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Hot Spring

A Journal of Commitment



South African protest in Durban



Tamil Martyrs Week

Nov. 21 - 27



Every single Tamil, man and woman, who gave up his or her life on the battlefield in the cause of freedom, is remembered and his or her memory cherished every year during Martyrs Week.



The "Martyrs Rest", pictured above, built with reverence and gratitude, and tended with care in two places in Jaffna, are alas no more! They were desecrated and ploughed down to dust by a hate-filled Sinhala army after it occupied Jaffna, revealing a gross insensitivity to the dead, rarely seen in civilized behaviour anywhere in the world.

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Hot Spring

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Editorial Comment

Nothing is ever settled, until it's settled right

Sri Lanka's capital city, Colombo, has been buzzing with sudden, "peace activity" lately. Some do-gooders and academics have got together to form a new front - a "National Alliance for Peace" defying attempts by an anti-peace racist fringe to disrupt their efforts. Business czars and power brokers

could do better is a well-timed blow. Kilinochchi was bad enough; but the loss of the Lionair plane in the air, the sinking of the Super Dvora at sea, were all making Jaffna, the government's biggest prize of war increasingly inaccessible by land, air and sea - even to the government. Hardly a pleasant scenario to contemplate from



have taken the role of movers and shakers in hot pursuit of peace. A 6-member British Parliamentary team happening to visit the country have also contributed their pennyworth in recommending a negotiated political settlement. President Kumaratunga's "War for Peace" slogan is quietly being replaced in the popular mind by a new slogan - Peace for Peace. How does one account for this sudden yearning for Peace?

Not everyone will be prepared to admit this, least of all the peace movers themselves, but the sad truth is, the Sri Lankan military's Waterloo at Kilinochchi in the third week of September was the one that rocked the Colombo mind-set into thinking of peace. There is a Tamil saying that says: One's brothers are a source of support in times of need, but what

the cosy comfort of Colombo, at a time when ruin is facing the country, economically and otherwise.

Where were all these Colombo peace campaigners when, 500,000 Jaffna residents fled in the face of an advancing army shelling and bombing their way into areas of human habitation? Where were they when war lord General Ratwatte planted his Sinhala flag there? To them, war at that point of time seemed a more desirable proposition. Now that the realisation has dawned that the war is going against the government, there has been - bless their hearts - a noble desire for Peace!

This is not an argument against peace. This is an argument against human hypocrisy masquerading under

(Continued on Page 3)

What They Say

"My father provided arms to the LTTE only when LTTE's deputy "Mahattaya" was emerging as a rival of Velupillai Prabhakaran. My father's aim was to get Mahattaya to subvert Prabhakaran. During World War II, Britain and the US gave support to German generals who opposed Hitler. My father was following a covert military strategy of attempting to defeat Prabhakaran from within".

- *Sajith Premadasa, son of the late President Premadasa, in an interview with SUNDAY TIMES, Colombo, October 25.*



"The assassination of my husband and the tragedy our family has had to face is uppermost in my mind, and it is absolutely necessary that we know who

was responsible for assassinating my husband and whether there was an unseen hand orchestrating it".

- *Mrs. Srimala Disanayake, widow of the late Gamini Disanayake, in a letter to govt. Minister Mangala Samaraweera, quoted in SUNDAY LEADER, October 25.*

"We have lost territory, we have lost manpower, we have lost equipment. We have lost about four kms.... certainly it will have an effect because we have to take those four kms. also"

- *Major General Lionel Balagalle, in an interview with Reuters, Colombo.*

"And who was seated next to her (President Chandrika Kumaratunga) at this meeting? It was someone by the name of Barry Gardiner, the Labour Member of Parliament for Brent. And who is this

Hon. Gardiner, MP? The same fellow who goes and advocates "Eelam" at an LTTE-sponsored conference at Chatham House also in London - just a week later!"

- *anonymous writer in SUNDAY TIMES, Colombo, Nov.1.*



"The People's Alliance government has privatised the ethnic issue in its attempts in searching for a lasting solution to the problem. We will have

to call in the assistance of our national cricketers to help if the efforts of the business circle fails".

- *All Ceylon Tamil Congress General Secretary, G.G. Ponnambalam (Jr.), quoted in WEEKEND EXPRESS Oct. 24-25.*

"Who is S a n a t h Gunathilake? ... He may be a lap dog trying to see what others are doing. He, I mean the person whom you

have now referred to, is the cause of all these problems. It is a pity significant positions in the government are being held by insignificant people...."

- *Veteran Sinhala film actor and governor of the north-eastern province (now resigned) Gamini Fonseka in an interview with SUNDAY LEADER.*

International



"If we want to fight sincerely against genocidal behaviour, one cannot invoke the immunity of heads of state. Under those terms, Hitler would get immunity".

- *Geneva's public prosecutor, Bernard Bertossa, criticising British High Court ruling that Chilean dictator General Pinochet was immune from arrest, because he was head of state when the crimes were committed.*

"The High Court has made England a safe haven for dictators and former dictators acting in their official capacity as heads of state, undermining the absolute nature of the prohibition against torture in international law".

- *Amnesty International director Helen Bamber on the ruling on General Pinochet.*

"To the West, Taslima is an even better victim than Salman Rushdie because she is a woman. She has got global attention but in Bangladesh, she is not such a heroine."

- *Mahfuz Anam, editor Dhaka newspaper, THE DAILY STAR, on writer Taslima Nasrin, issued a fatwa (death sentence) by some Muslim clerics*

"I don't care about President Arafat. As Palestinians we have lost our dignity and our rights, and the peace process will never change anything in our lives".



- *Ghassan Henahen, a businessman, one of many in the West Bank who have lost faith in Arafat.*

Nothing is ever settled, until it's settled right

(Continued from Page 1)

the convenient cloak of peace. After all, who needs peace in that country more than Tamils who have suffered under the heel of the Bandaranaike family tyranny from father to mother and from mother to daughter? The Tamils had never had durable peace in Sri Lanka, ever since 42 years ago in 1956, Sinhala mobs laid hands on the Tamil leaders of that time who sat in silent Gandhian protest against language imposition by law, in front of the old Parliament building in Colombo. Madame President's father, Prime Minister Bandaranaike did not only order the police not to interfere (he was then ushering in what he called "the age of the common man), but he even mocked at Amirthalingam who walked into parliament with a bandaged forehead with the remark: "Ah, the wounds of war"!

1958 riots

It was the same father Bandaranaike who presided over the first islandwide riots against the Tamils in 1958, and permitted the Sinhala mobs to continue the mayhem until a constitutional governor Sir Oliver Goonetilleke had to step in and virtually arrogate to himself the powers of a head of the government, and put down the riots. As for mother Bandaranaike, the less said the better in this instance.

A platitude

As for the British M.P.s whose knowledge of the history of the country must necessarily be limited, it was not surprising that they came out with the well-intentioned remark that there should be a negotiated political settlement. There is nothing wrong with that. It was the kind of platitude that any politician who does not want to get knee deep into any problem would say: particularly when it did not concern them directly. But the poor, suf-

fering Tamils who have to remember their history are duty bound to place this on record: THERE IS NO INSTANCE IN THE HISTORY OF THE ISLAND GOING BACK TO EIGHTY YEARS WHERE THE SINHALESE HAVE EVER HONOURED A NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OR A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH THE TAMILS.

As early as 1918

That habit of dishonouring written agreements began as early as 1918. Having given the undertaking in writing to give a special seat for the Tamils in the western province, Sinhalese leaders James Pieris and E.W.Samarawickreme quickly went back on the pledge. Sinhalese historian K.M.de Silva himself does not hide this fact. He says:....Arunachalam had negotiated this settlement and thrown the full weight of his prestige behind it. It would thus seem that the public disavowal of this pledge shattered his confidence in the leadership of the Ceylon National Congress irretrievably". (*A History of Sri Lanka, Oxford University Press, 1981, page 393*). How Bandaranaike tore up the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957 and how Dudley Senanayake went back on the Dudley-Chelva Pact of 1965 are instances of more recent history.

Military governor

It was philosopher George Santayana who said: Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to relive it. Tamils who forget the past continue to relive it, except that they do not even realise that. Years might roll on, times might change, old Sinhala leaders give place to new, but yet in some respects nothing changes. Now look at what Prime Minister Bandaranaike said in 1958.

"I will run this country with my

army and navy.... My military forces are now in the east and the north. There is military rule in these two provinces, each with a military governor, yes. I say they are military governors...

(These excerpts are taken from Tarzie Vittachi's book EMERGENCY '58, The Story of the Ceylon Race Riots, Andre Deutsch, London, 1958).

Now what has changed after 40 years, 40 long years? Nothing. His daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga is running the country with the same army and navy, plus the air force. There is military rule in these two provinces. Daughter President has just appointed a military governor to the northeast, Lt Gen. Asoka Jayawardana.

A Mayor will do

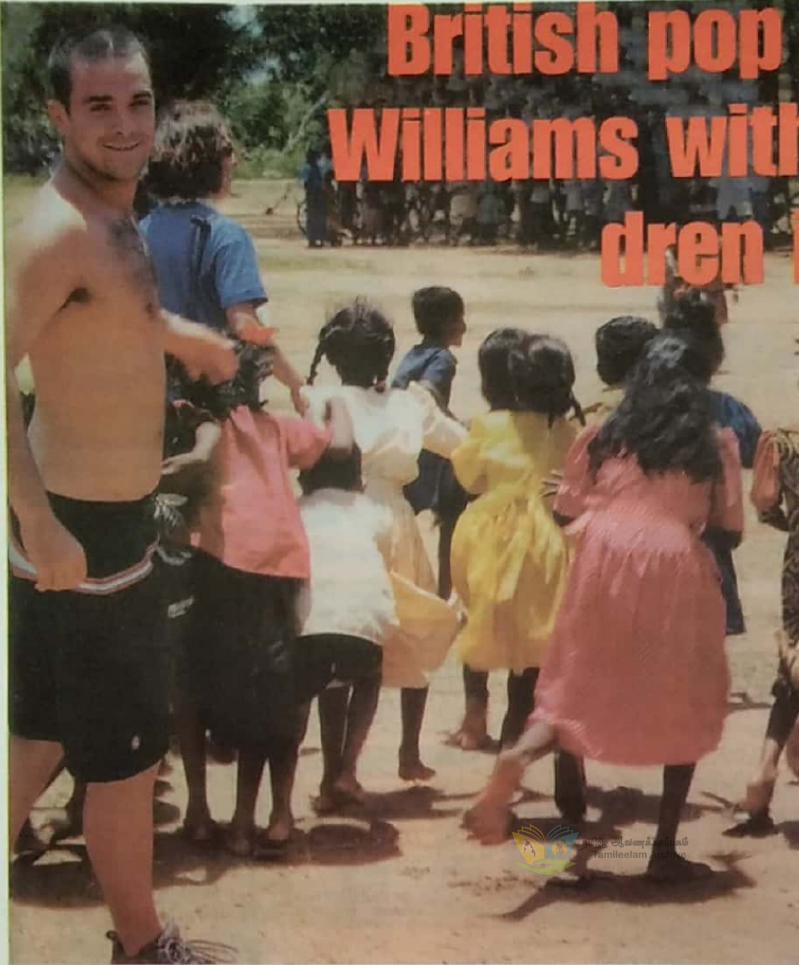
But ask Anandasangari, for example, who prides on his appellation, Senior Vice-President of the Tamil United Liberation Front, about the appointment of the new military governor and do you think he will object? No, how can he, he cannot remember anything of the past enough to know that his party asked for a separate state, a full 21 years ago, but now all what he is asking for is a Mayor of his choice for Jaffna, you know with robe and chains, what they call His Worship. That is what one would call reduced to a position of political poverty.

Go back to 1977

From asking for a separate state in 1977 and settling for a Jaffna Mayor in 1998 is the kind of negotiated political settlement that a party which yet carries shamelessly the words "liberation" would settle for. If 80 years has taught us anything it is that nothing is ever settled until it is settled right. The only way to settle it right is in remembering the past and go back to the point in 1977. The TULF must be grateful to the Tamil Tigers that they are trying to honour the pledge to the Tamil voter now, what they, the TULF dishonoured then.

S Sivanayagam

British pop star Robbie Williams with Tamil children in the Vanni



UNICEF's (the United Nations Children's Fund) celebrity-led trip to Sri Lanka. But for Williams this brief stint playing Pied Piper to these children was, he says, "better even than Glastonbury or playing with Tom Jones at the Brit awards".

Currently number one in the charts, on the eve of his keenly awaited new album, he could be anywhere in the world doing whatever he wishes. But instead he is in Sri Lanka's war-torn northern province to help immunise children under five against polio for UNICEF. His playmates are some of Sri Lanka's displaced children in the northern district of Vavuniya. With nearly 11,000 others, they live in large hangar-like tents that line the road.



THE TIMES MAGAZINE (London) of 17 October '98 said in a report:

"On a narrow, ochre-earthed road in the heat of the equatorial midday sun, a crowd of dark-skinned children swarm around a young white man who is dribbling a football at a frenetic pace. The ball bounces backwards and for-

wards as the children, most of whom are shoeless and skinny, scream with frenzied pleasure and try to grab the young man. "Stop, stop", he cries, sweat pouring from his face. "You've totally exhausted me. I can't go on". He hunkers down to their height, blows his cheeks into a clown face, tosses

one child in the air and dangles another on his knee. "Hi, who are you?", he says, beaming as the children giggle. "Me ? I'm Robert Williams from Stoke-on-Trent".

"This impromptu meeting between some of the world's most deprived young people and one of its most privileged youths, pop icon Robbie Williams, was not part of the schedule of



Roofed with corrugated iron and covered with plastic sheeting, they survive in fetid heat with little sanitation, on a diet of rice spiced with chilli or dhal. They have no idea who their visitor is, except that he is from England, an important guest of UNICEF, and they are thrilled to welcome him.

"Since 1977, UNICEF has been involved in an ambitious programme to eradicate polio by the year 2000 by targeting the world's worst-affected countries with national immunisation days. Over



the past decade they have negotiated annual one-day ceasefires in war-torn countries so that children caught in fighting zones can be immunised

It was another music icon, Ian Dury, recruited as a celebrity ambassador for UNICEF who was responsible for inviting Robbie Williams on the polio immunisation trip. The children of Jaffna under army rule missed their presence, because the bomb that killed the Jaffna Town Commandant Brigadier Susantha Mendis and the TULF Mayor five days earlier made the pop stars put off the trip to the peninsula.



Explosion at Colombo airport ahead of Fatchett's visit

A rocket propelled grenade went off at the Colombo international airport on 10th November, shortly before the arrival of British Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett, causing panic, but not resulting in any casualties or damages.

"Some personnel from the air force were loading the grenades when one of them got fired accidentally", said police official S.Vijayasinghe. The accident occurred on the Bandara naike International Airport's runway. The barrel was pointed towards the sky and the grenade exploded in the air, Vijayasinghe told AP.

"There was some confusion, but the incident did not affect any flight. We are back to normal", said Airport manager I.M.Rasheek. The airport at Katunayake, about 30 kilometres (19 miles) north of Colombo, handles about 35 flights a day.

The airport is guarded by armed air force personnel, some of whom get jittery at the prospect of attacks on the airport by the LTTE.

Meanwhile, Mr.Fatchett himself had an unhappy journey to Colombo travelling by an Air Lanka flight. He was originally due to arrive on Monday the 9th, but the Air Lanka Airbus A-340 carrying him developed technical problems while flying over France and was forced to return to London.

The British Minister said he had a harrowing experience trying to travel with Sri Lanka's national carrier,

which is managed by the Dubai-based airline Emirates.

"It is a real test of stamina", Mr.Fatchett told reporters shortly after arriving in Colombo.

Having cut short his Colombo visit, Mr.Fatchett left for India on Wednesday the 11th.

Before his departure to Sri Lanka, Mr.Fatchett told Reuters in London that he had no intention of imposing any peace solution on Sri Lanka.

"It is not my intention to go to Colombo and say: 'Look, I come here as the peacemaker

and I'm going to knock the heads of the parties together and we're then going off to talk to the Tamil Tigers and within 24 hours we'll have an agreement", he told Reuters in an interview.

"The world doesn't move like that. What we have to do is to say: 'Yes, if we can help we will do so, but it will be at the invitation of the Sri Lankan parties, not with the United Kingdom imposing itself and inviting itself"

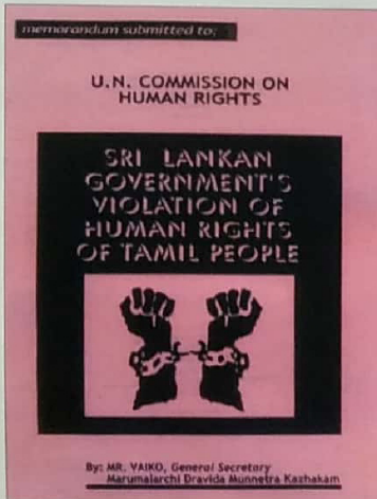
He said: "I think the message to all of the parties I'll meet is that you can only make progress on a national issue if there is a broad level of Consensus That is the political culture that I think the Fox agreement allowed to develop... I will certainly encourage the process of building on the Fox agreement".

Mr.Fatchett also added that he would remind Colombo of the need to respect human rights.



Derek Fatchett

Vaiko in Geneva submits memo on Sri Lankan Human rights abuses



Mr.V.Gopalasamy (Vaiko), member of Indian Parliament, and General Secretary of the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, met with Enrique Ter Horst, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva on 19th October '98, at which meeting he submitted a detailed memorandum on the Sri Lankan government's violations of human rights of the Tamil people.

