

TAMIL

Information

**Nothing
is ever
SETTLED**

**until it is
settled
RIGHT**

1 July, 1985
Issue No. 9

ANURADHAPURA AND AFTER

What Sri Lanka M.P. said in Parliament

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama, Kalawana)

Mr Chairman, it is almost with a sense of despair and futility that I rise to participate in this Debate today. The despair is because people in both communities, on both sides of the fence as it were, seem to have lost the capacity to try to resolve a problem which is fundamentally a problem that can be solved by negotiation, discussion and compromise. Instead of that, Mr Chairman, we see today a situation where the most insensate killings are going on on both sides.

This whole problem that we are discussing today has been brought into special focus by the incidents that took place at Anuradhapura on the 14th. I will speak about what happened in Anuradhapura in a short while. Nobody in his senses could condone what happened in Anuradhapura. It was the most brutal, cowardly terrorist action that has recently taken place in Sri Lanka. Whatever the alleged provocation, whatever the background behind the incidents, there is no doubt that it deserves the unreserved condemnation of every person in this country.

I want to say this straightway at this point. The President and several other Members of the Government have been repeatedly saying that all these people who are engaged in this activity on the Tamil side are doing so with the idea of setting up a Marxist State. It is a very well known thing that Governments, when they are faced with what seems to them to be an unsurmountable problem, find in it a communist plot, marxist plot. I want to say that the incidents at Anuradhapura are the best refutation of this allegation of Marxist and Communist interference. Communists are those who base their political activity on Marxism and who have an innate sense of humaneness. They do not indulge in unnecessary cruelty; they do not indulge in round round with sub-machine guns shooting at innocent civilians. If anybody were to say that that is the activity of a Marxist, I can only say that whoever says it is deliberately trying to mislead somebody or the other.

It reminds me, Sir, that all this talk of communist plots is a very old story. The best answer to this is the graffiti wall in London. It is said that Karl Marx's grave is another communist plot. Everything is a communist plot to the Government. I know why you are saying it. You say it because if you say that this is an ethnic problem, that this is a problem between the majority and a minority community, you will not get the support of certain Western countries to whom you are looking for support. So it is necessary to create about this an aura of Marxist insurrection. Then you will be able to scare some Western powers into giving you arms ammunition and cash. That is the whole purpose of this exercise. What I want to say is that the country has quietly been slipping into a situation from which it is almost difficult to extricate it.

Today on both sides, on the Sinhala side and on the Tamil side people have died. I do not know whether anybody can give us even roughly the count of people who have died in this process — (Interruption). I better be on some side on which you are not.

(Mr. N. Denzil Fernando)

Will you say on which side you are — whether you are on the Sinhalese side or on the other side?

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

These are idiotic question of the Hon. Minister of Industries. I wish he would not expose his idiocy so much. Everybody knows it up to an extent, but when he speaks he exposes the extent of it.

I was saying that on both sides large numbers of people are dying. At Anuradhapura what happened?

On the 14th, although the Government says it was an operation that took place only for twenty minutes, according to the documented information of people who went and interviewed UNP Members who are living in Anuradhapura, the whole operation took about one hour. The Mayor of Anuradhapura, Mr. Dissanayake, will bear that out. He was in his office at 7.45 a.m. with his wife, who is also a lawyer. On the dot at 7.45 he was there, and at 8.45 this operation was still going on.

On the dot at 7.45 he was there, and at 8.45 this operation was still going on.

(A Member)

No.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

There were people who telephoned the police station. I do not know whether (Interruption). It is useless shaking your head. There was Punchi Banda Mudalali, a very well known man in Anuradhapura. He telephoned the police station (Interruption). I mean, his son telephoned the police station. When his son telephoned the police station he was told that they were on their way. Then again, another man had telephoned the police station. At one stage the police asked them, "What do you want us to do? Do you want us to sacrifice our lives?" That was one of the questions the police asked. It is a very well known fact that along the bund road at one stage a police van came there and seeing what was going on had turned round and gone back. In fact, there were two army camps close to Anuradhapura, but nothing happened.

