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ALL PARTY CONFERENCE AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

The first round of the long-running saga of the All Party Conference (APC) is seemingly at an end. Or is it not to be? The proposed Second Chamber, the brainchild of President Jayawardene, the aging Third World autocrat as the London-based 'Guardian' put it, is to serve as a continuing All Party Conference! Presumably there is nothing else of importance to be done in a country which is competing for the last place among the poorest nations in all Asia, except to indulge in the extravagant luxury of confabulations, conferences, and continuing verbal diarrhoea.

If the APC had laboured for nine long months and brought forth even a mouse-like solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka, it would have been celebrated as a great achievement of the political and religious pygmies who have displayed a congenital incapacity to comprehend the complications and complexities of the national question in a multi-ethnic society and whom Sri Lanka is ill-fated to have as its leaders at the elevated seats of power, both temporal and spiritual.

In the first place, the APC would not have even been convened if not for the pressure from India following the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom. The conference, which was to be one comprising all political parties, soon transformed itself into an amorphous conglomeration of all and sundry, including 'pious' prelates and profiteering private trading groups. The declared intention of the APC to find a negotiated solution to the so-called Tamil problem was thwarted by the President himself when he invited as participants some of the most extreme, rabid and reactionary Sinhala chauvinist groups, including the Buddhist clergy who were mainly responsible in the first place for the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka and who, secondly, have consistently opposed any negotiated political settle-

ments by meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the major Sinhala opposition party, refused to participate from the commencement of the APC, putting forward the pre-condition that its leader's (Mrs S. Bandaranaike's) civic rights, which had been deprived by President Jayawardene, should be restored if the party were to participate. This party, which had employed Sinhala chauvinism to its maximum in the



President Jayawardene
past to gain power, opportunistically chose to wait in the wings to accuse the ruling United National Party of having 'betrayed the Sinhala-Buddhists' and ride back to power in case the APC decided to grant any concessions to the Tamils.

The APC commenced with an act of downright political chicanery on the part of President Jayawardene, when he scuttled 'Annexure C' (see box page 5) which he had co-authored with the Indian Special Envoy, Mr G. Parthasarathy. He disowned it no sooner he heard murmurs of protests from the Mathews within his party and Buddhist monks outside.

Annexure C provided for the establishment of regional councils in the predominantly Tamil populated

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 3

A FARCE & A FRAUD

What emerged as the 'consensus' imposed by Presidential pronouncement upon the All Party Conference (APC) does not touch even the surface of the deep-rooted problems facing the Tamil people, or for that matter the political crisis afflicting the whole country. The government and the Sinhala political leadership (including the opposition) have again demonstrated their incapacity to seize the opportunity of the APC to arrive at a lasting solution to the national question.

Not that many had any illusions about the outcome of the APC considering the chief actor behind this whole drama. It would have constituted a remarkable deviation from the traditional role that President Jayawardene had played right through his political career, had he came up with any meaningful solution to the ethnic conflict to which he had contributed in no small measure during the last forty years.

Mr Jayawardene rose to political prominence by entering the State Council in 1944 as member for the Kelaniya seat where he defeated the elder statesman, the late Mr E.W. Perera, by raising the anti-Christian and pro-Buddhist cry. Unashamedly he prides himself as the pioneer of 'Sinhala only' for he was the first one to move a resolution for 'Sinhala only' in 1944 in the State Council. He played a leading role in compelling the United National Party to adopt 'Sinhala only' at the Kelaniya Convention in 1955.

His countrywide campaign against the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact and to 'save the Sinhala-Buddhist race' not only resulted in the unilateral abrogation of the pact, but also contributed to the first ever ma-

jor island-wide outbreak of anti-Tamil violence.

Since he came to power, he has presided over at least five major outbreaks of anti-Tamil violence in which thousands perished and their property destroyed. His war cry in 1977, 'The Sinhala people are saying, I am not saying, that if it be war, let it be war, if it be peace, let it be peace . . . ' triggered off the anti-Tamil pogrom in August 1977.

His infamous pronouncement on July 11, 1983, that he was 'not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people or their lives' signalled the green light for the anti-Tamil bloodbath in July—August 1983. Since then, he has unleashed his uncontrollable death squads of the Sri Lankan armed forces to commit unprecedented and unimaginable atrocities against the Tamil people, bringing back memories of the dark years in Hitler's Germany.

Even as the APC was continuing, his minions in the military were murdering Tamils in their hundreds, burning their properties and raping their women. Forced evacuation of Tamils settled in areas of Vavuniya, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, etc., to give way to Sinhala settlers brought from outside were taking place. He was martalling his military muscle and recruiting foreign mercenaries and the murderous Mossad.

These are not the actions of a government or a President who looks forward to reasonable and peaceful solutions to the problems facing the Tamil people. They are the actions and diabolical preparations of those who had resolved to wipe out any trace of resistance to Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony and

achieve total subjugation of the Tamil nation.

Why the leadership of the TULF continued to participate in APC even after it became demonstrably clear that nothing would come out of it to the benefit of the Tamil people remains a mystery. At least the ruthless campaign of arson and murder by the armed forces in the Tamil areas should have prompted the TULF's immediate withdrawal.

Even parties operating in the South like the Communist Party withdrew from the APC protesting against the government's attempt to unilaterally impose a 'consensus', abandoning regional councils in favour of a Second Chamber. Had the TULF refused to participate once Annexure C was scuttled, the President could not have continued with this farce with even an iota of credibility. What the TULF has done, in continuing to participate, was to have given undeserved credibility to an otherwise worthless exercise, an exercise in futility as Mr Amirthalingam himself called it.

Having played for time through the long-running farce of the APC and in the meantime martialled his military muscle, the President has offered the Tamil people nothing tangible. Even a thousand second class Second Chambers or the devalued and discredited District Councils as proposed will not satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people.

The inter-district co-ordination between District Councils on limited matters on common interest such as dealing with a river flowing through their districts is of no concern to the Tamil people who are daily struggling to arrest the tide of

the river of blood presently flowing in the Tamil areas as a consequence of the atrocities committed by the armed forces.

The Tamil people have come too far, suffered too much, sacrificed too many lives and lost most of their property. They have been harassed and humiliated beyond endurance. They have been taunted and tortured too many times. They have been hacked to death and burnt alive.

Their homes and businesses even in the Tamil traditional homelands have been and are being ravaged and ransacked, plundered and pillaged, battered and burnt. There is only one apt description for the crimes committed against the Tamil people and that is GENOCIDE.

The pathetic palliatives offered by the President do not constitute even a partial solution to the plight of the Tamil people. They are a farce and a fraud. They ought be rejected, and rejected unreservedly and absolutely. Those who consider collaborating in this fraud will be committing a grave act of betrayal against the Tamil nation.

The fate and future of the Tamil people can no longer depend on the temper tantrums or periodic protestations of those paranoid prelates of the Maha Sangha. They can no longer be left to the vagaries of Sinhala political opinion. The fate and future of the Tamil people can be assured only when they take their destiny in their own hands. And that does not happen by accident. The struggle for national self-determination has already begun. It must be prosecuted more effectively, efficiently, unitedly and resolutely.

AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

FROM PAGE 1

Northern and Eastern provinces. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was not satisfied with two regional councils for these two provinces and hoped to achieve one single council for both these provinces through the APC. However, when Annexure C was abandoned by the President, there seemed little hope that the TULF would make much headway in pushing forward its proposals.

In the meantime, the President, through his Prime Minister and Ministers, and not excluding the extremist sections of the Buddhist clergy, commenced a sustained and continuous anti-Indian campaign within Sri Lanka and as months passed, the influence of the 'good offices' of India became progressively less and less, and finally no influence at all. The President had played for time and won.

At long last, the curtains are being drawn on Act One of the APC, an Act which had survived a record number of scenes, starting with dog-fights over the contents of the agenda, then prolonged postponements, walk-outs, pull-outs, come-backs, broken promises, contradictions, let-downs and, in short, anything but everything compatible with discord and dissension.

Amidst the chaos and confusion of the cast on the stage, the director of this tragi-comedy, President Jayawardene, had to appear in person to narrate the rest of the story and bring the curtains down abruptly promising the actors another stage, which he described as the Second Chamber, where they could continue with Act Two. The 'unbridgeable gaps' about which he spoke, have now been bridged by a device called 'consensus' which he imposed on all participants.

Second Chamber

The 'President's proposals' (see box page 15), which he described as having a 'large measure of consensus', have not been accepted by any political party or important group. The two basic elements of the President's proposals are the creation of a Second Chamber and District Councils.

When the President mooted the idea of a Second Chamber, those parties representing the minority communities suggested the setting up of a Chamber of Minorities if it were to have any relevance to the solution to the problems of the minorities. The 'Island' of 17.8.84 reported:

'There has emerged in recent inter-party discussions a proposal to re-structure the envisaged Second Chamber as a 'Chamber of Minorities' that would represent and protect minority interests.

'This new line of thought, according to informed sources, visualises the creation

of a second chamber comprising elected members representing racial and religious minorities and having vetoing powers in the case of legislation affecting minorities.

Sources said that the idea would be to model the Chamber of Minorities on the USSR 'Chamber of Nationalities'. The vetoing power would be on the lines of Section 29 (2) of the old Soulbury Constitution and relate to legislation affecting minorities.

'Proposals to restructure the Second Chamber on the abovementioned lines have emerged in discussions held among organisations such as the CWC, TULF, ACTC, DWC, CP, LSSP, Council of Muslims and Muslim League, etc. Although there has been no uniformity of opinion among these parties on the Second Chamber a general understanding on the feasibility of converting the Second Chamber into a Chamber of Minorities having the power to veto particular types of legislation is said to have been arrived at.

The TULF and the Tamil Congress, the major Sri Lankan Tamil parties, while remaining opposed to the Second Chamber as an alternative to Tamil aspirations, are not averse to it becoming a Chamber of Minorities.

'The CWC is learnt to be keen on the idea of a Chamber of Minorities, and is of the view that each of the 25 districts should elect two members who are minorities — race or religion wise. This would mean representation on an exclusive basis for Sri Lankan Tamils. Tamils of Indian origin, Moors, Malays, Burghers and also non-Buddhist Sinhalese. Certain minority sections in the UNP are also said to be in favour.'

However, the proposed Second Chamber (SC) serves only to enhance the extraordinary powers which the executive President already enjoys. The President's contention that the SC represents a bridge between two unbridgeable positions, namely the demand for Regional Councils by the Tamil people and the refusal by those sections of the majority Sinhala Community to go beyond District Councils as the highest sub-unit of devolution is absolutely untenable. The SC has no logical or organic connection with the question of devolution of power.

According to Rev. Fr. Tissa Balasunya:

'The proposed second chamber will have little or no effective power concerning legislation. It can only debate bills prior to their second reading or main debate in Parliament. Even then, there should be a definite exclusion of powers in relation to constitutional amendments, money bills, public security, foreign relations and any other "sensitive areas".'

'This leaves it little scope of any major significance even in ethnic relations. Further, when any issue becomes "sensitive" the Second Chamber

PLEASE TURN OVER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

would be powerless concerning it.

'Further discussions may be 'without media publicity'. This may ensure confidentiality, but not the impact of and on public opinion.

'The intention seems for it to be "in some way a continuing All Party Conference". The working of the so-called APC during the past 8-9 months is not so encouraging as to make the country happy with such similarity.

'The Second Chamber as proposed will have no control over the Executive. On the contrary the Executive President, with Parliament which he presently controls, will be able to nominate one-third of the members of the Senate. Since the ruling party controls most of the district councils in the country, most of the 50 members elected by the district councils (other than from the North and East) will be supporters of the ruling party and of the Executive President. The President will therefore have an absolute majority in the Senate, at least till the next General Elections which are not due till 1989. The representation in the Second Chamber may therefore not necessarily be representative of public opinion in the country.

'Since "the President may choose Cabinet and non-Cabinet ministers from the Second Chamber", this proposal will give the President power to

appoint Cabinet Ministers from outside of Parliament. He can thus bypass even the presently devalued parliament which too has several nominated MPs. This Second Chamber will thus result in increase of the powers of the Executive Presidency rather than of the Legislature or of the people.

'In this proposed Second Chamber the ethnic minorities will not only continue to be a minority — of about 16 out of 50 members elected by the district councils; further the balance minority representatives will be 'nominated by the President and Parliament' and hence may not adequately represent different political persuasions. The minorities will continue to be ineffectively represented in the Chamber too.'

Under the proposal, no legislation passed by the Second Chamber shall become law unless approved by the President! How the Tamil people can depend on a President who in the midst of the worst holocaust they faced, succumbed to the 'natural demand of the Sinhala people' and enacted the Sixth Amendment thus disenfranchising the entire Tamil people, to approve legislation protecting their rights, is difficult to contemplate.

A former Minister in the SLFP Cabinet said that even a hundred chambers would be ineffective 'unless we went into the roots of the problem

and solved it there. We must have more than a bridge in order to settle the problem for all time'

District Councils

The APC, described as 'an Indonesian shadow play' by the progressive Sinhalese journalist Mervyn de Silva, toyed with such units of Governments as 'provincial councils', 'cross-provincial councils' and 'zonal councils' after the President scuttled the idea of 'regional councils'.

