to save his life because the Criminal Investigation Department was trying to get at him. He is still in India.

The owners, New Era Publication Ltd., fought a marathon battle in the Supreme Court, with the late Mr. S. Nadesan, Q.C., as its chief counsel, for the freedom of speech and expression promised under the Fundamental Rights provisions of the 1978 Constitution.

Mr. Jayewardene while in the opposition had said: "Freedom of the Press is the essence of liberty and this is the source of all liberties. If this freedom is suppressed, restrained or controlled, then the foundation for autocracy is laid. ...."

The Supreme Court, in its superior wisdom, held against the *Saturday Review* which many people in the South, some of whom had never seen or read the paper, regarded as a "Tiger Paper" which it was most certainly not.

Anyway, the Government finally relented and allowed the paper to re start on 18th February, 1984, but under very strict conditions of censorship not applicable at the time to any other publication in Sri Lanka.

Yours truly, the new Editor, happened by an inexplicable quirk of fate to be a throughbred Sinhalese Buddhist.

For four years, the *Saturday Review* under my charge battled on while the battles between the Protagonists, the Sinhalese - composed Security Forces of the Government and the Tamil militant groups led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, raged with fury.

Until the Indian Peace Keeping Force came to the rescue, under the lop-sided 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, which was totally in India's favour ensuring its vital interests - securing India's southern flank - were achieved.

The last issue of the *Saturday Review* from Jaffna came out on 17th October, 1987. It consisted of just four pages brought out at the height of the I. P. K. F. operations against the L. T. T. E. and shells were falling all-around.

I was abroad at the time on another mission - enlisting world opinion on human rights issues in Sri Lanka.

I salute the staff, led by my deputy, Mr. A. J. Canagaratna, who faced the brunt of what was an impossible situation - publishing a paper while a Lebanon-style war was on. Somehow they did it. Thanks to all of them.

Owing to the impossibility of publishing the paper as an independent organ in Jaffna, with the I. P. K. F. clamping down on all the other newspapers there, the paper was re-started by me in Colombo on 1st February 1988 as a monthly under a slightly altered logo, the *New Saturday Review*.

Eight issues were produced but the publication had to be suspended mainly for want of funds. Publishing a paper is not a simple business. Sales alone cannot cover the cost of production. There has to be advertising. But advertisers are scared, because of their business interests, in getting involved in any venture which they fear could put them at loggerheads with the powers that be.

After a long period of gestation, a few people have found the guts to finance the publication which promises to blaze a fresh trail in Sri Lanka's journalistic world-fearless, forthright and forward-looking.

People with shared concerns are welcome to join the *New Saturday Review* in its adventure of enhancing the purity of public life, enhancing of human life, enhancing the future of ALL citizens of Sri Lanka.

Editor

## FIFTY KILLED

Fifty journalists were killed in 1989 - a record number, according to a US organisation monitoring violations affecting press persons.

Most of the reporters killed were from South America. Fourteen journalists were killed in the civil war in El Salvador. A further eleven died in Colombia where drug barons are locked in violent feuds with the authorities.

The number of journalists expelled from countries where they had been sent to report, had doubled to 55 cases, 12 in respect of China.

Last year, there were more than a thousand instances of press freedom being violated, ranging from censorship to harassment.

Appeals by world leaders failed to save Farzad Barzoi, 31, stateless journalist of Iranian origin, who was arrested in Iraq where he had gone on an assignment for the London "Observer." He was executed by the Iraqi authorities on 15th March. He was accused of spying.

## DISAPPEARANCES

The United Nations Group on Disappearances, in its latest report records 721 disappearances in 14 countries last year. It is an alarming increase over the 400 cases recorded in 1988.

The worst offender is Peru with 404 disappearances in 1989. In Iran 121 new cases were reported, 40 in Guatemala, 36 in the Philippines, 34 in El Salvador, 33 in Sri Lanka, 26 in India and 13 in Colombia.

The group is considered to be one of the UN's most effective human rights bodies. Since its establishment 10 years ago, it has asked 41 governments to explain 19,000 disappearances.



# J R & The Ethnic Conflict

A fact known only to a few Sri Lankans is that the much-maligned J. R. Jayewardene, as President, of Sri Lanka, made a valiant attempt to keep India out of the Island's ethnic conflict and its resolution.

His ambition, as made plain to me, was to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Tamils without jeopardising the interests of the Sinhalese and without foreign, especially Indian, involvement.

But he failed, as Prof. A. Jeyaratnam Wilson says in his book, "The Break-up of Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict," "because he had a most unhelpful Cabinet of Ministers."

Soon after I assumed the Editorship of the Jaffna-based "Saturday Review", it became quite apparent to me that the Government was mishandling the entire National Question.

On 11th December with his blessing. I visited Madras, where the leaders of the militant groups were then based. We talked for nearly a week. It was the first time any Sinhalese had established contact with these groups.

They were willing to negotiate a settlement on certain conditions. These included repeal of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act, a general amnesty for the militants and the release of nearly 6,000 under detention, recognition of the northern and eastern administrative regions as "traditional homelands" of the Tamils and withdrawal of the Sinhalese "army of occupation" from these territories.

I reported back to the President. He was visibly relieved by the response.

But apparently he could not get his ministers to

The hawks in the Government remained cocky. The state-controlled media gave the Sinhalese the impression that the situation was "under control." They had nothing to worry about. The rebels were on the run.

The massacre of nearly 150 men, women and children by the Tigers at Anuradhapura on 14th May 1985 finally jolted the Government. The Tamils had struck deep in Sinhalese territory.