Why I am saying these things is not to blame anybody, not to blame even the armed forces or the police. It is because I am trying to develop another argument because of the way you are going on. The whole operation, not in respect of Anuradhapura alone but in respect of the whole country, is a futile operation and you can end this only by settlement. That is the argument I am trying to build up, and that is why I say that in Anuradhapura your total security just collapsed, although I say — and the hon. Member for Attanagalla also said it — it was well known, well rumoured that an attack on Anuradhapura was going to take place. A 13-year-old boy had been arrested because he was coming and going from the police station all the time. He was questioned, and he gave his name first as Pieris, and then another time he gave it as Fernando. Then he was arrested. Once he was arrested he was questioned, and then he had broken down under questioning and said that there was going to be an attack by one of the groups on the Anuradhapura Police Station.

Now, there is another man who is under arrest, a person called Rasiah, a son of a former jeweller in Anuradhapura. I want to know how Rasiah came into police custody. Who surrendered Rasiah to the police? According to eye-witnesses, Rasiah is the person who went in front of the attacking bus on a motor cycle. They went to places which were well known. In fact, they went to a place called the Puchi Bath Kade owned by a mudalali called Siripala who had been very active in the anti-Tamil riots in 1983. They called out for Siripala, because he was known as an anti-Tamil activist. Siripala, of course, had run away and managed to escape, but the two Chinamen, a father and son — I do not know whether they are from Hong Kong or Taiwan — who had also taken part in the anti-Tamil activities in 1983 were sought out and killed. Now Rasiah is in police custody. I am speaking subject to correction. Can anybody deny that? Who surrendered Rasiah?

(Mr. Nissanka Wijeyeratne, Minister of Justice)

As regards the two Chinamen, the father was injured in the stomach and the son was shot in the head, but both are alright. But I am also subject to correction.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

The father and son are alive? May be, I do not know. I am talking about Rasiah now. The Chinese apparently have survived. What I am asking is, who surrendered Rasiah to the police? I want to know this because the police refused to give him over to the army, and the information is that Rasiah is the person who went on a motor cycle in front on the bus that attacked Anuradhapura.

Anyway, that is not the point. The point is that what took place in Anuradhapura is something that all of us should be utterly ashamed of, not merely because security failed, and also not merely because innocent civilians, including people who had come to observe sil, to offer flowers or to take bus to go work, were killed, but because this is the pattern that is unfolding itself in Sri Lanka. Therefore I want to ask the Government what steps they are taking to stop this from degenerating into an Island-wide pattern. It is now becoming the tragedy of the innocent.

See the statements that have been made. Take for instance the statement of the President made at Sapugaskanda and widely broadcast all over the country. Sir, I am the last person to stand up here in defence of army or police excesses. But what is the position? You cannot take it out of context. Discipline in the armed forces in this context is not a subjective matter. It is a fact of objective existence. This has been going on down the line. You have allowed it to go on up to a point. Up to a point, one day, you can play the fool after something has happened. But now, after two years or three years, to say, "you know, we must have a disciplined army" is well and good. It is a good intention. I am sure he was motivated by the best of intentions. But where is he going to get to? I want to tell the Government that now everybody listens to the BBC, the Voice of America, the Elam Radio, the Veritas, and also reads the "Hindu" for news. When the Hon. Minister of Public Administration was the Leader of the House one and a half months ago he said that you were going to end censorship. Under this Emergency we are still in censorship, and it is a peculiar censorship. When an army corporal was shot that was put over the radio and it has created a situation where the people were beginning to think or actually beginning to be in sympathy with the man who was shot. That must have been in order to have a disciplined army. That censorship exists, but the killing of the army corporal was put over the radio. Other things we are not told.

Now I want to ask the Government this. I have been reading "The Hindu" regularly the last few days. It reported the Anuradhapura attack as a retaliatory measure. I want to ask the Government, is it true that in Valvettiturai after the death of Lt. Mendis 79 boys from the ages of 12 to 20 were rounded up, taken and shot or blown up in cold blood?

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

That is not correct.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

Well, that is the information the BBC, the Voice of America, the other international radios and "The Hindu" give. You said in this House that is not correct.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

I said before that it was not correct. (Interruption)

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

But I am saying that the whole world knew that it happened.

TAMIL Information

Editor: S. Sivanayagam

For Private Circulation

1 July, 1985

Issue No. 9

Published on behalf of the
Tamil Information Centre, 3rd Floor, 24-28
Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UR, United
Kingdom

Nothing is ever SETTLED until it is settled RIGHT !

To all those who look forward with naive expectation that once the virtually imposed "Ceasefire" in Sri Lanka is made to stick for some period of time, a political "settlement" would become an inevitable corollary, we recommend the wise words of Rudyard Kipling : "Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right."