The wholesale betrayal of the Tamil people is most manifest in the President succumbing to the ultimatum position of some of the extremist chauvinist sections within his party and the Buddhist clergy that nothing more than District Councils should be set up as the highest sub-unit on which certain powers and functions could be devolved.

The proposed District Councils are nothing more than a rehash, albeit with a few modifications, of the powerless quasi-purposive discredited District Development Councils which were created two and a half years ago following the two-year round of talks with the TULF and which proved a total and absolute disaster.

TULF disappointed

The leader of the TULF, Mr A. Amirthalingam, who continued to

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£3,000	111.19	79.15	64.23	47.58
£3,500	129.72	92.34	74.93	67.18
£4,000	148.25	105.54	85.64	76.18
£4,500	166.78	118.73	96.34	86.37
£5,000	185.31	131.92	107.05	95.97
£6,500	240.91	171.49	139.49	124.76

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APR 21.7%

In terms of paragraph six of the President's statement of December 1st, 1983, the following proposals which have emerged as a result of discussions in Colombo and New Delhi are appended for consideration by the All Party Conference. These proposals are in the context of the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka and will form a basis for formulating the Agenda of the All Party Conference.

(1) The District Development Councils in a Province be permitted to combine into one or more Regional Councils if they so agree by decisions of the Councils and approved by Referendum in that district.

(2) In the case of the District Councils in the Northern and Eastern Provinces respectively, as they are not functioning due to the resignation of the majority of members, their union within each province to be accepted.

(3) Each region will have a Regional Council if so decided. The convention will be established that the leader of the party which commands a majority in the Regional Council would be formally appointed by the President as the Chief Minister of the Region. The Chief Minister will constitute a Committee of Ministers of the Region.

(4) The President and the Parliament will continue to have overall responsibility over all subjects not transferred to the regions and generally for all other matters relating to the maintenance of the sovereignty, integrity, unity and security and progress and development of the Republic as a whole.

(5) The legislative power of the Region

ANNEXURE C

would be vested in the Regional Councils which would be empowered to enact laws and exercise executive powers in relation thereto on certain specified listed subjects including the maintenance of internal Law and Order in the Region, the Administration of Justice, Social and Economic Development, Cultural Matters and Land Policy. The list of subjects which will be allocated to the Regions will be worked out in detail.

(6) The Regional Councils will also have the power to levy taxes, cess or fees and to mobilise resources through loans, the proceeds of which will be credited to a Consolidated Fund set up for that particular Region to which also will be credited grants, allocations or subventions made by the Republic. Financial resources will be apportioned to the Regions on the recommendations of a representative Finance Commission appointed from time to time.

(7) Provision will be made for constituting High Courts in each Region. The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka will exercise appellate and constitutional jurisdiction.

(8) Each Region will have a Regional Service consisting of (a) officers and other public servants of the Region and (b) such other officers and public servants who may be seconded to the Region. Each Region will have a Regional Public Service Commission for recruitment and for exercising disciplinary powers relating to the members of the Regional Service.

(9) The armed forces of Sri Lanka will

adequately reflect the national ethnic position. In the Northern and Eastern Regions, the Police forces for internal security will also reflect the ethnic composition of these Regions.

(10) A Port Authority under the Central Government will be set up for administering the Trincomalee Port and Harbour. The area which will come under the administration of the Port Authority as well as the powers to be assigned to it will be further discussed.

(11) A national policy on land settlement and the basis on which the Government will undertake land colonisation will have to be worked out. All settlement schemes should be based on ethnic proportions so as not to alter the demographic balance subject to agreement being reached on major projects.

(12) The Constitution and other laws dealing with the official language Sinhala and the national language Tamil be accepted and implemented as well as similar laws dealing with the National Flag and Anthem.

(13) The Conference should appoint a committee to work out constitutional and legal changes that may be necessary to implement these decisions. The Government would provide its Secretariat and necessary legal offices.

(14) The consensus of opinion of the All Party Conference will itself be considered by the United National Party Executive Committee and presumably by the executive body of the other parties as well, before being placed before Parliament for legislative action.

attend the APC, with occasional threats of 'walk-out', was clearly 'disappointed' with the President's proposals. He called it an exercise in futility. He said: 'We expected something more precise, more tangible to be presented to the APC. Last time the President gave me the impression that he would come out with a scheme of devolution to a unit larger than the district, formulating and defining the powers, legislative and executive, to be devolved. The present proposal is far too vague and intangible to satisfy the Tamil aspirations.'

It is a pity that Mr Amirthalingam seems to be placing too much reliance on the 'impression' given by the ever-changing President Jayawardene, even after the bitter and fruitless experience he must have had with the never-ending talks he has had with Mr Jayawardene during the last several years. Now the government and President Jayawardene have indicated the maximum extent to which they would go. It remains to be seen what the TULF response is going to be. Judging from the 'soft criticism' of the proposals, one would not be surprised with the TULF's lamentable lack of a clear political perspective or strategy.

Militant reaction

The reaction of the Tamil militant groups would be predictable. They

have, even before the President's proposals, rejected the APC as a meaningless and worthless exercise. One typical comment from a militant group stated:

"While a war is raging in Jaffna, a peace process is taking place in Colombo. This 'Peace Talk' is not concerned about the war of genocide launched against the Tamils. It is not concerned about massacres, mass

murders, mass arrests and the massive destruction of public property. It is simply concerned about vague concepts, loose generalisations and illogical propositions. It is a dialogue of empty words. This dialogue has been going on for decades ever since the birth of the federal party. It may go on for ever until the death of the Tamil nation. The world is sceptical about a

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TAMIL PASSENGERS KILLED IN ARMY HIJACK TWO WOMEN RAPED

It is a telling paradox that the footprints of the killers and rapists from the Sri Lankan army who waylaid a coach proceeding from Colombo to Jaffna on September 11 should have commenced near the statue of the compassionate Lord Buddha at Vavuniya (a town 90 miles from Jaffna).

Fourteen Tamil and one Muslim passengers were killed on the spot and several injured when an armed gang, some in uniform and identified as members of the security forces, opened fire at point-blank range with sub-machine guns after hijacking the coach during the early hours of September 11, 1984. The coach was carrying 45 passengers which included seven women and two children. Two of the young women, both from Jayanthi Nagar, Kilinochchi were gang-raped by the gunmen in the nearby jungle (see separate story).

Even before the entire details of this gruesome massacre and rape could emerge, the Sri Lankan government began a cover-up. The Minister of National Security, Mr Lalith Athulathmudali, has, of late, developed a new line to expain away army excesses and atrocities against Tamil people and their property — that, they were committed by 'Tamil terrorists' with a view to tarnishing the image of the army!

Ministry spokesman

Following this line, the Defence Ministry spokesman said the passengers might have been killed by Tamil militants with the view to discrediting the army. Finding it difficult to explain as to how the Sinhalese passengers in the coach were allowed to go unharmed, the Defence Ministry later suggested three possibilities: firstly, that Tamil militants carried out the killings; secondly, that it could have been done by former soldiers who were recently discharged for misconduct; and thirdly, that it could have been the work of some extremist Sinhala group.

In offering these possibilities, the intention of the government was demonstrably clear. It wanted to cover up the misdeeds of its armed forces.

However, the story that emerges from the survivors of this massacre leads one to the irresistible conclusion that the killings were carried out by a death squad of the Sri Lankan armed forces, apparently in retaliation

for the attack on some of their colleagues by Tamil militants in the nearby town of Mullaitivu the day before.

Our special Jaffna correspondent has pieced together, through eyewitness accounts, what transpired when this gruesome massacre of innocent civilians was carried out during the dark hours of the early morning of September 11 in the thick jungles of Vavuniya.

VICTIMS OF THE MASSACRE

The following persons were killed when an armed group belonging to the Sri Lankan security forces hijacked the coach in which 45 passengers were travelling, and shot them:

1. **Sornalingam Ekadhayaparan** alias Babu (28 years)
2. **Kandasamythurai Ravi** (23 years old), Chetty Street Lane, Nallur. Director Ravi & Raj Co., law student.
3. **K. Sinnadurai**, Driver of coach, Karaveddy.
4. **N. Nazeer**, Colombo.
5. **M. Siva**, Colombo.
6. **P. Sivashanmuganathan** alias Kokulam, Batticaloa.
7. **Saravanamuttu Thiyagesar**, Odduchuddan.
8. **Ratnasabapathy Kirubaharan**, Vaddakachchi.
9. **Mohammed Laikudeen**, Colombo.
10. **Sebamalai**, Jaffna.
11. **Veerasingam Murugiah** Chun-nakam.
12. **Nadesu Murugavel**, Chun-nakam.
13. **E. Bernard**, Chulipuram.
14. **S. Paramananathan**, Uduvil.
15. **Sinnathamby Jegendran**, Kaithady.
16. **S. Jeyasingham**, Vaddukoddai. Died after admission to hospital.
17. **R. Rajendran** (24 years) Died after admission to hospital.

The injured included Atputhanathan of Saranavai Mill of Thirumawaram, T. Suresh (18) of Wanasala, Kelaniya and Appran Hussein (30) of Akurana.

Two young Tamil girls (whose names are withheld for humanitarian reasons) were gang-raped by the army personnel.

Surviving driver's tale

One of the two drivers of the coach who miraculously escaped death and who was at the steering wheel when the hijacking took place, reported:

'I was driving the coach. The other driver was resting in a front seat. At Vavuniya, some persons standing across the road by the side of the Lord Buddha statue signalled the coach to stop.

'Since this is a usual army checkpoint, I halted the coach. They placed a gun against my head and ordered me in Tamil (spoken with a distinct Sinhalese accent) to drive the coach along Mannar Road. At the sixth mile post, in the middle of a thick jungle, they ordered me to stop.

'I was asked to switch off the headlights. The second driver was then ordered to get off the bus and was fired upon. Then the other passengers were pushed out of the bus in batches and shot. I had by then left the driver's seat and moved over to a passenger seat. I was pushed out with the passengers and fell on the ground outside. I managed to crawl under the chassis of the coach unnoticed and crawled out of the opposite side and bolted for cover into the jungle.'

Hussain Appran, a 30-year-old Muslim from Colombo, who was among the injured, narrated:

'After stopping the coach, the driver was ordered by the armed men to start it. The coach proceeded for about 10 to 15 minutes. I do not know the area. Then they ordered the driver to stop. I heard someone asking whether there were any Sinhalese in it. Three or four men came up. They were assaulted and asked to run away.'

A 30-year-old Tamil youth, who lived in Colombo with his parents and who was travelling to Jaffna with his father to attend a funeral, had the following harrowing story to tell:

'I was in one of the back seats of the bus and watched with a fluttering heart the passengers from the front seats being pulled out and shot. I told two of the armed men that I was a resident of Colombo and not of Jaffna and that my father was a retired serviceman. 'I pleaded for mercy. "Do you know what happened at Mullaitivu?" they asked.

(I was not aware at that time that some troops had been ambushed in Mullaitivu barely 24 hours earlier.) At this stage my father spoke to them and convinced them of the fact that he

was an ex-serviceman. As a result, our lives were spared.'

Nightmare relived

Twenty-three-year-old Thedchana-moorthy from Thachchanthopu relived his nightmare and recalled:

'On the day of the incident I was travelling seated on the last row of the coach. "Witness", a feature film, was being screened on the TV mounted in the bus. Some were watching the film while others were dozing off. The time was around 2.30a.m. I was awakened from my sleep suddenly as the coach halted and the TV was switched off. Five armed men had boarded the coach. One man with moustache and beard looked really frightening. Two of them were in army uniform and carried sub-machine guns. They said something in Sinhala.

'I then noticed that the coach had been diverted through a narrow road closely engulfed on all sides by thick vegetation. It was a thick jungle. The coach was stopped.

'The men then pulled out the reserve driver of the coach. Then I heard gunshots. Someone said that he had been shot. They then returned to the coach and at gun-point snatched whatever money and jewellery we had on our persons. In mortal fear, all the passengers handed over their belongings without as much as a whimper or a protest.

'While two of the men stripped us of our belongings from the front seat backwards, the other men dragged the passengers, who had been relieved of their belongings, out of the coach and shot them down. We realised that we were all on the brink of death. We wept, some were praying to Lord Jesus to save us. The faces of my sisters at home and other neighbours flashed through my mind.

'It was now my turn to be pulled out of the coach. I fell at the feet of my would-be killers and cried, praying for mercy. "I worship you as if you were my God and pray for mercy. Please don't kill me," I pleaded. They responded to my prayers by pushing me down the aisle of the coach, trampling on me and hammering me mercilessly with the butts of their weapons. A lady, whom I have never seen or spoken to before and who was travelling in the coach, must have been so moved by the mauling I got that she pleaded with my assailants to spare me and told them that she was my wife. It was all of no use. They battered me some more.