Mr.Karim Ghefraoli, Human Rights officer, Asia Desk, at the United Nations office, Geneva, was also associated at the meeting

In a meeting that lasted an hour, Vaiko described the attacks on the Eelam Tamils as genocidal. In drawing attention to the inaction on the part of the Chandrika Kumaratunga government over the gruesome tragedy of the mass graves of Tamils in Chemmani in Jaffna, Vaiko pleaded for the immedi-



ate necessity to order an investigation by the UN Human Rights Commission. The Deputy High Commissioner is reported to have given a positive response to the plea.

the ICRC to render all possible assistance and solace to the suffering Tamils. This meeting lasted seventy five minutes.



Vaiko also met with Mr.Rajiv Kapur I Head of Desk for South Asia and Mr.Kazutoshi Nagasaka, Desk Officer, Regional Bureau for Asia at the office of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

Mr.Rajiv Kapur is reported to have explained to Vaiko the problems faced by the High Commission for Refugees in this regard while assuring him their sympathy with the plight of the Tamils.

Vaiko had also a meeting in the morning with Marco Altherr, Deputy Delegate General for Asia and Pacific, of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Francoise Marclay, Head of Operations for South Asia and the Pacific, ICRC. He represented to them the plight of the Tamils in Eelam in the island of Sri Lanka, and requested



“WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS ?”

I was most interested to read the report of the interview with Major General Lionel Balagalle and the short report about demining in Jaffna, in the August edition of 'Hot Spring'.

Firstly, the so-called 'War for the Hearts and Minds' of Sri Lanka's minority Tamils. Well, all I can say is that the GoSL/SLAF have a very strange way of pursuing their objective!

My own first sighting of SLAF troops on the Jaffna peninsula, apart from the frequent bombing missions carried out by Puccara and Kfir aircraft, was in Point Pedro the day tanks and armoured vehicles arrived outside Manthigay hospital one late afternoon in mid-May 1996.

The following day, as the armoured units took the main road through the town, to establish a base in the harbour and Hartley College area, infantry units proceeded in the same direction down every back-lane including the one which ran past the house I was using as both residence and office. My all-Tamil staff were petrified at the sight of the fully armed and camouflaged SLAF troops and I felt that it was expedient for me to take up position at the main entrance to our compound. It seemed to me, that the SLAF troops were as 'nervy' as my staff, as they went about their mission.

An SLAF Captain stopped outside my gate and, reading the signboard, asked, "And which children are you saving?", to which I replied, "Sri Lankan children, Captain". "Then why are you not working in the

South?" "Because the main needs are in the North", was my response. From this short conversation, it was obvious what his view of Tamils was and it seemed to me that 'Winning Hearts and Minds' was not very high on his agenda!

The following day, after the SLAF had established their main base along the sea-front, the local population were more relaxed and had friendly

“Vella Puli” (White Tiger)

exchanges with the troops who were positioned at every road junction and in every lane in the Point Pedro municipality. They were happy that there was a 'law and order' presence once again, following the vacuum created when the LTTE withdrew from the area. Looting and theft ceased and dry rations were issued - the battle for hearts and minds? However, it was to be a short-lived battle!

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The following day, checkpoints, were established at major junctions and local people were subjected to ID checks and searches. This was not their idea of 'an army of liberation'.

In subsequent days, the following incidents occurred:

Bulldozers, left behind by the LTTE, were used to completely demolish Ranjan Poonga' the only park in Point Pedro where one could spend a relaxing break. On asking an SLAF officer why this had been done, he told me that "we want to remove every trace of the LTTE". I pointed out that specific LTTE items could have been removed, leaving the park for the continued use of the people but this, he said, was not acceptable.

Round-ups were initiated and I saw a number of hooded people being taken to the SLAF headquarters for Interrogation. Others, also hooded, were driven to round-up areas to point out LTTE cadre and sympathisers.

I personally complained to the military command about soldiers sleeping, bathing and taking arms in temple premises.

On a journey to Koddikamam, I saw that the LTTE cemetery had been completely bulldozed, as had,

I discovered when we were later permitted to travel between Vadamarachchi and Vallikamam the LTTE cemetery at Nallur and 'Kiddu Poonga' on the edge of Jaffna town.

Jaffna town itself, had virtually become a military garrison with both the Gnanams and Subhas hotels being used as headquarters. Almost every junction had checkpoints where people were checked and searched each time they passed through.

One of my staff, who had been given a permit to visit his mother in Jaffna, failed to return. Subsequent enquiries to the military command revealed that he had been arrested and was being held at Koddikamam. After continued 'pressure' from myself, he was released without charge or explanation - luckier than many who 'disappeared' at that particular place of detention.

'Winning Hearts and Minds?' There were few, if any, being won then and, I suspect, at any time since.

The introduction of an air service between Jaffna and Colombo could have not won many more hearts and minds either. In the event of being 'lucky' enough to secure a flight, conditions for civilian passengers at Pallaly and Ratmalana, were abysmal.

'Of more concern was the practice of sending three identical planes, at five-minute intervals, on each flight. Two planes carried military and government personnel while the third carried civilians, and the order in which they took off was always varied in an attempt to deter the LTTE from shooting at them. When I complained to 'Lion Air' and the Ministry of Defence that this policy of using civilians as a 'human shield' was not acceptable, not only did I not receive an answer but was told, by a representative of the British government that "I had been ill advised and undiplomatic in making that complaint".

With regard to the UN warning that it may not be able to proceed with a programme of demining in Jaffna without adequate communications equipment, I received the same response when, on behalf of a British medical NGO, I tried to secure an agreement to supply medical personnel for both the medical faculty at Jaffna University and Jaffna Teaching Hospital between August 1996 and July 1997.

Why, when all radio frequencies are monitored by both the GoSL and the LTTE and the fact that five other international NGOs have these facilities, should it be a problem?



U.K Parliamentarians are willing, if asked

A British parliamentary delegation said in Colombo that London would be willing to mediate in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict if Colombo made a request.

The British parliamentarians, who are on a nine-day visit to Sri Lanka, said they were not here to prescribe a settlement but there should be confidence-building mea-



PEACE OFFER: British MP Michael Morris (left) speaks to reporters in Colombo when a visiting UK parliamentary delegation offered Britain's good offices to revive a peace bid in Sri Lanka. Mr Morris said he believed Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels no longer expected a separate state. To Mr. Morris' right is fellow MP David Curry.

"If the government of Sri Lanka feels it is useful for us to play a role, then it is for the Sri Lankan government to make it clear and make a request," David Maurice Curry, Conservative Party MP, told a news conference in Colombo.

"It is for Sri Lanka itself to decide whether it wants help or assistance," Labour MP John Eric Austin said.

"What I feel is the need for a fresh face...to give the kick start that the negotiations need," said Robert Walter of the Conservative Party.

sures to bring together all parties involved in the conflict.

"Hopefully some solution will come here...on the lines of the response we have in Northern Ireland," said William O'Brien, Labour MP and leader of the delegation.

Michael Wolfgang Laurence of the Conservative Party said that a starting point in negotiations could be to convince Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader Velupillai Prabhakaran that a separate Tamil homeland was not a possibility.

Arms dealers make merry in Sri Lanka!

The bloody and drawn-out ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has left a trail of broken homes and dead bodies, but for some businessmen, the dark clouds of war hold nothing but gold linings.

Sri Lanka's arms dealers, a shadowy bunch of politicians, servicemen, bureaucrats and their relatives and friends, who conclude multi-million-dollar deals nearly every day pocketing hefty commissions are the only beneficiaries of the intensified military campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Armour-plated, helicopter Mi-24 gunships from Russia, anyone? A package of five, please, with spares for US \$18 million, price marked up to cover the dealer's commission of seven to 10 per cent.

T-56 automatic weapons from China? A consignment of 10,000 for about US \$20 million. The dealer makes \$200 on every rifle.

Tanks from east Europe? Get six with spares, six reconnaissance vehicles and 12 armoured personnel carriers to make one armoured squadron, all for \$8 million. The dealer takes 10 to 15 per cent.

"Two or three such deals, and you can retire," says a retired army officer. However, retirement is the last thing on Lankan arms dealers' minds as the conflict in the north-east threatens to worsen in the coming months.

According to a former officer who was in the 1986 Vadamarachchi operation, the arms for that offensive came in 40 to 50 containers from Israel, the biggest order in those days. Today, one consignment alone takes up 200 containers.

There is money to be made in the days ahead as the conflict escalates: aircraft, patrol ships, communication

and electronic-surveillance systems, armoured vehicles, airborne data processors, personal weapons, light machine guns, heavy artillery, cars and trucks. The list of what an army at war needs is endless and those in the business are already licking their lips in anticipation.

Teams from the armed services are constantly travelling the world looking for weapons. Much of the buying since the outbreak of "Eelam War Three" in 1995 has been done under the category of "Crisis Purchases" so that normal tender procedures are not necessary. It is a situation tailor-made for nepotism, cronyism and corruption. A few dealers have cornered the market and have exploited the Government's distress shopping to line their own pockets, assisted by those in top positions.

Chinese army deal

Recently, a Sunday newspaper revealed how a government-to-government agreement between Sri Lanka and China for the purchase of military hardware through the authorised Chinese trading arm, Norinco, had been bypassed in case of a deal worth \$80 million. Instead, it was awarded through Sri Lankan and Chinese middlemen to Bomtec of the People's Liberation Army.

According to the grapevine, the commission paid out was 20 per cent. In another purchase, tender specifications were reportedly blatantly fixed to suit one particular bidder.

While arms dealers corner the lion's share of profits to be made from the war, there are plenty of thers raking in the crumbs, from suppliers of cloth for uniforms to contractors for meat, vegetables and even laundry. So

much so that economists estimate that nearly 2 per cent of Sri Lanka's economic growth now is from purely war-related activities.

An indication of the money at stake comes from the 1998 defence expenditure. After originally fixing 45 billion Sri Lankan rupees for it in the budget, Parliament approved last month a supplementary estimate of 12.2 billion rupees, bringing the total to a staggering 57.2 billion rupees.

Not many were surprised when one of the leading arms dealers in Sri Lanka, through whom the Air Force makes about 80 per cent of its hardware purchases, put up a glass, steel and concrete building almost overnight in the heart of the capital at an admitted cost of around 650 million rupees. It is mockingly referred to as the War Memorial.

He is said to pamper politicians with lavish gifts but apparently recovers much more than he spends to send his executives on paid luxury holidays to Dubai with shopping money.

Another dealer, who used to run a video parlour a few years ago and travelled around on a motorcycle, is now the owner of a house with a swimming pool just outside the capital, valued at 35 million rupees, with a fleet of the latest cars at his command, including two Jaguars.

With these neo-plutocrats doing some aggressive selling, it is not surprising that Sri Lanka has sometimes bought hardware totally inappropriate to ground conditions. For instance, in 1994, it bought six Kfir-Mach(2) fighter-interceptor aircraft from Israel for \$9 million in spite of the advice of experts that these were useless for Sri Lankan conditions.

- AN INDIAN EXPRESS REPORT

Anti-LTTE Tamil parties now gain political wisdom!

BY FARAH MIHLAR

It has been a long wait for Sri Lanka's Tamil parties. Many of them gave up arms a decade ago and joined the political mainstream in search for a peaceful solution to the country's long-drawn ethnic war. A democratic struggle in a parliamentary system looked more meaningful to them at that time than an armed insurrection. But now, hopelessness and frustration are evident among most mainstream Tamil political leaders. "I don't see light at the end of the tunnel and it seems a very long tunnel," said Dharmalingam Siddharthan, a rebel turned politician who now heads the Peoples Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). "There is political stalemate. I don't believe the (Tamil) rebels will come for a political settlement and the Tamil people are really fed up because there is no one to give them solace."

"Democratic mainstream of little help"

Politicians say joining the democratic mainstream has done little to help the Tamil ethnic minority as successive Sinhala-majority parties that rule Sri Lanka have let them down. The two main parties continue to squabble over a peace deal and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels still have the muscle to stall the military and kill at will. Peace, always a distant dream, looks even further away now. And Tamils, as a people, are tired of waiting. "Some Sinhala government must solve our problems. So far no one has and I don't think anyone is committed to doing it. Not even the present government," said Amirthanadhan Adaikkanathan of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO).

When Chandrika Kumaratunga led the People's Alliance to power in 1994,

Tamils rallied to support her. She initiated talks with the LTTE and, when negotiations derailed, her promise of a set of political proposals that would give minorities greater autonomy offered Tamils hope.

Anandasangari's "moderate" lament

"When this government came to power we were willing to support them, but now they are beginning to let us down," said V. Anandasangari, senior vice president of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). "It has been four years. They could have done so much to end this war. But they are prolonging it, and this has caused suspicion in the eyes of the Tamil people," he added. "The UNP is out to sabotage it (the plan). If they really feel the country's problems should be solved, it is nothing for them. They can help solve it overnight," Anandasangari said.

On their part, Tamil parties have failed, too. A lack of unity has prevented them from becoming a viable third political force in Sri Lanka. "We all have a common cause but there is no unity amongst the Tamil parties because of vested interests. So it is difficult to bring up the burning issues of Tamil people for a successful resolution to the problems," said TELO's Adaikkanathan. The common goal is undoubtedly to end the ethnic war, but opinion is split over how best to do that.

Most Tamil parties feel the first step should be for the government and opposition to join hands and present a common set of political proposals to bring the rebels to the table. "Tomorrow if the LTTE comes for talks, nothing can happen because the UNP and government have not come to a common consensus," said Douglas Devananda of the Eelam People's

Democratic Party. Devananda, like other Tamil party leaders, says an acceptable set of proposals will lure LTTE rebels to the negotiating table or else isolate them from the Tamil people. "Every Sinhala man knows what Tamils want. The LTTE does not have to tell them we (Tamils) need a political solution to this conflict, which the LTTE will have to accept or else they will be alienated," Siddharthan said. "The solution is not for the LTTE, it is for the Tamils." Yet all Tamil parties also give the LTTE credit for keeping alive Tamil aspirations for a separate homeland. "Tamil people feel the LTTE is a necessary devil. If the LTTE is defeated then Sinhala hardliners will be strong and make sure no solution is found to Tamil problems," said Siddharthan.

REUTERS

\$500 m. a year from Tamil refugees!

The on-going war has cost the Sri Lankan economy over US\$38 billion, according to a study conducted by the Merga Institute for the National Peace Council.

However, there is a school of thought represented by Roland Edirisinha of the "Economist" which says that the war has propped up the economy. The burgeoning security apparatus provides direct employment for about 4,50,000 people and sustenance for 7,20,000, says Edirisinha.

Tamil refugees abroad send back over \$500 million a year as remittances to their kith and kin. Much of this is through non-banking channels. But Edirisinha argues that the Sri Lankan black economy at \$4 billion per year is a major factor making the country hum with activity.

Hindustan Times: your correspondent is up to no good, Sir!

*The Editor,
Hindustan Times*

Dear Sir,

Reading Balachandran's recent articles and captions, one begins to wonder whether he is following the best tenets of journalism - truth, neutrality and independence. The latest example of this is in your issue of Nov. 2nd captioned "LTTE rebuilding network in Tamil Nadu". Is he writing articles at the behest of someone such as the Colombo government, RAW or even the EPRLF? The facts are not only untrue, but calculated to be mischievous and to create trouble.

M.P s with 10 votes

He seems to be privy to what pro-LTTE circles in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu and the Tamil diaspora are discussing! He refers to "sources", a reliable Eelam Tamil source in Chennai", "Sri Lankan army top brass" and "unconfirmed reports". The only source he names is Premachandran of the disrespected EPRLF, an M.P. who got elected at the last general elections held in Tamil areas when the army was in occupation of a large portion of the area, and which was boycotted by most Tamils. It is worth remembering that at that election no less than 5 M.P.s were elected with less than 5 votes each, one as low as three!

For those who do not know, the EPRLF government was the one foisted by the IPKF on the Tamil Northeast province. Its leader Varatharaja Perunni was the Chief Minister, who along with 90 members of the families

of EPRLF leaders was flown to India on an Indian Airforce plane shortly before the IPKF withdrew. He still lives in India with a retinue fit for a king at Indian tax payers expense.

It is true that there are several right thinking Tamils like Salai Identhirayan and non-Tamils like George Fernandes, who see the justice behind the cause of Eelam Tamils and recognise that they are fighting a war of liberation against a neo-colonialist Sinhalese government which is carrying on Genocide against them. Is it any surprise that the LTTE sent a message of condolence on Ilantanthirayan's demise!

It has become a habit to blame the LTTE whenever there is violence. Whether in Sri Lanka or Tamil Nadu. Why some people even tried to blame them for the bombing of a building in Oklahoma, U.S.A.! LTTE is having their hands full fighting a fierce war against the SL government with Unlimited resources and several times their number in manpower. Does Thindivanam Ramamuthi think they gain something by getting involved in caste clashes in Tamil Nadu?

Why does Balachandran think that a non-Tamil () Indian Army will clash with Tamils of Tamil Nadu? - a mischievous statement. Does he also think that Tamil Nadu Tamils are not Indians?

He trusted India

Where was Balachandran in 1987. If he was around, he would have known that though Pirabakaran was not in favour of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, he accepted it and in a speech at Suthumalai in Jaffna, he

stated that he did not want to fight India. He handed over his personal weapon to the Indian General and said "By handing over this weapon to the Indian government, I am handing over the security of my people to them". The LTTE started handing over their weapons. According to the Indian and Sri Lankan government over 20% of their weapons had been handed over and the process was going on.