To the Tamils in Sri Lanka who have been leading unsettled lives these past few years, nothing should surely give greater relief than to be able to lead settled lives. There is no questioning that. But what kind of a settlement does the world expect the Tamils to accept ? An imposed settlement that will take them back to Square One ? A settlement that will make them sign away their right of self-determination, concede their traditional homelands in the north and east, reconcile themselves to second-class citizenship and pin their future on assurance given by those who occupy the seats of power in Colombo ?

History shows that if the Tamils have today become victims of State terror and national oppression, it is because they – in their characteristic Hindu penchant for compromise (unlike Mohamed Ali Jinnah in India) accepted the assurances of the majority Sinhala leaders at their face value. The sell-out of minority interests, both racial and religious, began in Ceylon even before independence, and continues to this day. When Whitehall sent Lord Soulbury to bequeath a constitution for Ceylon, the then leader of the Tamils, G.G. Ponnambalam, demanded a "Fifty-Fifty" system – limiting the Sinhalese to half the seats in the legislature and reserving the other half to the Tamils, Muslims and other minorities. It was a prophetic demand, couched in an impressive 8-hour oration, 40 years ago. But the mistake Mr.

Ponnambalam made was to accept thereafter a Sinhala assurance and a Cabinet post. This has been the historic pattern of Tamil leaderships – they start right but crumble half-way.

The Soulbury Commission rejected the Fifty-Fifty demand, but incorporated some safeguards in the constitution, including prohibition of any enactment of law which would "impose disabilities and restrictions, or confer advantages or privileges, on the members of any community or religion". With that, the erstwhile British colonial masters thought they had settled the Sinhala-Tamil problem for good; and departed. D.S. Senanayake, the Sinhala President of the Ceylon National Congress and later to become the country's first Prime Minister, spoke like a knight in shining armour when he said : "On behalf of the Congress and on my own behalf, I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need they fear at our hand in a free Lanka". He asked the Tamils : "Do you want to be governed from London or do you want, as Ceylonese, to help govern Ceylon ?". To the eternal credit of the Tamils, they accepted the assurance, and took their majority Sinhalese brothers at their word. With what results ? They found out soon enough that they were being governed from Colombo, instead of being governed from London.

Soulbury was to realise much later that the "reconciliation of Tamils and Sinhalese will depend not on constitutional guarantees but on the goodwill, commonsense and humanity of the Government in power and the people who elect it" (Foreword to CEYLON A DIVIDED NATION, by B.H. Farmer, Oxford University press, 1963). If today the peace movers and decision makers in New Delhi and elsewhere cannot see what Soulbury saw in 1963,