Pretended to be dead

'They dragged me and two others who were seated near me along the aisle and hurled us out of the coach.

SILVARROW'S SLANDER

Murderers are those who murder people. Rapists are those who rape women. How does one categorise those who cover up for and protect murderers and rapists? There cannot be much difference between the two.

One can understand the genuine agony of those Sri Lankans who feel ashamed and hurt by the adverse publicity that their country attracts due to the continuing atrocities of arson and murder attributed to the country's armed forces. However, those Sinhala racists who engage in the cover-up of atrocities committed against the Tamil people deserve to be exposed for what they truly are.

The bankruptcy of the Sinhala racist propaganda machinery in the UK is revealed by the front page fraudulent story which appeared in the September 1984 issue of the 'SILVARROW' with banner headlines about the killing of Tamil passengers at Vavuniya on September 11.

The 'SILVARROW', named after its owner Mr Silva (Suriyasena Silva), although a Sri Lankan government mouthpiece from its inception, did not engage in openly racist and anti-Tamil propaganda. However, since the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, Mr Silva and his 'Silvarrow' began to shed their masks and show their true colours through the columns of this freely distributed paper.

The free distribution is made possible by the considerable income he receives from the several pages of advertisements, including those from the Sri Lankan government's corporations, which fill up almost half the paper. Besides the advertisements, the paper normally contains nothing but photographic reproductions of material which had appeared during the previous month in the state-owned *Daily News* and *Sri Lanka News* (weekly).

Suddenly, Mr Silva and his SILVARROW have become very concerned about the plight of the harijans (lower caste people) and his concern is really touching. When one has friends like him, who needs enemies?

According to Mr Silva's SILVARROW, the harijans living in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka have appealed for protection

As we crashed on to the bare ground, there was a burst of gunfire and one young man who was thrown along with me was riddled with bullets. I screamed along with him and lay motionless along with his dead body in abject fear. I was splattered with blood spurting out from his body. They came up to me and kicked me

against harassment by 'Tamil terrorists'. The story alleges that many harijans have been killed and their bodies were found scattered in the Jaffna district. No one is named as having made this appeal, nor does it identify to whom this appeal has been made.

Again, the SILVARROW has gone a step further than the Sri Lankan government in its attempt to cover up the gruesome massacre of a coach-load of Tamils by the death squads of the armed forces.

The September issue of this paper carried a front-page diabolical false story under the heading '15 HARIJANS SHOT DEAD BY TERRORISTS'. At least the government speculated three possibilities as to who the killers might have been and it did not claim the murdered Tamils to be harijans. But Mr Silva's SILVARROW was absolutely sure on both these counts!

Unlike the Sinhala army and the racist mobs who have killed and who continue to kill all Tamils, no matter what caste, sex or age group they belong to, the so-called Tamil 'terrorists' have not attacked defenceless Sinhalese civilians. Their targets are invariably members of the security forces who have over the years harassed, tortured and killed Tamils and burnt their property.

Therefore, the SILVARROW and those who desire to malign and slander the Tamil militants and falsify what really happens in Sri Lanka have conjured up this baseless 'harijan story'. It is not that Mr Silva or his SILVARROW do not know the truth.

This is not the first time that SILVARROW has indulged in this type of falsification. When the Church of Our Lady of Refuge in Jaffna was shelled and damaged by the security forces in April this year, the SILVARROW published a photograph of the undamaged rear view of the church and attempted to cover up the truth.

If the Sinhala racist propaganda lobby think that they can get away with such blatant falsehoods to cover up the genocidal atrocities committed against the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, they are living in a fool's paradise.

with their boots. I pretended to be dead.

'They went into the coach, pulled out more people and shot them. I still shudder to think of the nightmare experience of lying motionless by a dead body, soaked in the blood pouring from it and with bullets flying all

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 18

LIYANAGE, THE SCAPEGOAT

Many questions still remain unanswered about the recent visit of Mr Douglas Liyanage to Israel, although he has resigned from his top-level post, Secretary to the Ministry of State and Information.

The government has attempted to underplay the matter, stating that his visit was a private one. But Mr Liyanage is no ordinary public officer. He was a senior civil servant when he was arrested in 1962 and charged as the prime conspirator in the coup d'état organised by senior officers of the armed services and police against the then government and later convicted and sentenced to prison. He was released from jail only when his conviction was set aside on a technical point by the House of Lords.

Mr Liyanage was rehabilitated during the 1965-70 UNP regime and soon rose to prominent positions again. When Mr J.R. Jayawardene came to power in 1977, he was appointed to the important post of Secretary to the Ministry of State and Information.

In addition to this position, he was appointed 'competent authority' for several subjects and chief censor of news and information under the Emergency. He was the first person to come up with the unbelievable theory that the left parties were behind the July 1983 violence and the government soon adopted this theory as its own.

No one believes that the visit of Mr Liyanage to Israel was a private one and this is demonstrated by the fact that he was met by senior officials of

the Israeli Foreign Ministry. If his visit was purely private, Mr Liyanage is no fool to give interviews to the Israeli press touching on foreign policy matters and bilateral relations.

The story of the 'private visit' had to be manufactured by the government and later his resignation had to be called for as a result of the mounting reaction from Arab countries to the statements made by Mr Liyanage in an interview he gave to the Israeli newspaper 'Jerusalem Post'.

He said that if Arab countries and the PLO could have embassies in Colombo, 'there is no reason not to have equality with Israel'. Although Mr Liyanage was in fact reflecting government policy, his statement contradicted the government's public claim that the establishment of the Israeli 'interests section' would not lead to the resumption of full diplomatic relations with Israel.

'Government's claim

Another fact that came out of Mr Liyanage's interview was that the government's claim that Arab countries fully understood the government's decision to open the Israeli 'interests section' was false. Mr Liyanage had said, 'Arab countries had put strong pressure on Sri Lanka to end its links with Israel, but this had not been accepted'.

Besides the severe condemnation in all Arab newspapers of the government's decision to set up the 'interests section', it is no secret that the Arab

countries have already taken certain retaliatory measures against Sri Lanka and more are likely to follow.

Ambassadors from certain Arab countries have already left Colombo and there is no prospect of their return. Sri Lanka, which depends heavily on trade with many Arab countries and on massive loans to balance its budget deficits, is likely to face further reprisals. The plight of over 300,000 Sri Lankans working in the Middle Eastern countries is anybody's guess.

In the light of the serious consequences that may eventuate, very few are prepared to forget the Liyanage episode with his resignation and dismiss his visit as a private one in which the government had no say. They refuse to believe that President Jayawardene who authorised Mr Liyanage going abroad and Mr Anandattissa de Alwis, the Minister of State, did not know about his visit to Israel.

It is difficult to believe that so senior a public officer as Mr Liyanage, whom the government had entrusted with a number of special tasks, would have made such remarks on such delicate and sensitive matters or gone without leave to Israel.

Informed Colombo circles suggest that Mr Liyanage did in fact undertake a special mission to Israel on behalf of the government, and in view of the unexpected strong reaction that resulted, he had now been made a scapegoat and made to resign to save the government's skin.

PARENTS APPEAL AGAINST ASSAULT, ARREST AND DETENTION

The following is the text of an appeal made by the Parents' Association of Jaffna to President Jayawardene through the Government Agent, Jaffna.

The deputation which met the G.A. on behalf of the Parents' Association included Messrs K. Nesiiah, S. Subramaniam Mahasivam, President, All Ceylon Tamil Teachers' Union and several Principals of Schools:

It is with deep regret that the Parents' Association of Jaffna wishes to point out that the arrest, assault and detention of Tamil students and youths, believed to be breadwinners of hundreds of families, has produced deep sorrow throughout Jaffna. There is still wailing in Tamil homes owing to the massacre of innocents and their continued detention.

The education of Tamil children in Jaffna is in jeopardy; many examinations, namely, the University examinations, Technical College examinations, English competitions, etc., have already been postponed indefinitely as a result of the army violence in the north.

Assaulted him mercilessly

Very recently, some army men in civil dress stopped their vehicles at Kandarmadam Junction, Jaffna, pulled a Jaffna Hindu College student (CENSORED) going on his bicycle to his College at 8.15a.m. pushed him and his bicycle into their vehicle and assaulted him mercilessly till he became unconscious. They then took him to the army camp at Palaly and many

hours later dropped him at an unknown place, from where he returned home with much difficulty as a result of his body-pain.

A student of Nadeswara College, (CENSORED), son of a teacher, was assaulted near the Cement factory service station when he was on his way to his college. This led to students deserting their schools for fear of life and to the cancellation of the English Competition in the Kankesanthurai Circuit.

Earlier a Manipay Hindu College student, (CENSORED) was taken into custody for not producing his identity card when he was travelling to Kili-nochchi. He has still not been released despite repeated requests. His continued detention has led to boycott of schools by the students.

The Parents' Association of Jaffna considers the attack on Hartley College, Point Pedro, by the army as an insult and a challenge to the education of the Tamil students in Jaffna. They had smashed the laboratory and set fire to the library consisting of about 7,500 volumes of valuable books; the new block of the college has also been burnt down. This recalls the burning of the Jaffna Public Library, which was unbearable to the Tamil people and this gives rise to the fear whether it is a continued attempt on our cultural heritage.

There is a police commando group camped very close to this college.

The army has taken over and is now in occupation of the Sithivinayagar school situated in the Kankesanthurai area. The school children are unable to continue their education there.

As a result of the army violence the students in the district are unable to travel with any degree of safety to their schools and we the parents are scared to send them there.

It is, therefore, clear that the violence of the armed forces must be stopped. We the parents of Jaffna urge on your excellency to:

○ Withdraw the armed forces from Jaffna territory. This alone will help to improve the relations between the Tamil people and the government; there is already a marked deterioration of such relations.

○ Release the Tamil students and youths whom we know to be breadwinners and are languishing in detention for no reasons of their own.

○ Hand over the schools now in occupation of the army.

(Courtesy of 'Saturday Review')

**HARTLEY COLLEGE O.B.A.
(UK Branch)**

**REUNION LUNCH
for Hartleyites and their friends**

**Saturday
16th December
at 1.00pm**

**Lola Jones Hall,
Greaves Place, off Garratt
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Adults £3

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C.J.T. Thamotheram	01-567 3221
M. Theva	0883 48005
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PARENTS CALL FOR RELEASE OF CHILDREN

'We are mothers. We can't live without seeing our children. Our entire family is unable to eat any food because everyone in the family is weeping. Please hand back our children', a delegation of Vadammaradchy (Valvetithurai and Point Pedro area) mothers told Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne on 25th September.

Calming these wailing mothers down became quite a problem. A delegation of others from Vadammaradchy Citizens' Committees met the Brigadier to ask him to hand back their children who are now held in the deep south, Boosa, Galle.

The Government Agent, Jaffna, Mr M. Panchalingam, had arranged for this meeting. The mothers, including wives and sisters of the detainees, were in the delegation.

The Valvai Citizens' Committee delegation first met the Brigadier.

The Brigadier explained to the delegation that, at present, there are only 67 youths detained at Boosa. They are under interrogation, and he had instructed the Boosa Camp authorities to send back the detainees immediately the investigations are over. But, he said, he could not request them to send them to the camps here.

He also emphasised that youths who were taken into custody on the 4th and 5th August are not in any physical danger and that if anything like that happened, he said, 'I am responsible'.

The names of 13 people who had been released on 24th August were read out at this stage. The mothers of the other youths began wailing aloud at this point.

'MAKE TAMIL ALSO AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE' — Former UNP Minister

Dr M.C.M. Kaleel, a lifelong member of the United National Party, a former Cabinet Minister and a leading Muslim political personality, has declared that the key to the solution of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka is that 'both Sinhala and Tamil should be made the state languages throughout the country irrespective of whether the majority are Tamils or Sinhalese in a particular area.'

Dr Kaleel, in a lengthy article ('Daily News', August 27, 1984), covering the history of the ethnic problem, stated:

'It is therefore, seen that the root cause of the Tamil-Sinhalese controversy is mainly due to language differences. Strange to say, both parties are not very keen to solve the language issue because the Sinhalese want Sinhalese only to be the state language, with a concession to the Tamils for the reasonable use of Tamil in the Tamil-speaking areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

Help achieve Federalism

'The Tamils prefer to have Tamil in the Tamil speaking areas because it will help them to achieve Federalism or Eelam for their own majority areas.

'If the policy proclaimed by the President at Mahiyangana that "Every citizen of Sri Lanka had a right to settle down in the north and they should utilise that right. In the same way, every citizen in the North has a right to come to the South and settle down there.'

It is a sine qua non that both Sinhala and Tamil should be made the State Languages throughout the country irrespective of whether the majority are Tamils or Sinhalese in any particular area. This I believe is the key to the solution of the problems between the different ethnic groups in this country.

'Every citizen in Sri Lanka irrespective of nationality, language, caste or creed can enjoy full freedom and equality of status to move about in any part of the country or settle down in any part of the country in accordance with his legal rights.