Anuradhapura, centre of a great Sinhalese-Buddhist civilisation from the 6th Century BC to the 11th Century AD, was dear to the hearts of the majority community. It is midway between Jaffna and Colombo, 35 miles from the nearest big Tamil habitation in Vavuniya and regarded as impregnable.

After this attack India made a determined bid to end the conflict. The fallout was being felt in its southern state of Tamil Nadu. Nearly 125,000 Tamils from northern Sri Lanka had sought refuge there to escape the brutality of the Sinhalese Army and south Indian opposition politicians were accusing Rajiv Gandhi of doing little.

A dialogue began between representatives of the militant groups, the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), and officials of the Sri Lanka Government, under India's aegis in the neutral Bhutan capital of Thimpu in July 1985. The talks continued in New Delhi and Colombo.

In November 1986 Jayewardene told me he was willing to meet Tiger leader Velupillai Pabhakaran during his visit to India for the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) summit in Bangalore later that month. It is generally accepted in Sri Lanka and India that Prabhakaran is a force to contend with.

I conveyed the message to the LTTE northern commander Sathasivam Krishnakumar (code name Kittu) and

he promised to contact the leader in Madras by radio. The response, according to Kittu, was positive.

Then a strange thing happened. The Tiger leader issued a press statement in Madras saying that Jayewardene had "put feelers through Gamini Navaratne, Editor of the 'Saturday Review' for 'secret talks'". He, however, would

Militant insistence on linkage of the north and east to form one unit under Tamil control stalled the prospect of talks. The LTTE meanwhile tightened its grip on the Jaffna peninsula, growing so confident that there was talk in Jaffna that it could take over the civil administration on 1st January 1987.

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## Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

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## EDITOR MEETS TIGER LEADERS IN MADRAS

I was in Madras from 11th to 19th December as a "special emissary". My mission was to establish contact with the leaders of the various militant Tamil groups fighting for the rights of the Tamil people.

TO SEEK A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT—PROVIDED ONE COULD BE FOUND AND PROVIDED THE PROPER ATMOSPHERE COULD BE CREATED FOR SUCH A MEETING.

"The only way out, as I see it, is by repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, followed by the grant of an amnesty and the involvement of the militant groups in the process of dialogue."

state power— if they want to ensure that Sri Lanka remains one country. Representatives of some of the groups said they would like to have discussions with Sinhalese and Tamil leaders of all shades of opinion.

"not do anything behind India's back." No meeting took place.

On his return, Jayewardene told me; "Your fellows (LTTE leadership) are useless." This was an expression of his deep disappointment. I said they were not "my fellows but our fellows", an expression of my approach to the ethnic problem.

The Government retaliated with an economic blockade of the peninsula and prepared for a final push against the militants, called "Operation Liberation." Jaffna city, site of Tiger headquarters, was to be the prime target.

(Cont. Page 5)

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## Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

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29th September 1984

EDITOR WRITES TO APC:

## INVITE THE TIGERS TO THE TABLE

FRIENDS: I am addressing you as perhaps the only Sinhalese (Buddhist) civilians still in public life in Jaffna. I have been visiting Jaffna, as a journalist, since 1984 and know the land and its people better than any non-

and a journalist, I feel intensely about the welfare and the human rights of ALL the people of Sri Lanka.

Please read carefully what I have written before coming to a final decision on the National Question.

regarding the use of their language, higher education, state employment and colonisation and promised to convene an All-Party Conference early to work out a permanent solution.

The APC was convened seven years too late, but it

SHABRA - YOUR FRIENDS IN FINANCE. INVEST CONFIDENTLY WITH SHABRA. We Channel Your Resource Into Sound Investments And Give You A Full 30% Interest. SHABRA. 61, New Bullers Road, COLOMBO-4. Telephone: 589310. 207, Power House Road, JAFFNA. Telephone: 22073.

"Sri Lanka: Beyond Conflict" written by Ambassador Ernest Corea (Sri Lanka News Review, Vol. 3, No. 5, Department of Information, August 1985). "The separatist slogan, let it not be forgotten, did not enter Sri Lanka's political lexicon until 1976."

In the issue of the "Saturday Review" dated 24th September 1984, I said, under the headline, "Invite the Tigers to the Table."

"Just as the Palestinian problem could not be resolved without the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organisation at the negotiating table, Sri Lanka's ethnic problem could not be resolved without the direct participation of the militant groups let by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)."

The point was well taken by Jayewardene and in December 1984 he asked me to meet him at his residence.

agree to seek a political solution. Failure of my mediatory effort led to an intensification of fighting between the Security Forces and the militants, more deaths and more devastation. The victims were mainly civilians from both communities, sometimes caught in the cross-fire, sometimes subject to brutal reprisals by one side or the other.

I continued my behind-the-scene efforts, keeping in close contact with Jayewardene and militant groups, as well as trying to nudge both parties to the negotiating table through the "Saturday Review."

## Buddha Statue Sinks in Indian Lake

The 75-ft statue of Buddha, which was expected to figure in the Guinness Book of World Records as the tallest monolithic stone carving, has met with a fate similar to that of "The Titanic" ship.

The giant figure slipped into the waters of the Hussain Sagar lake in Andhra Pradesh on 10th March, while it was being taken on a barge to a platform in the lake.

The platform is located about half a km inside the lake and the statue slipped into the water after the barge has covered a little more than 100 metres, at about 6.25 a.m. According to survivors and people nearby, like sculptors' assistants, it was all over in a matter of seconds. The statue slipped into the water and the barge overturned.