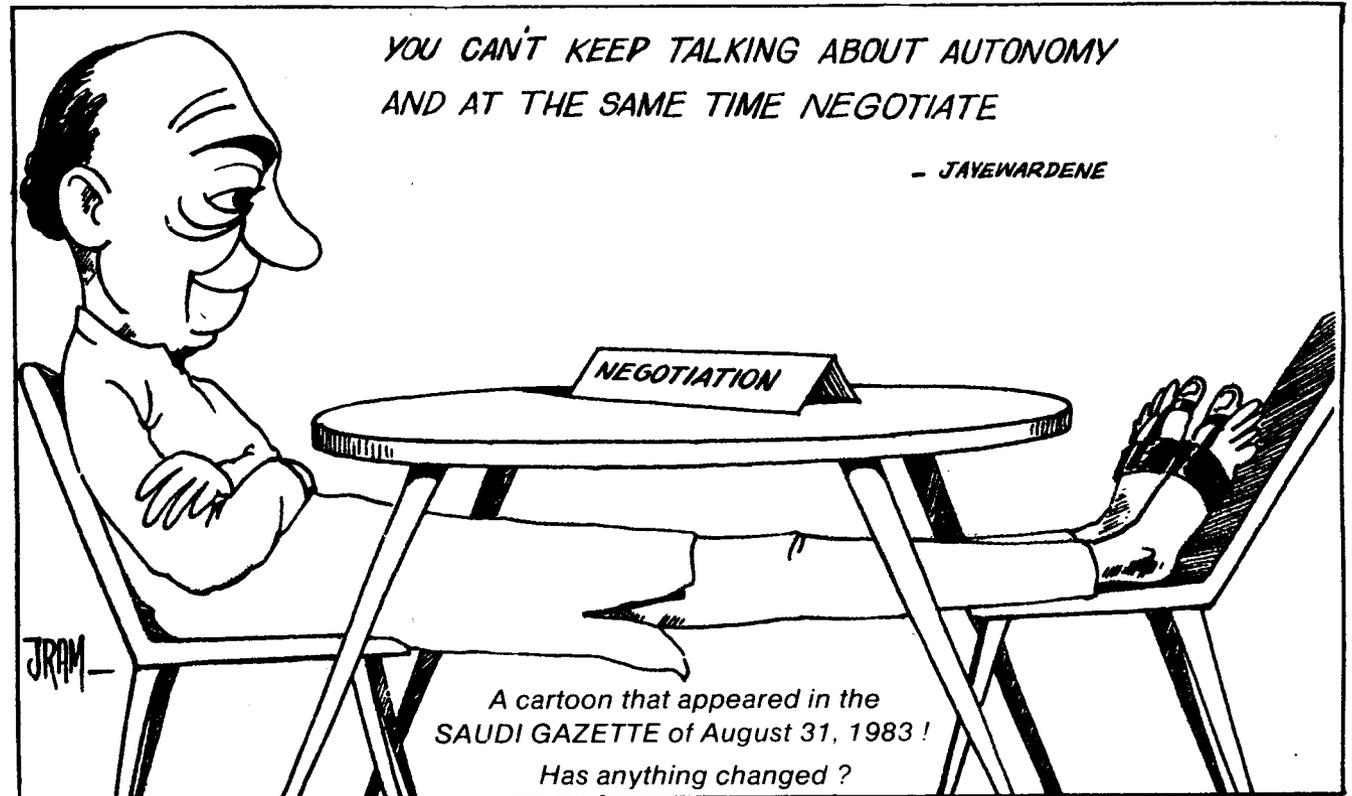
we cannot see what kind of "constitutional guarantees" that Sri Lanka has to offer could result in any reconciliation in the total absence of what Soulbury called "goodwill, commonsense and humanity" of the government in power.

The absence of goodwill (towards Tamils), commonsense and humanity of the various governments in power in Colombo and the Sinhala people who elected them was a recurring characteristic from as early as 1956. The liberation struggle of the Tamils and the induction of guns was comparatively a recent phenomenon. Many Sri Lanka watchers, even academics who should know better, make the mistake of juxtaposing the two and in fact try to justify the former by quoting the latter. One cannot begin to trace history at a selected point convenient to one's argument; it would result in mixing up the causes and effects.

But how does one bring about goodwill and commonsense in a government enthroned in power and ruling by sheer brute force? Mao Ze Dong once said that power flows through the barrel of a gun. It is an interesting comment on human behaviour that sometimes goodwill, commonsense and humanity also begin to flow when compelled to face the barrel of a gun! It ought not to be so of course. Whatever Human Rights upholders might say in all genuineness

or whatever double standard dealers might say in all hypocrisy, the fact remains that Sinhala commonsense surfaced for the first time since July 1983 after nearly 200 Sinhala civilians were butchered in broad daylight in Anuradhapura on May 14. There is enough evidence for a sociologist to make a study of patterns of Sinhala behaviour as a consequence of that tragedy and come up with curious findings! For example, is it not strange that a government which made a successful song and dance about "brutal" killings of Sinhala civilians at Kokkilai and Nayaru, found it difficult to mount a propaganda offensive over the much bigger and (in their vocabulary) more "brutal" killings at the Buddhist holy city? But why? Because the Sinhala public had begun a propaganda offensive against their own government, Police and armed services for permitting it to happen! But more of it later.

Whoever tries to bring reconciliation between two warring parties should have a clear idea of the "trackrecord" of both. Unlike Jinnah who demanded Pakistan before India got her independence, Tamils did not ask for a Tamil Eelam in their centuries — old traditional homelands in which (at the time of independence) they were in an over-riding majority; it never even occurred in their minds. It took them 8 years after Sinhala discrimination began, to press



for autonomy under a Federal constitution (1956). It took them another 21 years – of discrimination, deprivation of job and education opportunities, deprivation of part of their homelands through state-sponsored Sinhala colonization, mob violence, periodic losses of lives and property, of humiliation and hurt, before they demanded their right of self-determination (1977). In short, Tamils had always, besides contributing to the welfare of the country a bigger share than their population warranted, proved themselves to be a responsible-minded minority within the Ceylonese polity. They never tried to force the pace of history in order to embarrass the majority. The Tamil Eelam demand came at a logical point in Sri Lanka's unhappy post-independence history; when all other options were exhausted and when no other settlement was possible. Behind it therefore is the thrust of history, and the conservative impulse of a people who never accept or admit change except when change becomes absolutely necessary.