Only one problem

'There is only one problem, it needs an amendment to the constitution to amend the 'Sinhalese only, with reasonable use of Tamil' to a 'recognition of both Sinhalese and Tamil' as official languages. This does not mean as some writers have pointed out that every Sinhalese must learn Tamil and every Tamil must learn Sinhalese.

'It is ridiculous to expect to expect a Tamil from Point Pedro to learn Sinhalese, and a Sinhalese peasant in Dondra head to learn Tamil. But each of them should be permitted to use his own mother tongue in whichever part of the country he may happen to be in because both languages are officially recognised.

'In passing, may I also add that in every school whether the medium of instruction is Sinhala or Tamil, English should also be taught as a second language to every child.'

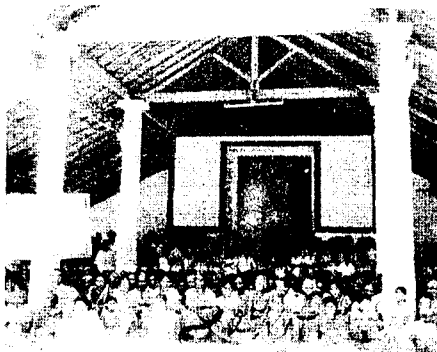
TAMIL TRAVAILS

(Sukhan's diary of events in the occupied Tamil areas)

SEPTEMBER 5, 1984

The Jaffna Citizens Committee members visited Point Pedro, to assess the damage caused by the Army rampage. They also spoke to eyewitnesses to the massacre. Among those fired at by the army were a young couple who had been married that very same day. As they ducked for cover, the bullets riddled the legs of 65-year-old Mrs Aachimuttu Chellappah who was behind them. The result? The 65-year-old lady terrorist is convalescing at Manthikai Hospital following an amputation of both her legs.

☆☆☆



The mothers of the youths taken away by the army praying for their early release

The Valvettithurai Citizens Committee has released a Press statement to the effect that of the 500 Tamil children and youths 'kidnapped' by the security forces at Valvettithurai, 348 were held as 'hostages' at the Boosa Army Camp at Galle, while the fate of the balance 152 was not known. They have also complained to the Government Agent of Jaffna that among the 500 Tamil children taken away by the Army were some who had had either their father or mother slaughtered by the security forces just before capture and in some instances brothers have been taken away.

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Students of Victoria College, Chulipuram, staged a demonstration on bicycles protesting about the incineration of Hartley College and seeking protection for their school.

☆☆☆

At a police-public relations committee meeting that took place at the Central College Hall at Batticaloa, Mr S.E. Kamalanathan, the Principal of St Michael's College, a leading school in the Batticaloa District in Eastern Sri Lanka, reported how students of his school who were playing at the school grounds had been whisked away in trucks by the troops to an army camp without any provocation whatsoever. They had been released after the Regional Director of Education had got in

touch with the Commanding officer of the area.

A few days later he found some troops in civil attire in a jeep in the precincts of the school and asked them why they had come. The troops had questioned his right to ask about their movements.

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Following an incident involving the truck in which the police commandos were travelling on 1.9.84, several houses along the sea front had been attacked by the security forces. Several houses and fishing waadis (temporary huts along the sea coast put up by migrant fishermen, where their fishing paraphernalia and their catch — in salted form — are stored) have been set on fire by the troops at Sakkoddai and Inbarooty over the last few days. People from Tikkam and Sakkoddai have fled from their homes to the safety of Alvai South and Vathirri Aadai, where they have sought refuge in school buildings.

☆☆☆

The fund is urgently being raised by the people of Jaffna to set up a 'Fire Brigade' for the district to combat the recurring acts of arson and fire-raising by troops.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1984

A delegation of Principals of schools from the Jaffna District met Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne, who is in charge of the security forces in the Northern Province, at the Army Camp at Guru Nagar. They protested to him about the indiscriminate assault by troops on schoolboys and the detention of students from Manipay Hindu College, Jaffna Hindu and Central Colleges and Nadeswara College. The Brigadier replied that he was not aware of any of these incidents.



A section of the demonstration by schoolboys

The Brigadier told the delegation that any schoolboy who is found possessing or distributing any form of pamphlet or leaflet would be arrested by the Army and brought to the Army Camp.

☆☆☆

All students from the Jaffna District boycotted classes today protesting against the intimidation, harassment, assault and detention suffered by Jaffna schoolboys at the hands of the security forces. The boycott was 100 per cent successful.

☆☆☆

Troops arriving in a jeep in civils opened fire on innocent shoppers at 'Murugesu Stores' at Mallavi junction last night, killing five and injuring many others. Mr V. Shanmugam (58 years) of Alaveddy, the owner of the shop, Master S. Selvaratnam (12 years) of Yogapuram, Visuvar Nadarajah (29 years) of Vavunikulam suffered serious injuries and were transferred to Jaffna Hospital from Mallavi Hospital today.

It has been reported that security forces have gone on the rampage in the village of Mankulam two days back and had set fire to several shops. Seven shops were completely gutted. If not for the timely action by the villagers in putting out the fire, more shops would have been razed to the ground. The Government Agent of Mullaitivu has brought this to the notice of the army authorities.

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In a massive indiscriminate operation launched by the security forces in the town of Vavuniya yesterday, it is reported that 500 Tamil youths under the age of 30 years had been taken away. Their whereabouts are not known.

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Harbour View Hotel, Kankesanthurai, the only sea front tourist hotel in the North, has been commandeered by the security forces.

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Forty Tamil youths from Batticaloa, Vavuniya, Mannar and Jaffna, who were arrested in a Colombo hotel by the Maradana police were released today after two days of interrogation. These innocent youths had come to Colombo to attend to various matters pertaining to employment in foreign countries.

☆☆☆

SEPTEMBER 7, 1984

The Valvettithurai Citizens' Committee had complained to the Government Agent, Jaffna, about the continuous booming of cannon fire along the coastal belts of Thondamannar and Valvettithurai. This Navy shelling from the

sea is said to be continuing daily to maintain a state of panic and frenzy among the people. Heart patients and pregnant women are said to be affected most.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1984

Two more citizens' committees have been formed in the Jaffna District for the areas of Kokuvil and Point Pedro. This comes in the wake of the formation of the Jaffna Citizens Committee following the July 1983 Tamil pogrom and the Valvettithurai Citizens' Committee following the massacre of Valvettithurai last month. Consequently, the 'shutting out' of Tamil MPs from Parliament by an amendment to the constitution brought by President Jayawardene last year, these citizens' committees play the role of 'protesters' against army atrocities in the Tamil areas.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1984

Students from the Jaffna District began a week-long boycott of schools in protest against harassment and assault by troops on schoolboys. The boycott was 100 per cent successful.

☆☆☆

Sivanathan (29 years) of Meesalai, a lorry owner from Meesalai was shot dead by the troops at Karanavai Road while proceeding in his lorry to buy some spare parts for his vehicle.

☆☆☆

SEPTEMBER 11, 1984

A private coach carrying passengers from Colombo to Jaffna was 'hijacked' by troops at Vavuniya and several were shot dead at point-blank range. (See separate article for details.)

☆☆☆

Two farmers from Mulliyavallai, Ponniah (43 years) and Selladurai Karunaharan alias Kannan (24 years), were killed by the security forces.

☆☆☆

The huts of several farmers in the village of Aandan Kulam were set on fire by security forces.

☆☆☆

Troops went on the rampage at Nedunkerni, setting fire to four shops and injuring several people.

☆☆☆

The Mothers' Front of the Jaffna District has forwarded a memorandum to the President of Sri Lanka citing specific instances of Army assaults on schoolboys. This included:

- a 15-year-old student of Jaffna Hindu College who was captured by the troops on his way to school, taken into an Army truck, whipped with nylon ropes till he became unconscious and then thrown out of the truck at Tellipalai, 12 miles away from the school;
- three students aged between 12-13 years from Jaffna Central College, who were in a similar way taken into an Army truck, mercilessly assaulted and thrown out;
- a 15-year-old student from Nadeswara College, Kankesanthurai, who was thrashed brutally by the troops on his way to school. They also referred to thousands of Tamil children taken away as hostages by the security forces over the past few weeks. They appealed to the conscience of the President himself a father and a grandfather to spare their children from these dastardly attacks.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1984

Jaffna students boycotting schools today staged a demonstration and a day-long fast at Point Pedro to focus attention on Army atrocities. People of the area joined the students at the demonstration and the fast, expressing solidarity with them. Scores of private transport workers tooted the horns of their minibuses in a deafening crescendo to express solidarity with the students when they demonstrated in the ravaged Point Pedro town centre.

Undergraduates of the University of Jaffna staged a total boycott of classes and examinations today in solidarity with schoolboys.

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Not a single candidate turned up at the Bachelor of Arts examination. The undergraduates issued a pamphlet condemning (a) the 'kidnapping' of schoolboys by the Army, (b) the Army assault on schoolboys, (c) the burning of schools by the Army, and (d) the commandeering of school buildings for occupation by the Army.

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About 50 leading educationists of the Jaffna District handed over a lengthy memorandum to the Director of Education of the Northern Province and the Government Agent, Jaffna, protesting about Army atrocities on innocent Tamil schoolboys and demanding the withdrawal of the security forces from Jaffna District.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1984

Pensioners from the Jaffna District have been requested by the office of the Government Agent, Jaffna, to call over at the Jaffna Esplanade from 17.9.84 to collect their monthly pensions, which had been hitherto paid out at Post Offices.

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The public in the Jaffna District observed a complete stoppage of work in solidarity with the students who are boycotting schools. Government departments, private sector enterprises and transport ground to a halt. All streets remained deserted.

☆☆☆

Consequent to a Cabinet decision of 12.9.84, the Department of Highways (Pallai, Kayts, Poonagari and Jaffna Divisions) withdrew their road repair squads who were busy repairing the recently rain-ravaged roads in these areas, which in any case had been in a poor state of neglect over the years. Department sources said that they had received orders from Colombo to stop even simple repair work.

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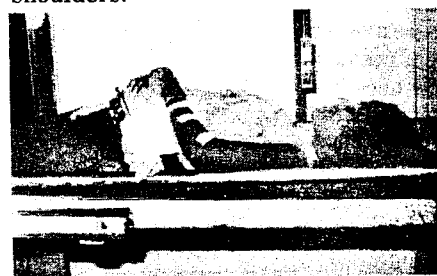
A Sri Lanka Air Force plane, with red and white markings on it, circled low over the south coast of the tiny island of Mandativu (one of the several islands of the Jaffna coast), firing into the coastal belt and the adjoining plantations.



The remnants of the shell used by the security forces on 15.9.84

SEPTEMBER 16, 1984

A 19-year-old pregnant girl died of brain damage following multiple comminuted fractures of her skull, following a missile attack by Sri Lankan security forces just before midnight yesterday in the coastal village of Karanavai. Mrs Kalavathy Thangathurai had just settled down to sleep on a mat on the floor of her mud and palmyrah leaf thatched hut at Kottawattai, Kumulankoodal, when the missile ripped through the palmyrah-leaf thatched wall killing her and injuring her husband, Nallathamby Thangathurai (23 years) on his legs and shoulders.



Four months pregnant Kalawathy Thangathurai killed on 15.9.84

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CENTURY OF ETHNIC CONFLICT (Part IV)

DENIAL OF
POLITICAL RIGHTS
TO PLANTATION

By Kumari Jayawardene

WORKERS 1928-1948

These articles are based on a paper presented to a seminar of the Social Scientists Association and the Institute of Social Studies (The Hague) by Dr Kumari Jayawardena, Associate Professor, Colombo University, in December 1983. Reproduced by courtesy of the LANKA GUARDIAN.

From the 1930s to the present day, the history of the plantation sector in Sri Lanka has been a grim record of the denial of economic and social justice and basic democratic rights to the largest section of the island's working-class, namely the workers of Indian origin, whose labour on tea and rubber plantations has provided the country with its main exports and largest foreign exchange earnings.

The onslaught was carried out through several means; by stripping the workers of their voting rights in stages — thereby depriving them of representation at local government and parliamentary level; by creating a mass of stateless persons and eventually subjecting a large section of them to what amounted to forced repatriation to India; by refusing them many of the wage, education, health and social benefits available to other sections of the population; by exposing them to the ordeal of famine conditions in the 1970s, and finally by subjecting them to death, rape, loot and arson during periods of ethnic violence in 1977, 1981 and in July 1983.

This article, however, specifically deals with the political attacks on these workers and the strengthening of racist ideology among the Sinhalese in the twenty years between 1928 — the year of the first opposition to Indian workers' franchise — and 1948, when they were finally deprived of citizenship rights.

The strategy of the political exclusion of plantation workers was spearheaded by the Sinhala bourgeoisie in the late 1920s. The Sinhala politicians used the cry of 'swamping' to avert the real threat that a class-conscious plantation proletariat might pose to the system, especially if it joined forces with other sections of the Sri Lanka working people.