The installation of the statue was scheduled to be completed on 11th March and it was to be formally unveiled on 9th May.

The statue was to be erected at the Gibraltar rock in the Hussain Sagar as part of the ambitious Buddha Poornima project of the Andhra Pradesh government.

The entire project expected to cost Rs. 5.58 crores, came in for severe criticism but Mr. Chenna Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister ultimately decided to complete the project and make it the central attraction in the tourist complex at Hussain Sagar Lake.

He plans to get the statue retrieved from the lake and have it installed.



# Lanka refugees land in Orissa

The following report appeared in "The Times of India" on 11th March:

Two shiploads of nearly 1,500 Tamil refugees from Trincomalee in Sri Lanka, who were denied entry by the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh Governments, are being given shelter in Orissa's Koraput district.

According to sources in Bhubaneswar, the first batch of refugees who had set sail from northern Sri Lanka on 6th March had been brought to Malkangiri in the interior, hilly region of Koraput district by road from Visakhapatnam. Another batch was expected to reach the resettlement site at Satiguda in the same district later.

Work on erecting sheds to accommodate the refugees has already begun at Satiguda and Malkangiri. The entire area has been cordoned off to facilitate identity checks on the Tamils.

The Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh Governments were reported to have denied entry to the refugees because they feared the presence of some extremists in their ranks. It is not yet clear whether the refugees are ordinary citizens or members of the EPRLF cadre.

The two chartered ships carrying the Tamils had first landed at Madras port because the passengers were keen on staying in Tamil Nadu. When they were not allowed to berth, they sailed to Visakhapatnam where, too, the Andhra Government was not willing to accept them.

The Orissa Chief Minister, Mr. Biju Patnaik, however, agreed to resettle the Tamils because he felt the refugee problem was a national one. Initially, the refugees were expected to land at Paradip port and tents had already been pitched there. But as Paradip was not found suitable, it was decided to accommodate the refugees in the sparsely-populated Satiguda area in south-western Orissa.

The details of the rehabilitation scheme are yet to be worked out and the financial implications are not known.

The Union Government is believed to have provided an advance of Rs. 10 lakhs to Orissa for initial expenses.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, said Sri Lankan Tamil militants, whatever group they represented, would not be given shelter in refugee camps or be allowed to set up base in the state.

He said he learnt about the movement of Lankan Tamils mostly belonging to a militant group in ships chartered for carrying IPKF men and materials the day before the vessel "M. V. Harshavardhan" arrived in Madras.

Mr. Karunanidhi conveyed to Mr. V. P. Singh, the state government's concern about the law and order situation that could be created by an influx of Sri Lankan militants into Tamil Nadu. This led to the diversion of the ships to an Orissa port.

Asked about a report that their movement to Orissa was a temporary arrangement, Mr. Karunanidhi clarified that his Government would not allow members of any Tamil groups to carry on their activities or set up camps in Tamil Nadu in future. This gave scope for a conflict among the warring groups and would create a law and order situation in the state, Mr. Karunanidhi said.

His Government, however, had no objection to receiving genuine refugees from Sri Lanka, he added. Nearly 3,000 of them, who had come to the state in the last three months, were put up at Mandapam (in Ramanathapuram district) and the Kottapattu refugee camp, near Trichy.

Meanwhile, the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) expressed concern at the attitude of the Tamil Nadu Government in refusing permission to the refugees.

The ENDLF general secretary, Mr. G. Gnana-sekaran, in a statement, said the Indian Government had persuaded Colombo to allow the refugees to be shipped to India. Before they boarded the ship, the 2,000-odd Tamils were registered with the IPKF in Trincomalee and screened for arms. He said he was at a loss to understand how these unarmed refugees could cause a law and order problem for Tamil Nadu.

Referring to Mr. Karunanidhi's relations with the LTTE he said: "Those who had fought the Indian Government have now become the pets of the present Tamil Nadu Government and those who co-operated with India are now receiving a stepmotherly treatment." He urged the state government to reconsider its ban on the latest influx of refugees on humanitarian grounds.

"The Times of India" correspondent from Colombo, Seema Guha, adds The Tamil Nadu Government's decision to turn away the Indian ship carrying over 750 Tamil refugees, including women and children, fleeing certain death at the hands of the Liberation Tigers, have dismayed the pro-Indian Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) leaders.

While the Foreign Minister, Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne, welcomed Mr. Karunanidhi's action, sober elements within the Sri Lankan administration are aware of the future problems Colombo would have to face if the Tamil Nadu Government can act independently of the Centre.

A senior bureaucrat saw Mr. Karunanidhi's action as the fall-out of a weak Central Government. He went on to explain that today some Sri Lankans are happy about what has happened, but tomorrow if Madras defies the Centre, and decides to help the Liberation Tigers against the Sri Lanka Government, the tables may be turned. He pointed out that if New Delhi could not influence the state governments, all its protestations about upholding the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka would fall on deaf ears. It would have no effect on the independent course chartered by the Tamil Nadu Government.

A large number of Sinhalese are sceptical about the sincerity of the LTTE's present postures. Most people feel it is only a matter of time before the Tigers and the Sri Lankan Government fall out. In such an event, Mr. Karunanidhi's pro-LTTE sympathies will pose a problem to Colombo. What is even less palatable to the Sri Lankans, is the fact that this may have been done with the concurrence of New Delhi.