The Tamils have been habitually a docile people, industrious, job-ethic conscious, cautious and conformist, tradition-bound with strong family attachments, fatalistic, individualistic, and never prone to challenging authority or inclined to rioting and revolutions or organised direct action. The fact that a vast proportion of them are Hindus might have something to do with their tame temperament. When over 100 Hindu temples were destroyed and desecrated by Sinhala Buddhist mobs in the course of the 1977 anti-Tamil riots, they accepted it as God's will !

In a country peopled by 17.6% Hindus, with Muslims and Christians each constituting under 8%, it would be unthinkable that 100 mosques or 100 churches could be destroyed or desecrated without it leading to a violent backlash !

When the Communist Party saw its birth in Ceylon, some of its ablest theoreticians came from the Tamils, but the Tamil people never returned (with a solitary exception, and for other reasons) a Communist M.P. They hankered after security, took no risks, sought government jobs and pensions, (a Tamil saying goes : Even if your job is looking after hens, do it under the government), and were obsessed with perpetual thoughts of how to educate their sons and collect enough dowry to marry off their daughters. When Sinhala mobs began to set upon them in the south, beginning with 1956, their only reaction was to run, run as fast as they could, either to the safety of their own homelands in the north and east, or to the nearest refugee camp in Colombo. Resistance was never in their thoughts. If these same people suddenly produced

a new generation of youths who were prepared to throw away their books and their future, forsake their homes and families, dedicate their lives for a struggle that would liberate their people from continuous killings, humiliation and degradation, and take to guns and stand up to a government, what kind of transformation was it ? What caused it ? If a habitually non-violent people came to accept these youths with guns as their saviours, proudly accept them as "our boys", give them food, cash, gold, and sanctuary, so that some day, some way, they will be able to live as free people, what kind of "settlement" does the world expect them to accept ?

No Sirs, whoever you are, Presidents or Prime Ministers, Pedants or Professors, Editors or Foreign Policy Experts, you are underestimating the will and tenacity of a small nation of people whose capacity to take in more punishment, lose more lives and property, and survive crises, are by no means exhausted. You are under-estimating the vast brain reserve that Sri Lanka Tamils have, scattered in over 50 countries of the world, the expertise in various fields, their technical skills, their lobbying capacity, their ability in time of need to influence decisions in various capitals of the world. You are forgetting what President Jayewardene once said : The Tamils are among the most powerful minorities in the world. You are also unmindful of the great historic process that shapes the lives and destinies of nations and peoples, against which may attempt to "impose" settlements would be like trying to sweep the waters of the Bay of Bengal with a broom !

It must also not be foolishly believed that the liberation struggle is being carried on by the armed militants to the exclusion of the people themselves. The people may APPEAR to be helpless – without guns, but it is they who nourish the fingers that press the triggers. No guerrilla movement could ever succeed or even continue to operate as it has done, except with the covert support of the total population. That is why the Sri Lankan government feels justified in killing unarmed Tamil civilians, because in their eyes, every Tamil man, woman and child in the north and east is a "tiger" of sorts.

The entire thrust of the Sri Lankan government propaganda has been to make the world believe that the problem in their country is simply one of "Terrorism"; and that "terrorism" is being carried on by a small band of misguided youths. Once these foolish boys are either killed or brought to the table, the problem would be settled. It is time Tamils realise that President Jayawardene has

succeeded in his propaganda. He might have succeeded in fooling other governments with this point of view as well. It was easy, because he had effectively silenced the voice of the Tamil people in their own soil. They have no way of communicating their thoughts or views or feelings from their own homelands. There is no room for dissent, no room for public meetings, processions, protests, demonstrations, gatherings, no, nothing, after President Jayewardene imposed a State of Emergency in May 1983, which his Parliament, like a monthly ritual, has been rubber-stamping for the past 25 months. But who decides about how to settle a people's problems, except the people ?