However, although racist propaganda against the political rights of Indian workers on plantations was first raised by the Sinhala politicians in the late 1920s, the Sinhala working-

class, under the social-democratic leadership of A. E. Goonesinha, was at a peak period of ethnic unity and class solidarity, and opposed discrimination against plantation workers.

When in the 1930s and 1940s Goonesinha's policies changed on this issue, the Left gave non-racist leadership and opposed every attempt to restrict the rights of Indian workers in the urban and plantation sectors. Thus on the question of voting and citizenship rights of the plantation workers, the **working-class parties** in the period 1928 to 1948, firmly supported the plantation workers, while the **parties of the bourgeoisie** consistently campaigned for the denial of these rights.

The earlier articles in this series discussed the formation of the Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness and the resultant conflicts with other non-Sinhala or non-Buddhist elements — the Christians, the Muslims and the Malayalis. In all these instances, ethnic conflict flared up into violence against members of these groups.

However, ethnic antagonism could lead, not only to violence against persons and property, but also, as in the case of plantation labour, to violations of the fundamental human and civic rights of a minority group.

It is very revealing that, although from 1830 to the 1930s, the numbers of Indian migrants on plantations increased significantly, the 'Indian issue' did not become a central concern of Sinhala agitation during this period. In 1911, the Indian Tamils numbered 530,000 or 12.9 per cent of the population of 4.1 million; the vast majority were plantation workers and their dependents and the others were mainly traders and urban workers. By 1921, the numbers had risen to 602,000 of which 536,000 were plantation workers and dependants.

The presence in Sri Lanka of such a large group of recent migrants might have been expected to cause resentment and open expressions of hostility. But the targets of the Sinhala Buddhists from the 1880s were other

minority groups, even though they were numerically much smaller than the Indian Tamils.

It would of course be wrong to say that the presence of several hundred thousand migrant workers caused no resentment among the Sinhalese. Anagarika Dharmapala often made passing disparaging remarks about Indian workers, complaining in 1902, for example, that 'under the English administration, the outcastes of Southern India are allowed to immigrate into the island'. Similarly, contemptuous references to plantation workers were made by Sinhalese leaders and the word 'coolie' was used derogatorily in common parlance.

Captive labour

The structure of the plantation system was geared to this 'new form of slavery'. The migrant workers were subject to a military style, hierarchical domination by British management, to the patriarchal control of the **kangani** or labour recruiter and to the ultimate violence of the colonial state apparatus with its police, regressive laws and prisons.

The workers were kept in 'line' rooms on plantations and were prevented from leaving by both the estate security services and the laws of the land; their health and education levels were deplorable and wages remained, for over a century up to 1927, at a bare subsistence daily rate of 33 cents for men and 25 for women.

However, what was crucial in terms of ethnic relations was that the Sinhalese were not competing for the same jobs as the plantation workers. One of the generally accepted myths is that Sinhalese did not work on plantations because they were not willing to be degraded to the level of 'coolies', being proud of their race, religion and status.

Recent studies have shown that Sinhala peasants refused to work as wage labour on plantations because, even after the advent of plantation capitalism, they continued to have

access to some land; in short the system had not pauperised the Sinhalese to the extent that they had no options but to join the plantation proletariat.

Hence, in the 19th and early 20th centuries the estate Tamils were not targets of ethnic violence; nor was there agitation for their repatriation.

As long as they remained a captive labour force, isolated geographically in the hills with no trade unions or other types of organisation, possessing neither economic nor political rights, and posing no threat or competition in terms of employment, they could be tolerated in spite of their numbers.

Universal franchise and the Indian vote

The first concerted attack on the rights of plantation workers by the Sinhala bourgeoisie occurred when the question of universal suffrage was raised in the late 1920s, during the discussion on constitutional reform.

Plantation workers were vital to the economy but not to the political process, their near slave status was accepted but the prospect of their gaining voting rights and influencing the outcome of elections resulted in a chauvinistic campaign led by elections of the Sinhala bourgeoisie who stirred up fears among the Sinhalese that they would become a minority in certain electoral districts.

Before the Donoughmore reforms, 4 per cent of the population was entitled to vote at elections to the Legislative Council, the franchise being based on income, property and literacy qualifications. Under this system, the Indian workers were not entitled to the vote but 'Indian interests' were represented by two nominated members.

The Donoughmore Commission, which had come to Sri Lanka in 1927, abolished ethnic representation and recommended that the franchise be open to all over 21, stating, however, that 'the privilege of voting should be confined to those who have an abiding interest in the country or who may be regarded as permanently settled in the island'.

The debate in the Legislative Council

The issue of universal suffrage and especially the enfranchisement of women and Indian workers aroused much public controversy in 1928. In the Legislative Council, all but one of the Sinhala representatives openly voiced fears that the Sinhalese would be politically swamped by the Indian vote.

D.S. Senanayake stated that the recommendation of the Commission which had caused the greatest alarm, was the proposal to extend the franchise to Indians. He voiced the view that the Sinhalese were not only a minority in respect to India, but were also the 'victims' of injustice.

'The Sinhalese are . . . an unfortunate community . . . the Sinhalese have been misunderstood and even their generosity forgotten . . . I do not think there is any other community like the Sinhalese who have consented to penalise themselves in order to give privileges to others . . . the Indians . . . have a big country. We have only this small bit of land for ourselves . . . we want this country for ourselves.' (*Hansard*, 8 Nov 1928. Emphasis added.)

Other Sinhalese politicians in the legislature expressed similar views; Francis Molamure claimed that his warnings on the 'Indian menace' were timely:

'It is a question of foresight; it is a question of self-preservation . . . we are voicing the sentiments of a good majority of the population penetration . . . In the past . . . people referred to Ceylon as Liptons Tea Garden; perhaps in the future people will refer to Ceylon as the Indian Banyan Tree.'

Molamure clearly saw the potential of racism as a slogan in future elections based on universal suffrage.

Replying to his critics he predicted electoral defeat for candidates advocating non-discriminatory policies.

'I throw out this challenge. Let them go to the country and make this their platform cry "Send me in and I shall not make any discrimination between Ceylonese and non-Ceylonese"; let his opponent say "My policy is to save Ceylon for the Ceylonese".' (*Hansard*, 15 Nov. 1928)

In this debate, C.W.W. Kannangara also referred to the menace of Indian labour which would swamp 'the permanent population' and hinted that those who did not oppose Indian enfranchisement would be considered to be traitors. (*Hansard*, 8 Nov. 1928) Another class angle on this question was given by V. De S. Wickramanayake, a member of the legislature.

'What I fear most is the Indian cooly on the estate . . . rather than the Indian living in Colombo . . . The Indian labourer . . . goes to work at 6 in the morning and returns to his cooly lines at . . . 6 at night; What does he know of events in the island? . . . therefore I say he is not fit or competent to give a vote on matters political' (*Hansard*, 2 Nov. 1928).

The Labour Party and the Indian Question

The one exception among the Sinhala Legislative Councillors was C.H.Z. Fernando, a member of the Labour Party, who for a decade had been active in support of the urban labour movement. He refuted the alarmist views on 'swamping' calling them 'unfounded in fact' and derided the 'mythical dangers of Indian domination'. However, he did not underestimate the harmful possibilities of racist electioneering; quoting Dr W. A. de Silva, he said:

'The Congress President . . . stated that if it is pointed out to the masses that we want to hand over the destinies of the country to Indians who have no permanent interests here, the masses would rise up to express themselves very strongly on the subject. I quite agree . . . that if anyone were to go among the masses with that cry, which I submit is not an honest cry — it would be very easy indeed to move the masses to some precipitate action' (*Hansard*, 2 Nov. 1928).

Several minority Legislators — who were at the same time supporters of the Labour Party — also warned of the dangers of racism. These included Natesa Aiyar and A. Mahadeva, who stated: 'The Labour Party says . . . we want the Indians and we want them on equal terms with the Ceylonese.' (*Hansard*, 8 Nov. 1928)

Although not in the Labour Party himself, T.B. Jayah (a Malay), supported Indian franchise rights and claimed: 'The Labour Party is strongly in favour of the grant of the franchise to the Indian Community. Their accredited leader says that the Sinhalese labourer will not stand in the way of the grant of the franchise to his Indian brother.' (*Hansard*, 8 Nov. 1928. Emphasis added)

The 'accredited leader' A. E. Goonesinha, who was at the height of his power as Colombo's trade union leader, supported the franchise rights of Indian workers, since his policies were based on class solidarity and ethnic unity. While sections of the Sinhala press were stirring up racist propaganda, A.E. Goonesinha, in 1928, chaired a meeting of the Gandhi Sangham in Price Park and came out in favour of Indian workers' rights; the *Ceylon Daily News* (10 September 1928), reported Goonesinha's attack on the Sinhala leaders.

'A few plutocrats spoke of the Indians as being a menace to the Sinhalese workmen. What had these conscientious patriotic plutocrats done . . . for their workmen in their

times of trouble and hardships? Instead of helping their poor fellow countrymen, the plutocrats had expended their energies in driving out the poor villager from his plot of land. Now these men had developed a sense of patriotism. What was the reason for this solicitude? It was the result of the poor man being given the vote. It was the same plutocrats who went before the Special Commission and opposed . . . the grant of universal suffrage. Having failed in their scheme they now talk of depriving Indians in Ceylon of the right to vote.

The courageous stand that A.E. Goonesinha took in these years, risking criticism and unpopularity by championing the rights of the plantation workers, was in stark contrast to his volte face on minority rights in the thirties.

The elections

When the amended reforms were finally implemented, the franchise was given to those with a Ceylon domicile of origin or choice based on 5 years residence, literacy, property and income qualifications or the possession of a certificate of permanent settlement, given to those with 5 years continuous residence and intention to settle in the country. Under this law, a section of plantation workers were able, for the first time, to exercise franchise rights.

During the first general elections in Ceylon in 1931, there was considerable political campaigning in the plantation areas. Two candidates of Indian origin were elected S.P. Vytilingam (Talawakelle) and Peri Sunderam (Hatton), who became the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce in the new State Council. There was renewed political agitation in the plantation areas in 1936, when the number of Indian voters had risen to 145,000.

At the general election in 1936, two Indians were returned, S.P. Vytilingam (Talawakelle) and the trade union leader K. Natesa Aiyar (Hatton). As general elections were to be held every five years, there was active preparation for the anticipated 1941 elections, (which were postponed because of the World War). By this date the Indian electorate had risen to 225,000 and the election enthusiasm which had spread to the plantation sector also led to a political awakening which facilitated the spread of trade unionism after 1939.

Denial of village franchise

The grant of the franchise, even with certain limitations, to plantation workers and their keenness to regis-

ter and vote, led to feelings of apprehension among the Sinhala political leaders. Having failed to disenfranchise this group at the parliamentary level, an effort was thereafter launched to deny them the franchise at the local government level.

Under the Village Committees Ordinance of 1889, participation in these committees was denied to Europeans, Burghers and Indians, on the ground that they did not form an organic part of village life.

In 1937, law was amended to impose a tax on estates within the village areas, and to give village franchise to Burghers and Europeans, but not to Indians, thereby excluded these workers from a share in local government.

There were loud protests over this legislation; many Indian associations in Sri Lanka accused the State Council of trying to deprive Indians of their political rights and the government of India alleged that the Bill was based on racial discrimination. Dr N.M. Perera, the LSSP member in the State Council, made an attack on the policies of the Board of Ministers:

'They have no objection to enfranchising European planters . . . Those . . . who have property who exploit the people in the true sense of the word are enfranchised. But when it comes to the poor labourer who has not the fortune to possess land, he is not enfranchised . . . This bogey of swamping is entirely imaginary and has been created by a handful of people . . . the interests of the Indian labourers and the vast mass of peasants and workers in this country are the same. The fight is against the capitalist class, whether they are Indians or Ceylonese. (*Hansard* 1937, p.4150)

As a result of the protests there was another amendment, depriving all plantation labour, irrespective of race, of the village franchise. However, since there were only a few Sinhala residents on estates, the effect of the legislation was to discriminate against Indian workers.

The uncertainties faced by the Indian minorities in Sri Lanka (Malayali and Tamil) were aggravated in the late 1930s, when measures were passed enforcing retirement and repatriation on urban workers of Indian origin. The continuing unemployment also led to a discussion on the issue of migration (from India) for work on plantations, which was vital for the functioning of the key sector of the economy.

Ironically, the Sinhala bourgeoisie which had campaigned for the repatriation of urban labour, who were said to be in competition with Sinhala workers, were again against the banning of

immigration from India for work on estates, since it went against the interests of the plantation economy. However, the Indian government in 1939, in retaliation for the repatriation of urban labour, banned immigration from India.

Militancy of plantation workers

The unionisation and subsequent militant struggles of plantation workers were also factors in increasing Sinhala fears about the potential political influence of these workers. K. Natesa Aiyar had formed the first plantation trade union in 1931, but this never made rapid strides due to adverse economic conditions during the depression. By the 1930s, however, the situation had changed; the Lanka Sama Samaja Party started organising the plantation workers and led some very militant strikes in 1939 and 1940, against which the employers retaliated with violence.