If so, this is being regarded as a clear signal to the Tigers that India is willing to forget the past, and start a new chapter of friendship with the LTTE. Colombo foresees the dangers of such a development, which in the long term can work against the interests of the Sri Lankan Government. By refusing to allow the LTTE's bitterest opponents to take refuge in Tamil Nadu, Mr. Karunanidhi's credentials with the Tigers will remain intact, making it possible for the chief minister to play a vital role in future negotiations between Delhi and the LTTE.

## CAIRO BANS MAG

The Egyptian authorities are using economic censorship to prevent the Arab world's leading international feminist association from publishing a quarterly magazine.

Dr. Nawal El Saadawy, Egyptian feminist writer and head of the Cairo-based Arab women's Solidarity Association (AWSA), has been refused permission to put "Noun", the AWSA Arabic language magazine on public sale. Consequently, the magazine is faced with closure because it cannot gain income from public sales.

Dr. Ali Lutfi, president of the Higher Press Council, explained that "Noun" did not meet the legal conditions set in article 19 of the Press Law, according to which a deposit of EL 250,000/- for a daily and 100,000 for a weekly (about Rs. 4 million and Rs. 1.5 million respectively) ought to be deposited as a precondition for printing.

"Noun", however, was neither weekly nor daily. It was a quarterly, and thus, according to Dr. Saadawy, the authorities were "mistaken in applying the law in this context."

ARTICLE 19, the London-based International Centre on Censorship, (90 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LL UK) in a statement said: "By placing the condition of a financial deposit on a monthly or quarterly publication, the Egyptian Press Council is going beyond the limits of its own Press Law and that it is using its power to censor AWSA by preventing them from publishing 'Noun'."

ARTICLE 19 is the inspiration of American journalist and champion of civil rights, the late J. Roderick MacArthur.

Taking its name and purpose from the nineteenth article of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the organisation holds that freedom of expression is a global human right, defined and guaranteed by international law.

The Director of Article 19 is Ms. Frances D' Souza. Among the members on its international board are British writer, William Shawcross, Soli Sorabjee, former Solicitor-General of India, Zwelakhe Sisulu, Editor of the black South African newspaper "New Nation" and Tarize Vittachi.

## PROBE KILLINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

The Jaffna University Students' Union (JUSU) have called on the Sri Lankan Government to hold a public inquiry into the killings and disappearance of University students throughout the island.

In a recently published report the JUSA says that universities reopened in January cannot function properly unless large numbers of students still held in custody are released. They have asked the Government to publish a list of students arrested by the Security Forces.

The growth of State terrorism in the South is a direct result the JUSU says of the silence of political parties and student organisations, years earlier when Sri Lankan forces unleashed an orgy of violence on the

people of the North and East.

The Jaffna-based University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR), who released their third report at the beginning of this year, have been instrumental in drawing attention to killings and disappearances in the North-East carried out by IPKF forces and Tamil militants since the Indian occupation.

Last November, representatives from Universities throughout Sri Lanka gathered in Jaffna for a two-day series of meetings and seminars on education and human rights, dedicated to the memory of Dr. Rajani Thirunagama, a leading figure in the UTHR, who was killed by a militant at Thirunelveli Junction in Jaffna town two months earlier.



## Step by Step — up the Garden Path!

"Let us go step by step. Certainly the withdrawal of the IPKF is welcomed by the people of the North and the East. They look forward to and expect peace, law and order, which the IPKF was unable to ensure." So said eminent jurist and ex-Supreme Court judge T. W. Rajaratnam, M. P., in an exclusive interview with the *New Saturday Review* on the eve of the departure of the IPKF from Sri Lanka.

Mr. Rajaratnam said "The materialisation or the fulfilment of these expectations will depend on three factors - 1. The Indian Government keeping its hands off the affairs of the North and the East which they have promised. 2. Maintaining of good relations at the highest level of diplomacy by the Sri Lankan Government. 3. The concern and commitment of the Government and the LTTE to usher in an era of peace, law and order.

Q. Will the attitude of the LTTE towards India change?

A. It depends on the change of attitude on the part of India towards the LTTE. It cannot be unilaterally considered.

Q. Will the cry for Eelam cease?

A. Certainly, if the need for Eelam does not arise. One has to accept the law of cause and effect in the field of politics too.

Q. Will the Sri Lanka Government share power with the LTTE?

A. That question does not arise in a unitary form of Government, except to the extent of the substantial devolution of power, subject to the sovereignty of all our people. It is my perception that the term "power" in the question is not very appropriate. It is not a question of power, but duties and responsibilities on the part of everybody in the national interest. Under our constitution only the people wields sovereign power. It is a matter of sharing of responsibilities and duties for the cause of peace, law and order on the part of the Government and the LTTE. Both the Government and the LTTE must have a sense of commitment towards these objectives, justice.

In any case, my concept is not that of sharing power, but a concept of devolution of responsibilities and duties to the people, who are sovereign, whether in the North-East or the South. I want to make clear that the situation in the country is far too serious for power politics.

Q. How will the different ethnic communities in the East react to the LTTE take-over?

A. "Take-over" is not the appropriate word. It depends on the commitment of the LTTE for justice, and there is no reason to doubt that a sense realisation of duties and responsibilities will ensure justice and peace. There must be a concern to prevent man's inhumanity to man. Foreign intervention should be prevented.

Q. Will fresh elections in the North-East help in solving relations among the different communities?

A. Fresh elections are necessary. The Provincial Council elections were not free and fair. There was effective interference by the IPKF. I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the future. Being a realist and a humanist, if everyone concerned is sincere and willing to learn from the lessons of history, not forgetting the past mistakes, there is no reason why I should not be optimistic.