Why did the war begin? During this process, 14 LTTE personnel including two of their seniormost area commanders were arrested on the high seas, contrary to the general amnesty granted, by the Sri Lankan navy when they were bringing communication equipment from India to Jaffna. They were handed over to IPKF. The president of Sri Lanka insisted on their being handed to the Sri Lankan army to be brought to Colombo. The LTTE was against this fearing they will be tortured and told so to the IPKF. The IPKF general agreed with them.

India caved in

However, when Jayawardena threatened to abrogate the Accord, the Indian government caved in. As they were about to be transferred, all of them took cyanide and 12 died. Because the area commanders were held in high esteem, there was rioting in several Tamil areas. The LTTE stopped surrendering their arms and its leaders put his pistol back in its holster.

Who provoked whom?
Mr. Balachandran.

N. Viswanathan
350 Rolland Drive
Glendale Hts., IL 601 39
U.S.A.

LETTERS

War for Peace?

Editor

HOT SPRING

Dear Sir,

The obscene and cynical slogan of the Sinhalese government, "War for Peace" is evidently taken over from Geroge Orwell's novel, titled "1984". In that work, the main concern of "the Ministry of Truth" is war! The main slogans of that government are "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength."

The Sinhalese government has turned the exaggerations of satire into a nightmare reality for Tamil civilians in the North east.

I am also reminded of a poem by Dudley Randall, and quote it below.

After the Killing

"We will kill,"
said the blood-thirster
"and after the killing
there will be peace."
But after the killing
their sons
killed his sons,
and their sons
killed his sons - until
at last a blood-thirster said,
"We will kill,
and after the killing
there will be peace."

The Sinhalese government aims to achieve peace for the Tamil nation, the peace of death.
C.Ponnu

Raising awareness of the Tamil cause

The Editor
HOT SPRING

28.10.98

Firstly, I must express my gratitude to Charles Somasundaram Anton J.N.Selvadurai, Mohanaruban Shanmugarajah, "Marlis" and "Refugee Puli" for their responses to my original article. (H.S. July '98). It makes me realise how lucky we are, to live in a society, where an open exchange of views is not followed by a "knock at the door" in the early hours or our sudden disappearance.

I was particularly encouraged to read "Marlis's" letter and to know that other "vellakarans" are also concerned about "the cause". The continued lack of news on our radio, TV and newspapers about the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils, increasingly saddens, frustrates and angers me - and I am not one who is, or has been directly affected.

This apparent atmosphere of disinterest on the part of UK, Europe, and the developed world brings me to realise just how much we need to raise awareness of the situation in Sri Lanka. Unless people here know where Sri Lanka is and the terrible things that Tamils have to endure these many years, how can we mobilise them to support and join in our efforts? If only the media would give even 25% of the amount of coverage given to Kosovo, we would be on the way.

Those of us already "committed to the cause" need to constantly raise pertinent issues with Ministers and M.P.s; newspaper editors; radio and TV political presenters; religious organisations; NGOs, especially those with programmes in, or links with Sri Lanka, etc.

Finally, in response to Mr.Shanmugarajah's letter in the September/October HOT SPRING:

1. No, I do not have proven quantitative figures for numbers of dead, buildings destroyed, etc. but give an alternative view, having been on the ground at the time. It is interesting to note (page 16, Sept/Oct. issue) that one of Kadirgamar's questioners at the New York Asia Society meeting, puts the number of people killed at the Naval church incident, as 165! C'est la vie!

2. My "first-hand experience of military operations"? Providing relief during operations "Dragon Fire", "Thunder Strike", and "Shake Hands" (August to October 1994); being shelled, and bombed, and evacuating during "Riveresa V" (Oct/Nov.94); displaced but providing relief in Thenmarachchi and Palai during "Riveresa 2" (Jan. to May '95); and dealing with the SLA after they took Vadamarachchi in May/June 1995. Sorry, no conspiracy story - all this was in conjunction with the "Puligal"

"Vella Puli" ("White Tiger")

* * *

Mischief in Moratuwa University

The Hindu Students of Moratuwa University celebrated the Vaani Vizha (Annual programme to mark the Saraswathi Pooja) on the 27th of September 1998. Fortunately or unfortunately it coincided with the Kilinochchi debacle.

After nearly a month, some small posters, written in Sinhala appeared in the Campus premises, accusing the Tamils for celebrating the Kilinochchi Victory. Those were removed by

some students immediately but the next week, on 31 October 1998, again large posters were pasted containing the same message.

Students said that the Vice Chancellor of the University, Dean of the Engineering Faculty and several lectures participated in the Vaani Vizha celebrations.

Among the 300 new undergraduates to the Engineering faculty, 110 are Tamil students. Their lectures

began on Friday, 29th of October. (Normally the number of Tamil students entering the engineering faculty of Moratuwa University is 70-80)

Tamil students expressed concern over this incident as this type of incidents happen rarely at Moratuwa University, and they fear that the innocent Tamils might be targetted for setbacks suffered by the Sinhala Forces.

S.N.Lakshan
Colombo.

Talks with LTTE: SL govt. "looking for an opening"

The Sri Lankan government is looking for an opening to resume peace talks with Tamil separatists who also appear to be searching for a break, political analysts and government ministers said on Tuesday.

The issue of resuming talks to end the 15-year-old Tamil insurrection that has left an estimated 55,000 dead, 1 million displaced and the economy in a shambles is politically so sensitive that government ministers declined to speak on the record. But they admit privately that the administration is indeed looking for an opening.

Before the government commits itself to talks with the main rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, it will have to obtain total backing of the main opposition United National Party. Without opposition support, the administration will be unable to offer concessions to the rebels. The governing people's alliance party has only a one-seat majority in the 225-member Parliament.

Next month's visit by British envoy Derek Fatchett could be crucial. Fatchett is a successor to Liam Fox, who helped the UNP and the government reach an agreement in 1997 that later faltered.

Fatchett is coming to inaugurate a British trade fair, but local reports say his schedule includes meeting with President Chandrika Kumaratunga and UNP leader Ranil Wickramasinghe.

There are indications that the LTTE, which is now confined to northern jungles and one northern town, may also be willing to resume the dialogue they broke off in April 1995 by staging surprise attacks.

Last weekend the LTTE freed six Sri Lankan soldiers after holding them for about five years. The soldiers said they were puzzled by the LTTE gesture.

The only reason I can even imagine is that they may have some idea of wanting to have talks with the government," said one of the freed men, Lance. Corp. D.E. Amarasinghe.

The LTTE said over its clandestine Voice Of The Tigers radio that the soldiers were released as a "goodwill gesture."

A top LTTE official said earlier this month that the group was not against a dialogue. Citing the examples of Kosovo and Bosnia, Tiger spokesman V. Rudrakumaran, a US-based lawyer, told Colombo's midweek mirror that any major western power could bring the two sides together to talk.

The government is hoping to persuade the LTTE, which is fighting for an independent Tamil homeland in the north and the east, to agree instead to greater autonomy for Tamil-dominated areas within a federal structure.

"It is the only objective, well-developed approach which can form the core of a political solution," Jehan Perera, director of the Sri Lanka Peace Council, said. "But to succeed there will be a need for a total consensus among the political parties to start with.

(AP)

Army desertions: Another amnesty

The Sri Lankan government offered a fresh amnesty on October 16 to thousands of army deserters in a desperate bid to boost a costly war against Tamil Tiger guerrillas. A week after announcing tough action against some 15,000 men who were absent without leave, the military offered the three-day amnesty ending Monday, a government spokesman said.

The offer came as military spokesman Sunil Tennakoon said that 5,000 men in the 120,000-strong army deserted their posts in the past five months as security forces suffered heavy losses at the hands of Tamil Tiger rebels. The heavy loss of life among security personnel has led to a high rate of desertions despite military attempts to offer amnesties at regular intervals and promises that there will be no punishment to those who return. There were heavy casualties in the northern region late last month when the guerrillas pulverised a military base and killed up to 1,900 soldiers according to figures given in parliament by opposition politicians. The government has discounted the opposition figures.

◆◆◆

Tamil journalist released on bail

ATamil journalist detained by Sri Lankan police for more than three months for alleged involvement with Tamil Tiger rebels was released on bail on October 27.

S. Srigajan, who works for the Colombo-based Tamil language **Virakesari** newspaper, was produced before a Colombo magistrate and released on 2,000 rupees bail. No charges had been filed against the journalist, but he was ordered to appear before the court on November 02.

Srigajan and another journalist working for the same newspaper and based in northern Vavuniya town, P. Manickkavasagam, were detained by police in late July. Manickkavasagam, who contributes to Reuters and the British Broadcasting Corporation, was released on August 10. No charges were brought against him either.

Srigajan had filed a fundamental rights case against his detention which is scheduled to be heard on November 4, his colleagues

“No way of transporting Civilians to Jaffna”

In a virtual admission of defeat President Chandrika Kumara tunga has told representatives of Tamil political parties that the government had “no means” of transporting civilians to and from the Jaffna peninsula.

She told representatives of the PLOTE, EPRLF and EPDP that the government had ruled out resuming civilian flights as two airstrips had been sighted in the LTTE-controlled Mullaithivu jungles. The president and other top officials who attended the meeting to discuss the security situation in Jaffna expressed fears that the LTTE might hijack civilian aircraft flying to the peninsula, divert them to jungle runways, reload the plane with explosives and possibly carry out a terrorist attack on a vital installation.

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The only ferry service, operating between Trincomalee port and Kankesanthurai in Jaffna, was also discontinued last week after the LTTE attacked and sank a naval gunboat escorting a government ship carrying soldiers as well as civilians. This has left nearly 5,000 civilians stranded in Trincomalee and thousands held up in Jaffna. But the government said it had found it “impossible” to charter ships to ply that route. With this, the normalisation process in Jaffna appears certain to suffer a major setback. “After inviting people to go and settle in the peninsula under the protection of the army, the government cannot even provide them transport.

□ □ □

Disrupters shout “kill Prabhakaran” at Colombo Peace meeting

A group of disrupters nearly wrecked the inaugural meeting of the National Alliance for Peace held in Colombo on the 11th November. Claiming to be from the “National Movement Against Terrorism”, they shouted in chorus: KILL PRABHAKARAN, and tried to take over the stage forcibly.

A news release from the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, dated 12th November says, inter alia:

About two hours into the meeting, following the plenary session and the division of the meeting into small discussion groups, an unexpected situation arose when a group of disrupters,

claiming to be from the National Movement Against Terrorism, a shadowy group of unknown influence and contacts, sought to disrupt the meeting. The disrupters who had stationed themselves in strategic positions within the Public Library Auditorium where the meeting was held sought to cause chaos midway through the meeting.

Moves to disrupt the meeting arose during a presentation made by a leading Buddhist monk on the stage who set out the means by which the Alliance should set about bringing peace into the country. **A member in the audience with the group of disrupters stood up at this stage and**

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asked whether the steps prescribed for peace would make the LTTE leader Mr Prabhakaran lay down arms and talk peace. As if on cue, others stationed within the audience began to chant slogans in concert. “Kill Prabhakaran. We want war, not peace,” they said.

This was followed by moves on the part of the disrupters to forcibly take over the stage, at which point the organisers and others present moved to expel the disrupters. The group was then gradually pushed out of the hall. The pushing and shoving went on for a while, with a few policemen trying to stand inbetween the participants and the disrupters. There was a great deal of shouting, abusive language and chanting of slogans by the disrupters.

THE ACTION GROUP OF TAMILS (TAGOT)

Telephone: [+ 94 1] 877220, 869257 Email: ssatha@pan.lk manoraj@sri.lanka.net

1 November 1998

PRESS RELEASE

We are a group of concerned Tamil citizens who have formed The Action Group Of Tamils (TAGOT) to advance the interests and defend the rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The aim is to contribute our share to the effort to tackle the growing political crisis confronting the Tamil people in the country.

Some of us were members of the Action Group of Tamils in Colombo (AGOTIC). Our decision to reconstitute ourselves as TAGOT was made after much deliberation and exhaustive consultations with elders in the Tamil community; and it is the result of a combination of events spread out over the past six months.

AGOTIC is the brain-child of a group of Colombo Tamils who met in March 1994 to review the political reality in the country and to explore the way forward for Tamils. The group elected and mandated AGOTIC to give voice to the concerns and aspirations of the Tamils in Colombo. We worked tirelessly during the past four and half years to do justice to that mandate and we are grateful for the support and encouragement generously extended by Colombo Tamils. The work of AGOTIC must certainly go on.

At the same time, some of us within AGOTIC became increasingly aware that the focus on Colombo Tamils, no doubt necessary, nevertheless tends to neglect the issues and concerns of the larger Tamil people in the country as a whole. The escalating war in the North-Eastern Province (NEP), the rising demand for foreign involvement through mediation or facilitation and the emergence of ultra-right Sinhalese political groups in the south are indications that the ground situation has gone through a fundamental qualitative transformation since 1994.

However the original mandate of AGOTIC, which understandably was

Colombo-centric, provides little space to spread our wings and constructively respond to the evolving larger reality. Obviously it is time to shed the old skin.

There are of course other reasons for our decision to chart a course different from that of AGOTIC. **After Mr N Vijayasingam assumed the post of President of AGOTIC in May of this year, the association gradually lost its sense of direction and consistency of purpose.**

Mr Vijayasingam, who is a Political Advisor to the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), found himself constrained by a conflict of interest. Where AGOTIC's viewpoints contradicted those of the CWC, Mr Vijayasingam tended to subordinate the interests of AGOTIC in favour of the CWC.

His gruff paternalism and his persistent disregard for AGOTIC's objectives and welfare led to the resignation of three valuable members within the space of about two months.

He ignored the cardinal principle that an AGOTIC member, when speaking or acting on behalf of the association, should do so only with its authorisation and express only the consensus of the association. He repeatedly, and without the required concurrence of the association, made statements and took actions that compromised AGOTIC.

One such instance, which brought matters to a head, is the statement he released to the press in early September. Without informing AGOTIC, Mr Vijayasingam announced on behalf of the association that Britain would be welcome as a mediator to resolve the armed conflict in Sri Lanka between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). **His invitation is ill conceived since the British Government has of late been partial towards the Sri Lankan Government.**

We categorically disassociate ourselves from Mr Vijayasingam's

unwise call for British mediation. We unambiguously state that it is for the combatants to decide whether they require a mediator or facilitator; and, if so, it is for them to mutually agree upon a suitable government, organisation or person for this purpose.

The above are some of the more important factors that impelled us to form TAGOT. We will continue to carry out the "watch-dog" function and sensitively intervene in political events and developments to safeguard the welfare of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

*The Action Group of Tamils
(TAGOT)*

Dr S Sathanathan, Secretary

Mandela asked to mediate

Visiting South African diplomats said in Colombo that President Nelson Mandela has been asked to mediate a settlement to Sri Lanka's Tamil separatist war, but there should be regional support for such a move.

The three South African diplomats based in the Indian capital of New Delhi told reporters here that Mandela has been invited to get involved in the Sri Lankan conflict by "certain quarters" but made it clear there had been no official request. They said a mediatory role by Mandela must have the backing of all parties to the conflict as well as the support of countries in the region.

"Mediation can be done only if there is regional support," Jaco Schoeman, a secretary of the South African embassy in New Delhi said. "If you do it in a void then there won't be any progress."

The visit by three diplomats came amid mounting tension over the issue of the island's Tamil Tiger guerrillas allegedly gaining support from sections of the African National Congress (ANC).

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“Power Symmetry is a Prerequisite for Successful Negotiations”

In the last few years the international community has witnessed a number of advances in the peace process many parts of the world. There have been negotiations between Eritrea and Ethiopia; and between the African National Congress and the Afrikaner government; and they have also led to the Dayton Peace Accord and the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement.

Today, having witnessed the massacre and persecution of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo by the Serbian government, the international community has committed to the protection of the ethnic Albanians and to bringing about a negotiated resolution for the Kosovan conflict. The situation of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo has numerous parallels with that of the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka, namely:

☆ Both Kosovo and the North eastern territories of Sri Lanka are regarded by the international community as integral parts of Yugoslavia and Sri Lanka, respectively.

☆ **Ethnic Albanians constitute a numerical minority in Yugoslavia as a whole but form a numerical majority in Kosovo, while the Tamils constitute numerical minority in Sri Lanka as a whole, but form a numerical majority in the Northeastern territories of Sri Lanka.**

☆ The autonomy enjoyed by the Kosovans was unilaterally stripped by the Serbian government in 1989, in a similar manner the constitutional protection agreed to by the numerical minority Tamils at the time of Sri Lankan independence from the United Kingdom was unilaterally stripped by the Sinhala majority in 1972. This pro-



**Visuvanathan
Rudrakumaran**

vision which was Article 29 of the Constitution drafted by Lord Soulbury at the time of Sri Lankan independence was characterized as a "sacred covenant" between the Sinhalese and the Tamils by the United Kingdom's Privy Council.

Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo & Tamils in Sri Lanka

☆ Failure of peaceful methods resulted in the emergence of the Kosovo Liberation Army in Kosovo. Similarly the failure of nonviolent methods gave birth to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as a "National Liberation Movement" as understood in international law.

☆ **The Serbian President Milosevic has sent 40,000 security troops to Kosovo which use excessive and indiscriminate force to put**

down the political aspirations of the Kosovans; while Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga deploys over 100,000 troops which employ excessive and indiscriminate use of force to put down the political aspirations of the Tamil people.

☆ Further the Serbian President has used food as a weapon of war and has attempted to starve Kosovans. Similarly, the Sri Lankan President has employed food as a weapon of war and has attempted to starve the Tamils into submission.

☆ The Serbian President has denied NGO's free access to Kosovo, while the Sri Lankan President has prohibited most NGO's access to the Northeastern territories in Sri Lanka.