The Ceylon Indian Congress, inaugurated with Nehru's patronage in 1939, also began trade union activity, organising a wave of strikes, which set the whole of the hill country ablaze in 1940. The planters were caught off their guard, having for generations been used to 'docile coolies'; the colonial officials were also alarmed at the unrest, which occurred after the outbreak of the World War. Recognition was hastily given to the unions and a collective agreement was signed in 1940, between the unions and the Planters' Associations.

The sudden eruption of violence and labour agitation on the plantations also unnerved the Sinhala leaders, who began to see the 'dangers' of an organised plantation proletariat having links with the Left parties. Alarms about the 'red peril' were further sounded after the end of the World War, when urban labour, led by the Left, erupted in a series of militant strikes in 1945 and 1946, culminating in the general strike of 1947; the spectre of joint revolutionary agitation, involving plantation and urban labour, was to further haunt the bourgeoisie, after the unforeseen successes of the Left parties in the parliamentary elections of 1947, when their representation increased (from 2 at the previous election) to 20.

The election also highlighted the political potential of the plantation sector, the Ceylon Indian Congress had, by returning 7 members to parliament. In electorates which they did not contest, the plantation workers generally supported candidates of the Left parties, their roles being decisive in around 14 constituencies which had returned Left candidates.

AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

FROM PAGE 5

positive outcome. Even the Indian leaders are disappointed and disillusioned. The monks of Maha Sanga are arrogant and unappeasable. Sinhala

opposition parties are staying out. The only person who is jubilant and hopeful is Amirthalingam. The whole world is puzzled and dazzled about his positive assertion of a 'progress' in talks."

THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSALS

The following are the proposals presented by the Sri Lankan President Mr J.R. Jayawardene, to the All Party Conference:

"Systems of Government: The basic unit of government to be the pradesheeya mandalaya covering an assistant government agent's area. The actual composition of it members will have to be decided.

"The next unit to be urban councils and municipal councils as at present constituted.

"The third unit should be district councils and their composition and method of election and powers and functions will have to be redefined. Their area of operation to be the present districts.

"The district councils would be directly elected by the people of the districts. The chairman and the vice-chairman would be the first and second names in the list of the party receiving the highest vote, if the election were held on the basis of proportional representation.

"Inter-district co-ordination and collaboration: Inter-district co-ordination to be permitted in defined spheres of activity. District councils must vote for this co-ordination. If they wish to have a referendum in the district a referendum should be held.

"If units are constituted for this purpose they should include the chairman and the vice-chairman of each district council and a limit number of additional representatives elected by each district council. The relationship between such institutions and the district councils from which they are constituted has to be worked out.

"Second Chamber: There are several precedents where the instrument of a second chamber has been successfully employed to ensure a more equitable exercise of political power by all members or sectors of a multi-ethnic society.

"To that extent, if any proposal to establish inter-district collaboration or co-operation is required well-defined spheres of activities may very well be examined, since this proposal offers the possibility of various combinations of two or more districts for different purposes as well as the establishment of co-ordinating bodies for inter-district functional operations. The chairman and the vice-chairman of each district council would be ex-officio members of the Second Chamber. Since these members of the Second Chamber are those who enjoy the confidence of the majority of the members of the district council or the units of co-ordination between districts, the Second Chamber would be a reservoir for the purpose of appointing Ministers to function for inter-district co-ordinating units.

"Ministers who enjoy the support of the majority in either the inter-district co-ordination units or in a district council could be appointed by the President and removed also by him. Their functions, duties and obligations have to be discussed. The question of these Ministers being

answerable to the co-ordinating units in the exercise of their executive functions will have to be studied and a procedure for implementing any decisions taken will have to be worked out.

"Composition of Second Chamber: With regard to the composition, the powers and functions of the Second Chamber, consideration should be paid to the President's memorandum presented to the All Party Conference on the second chamber proposal on July 23rd 1984.

"The Second Chamber may be constituted as a chamber with adequate representation for all major and minor ethnic communities.

"Provision may be made for representation of minority communities from districts where there are substantial or significant concentrations of such minority communities. The district councils in the respective districts could also elect or nominate such members. Thus the four ethnic groups on the island, the Sinhala, Sri Lanka Tamils and Tamils of recent Indian origin and Muslims should be represented in such a way as to ensure representation which will create a source of fair participation.

"The two members from each district to be directly elected at the same time as at a general election. The Second Chamber's term of office, therefore, coincides with that of the first chamber. When there is a dissolution of Parliament, it would mean the dissolution of both chambers. The district will be the constituency.

"Some powers of Second Chamber: There must be a sharing of powers between the two chambers in regard to the exercise of legislative power in respect of all proposed legislation affecting fundamental rights and language rights guaranteed under the Constitution. In this regard, no proposed legislation should become law unless approved by the President.

"The Second Chamber may be vested with the implementation of the provisions of Chapter IV, Section 22 of the Constitution dealing with the national language, Tamil.

"The Second Chamber could also constitute select committees to inquire into and report on all aspects of ethnic disputes such as those relating to university admissions, educational facilities, employment of communities. Land settlement, exercise of language and cultural rights and development of backward regions would also be considered. The recommendations of committee 'B' will be considered in this context.

"The stateless: There was support too for the proposal referred to earlier in this report that the stateless (some 90,000 of them) be given citizenship — vide paragraph 9 (3) of the report.

"Ethnic violence and terrorism: There was acceptance too that the causes of ethnic violence and all forms of terrorism in all parts of the country must be eradicated — vide paragraph 4 of the report."

I.U.F. CONDEMNS ORGANISED PERSECUTION OF TAMILS

The following is the text of a resolution adopted by the Asia-Pacific Regional Committee of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Association (IUF):

The Asia-Pacific Regional Committee meeting in Tokyo is deeply concerned about the organised persecution of the Tamil minority and the economic, social and political sequels of the attack on Tamil persons, institutions, and business enterprises in July 1983, and calls on the Government of Sri Lanka:

To take immediate steps to rehabilitate the economic sectors affected by the attacks and re-establish the jobs of the workers who lost their employment through the destruction of the production facilities of their employers, in particular:

(a) Through ensuring prompt and full compensation payment (by insurance companies or other institutions) and

(b) Through making reinvestment into production facilities mandatory for such compensation payments, by legislation or incentive schemes;

To lift the State of Emergency and to re-establish conditions for the free exercise of democratic and trade union rights in order to make possible democratic solutions to the present crisis.

TAMIL ISSUE RAISED IN AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT AGAIN

Two members of the Australian Parliament, Mr Kent and Mr Macarthur gave notice of the following motion in the House of Representatives on August 21, 1984:

"That this House —

(1) notes —

(a) with revulsion the new outbreaks of violence against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, and

(b) that the Sri Lankan armed forces and navy is engaged in indiscriminate shooting of inno-

PLEASE TURN OVER

cent by-standers and shelling villages in Tamil areas;

(2) calls on the government —

- (a) to express to the Jayewardene Government the abhorrence and opposition of the Australian people to racial violence, and
- (b) to take up the plight of the long-suffering Tamils in international forums such as the United Nations.
- (c) to refuse any request by the Sri Lankan government for military aid, but instead to provide aid to the Tamil minority through the International Red Cross.

Flagrant breach

The flagrant breach of human rights in Sri Lanka was also raised by Senator Childs in the Australian Senate. On August 22, he asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs whether he would condemn the Sri Lankan government in regard to the 'flagrant and well-publicised breach of human rights' and 'for its failure to control its troops'. He also urged the minister to exert diplomatic pressure on the Sri Lankan government to ensure that there was no repetition of such occurrences.

On behalf of the Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans replied:

'The government is certainly aware of the recent deterioration in communal relations in Sri Lanka and the concomitant increase in violence there. We are most concerned at the situation that continues to develop.

'The present crisis seems to have been precipitated by terrorist attacks in northern Sri Lanka. Those attacks have been met by what might be described as firm action by the government. It is clear that the government's security forces have, on several occasions at least, gone well beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour. Reprisals have been directed at innocent Tamil civilians and numbers of Tamils have been killed, including in Mannar.

Registered our concern

'I am advised by the Minister for Foreign Affairs that we have registered our concern about the communal situation many times with the Sri Lankan government. Most recently, on 14 August, our High Commissioner in Colombo spoke with Sri Lankan President Jayewardene, the

SINHALESE DOCTOR REPLIES TO TAMIL MINISTER

Reproduced, without comment, are two letters which appeared in the Australian press (August 17 and 27):

I HAVE just spent a weekend in Australia en route to Sri Lanka from Port Moresby, where I led my country's delegation to CHOGRM. I am appalled to read some of the media's misleading headlines and some distorted views of the situation in Sri Lanka in the last few days.

I am a Tamil and I have been a member of the United National Party (a non-communal party led by President Jayawardene) for 20 years. Many Tamils like myself believe that the ethnic problems of Sri Lanka can be solved by President Jayawardene's government by peaceful discussion. To achieve this end we have been meeting at a round table conference and continue to do so. A solution is in sight.

However, the major obstacle to solving this problem is the terrorist movement, which purports to fight the Tamil cause. Their many violent acts, including genocide of the Tamil people who do not co-operate with them, have been accelerated recently.

Their acts against government institutions and personnel are perpetuated in the predominantly Tamil areas of the north of Sri Lanka with a view to provoking reactions from the Sinhalese people in the other areas, where the majority of Tamil people live intermingling with the Sinhalese.

They succeeded in doing so in July 1983 and the world was made to believe that the Sinhalese people indulged in 'genocide of Tamils'.

The security forces have been charged with eliminating the terrorists and while they do so the sympathisers of the terrorists, mostly people living outside the country, indulge in false propaganda, accusing them of genocide and excesses.

I appeal to all right-thinking people not to support these terrorists and their propaganda.

K.W. DEVANAYAGAM
Sri Lankan Minister
for Home Affairs
Canberra

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MAY I reply to the letter from the Sri Lankan Home Affairs Minister Mr K.W. Devanayagam (17/8).

I have just returned from Sri Lanka after trying to sort out fact from fiction. This was necessary because of President Jayawardene's stranglehold on the press which prevents any news other than government propaganda leaving the country.

1. Mr Devanayagam refers to the media headlines in Australia as 'misleading' and 'distorted'. On the contrary, the reports in *The Australian* (and particularly news broadcasts by the BBC, London) have been accurate and if anything an understatement of the Tamil genocide by the Sri Lankan 'security forces' now in progress in Sri Lanka.

2. Mr Devanayagam believes that the Sri Lankan problem can be settled by negotiation. Yes, if politicians such as himself, Jayawardene and before him Bandaranaike were politically honest, this might have been possible. The round table conference referred to has now gone on for almost a year. Apart from giving Jayawardene time to equip the security forces with American-supplied sophisticated weapons, it has done nothing.

3. He refers to the July 1983 massacre where between 500 and 2,000 Tamils (depending on who does the counting) were butchered. The less said of this disgraceful blot on Sri Lanka the better. The reluctance of Devanayagam's government to hold an inquiry into who was responsible for this bloodbath is about as damning as anything such an inquiry could unearth.

What is urgently needed is to appreciate that despite Mr Devanayagam's propaganda (which he is paid to do), the country is at the brink of a civil war and the most urgent need is to get an international peacekeeping force into Sri Lanka before the next massacre of innocent civilians, which is imminent.

(Dr) BRIAN SENEWIRATNE
Brisbane.

Foreign Minister, the National Security Minister and several officials. Since then, the Minister for Foreign Affairs has written to his Sri Lankan counterpart. In that letter, he again expressed our government's concern

over the state of communal relations and reiterated our hope that all groups in Sri Lanka will eschew violence and will work together to achieve a lasting solution to Sri Lanka's communal difficulties.

'Sri Lanka: Racism and the Authoritarian State'

BOOK REVIEW

A multitude of publications have appeared on Sri Lanka in recent years, especially after the 1983 pogroms. Some have concentrated on listing the immediate atrocities, some others have attempted to vindicate the government and/or the Sinhala people. But none had challenged us to think afresh — until *Race & Class* brought out their special issue, *Sri Lanka: Racism and the Authoritarian State*.

'Ever since independence', write the editors, 'successive governments have done everything in their power, from state-sponsored racism to state-sponsored pogroms, to render the Tamils a separate people, and inferior — and then cried out against that separatism when the Tamils embraced it to carve out their dignity and future.'

This volume of *Race & Class*, the journal of the Institute of Race Relations in London, not only includes a narration of the events of 1983 but looks to their causes. Sanmugathasan tells the 'Story of the Holocaust'. Kumari Jayawardene sheds new light on communalism and class formation in 19th century Ceylon. 'Plantation politics' by Rachel Kurian and others examines the discrimination and manipulation of plantation Tamils in the overall examination of state racism.

Vivid examples

The journal also gives vivid examples of the culture of racism as political diatribe by reproducing some speeches by Industries Minister Cyril Mathew, translated from Sinhala for the first time. Included in the issue are vital background materials on discrimination and state aggression against Tamil people, human rights violations and the first comprehensive bibliography on July 1983 which has been compiled by the well-known bibliographer H.A.I. Goonetilleke.