## J R & the Ethnic Problem

Talks with the President led me to conclude that his heart was not in the operation but that he was under pressure from the hawks and the military. The militants camps were in densely populated areas so a blood-bath was likely if it was carried out.

Jayewardene asked me to make one more attempt to persuade Prabhakaran to meet him, a plus point for a man accused of intransigence on the ethnic problem.

Our final discussion took place in the presence of the National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali. I went to Jaffna by air force plane an official emissary of the President and with ten days to get a word.

I sent message after message to the LTTE headquarters. Prabhakaran was simply "not available". Jaffna was then reeling under the blockade. Food, fuel and other essentials were very short.

I was invited to a meeting of concerned citizens at the Jaffna University to discuss the crisis. It was decided to seek an interview with Prabhakaran to explore bringing about an immediate ceasefire and easing the people's suffering.

I went back to my office at 4th Cross Street, Jaffna. About 20 machine-gun toting LTTE cadres, led by 'Radha' (who had taken over the northern command from Kittu after he lost a leg on an assassination bid) were waiting outside.

I asked: "What's the problem?" Radha said they wanted to interrogate me. I said: "Okay as long as you leave your guns outside".

Five members of the LTTE political wing, unarmed wing, came inside. I was quizzed for nearly an hour. Who organised the meeting? What was the outcome?

I told them everything plainly, but they were not satisfied. Around 7.30 p.m. the same day an armed party came to my temporary home in Jaffna at Kasturiar Road and took me to a camp at Tinnevely. I was held incommunicado for four days.

The standard treatment for 'offenders' of any sort against the LTTE was to be tied to the nearest lamp-post and shot through the head. Thankfully there was no further questioning nor torture. I was treated royally. Those four days were the best I had spent in Jaffna in four years: regular meals, home comforts, books and newspapers, radio and TV, cigarettes and liquor.

I taunted my captors. I said I had reserved three lamp-posts outside the "Saturday Review" office, the centre one for me and the others for my assistants.

Apparently, the Tigers had become worried about stories spread in Jaffna by some Tamils jealous of the power that a man from the South wielded. I was supposed to be a double agent, the President's man, etc.

My connections with the President are no secret. As a journalist, I have followed his career for 35 years. Since the 1977 general election, when he came to power for the first time, I had been in close touch with him.

Since the 1983 tragedy, when thousands of Tamils living in Sinhalese areas were massacred, I had moved closer to him, not for personal gain but to see if a settlement of the ethnic conflict could be speedily reached, so that sanity would prevail.

The LTTE investigated the circumstances in which I came to Jaffna as the President's emissary. They conceded, albeit reluctantly, that I had acted only to save the Tamil people from further suffering by bringing together the protagonists—President Jayewardene and the LTTE supremo. They released me unconditionally. It was all, they said, a "big misunderstanding."

Anyway, it was all too late. "Operation Liberation" was launched in mid-May and Jaffna was shelled from land, sea and air. Much blood was spilt. Hundreds of innocent people died. Substantial damage was caused to property. Even the Jaffna hospital was bombed.

As the security forces tightened the noose round the LTTE, India intervened. That is another story.

## 'Monitor' on Journalist's Death

The bullet-riddled body of Richard de Zoysa, one of Sri Lanka's leading journalists, was found washed ashore on Korallawella beach south of Colombo on 19th February. Reports say he was abducted from his mother's house at Welikade at 3 a.m. two days earlier by six gunmen led by a man in police uniform.

Mr. de Zoysa (33), a former newscaster for the *Rupavahini* television network, was deputy Asia editor for Inter Press Service, a prominent Third World news agency based in Rome. In the past he had also worked as a media consultant to the Sri Lankan Army's Joint Operations Command. Former National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali and Plantations Minister Gamini Dissanayake, sidelined in

the present administration, attended his funeral.

Inside sources suggest his death is part of a long-running feud between ruling United National Party (UNP) factions. They point to de Zoysa's authorship of the stage satire "Who is he? What is he doing?" produced by Lakshman Perera, a municipal councillor who disappeared mysteriously four weeks earlier to de Zoysa's killing.

Richard de Zoysa's killing has generated outrage and foreboding among Colombo's English-educated middle class and among journalists around the world.

The state-owned *Daily News* published a front-page protest on 26th February from the International Press Institute saying the de Zoysa family suspected the

gunmen were members of the security forces.

State Information and Broadcasting Minister A. J. Ranasinghe denied any such involvement but Opposition leader Sirima Bandaranaike convening a human rights conference of nine political parties in late February, blamed paramilitary groups inside the security forces controlled by prominent politicians.

(Reproduced from the February 1990 issue of "The Sri Lanka Monitor" published by the British Refugee Council.)

P. S. Mr. de Zoysa was one of the few journalists from the South who accepted the invitation of the then Jaffna-based "Saturday Review" to visit the North to study the situation there at first hand instead of depending on official handouts. He visited Jaffna twice during trouble times and returned safely. The tragedy was that he was killed in the South. We mourn his untimely death.



## The Salt of the Earth

There is the story of an editor of a small newspaper in the 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 preoccupation. 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 form 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.

## Economy in Big Mess

In the preoccupation with the Tamil insurgency in the North and the Sinhalese insurgency in the South, Sri Lanka's media have tended to give little publicity to the country's deteriorating economic situation which has been the progenitor and promoter of the twin menaces.