The question then arises : who represents the Tamil people ? In terms of democratic legitimacy, no one : for the simple reason that there were no Parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka for the past eight years. Having sent in the TULF leadership on the Tamil Eelam mandate in 1977, the people never got the opportunity of disowning their errant leaders. Thanks to the Indian government that used them as instruments in the predictably sterile negotiation process, and thanks to the Indian media which continued to accord them a place in the headlines, the pretence was successfully maintained that Amirthalingam and Co. were wholesale dealers in Tamil opinion. It is now clear that they are only in the retail business.

In terms of sheer power, the armed youth militants had assumed the leadership. Having got sucked into the glare of media publicity, and despite inspiring the confidence of people in their own soil as well as winning friendly attention from Tamilnadu, they face a dilemma in filling the leadership vacuum left by the discredited political leadership. Being essentially military groupings, and totally liberation-oriented, they would rather not get drawn into the sordid world of political oneupmanship. One group that tried that, has already lost heavily in military credibility. What was missing was a Third Force – an open centralised force drawn both from the soil as well as expatriate resources, that was able to reflect the collective thinking, will and image of the militant groups, cement their personal and ideological differences, hold them together and at the same time spell out the political objective of the Tamil people to the outside world, with one voice. This vacuum has already retarded the liberation struggle; the world, even friends who would like to help, do not know with whom to deal !

In thinking of political settlements, one has therefore to understand the ill-matched character of the actual adversaries; the motivations on both

sides that led to the conflict; whether the conflict is at a low enough level for third party "good offices" to be effective; whether direct negotiations might not prove to be anything more than transferring conflict from the battleground to the conference table, until one or other adversary is better equipped to carry on the battle; and what is most important, whether the whole exercise was not designed for that very purpose ?

No one who is prepared to view the Tamil liberation struggle with sympathy could fail to note that the Ceasefire of June 18 came at the most inopportune time. President Jayewardene was let off the hook precisely at the point of time when he was ready to bite hard. The months of May and June brought government morale to its lowest ever. Colombo's persistent efforts towards a ceasefire took on a sense of desperate urgency after the Anuradhapura episode of May 14. The President was coming under tremendous pressure from his own side of the fence. For the first time since the State-inspired mob terror of July '83, Sinhala mobs were trying to take the law into their own hands. Frightened and humiliated by the brazen effrontery of the Anuradhapura attack, the Sinhala people were beginning to pour scorn and ridicule at their own government, army and police. The Maha Sangha was getting restive. Nearly, 2,000 Buddhist monks staged a "Satyakriya" on Parliament Road in Sri Jayawardenepura. In the power tussle within the government, Prime Minister Premadasa was trying to rub salt into Minister Lalith's wounds. The anti-Tamil hate that the government had been carefully nurturing under the guise of fighting terrorism was turning into an anti-government feeling. Even the Sinhala perceptions about Tamil resistance were seemingly undergoing a change. Trincomalee district was in turmoil Sinhala colonists, planted in Tamil soil over the years with state aid, were either fleeing or feeling insecure. Into this imbroglio, came the "imposed" cesaefire and with unexpected swiftness came the announcement about Thimphu talks – from Colombo. Everything thereafter seemed to be orchestrated from Colombo, and President J. was wielding the baton with his habitual dexterity.

Life has many distractions and so do liberation struggles. A trip to Thimphu can be very soothing, we are sure. But as an Indian journalist said (Sunday Observer, Bombay, June 23) quoting some radical sources in Madras : "... It is time to return the struggle to the native soil where it belongs". That probably is the only way to settle a problem and settle it right. ■

Anuradhapura and After

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

I am glad to see that the Hon. Member of the Communist Party wishes to accept the truth according to the Voice of America.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

I will tell you what has happened to you. You gave thousand acres to the Voice of America, but you cannot stop them from telling the truth from time to time.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

You are saying that the Voice of America speaks the truth.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

Please, I must have my time. I am very sorry. I will answer all the questions, but I will be short of my time.

I am saying, killing is killing, and the people who are dying, whether they are Sinhalese or Tamils are human beings.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

I agree on that.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

And when they are civilians it is much worse. If 79 boys were taken and killed like that, blown up, in Valvetturai, it is as bad as what happened in Anuradhapura. That is all I can say. It is probably worse because it was done by the forces.

Then, Sir, what happened between Delft and Kudirimalai? People who are injured are still in the Jaffna and other hospitals. They were set upon by a half uniformed gang and cut up. 32 people died in that.