Every article and report and note and document in this work has the ring of honesty and commitment — and the mere presence of both Sinhala and Tamil writers in its pages promises some hope for the future.

But the article, above all, which in addition to all this disabuses our minds of our prejudices and falsehoods and allows us to see again the country's history in the light of truth is Sivanandan's 'Racism and the politics of underdevelopment'. He throws away many stock notions and formulations to write a history of state racism in Sri Lanka that has never before been discussed in such depth.

Unlike many of Sri Lanka's intellectuals and activists Sivanandan does not 'revise' history or begin with a conclusion; unlike the 'Marxists' he does not preach orthodoxes and slogans. Instead, he uses the tool of dialectical materialism to cut open and examine Sri Lankan society and its racist and class contradictions. He elucidates the impact of colonialism on the different 'social functions' of Sri Lanka and the different classes and types of racism it threw up. Everything about his analysis challenges the way people have looked at Sri Lanka and the Tamil question.

Sivanandan looks at racism in concrete terms. He exposes the 'Left' as colluders in racism; he attacks the Buddhist clergy for giving a lead in racist politics; he shows how private armies of thugs are used to break strikes, intimidate political opponents and carry out racist pogroms. And he firmly rejects any notion that the SLFP (by being more 'left' and less capitalist than the UNP) were any less racist.

In fact, he takes the reader step by step through the ways that racism was institutionalised via import substitution, state capitalism and nationalisation schemes. And he sets his analysis of state racism in the context of underdevelopment and imperialist strategy so as to provide a framework within which to understand similar problems in other Third World countries.

Finally, his analysis points to the symbiotic relationship between racism and dictatorship in such countries — with Sri Lanka as its clearest example. And for that very reason his strategy for overthrowing racism and the authoritarian state which thrives on it includes a mass movement on the part of both the Sinhala and Tamil peoples.

Taken the lead

In that struggle the Tamil freedom fighters have already taken the lead. But 'Tamil liberation is the easier won,' writes Sivanandan, 'through the weakening of the Sinhala state from within, socialism the surer achieved through struggles not narrowly nationalist'. And he concludes: 'There is no socialism after liberation; socialism is the process through which liberation is won.'

With characteristic clarity, Kumari Jayawardene shows up the ideological

interconnection between the development of Sinhala merchant capitalism and the Buddhist revival. The Sinhala-Buddhist hegemonistic claims were based on three interconnected myths: the myths of the 'Aryan race' and that Sinhalese belonged to the Aryan race; the myth of the landing of Vijaya and the founding of the Sinhala race; and the myth of Buddha's visit to Sri Lanka and his special relationship with the island.

'Master-race'

The implications of the Sinhala-Buddhist ideology were that Sri Lanka was the land of the Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese were there by the grace and favour of the 'master-race'. However reactionary or untenable it may be, the hegemonistic claim of Sinhala-Buddhism is re-asserted with the backing of the full might of the state power, in the present context of accentuated inter-ethnic conflict; 'Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country although non-Sinhalese and non-Buddhists too have lived here for a long time. This fact should not be forgotten by Sinhala Buddhists as well as non-Sinhalese and non-Buddhists,' (Cyril Mathew, Minister of Industries in 'Diabolical Conspiracy').

On another occasion, this modern standard-bearer of Sinhala-Buddhism asserted, 'Sri Lanka history is a Sinhala history and nothing else'.

Nancy Murray, in her chapter 'The State against the Tamils', concludes that the Sri Lankan state, which uses its armed forces to terrorise its 20 per cent Tamil population, will have at hand a ready-made machinery of repression against the whole population.

Ian Goonetilleke's bibliography basically is in two sections: A — 'The National Question: perception and performance'; and B — 'July 1983: outrage and outcome'. While his bibliography is characteristically thorough, Ian's preamble, written in his inimitable style, constitutes a devastating indictment of the Sri Lankan regime.

Describing the July 1983 'unprecedented communal holocaust in which the Tamil community in Sri Lanka suffered enormous destruction and life' as a 'massive haemorrhage', he draws attention to the strenuous attempts at covering up, that are continuing to be made in order that the true dimensions by these sad and tragic events may be concealed.

Ian Goonetilleke makes caustic com-

TAMIL PASSENGERS KILLED IN ARMY HIJACK

— TWO WOMEN RAPED

FROM PAGE 7

around me. Another person who must have been lying motionless like me on the ground crawled up to see whether the assailants had gone, only to be greeted by a spray of bullets and he was dead the next minute.

'After some time, which appeared to be a lifetime, I decided to get up. I was not sure whether our killers had gone away but it did not matter any more if I were to be killed. After all, I had witnessed so many people being slaughtered around me. I got up and walked a short distance. The killers had apparently left. I heard someone crying. I found it to be another man who had escaped death like me.

'We roamed the jungles for the next three hours without any purpose or direction. When the first streaks of dawn penetrated the jungles, we came to the place where the incident had taken place. We saw there the two

young girls who had been taken away into the jungle by our assailants.

Night of shock and horror

'On seeing us, they screamed and wept. I feel too frozen with shock and disgust to recount all what they told us about their night of shock and horror in the jungles. "Give us some poison. We prefer to die here than to return to our houses in this state," they declared. We consoled them and took them along with us through this maze of blood, corpses, and personal belongings strewn all over the place.'

Another young Tamil passenger, who chose to remain anonymous, gave the following account:

Coach was full

'I went to Colombo for an interview in regard to getting a job abroad. I was returning after the interview. The coach was full, with about 45 passengers.

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ments concerning the degenerating trends in public life since the present regime came into power in 1977: the democratic process had been eroded by a combination of ad hoc constitutional amendments and legislative enactments; demagoguery accompanied by overt and covert forms of thuggery had virtually institutionalised political violence; the final coup de grace inflicted on the electoral process in 1982 (a reference to the extension of the life of parliament to 12 years without an election); and the most menacing and open indictment of racist prejudice at the highest levels. Asserting that a high degree of political pusillanimity and moral cowardice have contributed to this 'crisis of civilisation' in a Buddhist land, he laments 'that little, if anything, had been learned and even less forgotten after the tragic catastrophe of July 1983'.

Ian Goonetilleke considers that the much talked about Round Table Conference had 'raised more problems than it agreed to solve' and frequent adjournments and changes in dramatic personae have neither increased the climate of accommodation nor diminished the potential for conflict. The continuing reliance on a military solution, repressive legislation, and a near-permanent Emergency has vitiated the arena of reconciliation and mutual trust. The conduct of the conference itself appears to have favoured the exacerbation of conflict positions and inflexible attitudes without advancing, in any significant mea-

SRI LANKA: RACISM AND THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE (Race & Class, Summer 1984) 200 pages, £3.50.

Institute of Race Relations, 247-9 Pentonville Road, London N1

sure, an acceptable approach to an enduring political solution of the problem of an oppressed national minority, through institutions of genuine devolution of power.

While referring to the 'frenzied expressions of narrow bigotry' on the part of the majority and the 'quixotic bravura of a national minority' and their serious lack of self-awareness and failure to face up to the realities of their respective situations in the real world, within and without the national borders, Ian Goonetilleke does not 'deny the Tamils the right to espouse their legitimate demands for the satisfaction of national self-respect and dignity and the freedom to pursue the same privileges and opportunities which the Sinhalese now seek to proclaim as their sole prerogative'.

And he concludes: 'Only Sri Lankans acting as a whole in defiance of present tendencies and mindful of their past and future destinies can deliver the country out of its current nightmare'.

This book is essential reading for everyone concerned with Sri Lankan affairs.

P.R. GANESHAN

'Two miles from Eerra Periyakulam, five men, three in army uniform, and armed with sub-machine guns, beckoned the coach to stop. They then

into the coach and ordered it to be diverted in the direction of Mannar.

'We all began to panic. The coach proceeded along Mannar Road and was ordered to stop by the side of the road, near the sixth mile post. They snatched the journey's collections from the driver who had driven the coach when we started from Colombo and pulled him out. Then there was a sudden burst of gunfire followed by the agonising screams of the driver.

Six at a time

'Then others in the coach were pulled out — six at a time. Some were standing and others lying on the ground when they were fired upon. With the gunfire and screams of the people outside, those inside the coach also screamed in fear. We could hear the people who had been shot crying out for water. The gunmen silenced them with another burst of gunfire.

'They had pulled out the younger men first; the elderly and the women were still inside the coach.

'One of the attackers was heard to tell another of the gang in Sinhala that he had run out of ammunition. The fact that they had to shoot indiscriminately in the dark at those who jumped out of the coach and ran might have been the reason that they ran out of ammunition; probably that is why we escaped death.

'I saw two young girls being dragged away by the armed men amidst screams. I do not know what happened to them or where they took them. They disappeared into the jungle.

'About 13 or 14 of us escaped the shooting but we sustained injuries when they assaulted us inside the coach. We reached some huts and asked for help. They told us not to go any further because the jungles were elephant infested and that there were army camps nearby.

Wept till morning

'We waited there and wept till morning thinking about our fate. At 6a.m. we walked back to the scene of the crime and found dead bodies of young as well as old people strewn about the place. We saw the corpse of a young boy with his intestines projecting out. We saw a bus belonging to the northern depot of the Sri Lanka Transport Board going from Mannar on the way to Jaffna. We got into the bus and having admitted six badly injured passengers at the Vavuniya Hospital returned to Jaffna.'

'TAMIL TIMES,' 'TAMIL INFORMATION' AND 'TAMIL LINK'

I have been a subscriber to the 'Tamil Times' for the last two years, and I value the service it does in highlighting the problems facing the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and the continuing atrocities committed against them. I am sure the Tamil people would be grateful for the work the 'Tamil Times' has done so far.

Recently, I happened to see two further publications, namely 'Tamil Link' published by the Tamil Information Centre in Madras and 'Tamil International' (which has since changed its name to 'Tamil Information') printed in Madras and financed by the Tamil Information Centre operating from London.

At a time when the meagre resources at the disposal of the Tamil people must be applied in the most efficient and economical manner, is it necessary for, or can we afford the luxury of having three or four journals which will certainly have to cover more or less the same ground? Monies are required for various types of work covering a variety of areas if we, as Tamils, are going to fight against the oppression by the Sri Lankan government.

Instead of pooling our resources, both men and material, and undertaking co-ordinated work on behalf of the suffering Tamil people, engaging in an area of work already done by one group of people by others, however well intentioned they may be, in my humble opinion, results in unnecessary duplication and wasteful application of meagre resources. More dangerously, it can also give rise to self-defeating rivalry.

S. Kasinathan

Ontario, Canada.

Editor's Note:

We share the sentiments of our correspondent. But it must be observed that 'Tamil Times' was started in October 1981 following the burning of the Jaffna Public Library and the anti-Tamil pogrom during August 1981. At that time, there was no other political journal to speak on behalf of the Tamil people. The need to fill this vacuum resulted in the birth of the 'Tamil Times'. Not a penny nor a rich backer or a grant from any aid agency was available at the time the 'Tamil Times' was born. The first issue was printed and distributed free, the cost for which was met by small contributions ranging from £1 to £25 from a few well-wishers. From then on, the paper has continued publication with subscriptions and dona-

DEVIL MEETS DEVIL

I refer to your quotation from the 'Saudi Gazette' editorial in the September 1984 issue of the 'Tamil Times':

"President Jayewardene, while talking about (Israeli) help for training the army against the terrorists, had said last month that 'I would shake hands with the devil itself'. Little did he know that he had already done it."

I disagree with the last sentence. The 'Saudi Gazette' has rushed into conclusions.

It is true that the Mossad has come to Sri Lanka to educate the Sinhalese troops on anti-guerrilla warfare strategy, to export their West Bank expertise.

But, I am sure, that at the end of the day the Mossad will return to Israel educated — indoctrinated with the Jayewardene strategy of gouging out eyes of political prisoners in maximum security jails, sacrificing Tamil blood to Lord Buddha, and raping women in pools of blood amidst dead and dying human bodies and also import back home the Kassappa expertise on homicide.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I refer to Samantha Perera (a Sinhalese) in the December 1983 issue of the 'Tamil Times':

"The record of the early Sinhala kings was one of continuous, incessant struggle for the throne, fratricidal and patricidal killings, conspiracies and intrigues. Very few kings succeeded their predecessors by peaceful means. According to the Mahavamsa, of the 54 kings of the Great Dynasty (543BC to AD275), 11 kings were forcibly overthrown, six were assassinated, 13 were killed in battle and 22 were murdered by their successors. The period following until the arrival of the western colonisers was no less prone to violence. How Kassappa buried alive his own father in a wall of concrete to become king himself is a well-known story."

So, at stumps, it could very well end up with the Israeli PM realising that it was he, repeat he, who had shaken hands with the devil!

S.K. Samy

New South Wales,
Australia.

VIOLENCE OF THE OPPRESSOR AND THE OPPRESSED

In a recent interview given to the 'Indian Express', President J.R. Jayewardene has told that once the Tamil guerrillas renounce terrorism they will be welcome to participate in the all-party conference.