☆ There are nearly 400 persons missing in Kosovo; while according to Amnesty International 600 people are missing since the occupation of the Northeastern territories of Sri Lanka by government troops. According to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances Sri Lanka ranks second highest in the world after Iraq in its total number of recorded disappearances and Sri Lanka still ranks second highest in the world after Sudan for its number of unresolved disappearances.

☆ It has been reported by the UN Security Council that torture is prevalent in Kosovo, while the torture is routinely practiced by the Sri Lankan government forces on the Tamils as part of its policy of subjugation.

☆ There are approximately 260,000 refugees and internally displaced people in Kosovo; while there are 1,000,000 (1 million) Sri Lankan Tamil refugees and internally displaced

Text of a talk delivered at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, on October 15, 1998.

people in Sri Lanka due to persecution and the militarization of the area by the Sri Lankan government.

☆ No mass graves have surfaced in Kosovo yet, while in Sri Lanka a Sri Lankan soldier has recently described in court a mass grave. It is estimated that this mass grave located in Chemani contained at least 400 bodies of Tamils arrested and then later killed by Sri Lankan government personnel.

☆ **The Serbian government has not yet banned journalists from Kosovo; the Sri Lankan government has denied journalists access to the Northeastern territories and has further imposed tight censorship under the direction of military censor.**

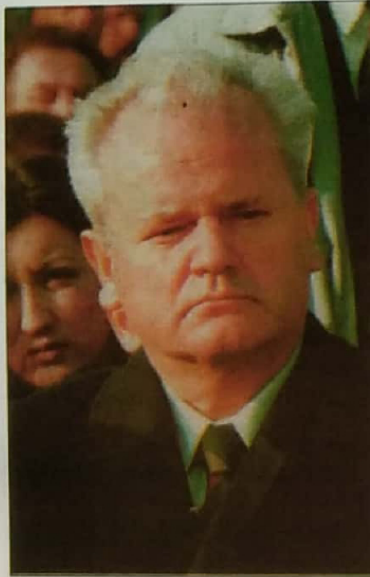
☆ The Serbian government has branded the Kosovan Liberation Army as terrorists, while the Sri Lankan government refers to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as terrorists.

There are many similarities between the situations of the two conflicts, yet the international community's response to them has been markedly different:

First of all, a number of western powers and NATO have agreed to deploy force in order to persuade Serbia to seek a political solution in Kosovo; while Western countries provide the Sri Lankan government with arms and military training thus, in fact, supporting its military solution to the Tamil question.

The United Nations and NATO have threatened deployment of their forces to persuade the Serbians to withdraw their troops from Kosovo, while the LTTE's call for withdrawal of government troops from Tamil areas has fallen on deaf ears.

The UN and NATO have also threatened use of armed force to persuade the Serbians to allow food and medicine supplies to Kosovo, while nothing of the sort has been contemplated by the international community with respect to the food and medicine embargo imposed by the Sri Lankan government upon LTTE-administered areas.



Milosevic: sent 40,000 troops to Kosovo



Chandrika Kumaratunga: sent 100,000 troops to the Tamil homelands

The excessive and indiscriminate use of force by the Serbians has been characterized by Hon. Robin Cook, the British Foreign Secretary as "cold blooded murder"; but no one has voiced any such condemnation about the similar actions of the Sri Lankan troops against Tamil civilians which have

occurred on a routine basis for many years.

The Kosovan situation has been characterized by the Prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal as an 'armed conflict' as defined by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia thereby distinguishing it from terrorist activities, while the situation in the Northeastern territories has been characterized as "terrorism".

The Kosovan claim for independence has not been rejected, but is held in abeyance for 3 years subject to the US government's search for a political solution within that period. However, the Tamil's claim for self-determination - let alone that for secession- has been flatly rejected.

The dissimilar responses of the international community can be attributed to either the West's geopolitical and/or commercial interests. It could also be attributed to Milosevic's failure to use a "political package" as another weapon in his arsenal to mislead the international community while actually pursuing a military solution. As Mr. Thirunavukarasu attorney at law from Sri Lanka pointed out, such a misleading political package was used by the Sri Lankan government in its policy termed "war for peace" and pursued by it since 1995. The Government claimed a constitutional reform proposal granting some autonomy for the Tamils which it has used to justify massive militarism directed against the Tamil community. Thus, the proposed constitutional package provided an anchor for massive militarism which has failed to achieve its objective of the subjugation of the Tamils and has now reached a phase where it has begun to dig its own grave. The timing of the resumption of military action by President Kumaratunga that commenced in July 1995 and the release of the political package by her in August 1995 and the Sri Lankan government's failure and/ or refusal to formally present the political package to the LTTE, thus far, clearly demonstrates that the political package is nothing but a political weapon that is supportive of the military weapons

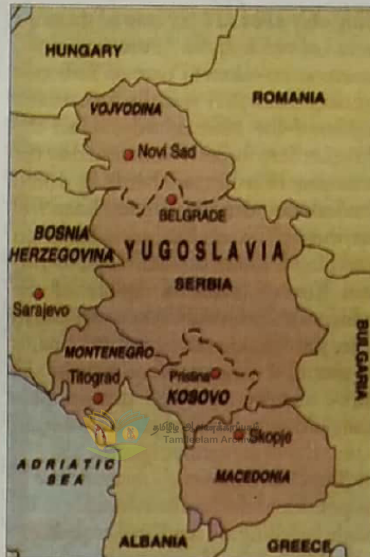
being used by the Sri Lankan government in its pursuit of a military solution to the Tamil question.

Also, the fact that while military action was commenced and pursued militarily to date no meaningful effort has been made to present and pass a constitutional reform package in Parliament supports the claim that the political package provides an anchor for militarism. Further, the fact that even the original political reform package did not address the Tamil aspirations articulated in Thimpu - that the Sri Lankan Tamils be recognized as a distinct nationality; that the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka be recognized as the historical and traditional homeland of the Sri Lankan Tamils people; that the right of the Sri Lankan Tamils to self-determination be acknowledged; that the Plantation Tamils, though outside the Eelam formation, be restored full rights of citizenship and franchise - and the subsequent substantial weakening of it provide corroborative evidence that the so-called political reform was used to justify the military subjugation of the Tamils in the eyes of the international community.

The Sri Lankan government's pursuit of a military solution has resulted in the deaths of more than 60,000 Tamils and the displacement of more than 1,000,000 refugees. If the above numbers are not sufficient to raise the conscience and moral abhorrence of the international community, then clearly the overflow of refugees into other countries shows that self-interest alone should encourage the involvement of the international community towards a peaceful resolution to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka which continues to heighten in intensity with time.

"Every war has a political solution" said King Hassan of Morocco. Enduring peace for the island only be will brought through a negotiated settlement that mutually satisfies both the Sinhala people and their government and the Tamils. But, for successful negotiation certain prerequisites must be met.

Negotiation experts have long held that power symmetry is the condition most necessary for mutually satisfying negotiations and the efficient attainment of optimal results. Kurt Lewin and Professor William Zartman noted that a balance of forces is necessary, if not sufficient, to guarantee successful negotiation. When power is roughly equal, negotiation takes place in a state of equilibrium and there is no a priori basis for one party to attempt to dominate the other. Power symmetry also creates an atmosphere of equality.



A difference in power invariably affects the manner in which negotiations proceed as well as their final outcome. The more powerful parties are better able to control the negotiation process and to obtain results more to their liking. In negotiations between a larger power and a smaller power the former tends to manipulate and exploit the process. In such a situation one side has power and the other side is left vulnerable.

In a situation where there is asymmetry of powers the intervention of a powerful outside party can alter the balance of power by using its resources in compelling the competing parties towards the negotiating table. In Bosnia, coercive diplomacy in the form of the bombing of the Bosnian Serbs brought the warring parties to

the negotiating table and produced the Dayton Peace Accord. Similarly, external support for the smaller power will level the negotiating field. In the case of Israeli-Palestinian negotiation the United States involvement played a critical role in the balance of power.

Withdrawal of Sri Lankan troops from the occupied areas will reduce the asymmetrical relations between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamils and will contribute to a climate for successful negotiations between the parties. Withdrawal of government troops from occupied areas as prelude to peace talks is neither a novel concept nor an aberration. The pledge made by Honorable Andre Presharma, President of Columbia for the withdrawal of government troop from occupied areas when he was a member of the Opposition, and the subsequent endorsement of this pledge by the Columbian population upon his election is one example; and another example is the insistence of the United Nations for withdrawal of Serbian troops and special police from Kosovo illustrate the legitimacy of the call for withdrawal of government troops from the occupied areas as a prelude to negotiations.

Withdrawal of troops will not only reduce asymmetry of power and pave the way for negotiation, but such a move is also consistent with inevitability and will additionally provide peace and security to the Tamil people. One of the rationales put forward by the Columbian President was that the occupied areas were under the control of the rebels before military occupation and more likely will also be left in the hands of the rebels upon conclusion of successful negotiations. Thus, the above rationale and the fact that occupation by Government forces creates a hostile environment for negotiation and results in unnecessary loss of lives, coupled with the notion that peace and security of the region and that of the people can be better protected by an armed forces representing members of that ethnic community rather than one comprising of members of the alien community makes

real sense in this context. Hence, peace and security in the Tamil homeland can be better maintained by the LTTE than by the Sinhala armed forces who are guilty of persecution of the Tamils.

The symmetry of power is not always manifested in the form of force and resources but also includes elements such as the legitimacy of the parties involved and the legitimacy of their positions. The reception of Mr. Gerry Adams and ethnic Albanian leaders at the White House by President Clinton was part of the overall process launched by the West to legitimize the smaller power parties in the respective conflicts in which they were involved.

Unfortunately, however, the international community's attitude towards the smaller power party in the Sri Lankan conflict runs counter to its practice in similar conflicts elsewhere. The international community's sale of arms and the training provided to Sri Lankan government troops only adds clout to the larger power group, thus encouraging its adherence to a rigid position and inhibiting the motivation for seeking a negotiated solution. Similarly, the characterization of the LTTE as a "terrorist organization"-leaving aside for the moment the issue of a legal and moral basis which I believe does not exist- in terms of the negotiation process continues to perpetuate an asymmetrical relationship and injures the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Legitimization of the LTTE, on the other hand, will not only pave the way for a symmetrical relationship between the competing parties, but will also establish beyond doubt the negotiating party which can be the genuine representative of the Tamils; and consequently has the capability of implementing the negotiated settlement when it is reached. One of the current problems in Kosovo, as observed by Honorable Richard Holbrooke, is the absence of an Albanian leadership which can also negotiate on behalf of

the Albanians. In the island of Sri Lanka, however, there is a legitimate Tamil leadership that is already in existence and its position needs to be fortified by the international community in the interest of real politik and peace-making.

"The international community's attitude in the Sri Lankan conflict runs counter to its practice in similar conflicts elsewhere".

The legitimization of the smaller party's cause will also contribute to the symmetrical relationship between the two opponents. How one defines a problem is the beginning of the determination of what to do about it. The definition of the problem determines the policy. The main reason for the failure of the Thimpu peace talks was that the Sri Lankan government refused to recognize the Tamils' right to self-determination. The recent events in the international arena clearly strengthen the proposition that the right to self-determination is not limited to colonial situations, but is also applicable in the post-colonial context. Recently the Canadian Supreme Court unequivocally stated in its opinion pertaining to the secession of Quebec that the right to external form of self-determination exists in the non-colonial context. The Court also stated the following with respect to the recipient unit of the right to self-determination namely, the "people":

"It is clear that " a people" may include only a portion of the population of an existing state. The right to self-determination has developed largely as a human right, and is generally used in documents that simultaneously contain references to "nation" and "state". The juxtaposition of these terms is indicative that the reference to "people" does not necessarily mean the entirety of a state's population. To restrict the definition of the term to the population

of the existing states would render the granting of a right to self-determination largely duplicative, given the parallel emphasis within the majority of the source documents on the need to protect the territorial integrity of existing states, and would frustrate its remedial purpose."

It should also be observed here that the position taken by Mr. Suresh Manickavasagam with respect to the Tamils' right to self-determination in Canadian Proceedings in his case which- was held prior to the Supreme Court opinion- was consistent with the advisory opinion.

Also important to observe here is the West's response to the Kosovan claim for independence that is an external form of self-determination. The ethnic Albanian claim for an external form of self-determination was not thrown out or rejected outright; rather it has been held in abeyance for three years in recognition of the fact that one of the warring parties will not stop fighting if its right to self-determination is denied. In Sri Lanka, however, all that was asked by the Tamils was the recognition of their right to self-determination; which need not be exercised exclusively in the form of external self-determination. It is the political obligation of the Sinhala political elite to inculcate a national consensus or at least a majority opinion among the Sinhala people with respect to the recognition of the Tamils' right to self-determination as a necessary prelude to successful negotiations. The recognition of the Israeli right to exist by the PLO in 1988 created an impetus for the negotiation process between Israel and the PLO. While it is heartening to see evidence of such political courage in domestic Sri Lankan Non-governmental organizations, the acceptance of such an approach is glaringly absent in the major Sinhala political parties. What should be expected of the Sinhala political leadership at this juncture is the political courage to conduct a national discussion which informs the Sinhala people that the

recognition of the Tamils' right to self-determination is not a threat to their interests but instead promotes peace and stability.

In this regard, the legitimization of the Tamils' right to self-determination by the international community will help the Sinhala political elite to marshal public support for the above

proposition- which will also reduce the asymmetrical relationship between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamils and contribute significantly towards a successful negotiated settlement.

Conclusion:

If I may paraphrase Prime Minister Blair I would like to say that the 'hands of history rest on our

shoulders.' The responsiveness of the international community to their plight- inspired by its conscience, sense of justice and righteousness, and the principle of consistency which demands equal treatment of similar situations in disparate places -is all that the victimized Tamils hope for at the moment. □

"Distortion" by Colombo newspaper deplored

In a letter to the Midweek Mirror, Colombo dated October 26, 1998, Mr. Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran has said:-

Dear Editor:

I am writing this to protest the distortion of my views as cited in my comments that were published in the October 21, 1998 issue of your newspaper.

On the 18th of October 1998, I presented a paper entitled "Power Symmetry for Successful Negotiations" at a discussion meeting held at Chatham House, London under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. In my presentation, I stated among other things that a recognition of the Tamils' right to self-determination will give momentum to the negotiation process and will provide a framework for negotiations between the two parties.

Following the meeting, I was asked by one of your correspondents whether recognition of the Tamils' right to self-determination will amount to separation. To which query my response was that self-determination is not synonymous with secession and can be exercised in various forms, namely federation, autonomy or confederation. [According to the Declaration of Friendly Relations among Nations, which is regarded as customary international law, the modes of implementing the right to self-determination are "the establishment of a sovereign and independent state, the free association or integra-

tion with an independent state or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people."]

I also informed your correspondent that if the Sri Lankan government provides a political solution in which the Tamils can exercise their rights to self-determination freely, LTTE will give it favorable consideration. All along this has been the LTTE's position. This is nothing new. Perusal of the Thimpu Principles will confirm this.

On your front page the news article heading stated: "LTTE is prepared to drop Eelam...". I would like to state the words "drop Eelam" were not used either by me or your correspondent.

Although your correspondent mentioned that you might exercise some discretion in editing my comments, it was not expected that you would distort the essence of my comments and bring confusion to the political views underlying the current conflict which has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives. Your news report is not only a violation of journalistic ethics but also is another illustration of how Colombo-based media distort the Tamil point of view and thereby prevent a genuine and meaningful dialogue between the Tamil people and the Sinhalese people.

*Sincerely yours,
Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran*

Nobel laureate considers splitting up Nigeria"

Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka and other Nigerian democracy campaigners plan to stage a public debate on whether the ethnically divided West African nation should remain a single state, a newspaper said Saturday.

A number of prominent leaders including Soyinka were organizing a "Congress of Nationalities in Nigeria" to debate, among other options, statehood for individual regions, the respected Lagos Guardian reported.

Soyinka, who returned home Wednesday to a boisterous welcome after four years in exile, was quoted as saying that the congress could take place in November, although no date has been set.

Nigeria's military leader, Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, has promised presidential elections in February and a transition to civilian rule by the end of May.

"There is nothing that stops the transition to civilian rule ... from going on side by side with the sovereign national conference," Soyinka was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

Nigeria, where the mainly Christian southern provinces are rich in oil and gas, has long been dominated by military leaders from the predominantly-Muslim north.

Ethnic divisions have split the country since colonial times and frequently explode into violent confrontations. The two-year separatist war in Biafra 30 years ago killed between 500,000 and 2 million people.

The Tamil Case presented in Brussels

On Wednesday 14th October about twenty people attended a presentation on the "Case of the Tamils" in the European Parliament in Brussels. The meeting focussed on censorship and the Human Rights situation in the island of Sri Lanka. The audience was comprised of Members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, academics, researchers and NGOs.

Anita Pollack MEP, Chair of the South Asia Delegation within the EP, presided over the meeting, and introduced the speakers, on different aspects of human rights of Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka.

Professor Nagalingam took the floor first, and with the use of charts explained the current situation in the North of the island in the Vanni, in terms of the health, education and welfare of Tamil children, whose fundamental rights are being denied.

Next, the eminent Colombo barrister, **Mr GG Ponambalam**, who has taken up many human rights cases in Sri Lanka spoke of the flagrant human rights violations of Tamil people by the Sri Lankan army, police and security forces. "A war is being waged against the Tamils" he said "by the Sri Lankan government, literally without witnesses and behind closed doors because of the censorship. This being so, one could well imagine the scale of the violations." **Mr GG Ponambalam** gave detailed accounts of arbitrary arrests and indefinite detentions of Tamils, of torture cases, rape, extra-judicial killings and involuntary disappearances. He had at hand documentation and affidavits. He said what is occupying centre stage today is the disclosure made in the High Court, Colombo on 3rd July 1998 that over 400 bodies are buried in Chemmani. He said there are allegations from local people that "there is furious activity at night with spot lights burning, bull dozers feverishly working, helicopters descending and smoke emanating at Chemmani." Investigations have not yet started.