Most of the media are under state control or influence so that they could not have been expected to highlight the economic failures of the rightwing United National Party Government led by Mr. J. R. Jayewardene from July 1977 to January 1989 and thereafter by Mr. R. Premadasa. Rather they often gave publicity to what critics have described as sunshine stores.

One of the most recent instances was the pledging of 612 million by the Western-dominated Aid Sri Lanka Consortium. This was splashed in the media as an expression of continued confidence of the world community in the policies followed by the UNP Government. No mention was made of Sri Lanka's slide into the debt trap which has become the highest common denominator of Third World countries.

Let us look at the economic indicators, provided by no less than the Government's own Central Bank.

The budget deficit in 1977 was Rs. 3 billion. In 1988, for which complete Central Bank statistics are publicly available, it was Rs. 42.6 billion. It was much more in 1989 and certain to be still much more in 1990. The Government has proved to be a financial rake.

The Government has been borrowing like hell from all possible sources to keep it going. The national debt today exceeds Rs. 260 billion, of which foreign, and the most dangerous component, is nearly Rs. 150 billion.

The balance of payments is in complete disarray. The total deficit by the end of the second quarter of 1989 was in the region of Rs. 9 billion.

The official cost of living index, which is no accurate reflector of the actual cost of living, stood at 570 in 1977. It is now up to 2,500.

A better reflector is the price of *karapincha* (curry leaves), an essential in every Sri Lankan curry. What was available in 1977 at five cents is now up to Rs. 1.50. And the bunch is much smaller!

The main culprits of this exercise in Sri Lanka going down the *pallan* are the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which in 1977 forced the country to adopt a liberalised economic policy.

Sri Lanka, I have written earlier, became a prostitute with anybody free to come at anytime and do anything.

Foreign multi-nationals have the main beneficiaries, exploiting the situation of the full.

Now even rubber erasers are imported. While Sri Lanka is finding it difficult to find export markets for its own rubber.

On top of all this, the International Monetary Fund, backed by the World Bank, is imposing impossible conditions on Sri Lanka.

It is insisting on the complete privatisations, in other words the derationalisation, of the public sector, including a Member of Vital Government departments.

Here are excerpts from IMP/WB policy matrix for Sri Lanka which has implemented before the end of this year.

Examine the desirability of increasing the retirement age for civil servants as well as increasing the minimum number of years in service to qualify for full pension benefits.

Analyse the financial implications of changing the existing Employees Provident Fund into a pension system.

Improve targeting of the Janasaviya Programme, reduce its total cost, and gradually transform it into a more production-oriented and sustainable program.

Set limits on the number of JSP beneficiaries to contain the combined cost of the JSP and the mid-day meal to more than 3.2% of GDP.

Improve targeting of the mid-day meal program.

Private United Motors, Ceylon Oxygen and State Distilleries.

Convert 16 other public sector enterprises to public liability companies as a first step towards privatisation.

Eliminate subsidies for wheat flour, rice and fertilizer.

Eliminate subsidy to the Sri Lanka Central Transport Board reduce subsidy to railways.

Implement freeze on filling vacancies in the entirety of the public sector.

Enact legislation introducing excise taxes.

Discontinue income tax holidays for establishments whose holidays have been extended through 31st March 1990.

Discontinue exemption on import taxes on capital goods and raw materials for projects catering to the domestic market.

Change the unit of taxation from individuals to families for income tax purposes;

Broaden the coverage of income tax to include currently exempt persons and institutions.

Increase the Business Turnover tax rates to be followed by value added tax in the context of the 1990 budget.

Reduce proportion of outstanding treasury bills held by the Central Bank

Prepare an action plan to streamline civil administration.

Reduce overstaffing in the public sector and rationalize civil administration.

Close five departments (Government Supplies, Housing, Land, Marketing, Commodity Purchase) and retrench 300 staff from Supplies and Housing Departments and prepare plans for retrenchment redeployment for 4,000 staff of other three departments

Carry out a census of staffing levels and establish a reporting system in the Ministry of Finance to monitor the staff strength of each department in each Ministry and in each non-central government Institution.

Eliminate the 100% tax on transfers of equity shares to foreigners.

(Cont. Page 7)



# PULIKSEY WRITES.....

Karl Marx once said that humankind can break with its past light-heartedly. For all historical events occur twice, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. I cannot but think only this of Marx as we approached the residence of Mr. A. Varatharaja Perumal, Chief Minister of the North East Provincial Council, where we were supposed to meet him for a farewell party.

Trincomalee, after an year and a half, seemed quite calm to me. None of the gun-trooping militants were there to be seen. An Indian Army heavy vehicle passed us roaring. That carried the last batch of pro-Indian militant groups, the onlookers said.

It was 12th March and the news that Tamil Nadu had already rejected a ship load of "Refugees" had come. The anxious onlookers swarmed the Mutur jetty from which the remaining members of the pro-Indian groups and their supporters were to be taken to an unidentified destination in India.

We, too, joined the crowd in the expectation that we could chick some photographs. But to the disappointment of us, we learnt that all of them had been taken to Prima jetty at China Bay.

Within 30 minutes we were at China Bay but failed in all our attempts to get into the harbour. The

whole area was churning with the Indian troop movements.

The trucks and heavy vehicles were moving on one after another in a hurried frenzy. I casually approached an Indian officer and asked whether there is a possibility of us going inside the harbour just to see the Indian soldiers off.

"That's not our business. Go and ask the Sri Lankan officers."

I told him that we have already asked them and their answer was that we should get permission from the Indian officers.

"Then you go the main office in Trinco. Ok? I cannot allow you inside" that was the end of our going inside the harbour.