If renouncement of terrorism is a pre-condition to sit at the round table, then the first people who should be kicked out of the 'pow wow' immediately are President Jayewardene and his Minister of National

Security, Lalith Athulathmudali. Because it is they who are the architects of one of the most savage forms of 'state terrorism' in modern world history.

Instrument of state

The Tamil guerrillas attack the armed services because it is the instrument of the state which foisted

TURN TO NEXT PAGE

tions from well-wishers and we can assure the readers that the donations were very small indeed. One may wonder as to how we managed all these three years. The secret is the dedication and the sacrifice of a few and determined group of individuals resolved to serve the people purely on a voluntary basis.

'Saturday Review' began publication from Jaffna in 1982 and that time active consideration was given to afford all the support that one could muster for this home-based paper.

Discussions with those connected with the 'Saturday Review' revealed that, because of the oppressive and repressive conditions in Sri Lanka, the uninterrupted publication of that paper could not be guaranteed and they insisted that 'Tamil Times' should continue to be published. The

soundness of this view was confirmed by subsequent events when 'Saturday Review' was ordered to be closed by the government. When the former editor of 'Saturday Review', Mr Sivanayagam, went over to India, he became a regular contributor to 'Tamil Times'.

We have set out these facts to place before our readers the circumstances in which the 'Tamil Times' was born and how it had continued publication for the last three years.

It is not for us to comment when others concerned in Tamil affairs start a new journal. For our part we would certainly have taken into consideration all the important points that our correspondent raises if we were thinking of launching a new journal when there is already one in existence serving the same purpose.

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

repression on the Tamil nation. They have never killed Sinhalese civilians. But the Sinhalese troops who are directly answerable to Jayewardene and Athulathmudali slaughter innocent Tamil civilians.

Will Jayewardene and Athulathmudali expel themselves from the all-party conference?

West Germany

C. Kunalan

CONCERT IN AID OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

Kamahl, the Australian singing superstar and holder of 76 gold and 14 platinum records during the course of his illustrious international career, will return to Carnegie Hall in New York for a special singing engagement on November 29.

Sponsors of the concert are the Sri Lankan Tamils of the United States.

FROM PAGE 11

A worker in the shoe industry, Than-gathurai and his brother had been previously employed at a shoe factory in Malwatte Road, Colombo. During the July 1983 pogrom his house had been ravaged by Sinhala mobs and they returned to Jaffna as refugees lucky to escape alive. They then worked in a shop owned by their father at the Point Pedro town centre. This was recently set on fire by the troops, making them redundant.

The missile attack that had killed beautiful Kalavathy, four months pregnant, had shaved the hood off a 70-foot tall palmyrah palm and also made gaping holes in their hut. A few weeks earlier another missile attack had been fired by the security forces from the sea, barely 2½ miles away.

The Government Agent, Jaffna, has brought this incident to the notice of the Commanding Officer of the Northern detachment, the Minister of Internal Security and the Secretary, Ministry of Defence. Meanwhile, the Jaffna Citizens' Committee visited Karanavai today to inquire into the incident.

SEPTEMBER 17, 1984

Public life in the districts of Jaffna, Killinochi and Batticaloa came to a standstill today as people observed a day of hartal (stoppage of work) to protest against mounting atrocities committed by security forces against innocent Tamil civilians and to express solidarity with schoolboys who have decided to extend their week-long

APPEAL

Professor S. Vithiananthan, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jaffna, has made the following appeal to Sri Lankans abroad.

"I wish to appeal through your columns to Sri Lankans abroad for financial aid for the University of Jaffna.

"The University of Jaffna had its beginnings in 1974 when it was founded as a campus of the University of Sri Lanka. It was granted autonomy in January 1979 and is now functioning as the University of Jaffna.

"There are three Faculties in the University of Jaffna — the Faculties of Arts, Science and Medicine. The first batch of medical students graduated this year. The University Grants Commission has approved in principle the establishment of a Faculty of Agriculture. We have also pressed for the establishment of a Faculty of Engineering and disciplines like Dentistry, Veterinary Science and Law. Foreign funding is required for capital



Vice-Chancellor Vithiananthan

expenditure for these Faculties. The Government has allocated 250 acres of land in Kilinochchi for the establishment of the Agriculture and Engineering Faculties.

"The University of Jaffna welcomes donations from Sri Lankans abroad for equipment, books and publications and also for various projects undertaken by the existing Faculties."

and successful boycott of classes into a full second week.



Nearly a thousand pensioners, including men and women, and the old and the infirm converged on the Jaffna Esplanade from twilight hours to collect their pensions. They came from all parts of the Jaffna district, some sickly persons paying as much as Rs.100-150 as car hire to collect their meagre pensions of around Rs.500 (£16). They had to stand in the blazing sun for as long as six hours to collect their payments; several people fainted in the process.

SEPTEMBER 18, 1984

Four fishermen from Maareesan Koodal, Pandatherruppu, have complained to their local fisheries extension services society that they were mercilessly assaulted by Sri Lanka Navy personnel while out fishing and that the outboard motors attached to their two fishing boats were removed by the Navy and thrown into the sea. They had suffered extensive injuries and had only managed to reach the shore alive after a big struggle.



The Jaffna Citizens' Committee has lodged a strong protest with the President of Sri Lanka in a telegram in which it refers to 'the extensive shelling from the sea by Sri Lankan Navy men of Jaffna coastline, in particular on 15.9.84, from 8pm to midnight, causing the death of a pregnant lady, injuring several others and causing extensive damage to property and

places of worship, including St. Thomas Church, Point Pedro.



Sri Lanka troops from the Mankulam camp today hijacked a private coach travelling from Colombo to Jaffna with 17 passengers, including a woman from just outside the camp 13 miles out towards Mullaitivu. The passengers expected another massacre. But having dropped some of their members the others came back to Mankulam and allowed the coach to proceed to Jaffna.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1984

Another citizens' committee has been inaugurated at Karaveddy in the Jaffna District.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1984

Sri Lankan Navy personnel resumed the shelling from the sea of the Jaffna coastal belt at 7pm last night at Mathagal, resulting in hundreds of civilians fleeing inland for safety, abandoning their homes. Several people have taken refuge at the Mathagal Nunassai Murugamoorthy temple.

CLASSIFIED

Mother seeks a Jaffna Hindu bride below 32 years for a post-graduate engineering student in UK, preferably with Mars in the Seventh House, Box No.M10, c/o Tamil Times.

Mother seeks Jaffna Hindu groom above 36, for charming Singaroan teacher daughter. Details: Toa Payoh North, P.O. Box 708, Singapore 9131.

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BHARATHA NATYA ARANGETRAM

Chevanthy, 16-year-old daughter of the late Dr N. Kandasamy and Mrs Kandasamy and grand-daughter of Mr K.C. Praesood of Tooting, London SW17, gave a scintillating Bharatha Natya performance on 29th September 1984, at Merton Civic hall, Wimbledon, on the occasion of her Arangetram. Mr Tony Bastable, the well-known writer and TV producer, and Mrs Bastable were the chief guests.

Chevanthy was accompanied by a live orchestra from the Jaffna Kalai Manram directed by Mr Ram Cumarasamy with Mrs Thiru Yoganantham and Miss Rathika Perinpanayagam (nattuvangam), Mrs Sathiabama Rajalingam and Mrs Jana Rajmohan (vocal), Mrs Rudrani Balakrishnan (violin), Mr A.S. Ramanathan (mridangam) and Mr M. Yogeswaran (flute).

There can be no better description of the performance than the speech made by Mr Bastable on this occasion. His speech appears below:

There is a story about an elephant and a mouse. They met together at the edge of the forest. The mouse looked at the elephant and said: 'Why are you so large?'. The elephant replied: 'My son, all my people have always been large. Largeness is an integral part of being an elephant. For thousands of years we have developed a culture based on largeness. It would be impossible to imagine any of us as other than large. It's very difficult to explain but if you're really interested I can arrange some evening classes for you.' But, said the elephant, changing the subject, why are you so small? 'It's nothing,' said the mouse, 'I haven't been very well recently.'

Now the point of the tale is this. This evening, I feel just like the mouse, a



Chief guests Tony Bastable and his wife with Chevanthy

very small creature attempting to come to terms with a giant and hugely complicated art form with historical roots that stretch back to the time when we in Britain were probably still messing about with flint axeheads. I ask you to accept my thanks therefore for the honour of acting as your spokesman tonight, but also I crave your pardon in advance if I fail in the task. After all, you all have 3,000 years of experience in this sort of thing. I, as it were, have only just started going to the evening classes.'

Quite remarkable

It is to me quite remarkable to consider the implications of what we have seen here this evening. Let us for a moment set aside our appreciation of the quality of the performance — we will return to this in a moment — and consider that there really must be something in an art form which cannot only last for more than 2,000 years, but actually flourish and grow during that time, and can then stand the shock of being transported 7,000 miles from its home into another quite different land.

That it can do so indicates its essen-

tial integrity; that it can do so, so well is a true reflection of its essential elegance — but more important than all this — that anyone would want to do so is surely a sign of that rarest and most desirable human quality — the quality of true civilisation. The whole Tamil nation must surely be congratulated for providing we mice here in the West with an object lesson in what culture and pride in achievement are really all about.

A few words

It would be explicable — but only just — if we could say in truth that what we have seen has been a wholly imported exhibition. But if you will permit me a few words about our dancer you will surely agree that the triumph we have witnessed on this stage tonight transcends even that. Chevanthy was not born in Jaffna. She was born in Portsmouth. She did not spend four years in Colombo — she spent four years in Canada. She did not undertake her arduous years of training and practice in South India — but in South West London. And although she is very conscious indeed of her late and distinguished father's wish that one day she should perform an arangetram, her duty to that wish is only a small part of her desire to perform for us. Chevanthy has embraced the disciplines of the Barathanatyam for love of the dance form itself, for pride in her cultural heritage, and like so much which is typical of the Tamil people — for simple joy!

It is these qualities which have enabled her to present us tonight a performance of rare eloquence. We have witnessed the birds fluttering from her hands — the flowers magically growing from her fingertips. We have seen happiness and sadness. We have been



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moved by the sadness, felt a frisson of fear and been uplifted by the infinite subtleties of mime and movement. One can well imagine the years of agonising practice, the depth of dedication and understanding and the degree of perseverance required for any artiste to achieve such excellence, to have done so on one's own land would have been impressive. To have done so against a background of a totally different culture has turned a success story into a triumph. This young lady has not merely done great credit to her cultural heritage. She has added to that heritage and further ensured its survival.

In this, of course, she has been helped. Such intricacy must be taught and thus there must be a teacher. Chevanthy's guru Rathika is an exceptional dancer in her own right — I may say that even though I have not had the privilege of watching her dance. And yet, and yet perhaps I have — for surely what we have seen this evening is an example of enthusiasm and motivation from mistress to student! Rathika must be congratulated for this evening — for it is her triumph too.

And none of this triumph could possibly have occurred without the music. The musical ensemble, who have travelled halfway across the globe to

play for us this evening, has truly complemented the grace and rhythm of the dance. This music, to my uneducated Western ear, is so very complex that one hesitates in attempting to make even a compliment about its performance for fear of committing the crime of understatement but I am bound to congratulate the musicians on all our behalfs for their delicate and apposite interpretation of lyric and rhythm.

So very lucky

You are all so very lucky. You are representatives of an ancient and proud people. You have a language which is perhaps the oldest spoken tongue in the world. You have art forms of immeasurable complexity. In a troubled world you stand as a beacon of hope and fairness to us all. To have been asked here this evening is in itself an honour. To have been asked to speak is a distinction of which I am wholly unworthy. You have so much to teach us here in the West. I have learnt much this evening and I am humbled by the experience. Perhaps the mouse is beginning — just a little to understand why the elephant is so large. It is so large because it has such a big — and gentle heart.

KOKUVIL HINDU COLLEGE OLD STUDENTS GET-TOGETHER

On Sunday September 2, 1984, there was a get-together of the old students of Kokuvil Hindu College resident in the UK, at the YMCA Hall in Dingwall Road, Croydon.

The chief guest of the occasion was Mr C.K. Kanthaswami, former principal of the College, who had been associated with the institution for over 30 years. It was a happy coincidence that Mr E. Sabalingam who was one time vice-principal of the College was also in England and was able to attend the function as a guest of honour.

The presence of the two revered old teachers gave the occasion a special flavour. On behalf of those present, Mr S. Kanagasunderam requested the chief guest to address the gathering. Mr Kanthaswami reminded those present that this happy event was taking place in the 75th year of the life of the institution and said that he earnestly hoped that this occasion would serve as a forerunner for the old students resident in the UK to organise themselves as a branch of the Alumni Association. Such a body functioning actively, he said, could play a vital role in furthering the development of their alma mater.

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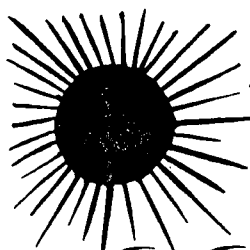
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