He said "**The Government is so paranoid about its record of gross human rights violations, under cover of its censorship, being exposed to the outside world, that it will go to any lengths to stop the outside world from knowing what is exactly happening in Sri Lanka.**" After details from his own personal experience and observations he said "Sri Lanka is an outstanding example of a country that has succeeded in getting away with violations amounting to genocidal proportions merely by blocking information or by manipulating it." Human rights groups have pulled out of the island because of restrictions placed on them.

The Sri Lankan government's invocation of Emergency powers facilitates the alarming incidence of these human rights violations, **Mr GG Ponambalam** said. "By characterising the war as one against terrorism and not against Tamils, and making the world believe it, human rights of non-combatant Tamils are being trampled. While there are enough reports emanating regarding the human rights situation in Sri Lanka and while enough lip service is being paid to enforce human rights, there has been no tangible evidence to show any improvement because the State itself is a party to the violations."

Mr GG Ponnambalam said that "the human rights violations against Tamils in Sri Lanka has reached scandalous proportions. Basic human rights, like the right to life, the right to freedom of movement and the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and tor-

ture are being denied to the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government's propaganda is that it is fighting a war to end terrorism. It has converted its security and armed forces into agents of terror by permitting them arbitrary arrests, torture, detention, rape and murder".

He requested all countries where Tamils are in exile to respect the Geneva Convention on Refugees and to protect Tamils who seek asylum from arbitrary expulsion to Sri Lanka where their lives will be in real danger." In his conclusion he stated that "It is time for the international community to take a serious note of the situation in Sri Lanka and take remedial measures before it is too late."

Then **Ms. Deirdre McConnell** of the Tamil Centre for Human Rights, emphasised the need for the international community to continue to raise the Chemmani mass graves issue. Over three months has elapsed since the revelation of their existence, yet the Sri Lankan government is still failing to issue the necessary permission for concerned bodies, including the UN to get involved. She spoke of the responsibility of countries, including those in the EU to take up the issue of human rights and noted that some of these countries are propping up the Sri Lankan government with aid and the sale of arms. Present also in the meeting were **Mr S V Kirubakaran**, General Secretary of the Tamil Centre for Human Rights, and **Prof John Nelson** from TCHR France.

The people attending were curious to know more about the real situation and a question and answer session ensued. **As far as the Tamil community and the European Parliament circle are concerned, this is considered as an historic event because it is the first time there has been a hearing of Tamil people in this particular international arena.**

□ □ □

Chandrika's South Africa comment causes outrage

Another powder keg exploded in Sri Lanka last week, says the SUNDAY LEADER, Colombo, in its "Inside Politics" column of November 8, '98.

And the person who created the furore was none other than the controversial LTTE apologist Kumar Ponnambalam who is also the

cause of the explosion. And the timing becomes significant in view of the crucial TULF meeting today to decide on the party's continued support for the government. It all started with President Chandrika Kumaratunga giving an interview to South African television when she went there in September 1998 to attend the non aligned summit. In the course of that television interview, where it was obvious that the interviewer was more interested in hearing what his own vice president had to say at the conference than on what Kumaratunga wanted to say, the president came out with a political bloomer

"They are wanting a separate state - a minority community which is not the original people of the country, etc," with the reference being to the Tamils.

The president's full interview to the South African television channels was reproduced in the 10.00 pm English news over Rupavahini on September 5, 1998 when the president was still in South Africa and before she left for the United Nation General Assembly ses-



Chandrika Kumaratunga

sions in New York. By this time this column in the issue of September 20 published the relevant extracts of the interview causing a furore among the Tamils.

Ponnambalam who had listened to the news thereafter began moving heaven and earth to get a video copy of that part of her interview. He got what he wanted, ironically from a PA

MP, and then went into action. He first sent a cassette abroad for multiplication and dissemination. Then on the basis of what the president said, Ponnambalam wrote an article titled "Let Us Go" (see The Sunday Leader, 27th September 1998) and sent it to the media. This was an article calling all Tamils to cry for separation. The Tamil Diaspora, which is very largely sympathetic to the LTTE, got hold of this article and went to town, cities rather - flooding the foreign cities with the article and put it on the Internet, too.

"Obviously, the heat generated was unbearable for the government because, either on the instruction of the government, or on his own volition, Ariya Rubesinghe, Director, Department of Information, sent a communication to the Tamil newspapers *Thinakkural* and *Virakesari* referring to Ponnambalam's article that appeared in the respective newspapers on September 26, 1998 and October 7, 1998, but not referring to Ponnambalam by name. These com-

Kadirgamar made to eat his words

The exact words used in the Sivanesan question are given herewith:-

Sivanesan: The president has stated in South Africa that Sri Lanka Tamils are not origins of this country, in other words, they are not belong to this country but that they are asking for a separate state. How do you respond?

Kadirgamar: *The short answer is, the president never said anything of the sort.* She never said that the Tamils are of recent origin and do not belong to Sri Lanka. No, she did not say that at all." You see, the president could not have possibly said a thing like that. If you look at the logic of it, her whole political philosophy, what she has explained to the people, what she fought the election about in 1994, all the numerous speeches and statements that she has made, her determination to settle the problem, is all based on the fact that the Tamil people are an utterly ancient community who have lived in this country from time immemorial.

So that, those words could never have become out of her mouth. Somebody else, maybe, but never from President Kumaratunga.

Fernando: I could reiterate, because I monitored every one of her speeches, and press and radio and television interviews and she didn't mention that.

Kadirgamar: *Logically, it is totally impossible.* Not from President Kumaratunga. She has an absolutely spotless record on the ethnic question.

munications were published by these respective newspapers on October 28 and 29, 1998."

The hawk that he is, Ponnambalam had noticed that in Rubesinghe's transcription from the tape of what the president had said in her interview, Rubesinghe had omitted that one sentence containing those words, "They are wanting a separate state - a minority community which is not the original people of the country, etc." And that is what has now got the Tamils up in arms against the president.

"When Ponnambalam noticed this, all hell broke loose and he sat down to write one of his now famous epistulary missiles to the president. "She could not get even Tiruchelvam to run to her rescue this time," he was yelling. **Just then, at about 7.00 p.m. on October 28, leader of the EPDP Douglas Devananda telephoned Ponnambalam and wanted to know whether he could see the tape Ponnambalam was armed with because in his article Ponnambalam had indicated that he had the tape and was prepared to play it, if anybody challenged him.**"

"I never open my mouth unless I have the dynamite under my belt," he was telling friends who had gathered at his home as the momentum was gaining pace.

Ponnambalam readily agreed and asked Devananda to ring back in half an hour during which time he would set up the screening of the tape at a place outside his bedroom, a veritable sputnik, as only very very close friends have access to his bedroom which is like a cricket pitch. Devananda agreed. But Devananda did not ring back. Half an hour became one hour. No call from Devananda. Then Ponnambalam made many calls to Devananda's home and left messages on his mobile.

The doubting Thomas that is Ponnambalam got it into his head that Devananda had a brief from the president to find out whether Ponnambalam actually had the tape. So when Devananda realised that Ponnambalam indeed had the tape, he

(Devananda) was playing hide and seek, Ponnambalam was to tell his wife Yogi.

"At 11.30 p.m. however when Ponnambalam was fast asleep, Devananda telephoned and said he got Ponnambalam's many messages but was at a party at the Taj Samudra Hotel. Ponnambalam, the lawyer, asked him why then he said he would ring half an hour later and asked him whether the president wanted him to find out about the tape. Devananda's hearty laugh awakened Ponnambalam sufficiently for an appointment to be made for 7.30 a.m. on the following morning, October 29. At 7.30 a.m. on October 29."

Devananda arrived with his retinue and Ponnambalam took Devananda upstairs and played and replayed the tape to Devananda's hearts discontent whilst his retinue stood guard at

Ponnambalam's gates and threshold. Ponnambalam assured Devananda that as long as he, Ponnambalam lived, no harm will befall Devananda either in his home or anywhere near his home. **Devananda looked terribly upset and unhappy as the words "they are wanting a separate state - a minority community which is not the original people of the country, etc." was played over and over again.** Devananda muttered it was very bad and said he was going to raise the matter immediately with the president. Ponnambalam said that was not enough and wanted the EPDP to vote against her government henceforth. Devananda did not respond to this request. After Devananda left, Ponnambalam finished his letter to the president, dated it, and sent it by registered post.

* * *



Douglas Devananda

As Ponnambalam was finishing his letter, Devananda rang back to clarify whether the words used were LTTE or the Tamils. Ponnambalam assured him that the words used referred unmistakably to the Tamils. After the Devananda interlude, many things started to happen.

The editor of the Eelamurasu, a popular Tamil weekly newspaper based in Paris had rung up Senior Vice President of the TULF V. Ananda Sangari and asked for his views about what the president had said in the interview in South Africa about the Tamils. His reaction was that as far as he is aware, that news is not correct and that this is all Ponnambalam's lies.



Neelan Thiruchelvam

The editor of *Eelamurasu* immediately telephoned Ponnambalam and reported what Ananda Sangari had said. Ponnambalam immediately requested the editor to give very wide publicity to what Ananda Sangari had said. And *Eelamurasu* has given very wide publicity to Ponnambalam's challenge to Ananda Sangari to quit politics if the tape contained the words "they are wanting a separate state - a minority community which is not the original people of the country, etc."

Eelamurasu also had a boxed comment that it is in possession of a copy of the tape (perhaps one made from what Ponnambalam sent) and is aghast at Ananda Sangari's reactions.

"And into this fray enters Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. On Saturday morning, October 31, Foreign Minister Kadirgamar was interviewed by Eric Fernando, Director General of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and the Janamandalee programme. At one point, one Sivanesan from Kollupitiya asked Kadirgamar to respond to what the president had said in South Africa, namely, that the "Tamils were not the original people of Sri Lanka and therefore did not belong to Sri Lanka," or words to that effect. Kadirgamar responding said that what appeared in a South African paper, which is still not before the people of Sri Lanka, was brought to his notice and the government corrected the position within "a day or two."

Then, on the morning of November 2, lawyer N. Raviraj, TULF's acting Mayor of Jaffna, telephoned Ponnambalam and requested to see the tape and he wanted to see it well before November 8, when TULF's all-

important meeting to decide whether it should continue to be supportive of the government was scheduled. Ponnambalam readily agreed and asked Raviraj to come to his home at 8.00 a.m. on poya day, November 3. After Raviraj hung up, Ponnambalam rang back Raviraj and requested him to bring as many TULF members as he could because Ponnambalam wanted to ensure that there were witnesses to Raviraj having seen the videotape. Raviraj, conceding it was a good idea, said he would bring others also. Ponnambalam then telephoned Devananda and told him what he had told Raviraj and invited Devananda to bring as many EPDP persons as he wanted to view the tape again. Devananda said he would discuss the matter with others and revert to Ponnambalam. But Devananda did not revert back to Ponnambalam. On the morning of poya day, November 3, only Raviraj went to Ponnambalam's home at 8.15 a.m. The tape was played and when the words "They are wanting a separate state - a minority

community which is not the original people of the country, etc." were uttered by the president, Raviraj who was at the edge of his seat, threw up his hands and fell back limply deep into the chair. Ponnambalam also played the Janamandalee interview of Kadirgamar where Sivanesan asks the question about the president's interview. Kadirgamar's reply drew the response from Raviraj as to whether people can be so dishonest. Raviraj who had brought a cassette wanted Ponnambalam to transfer both the president's famous interview and Kadirgamar's equally famous reply. Ponnambalam transferred the two interviews and gave Raviraj his cassette. And with elections round the corner and the political package in oblivion, the government probably realises Kumaratunga's words are having the same effect on the Tamils as did President D.B. Wijetunga's analogy of Tamils to 'creepers,' hence the spate of denials. But the tapes will tell all and will soon be aired on a private television channel.

Ponnambalam's letter to President Kumaratunga

தமிழ் இலக்கிய அகாடமி
Tamil Literature Archive

The following is the full text of the letter dated October 29:-

Your Excellency,

"They are wanting a separate state, a minority community which is not the original people of the country, etc" I write to you not only on a matter of grave public importance but also of great urgency. The quotation above are the exact words that came out of your mouth when you gave, what the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation's female news reader described as "a live interview given to two South African television channels." Your full interview was broadcast when the English news was being given by Rupavahini on a date in late September 1998 when you were in South Africa to attend the Non-Aligned Movement Conference. Your full interview was taped and I have a copy of the tape at home and I have made

many other copies and given to people, whom I trust, for safe keeping. The reason for writing this letter is because one Ariya Rubesinghe, whom you have styled as Director, Department of Information, a person of very poor calibre, which fact I have noticed on a number of occasions and which I will substantiate, if challenged, has sent communications to the Thinakkural and Virakesari, two Tamil daily newspapers, which communications appear in the respective newspapers of 28 October 1998 and 29 October 1998. In that communication, Rubesinghe refers to a letter to the editor of The Sunday Times (of South Africa) dated 18 September 1998 sent by one Mr. Rajesh Mudly, obviously taking objection to what you have said in your interview. But a copy of this letter has not been sent by Rubesinghe to the relevant newspapers. Mr. Mudly's let-



Kumar Ponnambalam

ter to the editor has drawn a response from your new high commissioner in South Africa, one Gamini Munasinghe, who was till recently, deputy high commissioner for Sri Lanka in the United Kingdom and a person well known to

the BBC and the Tamils in UK but Rubesinghe has sent a copy of this letter to the Tamil newspapers. So, the readers are unable to form their own judgment at the same time on the letters sent by Mr. Mudly and Munasinghe, because the words used by Mr. Mudly is also very important. I say this because, Munasinghe seems to have addressed his response on the basis that you had said the "Tamils do not belong to Sri Lanka." And it is on this basis that Rubesinghe has sent his communication to the Tamil newspapers which carried my articles. I did not go on the basis that you said that the Tamils do not belong to Sri Lanka but on the basis of the caption to this letter which was what you said in your interview. Rubesinghe gives a transcription of what you have said in that interview and dishonestly omits that one sentence which is the above caption! This type of deliberate dishonesty immediately makes him unfit to hold any office of responsibility anywhere, much less that of anything to do with "information." It is now confirmed that it is such people that are being used by your government in your campaign of disinformation against the Tamils. Rubesinghe's communication to these newspapers is a subtle attempt at a reply to my articles on this subject in the *Thinakkural* of Saturday 26 September 1998 and in the *Virakesari* of 7 October 1998. My article also appears in *The Sunday Leader* of 27 September 1998 but Rubesinghe has not thought it fit to send his communication there! Why? Is it because you do not want the English reading public to know your dishonest machinations? Why Rubesinghe had to rush in where you feared to tread beats me. Further, why Rubesinghe had to wait for so long after I wrote the articles to try to reply to me, also beats me. Douglas Devananda, Leader of the EPDP wanted to see the tape having seen Rubesinghe's denial in the *Thinakkural*. I said I will play the tape on condition that the EPDP will vote against your government henceforth. I played it for him and replayed it at 7.30 a.m. at my home on the morning of the 29 October 1998. A very worried and unhappy De vananda said he was

going to raise this matter with you immediately. Even he seems thoroughly disgusted. Knowing full well that the Tamil public has gone totally against you, a circuitous route via South Africa has been sought to cover up what you have said. It has made the situation even worse for you. **Even Neelan Tiruchelvam dare not attempt, this time, to whitewash you by writing a letter to you, putting somebody else's signature, saying you could not have said such a thing!** But this time, two others, Munasinghe and Rubesinghe, have tried to do what Tiruchelvam did two years ago in October 1996. Since you are the president of Sri Lanka, do justice to your office by either admitting or denying, honestly and publicly, as to whether you made the above captioned statement. If you deny, are you prepared to play your tape (on which Rubesinghe has based his transcription and communication) and I will play mine, at the same time and place and in front of the media, foreign and local, print and electronic? If you are found

to have said the above captioned thing, whilst a dishonest attempt is made to show in one instance that you did not say that the Tamils do not belong to Sri Lanka whilst in the other instance a sentence is deliberately and dishonestly omitted from the transcription because that sentence will finish you off politically, will you resign immediately and graciously because you have said such things a bit too often and specially about Tamils. If I am found incorrect, I shall quit politics forthwith. Will you take this challenge? You have not acknowledged any of my communications to you. I did not mind that because I did not expect you to do so. But this letter is different. If you do not state your position in response to what I have said in this letter, you will be taken to have accepted and conceded to all what I have stated. As this matter is a matter of grave public importance, I am releasing this letter to the media.

Signed
G.G. Ponnambalam,

China to finance 70 million dollar complex in Colombo

A 35-storey commercial and residential complex will come up in Colombo's city centre financed by the Chinese government. It will be the largest single investment by that country in Sri Lanka, at a cost amounting to 70 million dollars.

Housing and Urban Development Minister Indika Gunawardene who laid the foundation-stone for the building overlooking the sea in

Kollupitya, said it will go a long way in providing ultra modern facilities to Colombo-based businesses. Part of the complex will be used for luxury residential apartments.

China and Sri Lanka have solid trade ties, with Sri Lanka providing a good market for Chinese consumer goods. In return, China is one of the countries that supplies major military weaponry to Sri Lanka.