On returning to Trincomalee town, we stopped our vehicle at an Indian camp beautifully pitched amidst woods, and was in the process of decamping. We just wanted to take a couple of photos. The sentry refused.

"Can't we go and meet your officer?" I asked.

"Yes!" he said and grinned. "Where is he?" With this question we already started walking towards the camp.

"No" he replied. "What's no?" you just said that we could meet your officer!"

Again a firm "No."

Then my friends asked "can we take some photographs.....photos.....we can also take one of yours....."

This time he said yes and we took a photograph of him. The poor fellow must have seen satisfied with the luminescence of the flash gun. The important lesson one should learn about talking to an Indian jawan is repeat a question, if he says no.

We met the officers, talked to them. Rather uninterested. They said they were happy to so.

"Are you going straight away to Kashmir?" asked my friend and they smiled whole heartedly.

Chick, Chick, Chick. A lot of photographers. We said good-bye. If any body wants effective peace-keeping, send Indian Army (to undermine the peace) and ask LTTE to land-mine the Indians!

The Indian Army Camp at the junction (Trincomalee-Kantalai-China Bay) was the site of an emotional farewell. There were four Buddhist monks, just arrived to restore the vihara and resettle themselves close to the junction. The omnipresent Sri Lankan policemen, were there with their sophisticated weapons.

A couple of tourists; a large gathering of people: and we.

The Indian soldiers were moving in columns towards China Bay and a helicopter hovered over again and again. The tanks rolled on streets not so ominously this time and the commanding officers were all sweet.

One of the major camps was totally dismantled and only a dozen ammunition boxes were left to be carried.

The commanding officer walked towards the gate, where the Sri Lankan Police chiefs were ever ready to shake hands.

Indians and Sri Lankans met; a formal hand shake.

"Flop!" Ah. We missed the event. The camera was not ready in time.

"Could you please shake hands again I missed this important event."

"Yeah with pleasure."

They shook hands while the policemen entered the "Chick!" "Thanks a lot" good-bye!" We walked back to our Delica van. "Just a moment!" shouted a soldier. "Don't ask us to come again."

The Tiger leader Days alias Dayalan was all smiles and in civils as we met him not at his headquarters but at one of his tail-quarters off Nilaveli.

Relaxed, casual and without much pomp he said that tigers are already in Trincomalee town.

Does he see any possibility of clashing with the SL force?

"Not at the moment However, things are all, up to Premadasa."

What about the Sinhala refugees who are stationed at Fort Frederic and the vicinity of the Fort?

"Matters are being sorted out with the Government. In any case, all the Sinhalese settlements that came up after 1958 should go!"

Where to?

"Somewhere to the South?"

"Why, there are not many Tigers in Trincomalee while in Jaffna and Batticaloa?"

"We are inconspicuous here. We have as much as Tigers as in Jaffna and Batticaloa. However the situation different here in Trincomalee, you know."

"Well" How are you with the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress now?"

"We do not have problems with them here. We talk to them."

## SOVIET CHANGES

Commenting on the recent changes in the Soviet Union, Mr. Edmund Samarakkody of the Revolutionary Marxist Party states:

"The decline of the soviet economy and the failure of USSR to ensure living standards to working people equal to even those prevailing in some of the less developed countries, is not the failure of Communism, as has been the triumphant acclaim of capitalists and apologists for capitalism."

He points out that the socio-economic crisis that has surfaced in the Soviet Union during the last decade stems from the usurpation of power of the proletariat by the Stalinist ruling clique, which soon transformed itself into the leaders of the new bureaucratic caste and established a dictatorship.

According to Mr. Samarakkody, the ruling sections of the bureaucracy have no need of any Marxist theory, but "only the fig-leaf of a caricature of Marxism."

At the root of the economic decline was the bureaucracy. Its rule was marked by the robbery of the people's wealth, privileges and prerogatives for the bureaucrats, denial of democratic rights of the working class and the soviet masses, arbitrary arrests, suppression of oppositional currents, the imprisonment without trial of thousands, torture, executions and deportations.

It was inevitable that the centralised planned economy that had lifted the USSR from a backward country into a world power turned into a "command economy."

While Gorbachev was talking of democratic rights the Soviet working class and the masses were reaching out for their rights and liberties denied to them for decades. They began exercising the rights of assembly, demonstration, strike and publication.

He adds that the truth about restoring democratic rights is that Gorbachev has linked these rights with the release of market forces on a wide scale.

"Capitalist restoration is not in the interest of the working class and the Soviet Masses but of those sections of the bureaucracy aspiring to become the new capitalist class."

"The need of the working people of the Soviet Union is to develop the economy on socialist lines, ending of the stranglehold of the bureaucracy, the ending of its privileges. This is possible not through the Gorbachev reforms but by political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and set up soviets, democratically elected councils, in other words, the establishment of workers democracy."

## ECONOMY IN BIG MESS (Cont. from Page 6)

Begin auctions of increases in quotas to exporters of garments.

Permit free transfer of quotas in respect of EEC and USA markets.

Eliminate special incentives granted to the handloom sector 1988.

Establish a high-level committee to streamline bureaucratic processes including regulations restricting competition and unfair price advantages such as to Air Lanka and the Ceylon Shipping Corporation.

Examine the feasibility of privatising at least one of the two large state Banks.

Improve cost recovery in irrigation.



# Dispirited, Disenchanted Troops Withdrawal

This report by Seema Guha from Colombo appeared, in the "The Times of India" on 24th March:

As the Indian armed forces prepare to leave Sri Lanka, after more than two years of operations on foreign soil, there is a sense of bitterness and frustration at all levels in the IPKF.