Bandits in police uniform rob bronze Buddha statues

Seven bandits posing as policemen tied up the Buddhist monks in a Buddhist temple in Hakmana in southern Sri Lanka, and walked away with cash and seven bronze statues of the Buddha. Hakmana is about 160 km. south of Colombo.

An eye witness told the Hakmana police that on the night of the 1st November, the bandits walked into the temple, and told the high priest that they had come to look for deserters from the Sri Lankan army. They then tied up the inmates, including five Buddhist monks inside a room before loading the statues into a van.

FROM OPERATION LEAP FORWARD TO PON SIVAPALAN: DEATH OF A STRATEGY

Introduction

The armed conflict in Sri Lanka took a decisive turn on 11 September 1998. Jaffna Mayor Mr Pon Sivapalan (a Tamil) and Jaffna Brigade Commander Brigadier Susantha Mendis (a Sinhalese), together with six army and police officers and five Tamil civilians, were killed by a remote controlled explosive device. Although the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have not claimed responsibility, the general opinion is that it carried out the attack. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which nominated Mr Sivapalan to the post of Mayor, expressed "outrage and anguish". President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (a Sinhalese) reportedly was "shocked" by the killings. Many other individuals and groups too similarly expressed surprise and shock.

The National Peace Council (NPC), which advocates the protection of human rights and promotion of conflict resolution, condemned the killings as a "reprehensible act" committed in "a place of civilian administration" in a press release on the same day. The NPC thus skilfully distorted the act of war committed by the LTTE within a war zone as an attack on a civilian target.

However, neither the TULF nor the human rights and conflict resolution organisations had expressed surprise or shock when President Kumaratunga threw down the gauntlet at a public meeting held in Mirigama about a month and half earlier, on 19 July. She issued a bloodcurdling challenge to the Tamil people: "if the Tigers want peace they would get peace, if they want war they would get war" (*Virakesari*, 20/Jul/98).

Prime Minister JR Jayawardene (a Sinhalese), leader of the then United National Party (UNP) Government, had beaten the same war drum almost twenty-one years ago. Whilst the 1977 pogrom raged and the Tamil people were reeling from the slaughter, he



S. Sathanathan

rose to his feet in Parliament on 18 August and arrogantly issued a similar challenge to Tamils: "if you want to fight, let there be a fight; if it is peace, let there be peace" (*Hansard*, vol 23, no 2, col: 246).

President Kumaratunga, Deputy Leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which is the dominant party within the ruling Peoples Alliance (PA) Coalition Government, supplemented the 19 July challenge with the denial of the national rights of the Tamil people. In a live interview given to two South African TV channels during her visit to Durban in the first week

of September 1998, she derogated the Tamil nation to "a minority community" and relegated Tamils to an inferior political status in relation to the Sinhalese by denouncing the Tamils as "not the original people of the country".

Her inflammatory comments, which callously restated the chauvinist assertion that only the Sinhalese are the *bhoomi putra* ("sons of the soil"), were broadcast in Sri Lanka by Rupavahini television news on or around 10 September. But the Tamil political parties and the human rights and conflict resolution organisations have so far failed to demand a retraction of the statement by, and an apology from, the President.

President Kumaratunga's next step was in keeping with the Sinhalese political culture of whipping up chauvinist Tamil phobia among the Sinhalese people, especially for electoral gain. She resorted to the myopic practice of Tamil-baiting. At the SLFP's District Conference held in Kurunegala on 8 September 1998, she alleged that the UNP and the LTTE are "conspiring to overthrow" her Government (*Sarinihar*, 17-30/Sep/98).

The President's hawkish posture, which now stands fully revealed, was evident as far back as mid-1994. In fact, in an article titled "Broker Politics: Betrayal of the Tamil Struggle" published about two months before the Parliamentary elections of that year, we argued that the SLFP is bent on a military solution to the Tamil Question (*Lanka Guardian*, 15/Jun/94). The argument was reiterated and fleshed out in a subsequent article, "The Peace Hoax" (*Lanka Guardian*, 15/Aug/95). In the latter essay we examined the so-called "peace

process" between September 1994 to April 1995 and concluded that the PA's stated commitment to a negotiated settlement to the armed conflict between the Government and the LTTE-led Tamil National Movement is a Goebbelsian lie. The intention here is to examine the PA's war strategy during the period from mid-1995 to October 1998.

The war strategy

In retrospect, it is clear that the PA's approach to the Tamil Question was informed by conventional military theory, that it is extremely unlikely a popular guerrilla organisation could be totally defeated in battle. So a two-pronged war strategy cloaked in the rhetoric of "war for peace", which incorporated military and political responses, was devised to defeat the LTTE-led Tamil National Movement.

The military response

The military response is not a one-dimensional use of naked force. Rather it is a multi-faceted approach, which contains inter-related politico-military components. The main objectives of the military component are to weaken the fighting capacity of the LTTE and physically expel the organisation first from most areas of the Jaffna peninsula, the cultural heartland of Ceylon Tamils, and later from major cities and towns in the Tamil-majority North-Eastern Province (NEP). Operation Leap Forward commenced the first stage on 9 July 1995 and Operation Riviresa I appeared to have substantially completed it when the Sinhalese army occupied most of Wellkamam, the western region of the peninsula, and the city of Jaffna five months later. The ongoing Operation Jayasikurui, which began on 13 May 1997, to establish the road link between Vavuniya and Elephant Pass seemed to have formally launched the second stage.

The principal objective of the political component, which serves to consolidate military advances, is to politically marginalise the LTTE. Toward this end the PA revealed a plan to "re-establish normalcy", to set up an Interim Advisory Council in the NEP

consisting of up to twenty-one members (*Island*, 6/Aug/95). The intention is to install a group of so-called "representatives", selected through "managed" elections. The plan was fleshed out through the local government elections, held in the Jaffna peninsula on 29 January 1998 under the iron heel of military rule. They threw up 234 such pliant "Tamil representatives" who are expected to run the Jaffna Municipal Council and 17



Prof. G.L. Piries

Pradeshiya Sabhas.

The PA attempted to lure the Tamil population of the peninsula into supporting the newly installed local "government" with the promise of "reconstruction and development". This so-called "hearts and minds" tactic in essence dangled the prospect of employment and incomes for the war-ravaged people, to paternalistically "wean" Tamils from the LTTE - as if the Tamil people are infants who cannot think for themselves.

The political response

Three versions of an alleged "conflict resolution proposal" were released during the past four years. The President announced the *President Kumaratunga's Devolution Proposals* on 3 August 1995. The President's proposals were designed to appear at first glance as the PA Government's official initiative. But most of the Cabinet Ministers were kept in the dark regard-

ing the contents of the proposals (*Sunday Leader*, 6/Aug/95); and the SLFP parliamentarians were neither consulted when the proposals were formulated nor informed about them before they were announced by the President. Indeed, the President for the first time briefed SLFP parliamentarians about the provisions in the proposals a week later, on 10 August. Needless to add, the other parties of the PA coalition had also been kept in the dark. Not surprisingly, many of them opposed the President's proposals (*Island*, 11/Aug/95).

Minister of Justice, Constitutional Affairs, Ethnic Affairs and National Integration Prof GL Peiris (a Sinhalese) confirmed the lack of concurrence during a press interview two days later. He qualified the proposals as the President's own views or "basic ideas...almost in the form of a Green Paper. The next stage is for the draft chapter of the new constitution on devolution to be presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on Constitutional Reform. Within about two to three weeks we will try to finalise that document and that will be placed before the PSC...we will have full discussion to reach consensus within that forum. Thereafter it could be presented in Parliament where we would need a 2/3 majority" (*Island*, 6/Aug/95). The Minister thus implied that the said draft chapter would delineate the official position of the PA Government regarding the basis for negotiating a settlement to the armed conflict.

So when Minister Peiris released more than five months later, on 16 January 1996, the *Draft Provisions of the Constitution Containing the Proposals of the Government of Sri Lanka Relating to Devolution of Power*, generally referred to as the Draft Provisions, Tamils expected the document to be the definitive statement of the Government. However, the Draft Provisions were found to be the individual initiative of the Minister. Because prior to its release, the document was not communicated to most of the Cabinet Ministers and to the member-parties of PA. Predictably most parties in Government again were vehemently

opposed to the document (*Island*, 28/Jan/96).

To add insult to injury, the Draft Provisions did not contain key clauses relating to devolution of power, especially in respect of the all-important question of the extent of the alleged territorial unit for Ceylon Tamils, which, said Minister Peiris, would be dealt with "later". However, he did not publish the clauses and the Draft Provisions soon became irrelevant.

More than twenty months passed before Minister Peiris formulated and released the third version of an alleged "conflict resolution proposal" on 24 October 1997, titled *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform* and widely known as the Draft Constitution. Minister Peiris neither communicated the document to, nor sought the concurrence of, the Cabinet and the member-parties of PA prior to its publication.

To overcome the lack of endorsement by the PA, Minister Peiris, as Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC), had on the one hand slipped the document through the Committee and presented it in Parliament as an appendix to the three-page PSC statement. On the other hand, his PSC statement misleadingly described the appendix as "the Government's proposal on constitutional reform". This cunning and disingenuous procedural manoeuvre conjured up the illusion that the **Government** is officially presenting its "conflict resolution proposal" whilst ensuring that neither the President nor the PA could be held accountable for the Draft Constitution, that they could "maintain deniability", since the document officially is the PSC's report.

Moreover, by presenting the Draft Constitution as a PSC report, Minister Peiris attempted to anoint the document as the consensus of all parties represented in the PSC. This manoeuvre was foiled when it was pointed out in Parliament that the PSC statement was **not signed** by the party representatives, including those of the coal-

ition partners of the PA (*Island*, 25/Oct/97).

The decrepit deception did not end there. The UNP pointed out that the Draft Constitution was incomplete, arguing that the chapters on transitional provisions and definitions are missing (*Island*, 12/Jan/98). To make matter worse, when Minister Peiris released it in Parliament as a White Paper it was titled *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform*. But when he had the same Draft Constitution printed under the auspices of his Ministry for public consumption, and for the benefit of the international community, it was deceptively titled *The Government's Proposals for Constitutional Reform*. This sleight of hand dishonestly projected the misbegotten document as the PA Government's official proposal to negotiate an end to the armed conflict.

The following conclusions are inescapable. On the one hand, President Kumaratunga and Minister Peiris between them, and acting in their individual capacity, released three versions of a so-called "conflict resolution proposal". In each instance, at first glance the document appeared to be the Government's official position but was, on closer inspection, found to be the **individual** response of either politician. On the other hand, the PA Government has completed four years in office **without** reaching agreement on, and officially committing itself to, a framework for negotiating a political settlement to the armed conflict. **It follows that the question of whether or not the UNP and LTTE would respond favourably is at best premature; at worst, it is a red herring.**

Each version of the alleged "conflict resolution proposal" was exploited by the PA propagandists to achieve important propaganda aims. Firstly, they sought to mislead the Sri Lankan public and the Tamils in particular into believing that the Government has designed the constitutional basis for negotiations and that it is sincerely seeking a political solution.

Secondly, the propagandists sought political legitimacy for the PA's aggressive prosecution of the military response by timing the release of the documents to largely coincide with major military operations in the NEP. The 1995 President's Proposal was announced about three weeks **after** Operation Leap Forward was unleashed. The 1996 Draft Provisions were made public 48 hours **before** Operation Rivikirena was unleashed in the eastern regions of the Jaffna peninsula on 18 January. The 1997 Draft Constitution was released when Operation Jayasikurui, which the army expected to complete within three months, dragged on into the fifth month and was hopelessly mired in the Vanni. The propagandists dubbed each version as the so-called "peace package", as the PA's alleged political alternative, which in fact did **not** and still has **not** seen the light of day. **Each one served as the political fig leaf to dignify the genocidal military campaign against Tamils in the NEP.**

Thirdly, the propaganda portrayed the Government as the reluctant combatant compelled to do battle by the "intransigence" of the LTTE.

Most human rights and conflict resolution organisations enthusiastically disseminated this propaganda. Rather than expose the duplicity of Government, and perhaps to mask it, they on the one hand "welcomed" the non-existent political alternative and, on other hand, urged the LTTE to respond "positively" to that political mirage.

The propaganda provided a face-saving rationale for those forces in the international fora opposed to the LTTE-led Tamil National Movement to support the PA's "war for peace".

Thus the so-called "peace package" is an integral part of the PA Government's war strategy. Two days after President Kumaratunga released her 1995 proposals, Minister Peiris had ventured to outline its utility for the military response thus: "we do expect that the military effort will have the effect of deminishing the strength of

the LTTE. But the political proposals will also have a role in that regard because they will go a long way towards convincing the Tamil people that the Government should be supported and that will alienate the Tamil people from the LTTE. So there is a connection between the two things" (*Island*, 6/Aug/95).

A week later Minister Peiris explained the "connection", that is, how the "peace package" would legitimise and strengthen the military response thus: "some want to know the necessity for a political solution when a war is raging. True, what we need to win the war is armaments not a political solution. But we have been able to procure military hardware because we have presented a political solution...The President's leadership has gained international acceptance today. Therefore, we experience no difficulty to get our arms requirements...The President and the Government have succeeded in convincing the world community that restoration of peace is possible through the political package. **We cannot expect the co-operation of the international community [to execute the military campaign] without seeking a political solution**" (*Daily News*, 15/Aug/95; emphasis added).

Three days after the President's proposals were announced, Mr Neville Jayaweera (a Sinhalese), a former Civil Servant and political activist, published a refreshingly forthright comment on the PA's war strategy. He argued as follows: "it is clear that there is now more than a ground swell of enthusiasm in the South for an all-out war in the North, finally to administer the coup de grace to the LTTE, take Jaffna and occupy the peninsula. Obviously, the popular hope is that thereafter the government can dictate terms to the vanquished foe on a 'take it or leave it' basis and install in Jaffna our own version of a Vichy government, that is if we can find a Tamil leader who is ready to play Petain" (*Sunday Observer*, 6/Aug/95). **Obviously Mr Jayaweera underestimated the prodigal capacity of the**

collaborationist Tamils parties to supply their Petains.

The Tamil National Movement and UTHR(J)

The explosion in Jaffna on 11 September 1998 signalled that the war strategy has collapsed into blood-soaked chaos. **Brigadier Susantha Mendis and Mayor Mr Pon Sivapalan symbolised respectively the military and political components of the PA's military response.** The following three points are sufficient to show that the military component has been all but crippled. Many senior officers of the security apparatus in Jaffna have been eliminated. The army was engaged in "heavy fighting" in Mankulam as far back as in November 1997 (*Island*, 19/Nov/97) and, if reports are to be believed, took control of the town after a delay of almost one year, in October 1998. And the Kilinochchi-Paranthan debacle between 27 and 30 September, when the LTTE overran army positions manned by about 3,500 men and killed about 1,800 of them, has effectively torpedoed Operation Jayasikurūi. Digitized by TamilEelam Archive

The political component has been virtually neutralised with the death of Mr Pon Sivapalan. These events underline the impotence of the counter-revolutionary tactic of "re-establishing normalcy" by installing and sustaining a Vichy-type administration. Clearly it is extremely unlikely that the Deputy Minister for Defence General Anuruddha Ratwatta would be able to make good his juvenile boast to "shake hands" with the leader of a defeated LTTE, Mr Velupillai Prabhakaran (*Sunday Times*, 14/Feb/97).

Predictably most human rights and conflict resolution organisations intensified their anti-LTTE propaganda, which has reached almost hysterical proportions. The Special Report No. 11 of the University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna (UTHR(J)) on the 11 September attack in Jaffna (*Island*, 24/Oct/98) is a case in point. The organisation consists of a

few Tamil academics, who had been attached to the University of Jaffna but were later removed from their faculty positions. The authors of the report admitted that the explosion "killed...almost the entire security forces hierarchy in the City of Jaffna". Therefore the attack was aimed at an eminently military target. But the UTHR(J), like the NPC, emphasised more the civilian aspects. They alleged that "the incident once again demonstrates...the LTTE's absence of any concern for its own civilians". As evidence they adduced the names of the six Tamil civilians killed in the attack.

During the Vietnam war, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) too employed similar reactionary propaganda. The Vietnamese National Liberation Movement attacked United States occupation forces not only in the battlefield but also in the cities and towns. Often the guerrillas would kill American servicemen by exploding bombs in discotheques and bars frequented by them. The CIA propaganda then highlighted the Vietnamese civilians who also died in the blasts to allege that the Movement had scant regard for its own people.

The fact that the UTHR(J) have advanced the similar moribund claim is testimony to their intellectual vacuity and moral bankruptcy. In Vietnam the CIA foolishly hoped that publicising the deaths of civilians during attacks on Americans would turn the Vietnamese people against their own liberation movement. The UTHR(J) similarly believes with staggering naivete that by breast-beating over civilian deaths, the Tamil people could be turned against the LTTE.

Moreover, the UTHR(J) are incapable of making the moral distinction between the violence of the aggressor and the violence of the victim, between the violence of oppression and violence of resistance. Indeed, they have stood reality on its head: for them, the Sinhalese-dominated Government is the victim and the LTTE-led Tamil National Movement is the aggressor. The CIA also had attempted a similar,

From the North in the mid-1960s to convince the world that the then North Vietnam was the aggressor.

The central question is whether or not the Sinhalese armed forces are an occupation force. The answer will define the character of violence resorted to by the LTTE. The question cannot be avoided by advancing the absurd juridical assertion that the Sri Lankan armed forces cannot be an occupation force within the country's border. Nor can the reality of military occupation be denied by propagating, as the UTHR(J) does, the hilarious claim that the armed forces "are trying to return authority to the people and helping them to manage their own affairs", rather like the US army encouraging democracy in the then South Vietnam!

Occupation force

Whether or not the army is an occupation force is primarily a political question: it is determined by the relations of power between the Government and the Tamil people it oppresses. Totalitarian rule, for instance, is always and everywhere characteristic of an army of occupation. Confronted with the same draconian reality in the occupied Jaffna peninsula, the UTHR(J) turned servile apologists for the Sinhalese army; they argued: "it is simply that the LTTE's terror had reduced the people to a position where nothing can move in Jaffna unless the army takes the initiative." In other words, in the UTHR(J)'s sociology of mystification the Sinhalese armed forces are not an occupation force but merely reluctant totalitarianists!

Surely the victorious raising of the Sinhalese Lion Flag over the Tamil nation in Jaffna on 5 December 1995 had all the trappings of a foreign military conquest, the demeaning implications of which is not blunted by the TULF's abject collaboration in flying the Tamil *Nandi* flag too. On the following day a feudal ceremony was enacted in Colombo. The President pompously received from her Deputy Defence Minister a scroll embossed in gold and encased in a silver casket

announcing that her "order...to establish the writ of your Government in the historic city of Yapa Patuna" has been executed successfully. The President announced the "happy news" about establishing military superiority over most of the peninsula, which underscored the status of the Tamil nation as the internal colony of the Sinhalese-dominated Government, "with immense pride and humility" (*Island*, 7/Dec/95).

The UTHR(J) however strained every nerve to paper over the fact of Sinhalese internal colonialism. For example, they asserted that Brigadier Mendis was "responsive to public feelings...he involved himself in sports meets, public functions, and played an active role in reviving the Nallur Temple festival". The UTHR(J) are no doubt convinced that only the unkind would suspect him of ruthlessly penetrating Tamil society to gather intelligence information under the guise of benign social interaction.

Indeed the UTHR(J) have an impressive reputation for consistently ferreting out a plethora of hard-to-get information regarding the violations of human rights in the NEP for almost a decade. However, between 1990 and 1997 about thirteen thousand Tamils are reported to have disappeared in the eastern regions of the province (*Thinakkural*, 31/Mar/98) whilst an estimated thousand five hundred disappeared from the Jaffna peninsula alone in 1996 and 1997. Obviously, most of them were buried in mass graves. But the UTHR(J) did not breathe a word about mass graves. Presumably they want Tamils to assume that they knew nothing of the graves, that the UTHR(J) came to know of the Chemmani graves in the peninsula only after a Sinhalese soldier convicted of the rape and murder of a Tamil school girl, Ms Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, and the murder of three others blurted out the news in July 1998 (*Thinakkural*, 4/Jul/98)! The Tamils are not so gullible.

Arrant nonsense

Neither are the Tamil people crass opportunists. They clearly perceive the

Sinhalese armed forces as an occupation force. **The UTHR(J) would do well to reflect on just one well known fact: every time the LTTE mounts a military operation, most Tamils in the NEP, and many outside, fervently pray for its success in their temples, churches and homes. This is a measure of the depth and intensity of the widespread support the LTTE enjoys among Tamils in general.** It is therefore arrant nonsense to assert that the LTTE is a "minority" force unrepresentative of the majority of the Tamil people.

The Quislings

It is the fact of Sinhalese internal colonialism that primarily defines as collaborators those Tamils who assist the Sinhalese-dominated Government. Moreover, every war throughout history unfailingly produced its heroes and collaborators; and the armed conflict in Sri Lanka cannot be and is not an exception to this universal rule. Consequently, glowing tributes UTHR(J) bestowed upon Tamils who willingly collaborate in the Vichy-type local "government" in the peninsula - supposedly "out of a sense of duty" and determined "bravely to perform the onerous task of reviving civil life in the face of terror" - are vacuous phrases. **For Mr Vidkun Quisling too no doubt similarly believed that he was serving the Norwegian people during the Second World War by working closely with the occupying Nazi army in the face of threats from the patriotic Resistance. To borrow a phrase popularised by TULF politicians, Mr Quisling also may have defended his collaboration as indispensable "to keep open the lines of communication to the other side". The people of Norway, however, were not impressed. After the war Mr Quisling was executed for treason.**

1 November 1998

About the author

Dr S Sathanathan is the Founder-Secretary of The Action Group of Tamils (TAGOT) in Sri Lanka. □

THE MIRAGE OF A “POLITICAL SOLUTION”

1. This paper is written in the wake of the traumatic events on the Wannu battlefield at the end of September 1998. Nothing like them were experienced in the preceding 15 years of the conflict. The immense loss of lives on the Sinhala side, the enormous numbers of wounded, the Sinhala nation in a pathetic state of denial of reality and bitterly divided within itself, democracy among the Sinhala people, such as it is, declining from primacy to contingent status. Our nation holds its breath, wonders what next and when and how and through whom the salvation of peace will come. Few understand that our salvation lies within us, within each one of us, and not in others especially politicians, or political parties or governments of any description.

2. All governments since independence have reflected faithfully the widely held views of the Sinhala people, too faithfully perhaps. Our “leaders” were not leaders but the led, led by the mistaken views and prejudices and malice that lies within us. Sinhala politicians of every shape are no more guilty than any one of us. The attempt to shift the blame on to them is a shameful shirking of our personal responsibility which can no longer continue.

THE NATIONAL QUESTION

3. This is the first question that we have to face head on, and answer for ourselves, now. Is every individual entitled to decide for him/her self which nation he/she belongs to? Or is that question to be decided by some-

one else for each one of us? National allegiance is a matter of visceral, emotional bonding, the product of history and nurture and affection. Before going any further I will answer the question for myself. I regard myself as a member of the Sinhala nation to



Adrian Wijemanne

which I owe my deepest allegiance. I cling persistently to this tie even though (and, perhaps, because) I am not a citizen of Sri Lanka but am a subject of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Why nation and legal nationality do not correspond in my case, and in the cases of many hundreds of thousands of others, has to be answered in a thousand different ways, each having its own rationale and validity in terms of modern human experience and need. These answers together form a part of the modern history of our nation and its present parlous state.

4. So the answer to our question is

that every individual has the right to decide of which nation he/she is a member. On the other hand, membership of a state is a matter of law. We have come to a parting of the ways between nation and state - they are not co-terminous bodies. Membership of a nation is a matter for autonomous, unilateral decision by each person; conversely, membership of a state depends on a legal decision of others vested with the duty of making such decisions.

5. We have the right to decide which nation we belong to by virtue of our being human beings - in short, it is a human right. Human rights are common to all human beings. There is no one who does not have them. They are not the private property of any individual or group of individuals. People can decide for themselves whether they belong to the English nation, or the Scottish nation, or the Irish nation, or the Welsh nation, or the Sinhala nation, or the Tamil nation, or the British nation, or the Indian nation and so on.

6. So far we are not in trouble but we will soon be - and all it takes is to step into the island of Sri Lanka. Is there only one nation there or many? Do the people who live there belong to the human race and so have the same human rights as others all over the world in respect of national allegiance? Can people living there decide for themselves whether they belong to the Sri Lankan nation or to the Sinhala nation or to the Tamil nation? Or are they told by some higher authority such as the President that there is only nation on the island, the Sri Lankan nation made up of Sinhala and Tamil “communities”? If so how did the common human right to a choice of national allegiance disappear? Did all the people living in the island surren-

der it by some formal act? Are there no people on the island who assert an allegiance to a nation of their choice? If there are how is that assertion dealt with?

7. These are important issues which we cannot avoid. They are not political issues - they are personal issues. We need to meet them head on and doing so will help us understand the peril to which we have put ourselves and all others in the island. **The Tamil people asserted through their representatives in joint conference assembled in May 1976 (exactly 200 years after the American Declaration of Independence) that the indigenous Tamil people of the island whom they represented were a nation to which they belonged, which was separate from other nations on the island and which had a right to self-determination in the area of their domicile where they constituted the majority of the population.** Is there anything wrong in that? Do we have the right to give our allegiance to a nation of our choice, the Sinhala nation or the Sri Lankan nation? Are there any Sinhala people who say they do not have such a right, the same right which all other peoples in the world have? My conviction is there are none. **We have a perfect right to belong to a nation of our choice. How can we say the indigenous Tamil people on the island do not have that very same right?** If we are misguided enough to say so, does that deprive the Tamil people of that right? By what authority do we have the power to deprive others of the rights they claim for themselves? **Our refusal to recognize that the indigenous Tamil people on the island who claim to belong to the Tamil nation have the right to decide that for themselves is devoid of a semblance of justification either rational or moral.** It sets us against them on a fundamental human right, the right to belong to the nation of their choice. They do not deny to us that very same right, yet we deny it to them.

8. This is the *fons et origo* of the island's tragedy. We cannot bring our-

selves to understand that the indigenous Tamil people on the island are a nation, with national rights, exactly like ourselves and other nations of the world. **We believe that our avoidance of the word "nation" in respect of the Tamil people ends their nationhood.** We hope to sweep under the carpet a vital issue of national rights by resort to a primitive hegemonic stance the absurdity and immorality of which does not even occur to us. A dispute over national rights can be dealt with rationally by negotiation and accommodation or irrationally by recourse to war. The rational course was tried but without a clear understanding of the nature of the problem and for that reason failed. We are now engaged in the second and irrational way of dealing with a dispute over national rights i.e. by recourse to war. It is irrational because **war cannot, and does not, extinguish the rights of a nation.** When we hope to end the war by "a political solution" we demonstrate dramatically that we still have no understanding of the nature of the problem.

A "POLITICAL SOLUTION"

9. A political solution implies the existence of a political problem, i.e. a problem relating to the governance of a country. For the first 35 years after independence there was a political problem resulting from legislative and administrative discrimination against both plantation and indigenous Tamil peoples. Strenuous efforts were made by Sinhala and Tamil politicians who were elected to represent their peoples to secure a viable political solution. Parallel to these efforts, however, from 1956 on repressive violence, countenanced by the state, was used against the Tamil people to browbeat them into accepting "concessions" which the Sinhala majority considered adequate. Predictably this policy produced counter-violence by militant Tamil groups, culminating in 1976 in the Vaddukoddai Resolution opting for separation and independence. One year later, at the general election of July 1977, the Tamil people voted

overwhelmingly for separation and independence.

10. Those two events, namely, the Vaddukoddai Resolution and the massive vote by the Tamil people in favour of it at the general election of 1977, radically transformed the problem. **It ceased to be a political problem amenable to a political solution and became, instead, an issue of national rights** capable of resolution rationally on the basis of equal and reciprocal rights or irrationally by recourse to war in the hope that the larger nation could extinguish the right to independence of the smaller. The resort to arms by both sides sealed "the paradigm shift".

11. This fundamental change in the nature of the problem was not recognised by the Sinhala nation or its political establishment then, nor in the years that followed, nor even now. That is why persistent efforts from 1977 onwards, right up to now, to secure a "political solution" have failed. Even the "political solution" legislated by constitutional amendment in 1987 (the 13th Amendment and its provincial council system) has had not the slightest effect. The constitutional "Package" now under consideration is wholly irrelevant to the conflict over a nation's right to independence and sovereign self-government.

12. The war now in progress is being fought over the geographical extent of the Sri Lankan state. The single all-island state through the length and breadth of which the writ of the Colombo government ran ceased to exist when the armed challenge to it in the northern and eastern provinces began in 1983. Fifteen years later that challenge continues stronger than ever before. During this period that challenge has grown to include a naval challenge, an aerial capability through surface-to-air missiles and, latterly, a significant conventional warfare capacity. In several detailed analyses I have explained that **the Sri Lankan state lacks even a small fraction of the financial and personnel resources needed to hold in check the armed challenge of the LTTE.**

13. There is a common and very widespread assumption that it is essential for the government and the opposition to agree for "a political solution" to be secured. No thought is devoted to what these two parties should agree upon. In fact they are agreed that the single all-island must be preserved (or restored if it no longer exists) but it is precisely that which has proved so dramatically incapable of achievement. Agreement (even unanimous agreement) to do the impossible does not make the impossible possible. All Sinhala political parties, without a single exception, would like to see the LTTE disappear or be exterminated. Complete unanimity has not produced the desired result. Indeed, the reality is precisely the diametrical opposite of the wish i.e that the LTTE keeps on growing stronger and stronger with every passing year. So what is important now is not that the government and the opposition should agree on trying to do the impossible but that they should understand that there is no problem out there which they can "solve" either individually or together but that the irreversible situation on the island necessitates a re-ordering of the island's statal map and that peace requires peace talks with the LTTE ending in a peace treaty with the LTTE and that the longer this is delayed the stronger the LTTE will become and the more fraught will be the future relationships between the two states.

PEACE TALKS ENDING IN A PEACE TREATY

14. It is now an irreversible reality that there are, and there will continue to be on a permanent basis, two contending armies on the island. That is the fundamental fact of the future. It cannot be reversed by "a political solution". It cannot be reversed by any "solution." It is not a "problem" capable of "solution". It is not a "problem" at all. It is a simple basic reality which

will not go away and which has far-reaching consequences. Peace requires an understanding of these consequences and a rational and necessary re-ordering of the island's geographical structure into states corresponding to the national aspirations that gave rise to, and sustained, the long-drawn out conflict.

15. This can be done only by negotiation between the contending parties on the basis of the new reality that has emerged over the last 15 years of war. Such a negotiation is not "a political solution" for a problem within a single assumed state. The state within which a political solution could be implemented has disappeared. Negotiations between the two parties to the conflict with a view to ending the conflict are peace talks aiming for a peace treaty. A peace treaty is not "a political solution" but its terms will undoubtedly shape the political arrangements and political structures of the two states that will emerge from such a treaty.

THE LONG-TERM FUTURE

16. The peace treaty and peaceful separation should pave the way for the negotiation of an eventual Union between the two new states on the lines of the Benelux Union which is a purely social union and not a political one. It is because that Union is social and not political that it has contributed so much to the great prosperity of the three states that are joined in that Union. It should be well within the capacity of the Sinhala and Tamil nations and their respective states to achieve a similar prosperity, tranquility and happiness for their peoples when they join some day in the Union of SRI-LAM.

Adrian Wijemanne
29th October '98
Cambridge
U.K.

LTTE presence in Jaffna: Invisible, but ubiquitous

COLOMBO, Oct.15 (HT Correspondent) The Sri Lankan Army is all over Jaffna. But the minds of the people seem to be controlled by the LTTE, whose presence is ubiquitous, though, invisible.

In the last eight months, the LTTE has been able to assassinate two Mayors of Jaffna, the town commander of the Army, and a Pradeshiya Sabha member.

It has stopped the judiciary from functioning, and has cut all civilian sea and air links between Jaffna and the south. With the war raging in the Wannu, there has been no road link between the north and the south for long. The LTTE stopped the judiciary from functioning by just sending a chit to the judges.

In Thenmarachi, close to the Elephant Pass Army base, the LTTE managed to create panic by just

pasting a couple of posters asking people to quit the area in "their own interest".

The Army, which does not want a panic migration, is now preventing people from fleeing.

Security has been tightened all over Thenmarachi, with people being asked to get down from bikes at junctions for a thorough check, sources said.

Tamil papers reported recently that, a couple of shells fired from the Palaly Army base had hit the sea off Columuthurai and other areas of Jaffna. Obviously, there was intelligence about LTTE infiltration there.

In the absence of alternative road and sea links, more than a thousand people are now stranded in Jaffna, Trincomalee and Colombo, reports say.

Jaffna college alumni meet in London



The Chiswick Town Hall was the venue of the 15th annual dinner & dance on 26 September 1998.

The occasion also commemorated the 125th anniversary of Jaffna College, and the 175th anniversary of her predecessor and nucleus, the Batticota Seminary - all in one.

Proceedings commenced with an emotional welcome from the alumni association president, Dr.S.Sooriakumaran, in which, inter alia, he stressed the need for the alumni to integrate more fully, with greater involvement, to support the alma mater financially, and to revel in her splendid achievements through hazardous times.

The cultural programme that followed was preceded by the traditional lighting of the lamp by Mr.Rajan Kadirgamar, Principal Emeritus, who came from Canada to grace the occasion as chief guest.

It was Dr.Johnson who said: "Music is the only sensual pleasure without vice", and the appreciative audience was treated to Bharata Natyam by Vidhya Maheswaran, Veena recital by Harini and Mathini Rudrarajan, and a vocal recital by Vahini Paramesan. Chry shanthi Thambyrajah acted as compere.

The official proceedings then began, with Mr.R.S.Thambiah leading the assembly in prayer. Mr.Ranjith Thambyrajah, a previous president, conducted the election of office-bearers for the ensuing year. Mr.Noel Vimalendran, the current Co-Vice Principal, now in the UK on a scholarship, then presented a situation report on the progress and achievements of the school, with special references to the Primary, Secondary and Collegiate departments as well as the Technical Institute.

In his address, Mr.Rajan Kadirgamar dwelt on the theme "The Way Forward", tracing the history from

the days of the Batticota Seminary to the present day. He envisaged the affiliation of all Jaffna College Alumni Associations worldwide as one complex unit with the sole intent of enhancing the prestige and performance of Jaffna College both within the country and abroad

A souvenir, specially compiled to mark the occasion was distributed, and the business proceedings ended with the singing of the college song with the same exuberant gusto as was sung

in the Ottley Hall at Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai

A sumptuous dinner was served at



Picture shows the president Dr.S.Sooriakumaran helping Mr.Rajan Kadirgamar light the "koothuvilakku".

the tables which had been laid out for over 150 alumni. The finale was the dance with live music and disco, which brought an eventful evening's proceedings to a close at 11 p.m.

WELCH JEYARAJ BALASINGAM

Hounslow Tamil school, UK.