There is a general feeling among both soldiers and officers that the nation has not appreciated either their sacrifices or understood the problems faced by a conventional army, forced into playing a politicomilitary role with inadequate preparations.

What has hurt and ruffled the senior echelons of the Indian Army is Delhi's refusal to publicly rebuff the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr Ranjan Wijeratne's assertion that Indian bureaucrats and generals are a pack of liars.

The army feels that the Indian Government should have publicly refuted Mr Wijeratne's statement. A senior army officer remarked: "This is an affront to the manhood of the Indian Army, which has sacrificed more than a thousand lives in fighting someone else's war."

They are also angry with the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and officials who reportedly claimed that it was the IPKF which was bringing in refugees aboard Indian ships from Sri Lanka. A visibly peeved officer explained: "The Army only carries out the orders of the Government. We have no powers without the sanction of New Delhi. How dare anyone accuse us of this."

This anger is being compounded by the fact that the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister seems to be unwilling to accord an official welcome to the troops who sail for home on March 24. How far the Army's claim about the unwillingness of the Chief Minister is true, is besides the point. What is relevant is that

most of the officers believe this.

There are differing perceptions of what the Indian Army achieved in Sri Lanka. While many observers feel that the IPKF got bogged down in the quagmire of Tamil ethnic rivalry and was no match for the Tiger guerillas fighting on home-ground, the Army itself begs to differ.

The Army personnel react with anger when reminded that they failed in their basic task of disarming the LTTE militants. A middle level officer exploded: "Do you think it was easy to fight with one hand tied to our backs? If we went all out for the Tigers we could have smashed them. But bear in mind the consequences of fighting a force so intermingled with the civilians that it was difficult to hit one without affecting the other. And when civilians are affected it is you presswala who make the the most noise."

The civilians naturally resented the constant searches and the innumerable road blocks, all of which were made worse by the language barrier. However, if the Tigers got away with an attack on either the IPKF or the provincial government, the Army got the flak.

Finally, the IPKF had to also run the civil administration, a task for which it is not trained. The Indian Army had to ensure that buses ran, railway tracks remained clear of explosives and that supplies from Colombo reached the people.

Later on, the provincial government helped, but the IPKF was very much in the picture in maintaining the fragile law and order situation. The political and military objectives generally ran contradictory to each other and often proved self-defeating in the end.

According to the general-officer-commanding of the IPKF in Sri Lanka, Gen Kalkat, his men have fulfilled the objectives for which they had come. The IPKF was sent, he said to ensure the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka, and this was done by fighting the group which refused to accept the accord. The second Indian objective was to make sure that the ethnic problem was resolved politically, which is what is happening at the moment.

Gen Kalkat also made it clear, that if it was not the Indian Army, which made the going difficult for the Tigers, they would never have agreed to talk to the

President, Mr Premadasa, to work out a political solution. The General praised the Sri Lankan Army saying that by and large it honoured its commitments and remained in the barracks as promised in the Indo-Sri Lankan accord.

Gen Kalkat also said that the army had to implement policies set out by the government and that it was not for him to comment on the right or wrong of India's involvement in Sri Lanka.

Observers here feel that the IPKF's difficulties in Sri Lanka have not been fully understood by the Indian public. Indian policy planners would have done better if they went into the whole question with more

forethought, a better perspective and the ability to look ahead into the kind of fallout the Indian intervention was going to lead to.

This, in fact, has been one of the IPKF's major problems here. While at one level it was told to win the hearts and minds of the people, on the other it had to fight the LTTE which had its support base among the majority of the Tamils, especially in the north. House often had to be searched because sympathisers hid LTTE activists in their homes. Road blocks and vehicles searches became a necessity, because the Tiger had to be prevented from bringing weapons into IPKF areas.

## MUSICAL CHAIRS

## GCSU IS 70

Sri Lanka is likely to see a brand new Cabinet of Ministers with a new Prime Minister shortly.

What will be brand new? A few changes here and there, the dropping out of a few no-gooders and the injunction of several promising young politicians.

Well and good. But will this sort of ad-hoc changes be to the overall good of the country?

A Minister talks at least three months to settle down in office. He or she has to get to grips with the Ministerial work and, equally important, to get to know the personnel in various departments in his or her charge.

Anyway, all this is President Premadasa's problem. We wish him well in his new endeavour.

In all those developments, what is the role of the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of students (EROS), now politically functioning as the Eelavar Democratic Front? It is the biggest Tamil party in the Parliament with 12 members from the North-East. (See next issue for full story.)

And not to forget about the JVP. The movement is not dead, through its leader Rohana Wijeweera, like one time 'guru' Che Guavara, was killed by the country's security forces. (see next issue for inside story.)

The Government Clerical Service Union (GCSU) will mark its seventieth anniversary on 4th April.

On 20th February 1920, clerks in the General Treasury met to form a trade union. After a long dispute over its registration the colonial government finally relented and the GCSU was registered under Trade Union Act No. 15 of 1935.

With a doughty record of struggle for trade union rights, the GCSU together with other clerical and workers unions launched the 1947 general strike. Kandasamy, a member of the GCSU, was shot dead by the police while marching in a demonstration.

The general strike movement of that year brought to the fore activists like T. B. Illangaratne, K. Vaikunthavasan, K. C. Nythiananda, Bala Tampoe, I. J. Wickrema, Prins Rajasooriya and many others, who were to play a dominant roll for trade union, civil rights in the island.