The Hounslow Tamil School in UK celebrates its first anniversary

Vaikunthavasan: The Eelam Tamil who seized the UN rostrum!



Krishna Vaikunthavasan

It happened 20 years ago - on 5th October 1978. The venue was the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The President of the Assembly Mr. Liveano called upon the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka to take his turn and deliver his speech. The man who sprang up to address the august assembly looked every inch a man carrying the foreign policy burdens of his country in his head - except to the very, very few people who blinked their eyes in disbelief. Has the diminutive A.C.S.Hameed, Sri Lanka's accredited Foreign Minister suddenly become taller and broader? Surely it cannot be? As for most of the delegates present, they were blithely ignorant of the identity of the Foreign Minister, not to speak of the country itself.

Meanwhile, poor Mr.Hameed himself sank into his seat in stunned astonishment, made worse when the man started speaking on the mike. "Mr.President! Leaders of the world!", he began. "If oppressed minority nations such as Tamil Eelam cannot make representations to this supreme body, then where are we to go? My

name is Krishna and I come from the 2 1/2 million strong nation of Tamil Eelam lying between Sri Lanka and India.... (some unrest in sections of the audience). The Sri Lankan Sinhala government is continuing a policy of genocide aimed at the destruction of our Tamil nation (some agitated movements in the vast auditorium)

"There is every danger of the Tamil problem threatening the peace in the region. The problem in Sri Lanka will develop to be as serious as the Palestinian and the Cyprus problems

unless you, the world leaders intervene and help in its solution now

... (frenzied movements by UN staff and the mikes are cut off, and Mr.Krishna Vaikunthavasan, barrister, is led away by UN security guards!)

How did Mr.Vaikunthavasan gain entry into seats allotted to country delegates? Who helped him to get there? Only Mr.Vaikunthavasan knows. For those who are interested, Mr.Vaikunthavasan, now 78, lives at 55, Warren Road, Collier's Wood, London, U.K.

Tamil boy (9) breaks two more records in Chess Congress

The DAILY TELEGRAPH, London of 20 October carries the following report: -

"Murugan Thiruchelvam, aged nine, of New Malden, south London, broke two records at the weekend when he upset more top adult players while competing the Open section of the Maidstone Congress.

"Thiruchelvam's draw with the top-seeded Croatian, Grandmaster Bogdan Lalic, made him the youngest boy ever to avoid defeat by a GM in competitive play at nine years and 11 months.

"It was a well played game by the youngster who stood much better in the final position.

"When Lalic offered a draw, Murugan must have been tempted to play on, but having lost from a superior position to the Grand Prix leader GM James Plaskett recently at the Mind Sports Olympiad, he did not want to take any chances against Lalic, who is his coach.

"Murugan broke the record held by India's Surya Ganguly who defeated GM Grigory Serper, of Uzbekistan at Calcutta in 1994 at the age of 10



Murugan Thiruchelvam

years three months.

"Murugan tied for fourth place on 4/6, defeating Simon Buckley and the FIDE Master Chris Duncan, before drawing with Lalic and the Welsh international, Francis Rayner....

"Murugan is almost certainly the first nine-year old to perform at this level. He shared third place with one of England's top International Masters, Andrew Ledger "

Tamil Nadu vocalist with Eelam links

Ramachandran climbs the "Maharajapuram Tradition" ladder, says KALPANA (HK) in reviewing the vocal recitals in London by Maharajapuram Ramachandran whose links with Jaffna go back to two generations.

WRITES KALPANA:

Ramachandran climbs the "Maharajapuram Tradition" ladder.

Maharajapuram Ramachandran vocal recitals in London 4th October-18th October 1998

The sudden demise under tragic circumstances in 1990 of the legendary Maharajapuram Sathanam left a big void in the karnatic music world. The rasikas world over wondered who would continue with the Maharajapuram tradition. Then, I had only heard Ramachandran, the elder of Sathanam's two sons lending vocal support to his illustrious father. However his training and vivat imbibed from his grandfather the legendary Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer and from his father Sathanam had prepared him adequately to step in immediately to fill the void and soon after, he gained the senior slot in the Madras Music Academy recitals. The die for the future was cast and the anxiety of the Rasikas over Maharajapuram music was dispelled.

This tour of Ramachandran included 9 performances in the U.S and 9 in London and was crowned with success and glory. This was preceded by a tour of Asia Pacific countries - Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand earlier this year where he re-established the Maharajapuram stamp. I heard his solo recital for the first time in Hong Kong and was able to attend, regretably, only three of his recitals in London. Every so often a musical personality springs into our midst seemingly fully equipped both as a unique talent and a performer of striking and



Maharajapuram Ramachandran

richly creative ability. I am hooked by Ramachandran's music sung from the heart. His performances were rich, highly expressive, lively, artful and deeply satisfying to the ear, eye and mind.

Ramachandran like his father is a lyric vocalist. The rich lyrics were laden with the right measure of Bhavam. But then he has a voice which lends itself to such music making. His base voice in the lower reaches is vibrant and every swaram is sung clearly and distinctly with perfect pitch. He then transcends into the middle and high octaves effortlessly when one could close one's eyes and hear Sathanam in full throttle. Out of the 9 recitals the one at the Bharathia Vidhya Bavan in my opinion was the best. I could not agree less with Professor Marr when he summed up the recital. He gave an unusual elaboration of "Vathapi Ganapathem" in Hamsadwani, rarely heard these days and, ended the composition with a striking niraval "Pranavarupa...". Then followed a fabulous alapana in Humsanadham for

the composition "Karathil Vel Enthum Kanthan" by Guru Surjanantha, Reethigowla, is a very moving ragam full of pathos - realising our unity with God. Thiagarajah Krithi "Nanu Vicathi Thiagaraga Ramiah Rama" was sung in the bhavam akin to this ragam. Another Thiagarajah composition was in Sankaraparanam. This is a very classical ragam Thiagarajah took many excursions into really great and profound ragams and Sankaraparanam in the truest sense is a class. Ramachandran sang a magnificently structured alapana with beautiful passages, dwelling in tharasthayi mathimam, but going into panchamam, unusual swarams not in a hurried fashion, liberated but disciplined. The piece de resistance of the whole recital was the Ragam Thanam Pallavi (RTP) in the ragam Shanmugaprya and kandanadai thisra jathi thirupudai thalam with Kalpana swarams in the Pancha Gana ragams, Natai, Goulai, Arabi, Varali and Sri. The sahityam was "Then Palani Vadi Velanai Theivayanai". The entire RTP was a total delight. The Purantharas ragamalikai reminded one of the Vishnava shrines in India. Ramachandran inspired the accompaniment ensemble progressively in crescendo to a fitting climax.

It was soothing music to the ear and mind in the next two recitals I attended at Murugan temple, Archway and at the Kalabhavanam, Croydon. SouL stirring alapana Mohanakalyani, beautiful ragamalikas, the brilliant Bharathiar poetry in "Payu moli nee enaku" and composition by Papanasum Sivan, Oothukadu Subra Iyer, and Maharajapuram Sathanam were the highlights.

Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer in the 50's and Sathanam in the early 60's headed the Music Department in the Ramanathan Academy in Jaffna. Their affiliations and attachments to Jaffna resulted in the spread and growth of Karanatic music over there and produced some singers of repute of whom A.Karunaharan heads the list even today as prime disciple of Sathanam. Ramachandran himself expressed his own affiliation to Eelam

by singing a masterpiece composed by his father "Thiruketheeswara Mahalinga . . ". In the ragamaligai "Sarangan marugane" the commonality between India Nadu and Eelam Nadu was emphasised in the Nattai ragam. He also rendered the foremost Yalpanam composer Veeramani Iyer's beautiful composition " Sella kani solada kanne". He concluded the recital in Archway Temple by invoking the blessings for the Tamil language, Thamilar in Bharata Nadu (Mani Thiru Nadu) and Eela Nadu .The accompaniments from London, BaluRaguraman (VioLin), Balachandar (Mridhangam), YaLpanum Somasundara Desigar (Mridhangam), Bangalore Prakash (Ganjira/Ghatam) and his brother Bangalore Prathap (Ghatam) played as a ensemble at the different recitals at the expected high levels required by the singer.

Today, Eelam Tamils with their professional and benevolent approach are the front runners in organising Karnatic music in countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, France, Norway,, Switzerland, South Africa, Canada and USA. This stems from the healthy tradition established in the yesteryears from Eelam. The organisers for Ramachandran's recitals in the U.S and in London - K.Thanabalasingham (Sringeri foundation New Jersey USA), Dr C SornaLingam (London), Mrs Sivasakthi Sivanesan (Bharathi Vidhya Bhavan), Murugan temple (Archway, London) and Amman Temple (Tooting, London) in aid of Cancer Aid North-East Sri Lanka (CANE), Sivan Temple (Lewisham, London), Murugan Temple (East Ham, London) and Mr Yogarajah (community centre Croydon) and SPIC MACAY (UK) who presented a lecture demonstration in Classical South Indian music by Ramachandran at Oxford and Cambridge Universities (courtesy Association Sargam) should all be congratulated for presenting Maharajapuram Ramachandran to the West.

Bravo Ramachandran!



Listener increase for Spectrum Radio

RAJAR SWEEP is a survey to assess the listeners reach to various radio broadcasting in and around London. The Radio Authority which is the licensing and regulating body for the independent radio industry in the U.K. uses the above Survey for its official

purposes. The Survey covers more than thirty independent radio stations, both in FM and AM (medium wave), including Capital Radio, Capital Gold, BBC Radio 1 to 5, Sunrise, Spectrum ect. According to the latest quarterly survey results that has been published by the Radio Authority the listeners to the Tamil

Programme on Spectrum International

Radio on Sunday mornings have increased tremendously in the third quarter of 1998. The Tamil Programme has been broadcast on the Spectrum 558 medium wave since May

1998, initially for one hour and since July for two hours from 10-08 am to 12-00 noon on Sundays. The reason for this spectacular increase in listeners is attributed to the efficient management of the programme by an experienced broadcaster Mrs Yoga Thillainathan.

Eelam happenings - Zurich, Switzerland



The Women's Arts & Culture Unit of the LTTE branch in Germany gave a cultural performance recently in Zurich, Switzerland. Pictures show the visiting troupe being honoured on the stage.

Tiger martyr Thileepan, and martyrs Kumarappa and Pulendran were remembered at two centres in Switzerland.

An obituary with a difference

A Jaffna family that prospered in India, but declined on their return

Mr Manikam Ganeshan Wijayendran passed away, in Colombo, on the 13 June 1998. The announcement mentioned that he was predeceased by his wife, who died exactly three months earlier, and that he leaves behind a daughter Sathya Priyadarshini and two married sons Shyam Sunder and Ramdev. The announcement was of interest only to close members of his family and to close friends who had cared to keep in touch with him. **What the announcement did not disclose was the fact that this was the end of a remarkable man who, were it not for the fact that he was a Tamil, would have seen greatness come his way.**

Wijayendran was the younger of two sons of Mr and Mrs Manickam of Navalay. He had a sister Saroja, who died a few years earlier. His elder brother, Major Rajendran lives a life of quiet retirement surrounded by his loving children and grand children.

Mr Manickam, like many Jaffna Tamils of his generation, spent all his working life in British India. It is interesting to note that, in turn, quite a few Indians worked in Colonial Ceylon. Some names that spring to mind are Prasad who served in the Ceylon Civil Service and was Government Agent in Batticaloa and Jaffna, the Mathai's, the Abrahams, the Tiwari's who taught in schools in Ceylon, Dr Koshi who was in the government medical service and Dr Chacko who was in charge of the American Mission Hospital at Manipay. There were many more.

Travel between the crown colony of Ceylon and British India was a

mere matter of taking train at one end and getting off at the other end, with a brief ferry crossing in between. There were no papers to be filled, no passports or visa documents to be produced. All you needed was your train ticket. Mr

From a Special Correspondent



Squadron Leader M.G. Wijayendran (Indian Air Force during World War II, Royal Air Force (RAF), and also a stint at BOAC, the precursor to British Airways.)

Manickam joined the Forest Department in British India and served with that department till he retired. His sons were born in Ceylon and had their early education in Jaffna but finished in Bangalore in India. At the time of their father's retirement, the children were working there or otherwise gainfully employed. **The daughter Saroja, had a beautiful singing voice and had trained under talented exponents of Karnatic music. She had, at**

a young age, given a number of recitals over All India Radio. Wijayendran joined the Indian Air Force during World War II as a pilot and also held a number of technical posts. His brother Rajendran, joined the Indian Army and held the rank of captain. This was the Manickam family at the time Mr and Mrs Manickam made their fateful decision to return to Ceylon - with their children, terminating their fledgling careers in India. Who knows, if the Manickams had decided to settle in India, Rajendran may have become a General in the Indian Army as did many of his colleagues who served along with him, Wijayendran may have become an Air Marshal in the Indian Air Force while Saroja may have made a name for herself in classical music.

Shortly after the Manickam family returned to Ceylon, their daughter Saroja was married to a somewhat orthodox Hindu lawyer who would not hear of his wife singing in public. As a result, the Tamil world lost a talented singer.

Rajendran served briefly as private secretary to Mr C Coomaraswamy when he was sent as Ceylon High Commissioner to Delhi. On completion of Mr Coomaraswamy's tour of duty, Rajendran returned to Ceylon and worked as a Manager in the Technical Branches of the Galoya Development Board (Later known as the River Valleys Development Board) till he retired. He joined the Army Volunteer Force and rose to the rank of Major in the Engineering Services of the Ceylon Army. He still holds the rank of Major though he has been very much, a

retired man for many years.

Wijayendran joined the Royal Ceylon Air Force at its very inception, as the Second in Command and rose to the rank of Squadron Leader. He was one of those selected from among the three services, to represent Ceylon at the Queen's Coronation Parade in London. Since he was the senior most officer in the Ceylon contingent, he was chosen to lead the contingent in the parade. He subsequently commanded several ceremonial parades in Ceylon for visiting dignitaries during his tenure of service.

Unfortunately this, and the fact that he was a Tamil, made him unpopular with the rising military hierarchy in newly independent Ceylon. Wijayendran was sacked on a trumped up charge, by then government in 1955, after a hunger strike against him by some of the Air Force men. In 1956, the then Prime Minister S W R D Bandaranayake's first administrative act, on taking office, was to fly to Trincomalee, to settle a hunger strike by an army private with some imagined grievance against his superiors. On that occasion, Mr Bandaranaike gave the man a glass of milk to break his hunger strike.

The Sri Lankan armed forces' lack of military discipline, desertions from the frontline; sadistic behaviour towards civilians - whether Tamil or Sinhala (remember the JVP days) all owe their origin to the comic opera acts of our leaders who, on having power thrust upon them, did not know quite how to use it. They were extremely naive, and could be compared to children who were given toys to play with, which were much too sophisticated for their age group. This position was further aggravated, by the sycophantic hangers on from among their civil service and political advisors who always surrounded

them.

The Manickams made a decision that in all honesty they thought, was the right decision for the family. With hindsight, we know that the family would have been better off if they had remained in India. But then, who would have thought, in the early years of independence, that independent Ceylon would take the path she has now taken, led by opportunistic Sinhala politicians and a vicious and intolerant Buddhist priesthood. □

Obituaries

Mrs Sivapakiam

Balasubramaniam

Mrs Sivapakiam Balasubramaniam beloved wife of Dr K Balasubramaniam of Navalar Road - Anaipandhi surgery died on 28th of October in Melbourne, 27 Callistemon Rise, Millpark, Victoria, 3082 - Australia. Former teacher and vice-principal of Stanley College (Kanagaratnam Mahavidhyalam) Jaffna. Loving mother of Dr Logan Kanagaratnam (Sydney) and Dr Niranjani Seevanayagam (Melbourne), Mother-in-law of Ranju Seevanayagam and Dr Nalayani Kanagaratnam. Grandmother of Aran and Roshana. Sister of Mrs Sellmuthu Sangarapillai (UK), Mr Mylvaganam (Canberra Australia), Dr Kathirkarnasekaran (Sydney).

* V.D. *

Jayarathnasingham

Formerly of Jaffna Central and Brunei. Son of late Mr & Mrs. V.A. Vadivelu, husband of Kamala, father of Dr. Sujey (Consultant UK), and Sudarshani (Sweetie, USA), brother of Grace Vadivelu, Sam Vadivelu, Ariamalar and Selvarajasingham (UK), expired. Funeral service took place at Toronto on October 31, and interred in California later.

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In memory of Mr P Karalasingham



Kara, as he was affectionately called died suddenly on the night of 6 September 1998 at the age of 62. He was educated at Jaffna Hindu College and entered the University of Colombo in 1953. After obtaining a first class degree in 1956 he joined the Inland Revenue department as an assistant assessor, after 16 years in the department he retired as senior assessor. In 1971 he was called to the Bar having obtained a degree in law. Soon he became one of the few sought after tax consultants in Colombo. He authored publications which include "A guide to Taxation", "A guide to Corporate Taxation" and "A guide to goods and services Tax". He was selected to serve as commonwealth consultant to the Government of Barbados, St Lucia, St Kitts, Nevis and Monserrat.

My association and friendship goes back 45 years when we were undergrads at Colombo University. Though in different faculties we were closely associated with the activities of the University Tamil Society during the period 1953-56. A warm hearted man with benevolent feelings for others, he could only give happiness to those around with his nonstopping laughter. The sudden demise of such a vibrant personality is certainly bound to leave a void in the lives of those who knew him, let alone his family. Besides his wife he leaves behind three sons, Indarasanen (Director of Tritel Colombo), Dr Rupasanen (Australia) and Dr Indrajith (UK).

DR C SORNALINGAM

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