In Kalumunai what is worse according to "The Hindu" was that people were taken to a cemetery, asked to dig their own graves and shot.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

That is also false. That is a deliberate falsehood. (Interruption).

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

Well, you said something which is very interesting appeared in yesterday's paper.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

The man who has been spreading this story has now been taken into custody. When he was questioned as to where he got the information from and where these graves were, he was unable to point them out.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

I am glad that it is not true. All can say is that I am

I am glad that it is not true. All I can say is that I am very glad.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

Each incident, whoever makes the allegation, is investigated, must be investigated. But we must not be dazed to think that after the Anuradhapura massacre there was not an interest among the pro-terrorist elements to create another series of stories about the massacres committed relatively by the armed forces or by other people.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

Please reply when your turn comes. I am interested in my time.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

I am very sorry to waste your time.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

I am very glad if that story is not true. If that story is not true, all I can say is that as a Sinhalese I am proud that it is not true, because otherwise I would have been ashamed of the fact that anybody belonging to the same community that I had done a thing like that.

Then, Sir, the Hon. Minister of National Security, made a statement yesterday in one of the newspapers about what happened in Kalumunai. He said that some terrorists had been shot, but at the same time he said

the bodies could not be identified.

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

No, no!

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

That was what appeared in the "Ceylon Daily News".

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

That is not correct.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

Because it is very illogical. If the bodies cannot be identified how do you know that the people who had been shot are terrorists?

(Mr. Lalith Athulath Mudali)

For the simple reason that when you went to hit the camp they fired at you. So you know that!

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

That is one thing. The second thing I am coming to say is that this mass killing which has now gone completely out of hand must stop. It must stop, because otherwise, instead of learning to live together we are trying now to die together.

Now, what has happened today? As far as India is concerned the Government has from time to time been blowing hot and cold. It does not seem to have a foreign policy strategy as far as India is concerned. One day it is bending over backwards to be friendly with India, the next day it is doing something that is totally provocative to India. We cannot exist like that. It is one of the facts of life, one of the realities that you have to face that without the help of India, without the assistance of India, without the goodwill of India, this problem cannot be solved. And I think it is absolutely necessary that we should follow a policy that is consistent and friendly towards India because it is only through that that the beginnings of some settlement can be negotiated. I think, Sir, that somebody who is close to the hearts of some of these people, Machiavelli has said a very interesting thing about the small countries' foreign policy. Machiavelli has said that a small country is wise to find its friends close by and its enemies far away. We are a small country. If any of you like to behave in the way Machiavelli advocated, that is at least some good piece of advice to follow. That it is good to find your friends close by.

What I am going to say is, in our view, in the view of the Communist Party, the military option in this ongoing ethnic battle is something that cannot give you results. I do not want to say something and be accused of having been a prophet of doom, but I want to ask you what is the position? You have followed the military option for a long time. You said there is a Surveillance Zone. Has nothing come through the Surveillance Zone? Has nothing gone from this side to the other side of the Surveillance Zone in spite of the fact that ships were bought (Interruption) money was spent, the Surveillance Zone was strengthened? But there is a flow of traffic either way.

Now India claims that there are over or close to 100,000 refugees in India. Let us halve that figure and make it 50,000. They have gone through the Surveillance Zone. That is one.

The second is the cost. What does it cost you? Mr. Ronnie de Mel, the Hon. Minister of Finance, recently opened a branch of the Peoples' Bank near the Liberty Plaza at which he made a speech. He said that we have a voted expenditure of Rs. 2.5 billion for defence and that in addition to the voted expenditure of Rs. 2.5 billion we will have to spend another Rs. 2 billion for defence this year, and that this is happening at a time when we are going to lose in anticipated income another Rs. 2 billion because of the drop in tea prices. So that financially let us say we can stop everything else if there is a war and finance it but even financially that is the position in regard to the military option. But otherwise what is the position? I do not want to say. Sir, what happened in other countries. You have practically made enemies of the whole Tamil population, particularly

of the population that is living in Jaffna, you have made the civilians living in the South of this country totally scared for their lives. Do you know what is happening today? They get up in the morning in various towns in the country and somebody comes round with a story saying that there is going to be an attack here. People do not send their children to schools, or if they have sent their children to schools they go and bring them back, and there is general chaos and disorder in the town. I mean that alone is sufficiently destabilizing because the spin-off which you do not see, the non-production that results, the stoppage of all activity all that is also a part of this syndrome that is now going on. That is as far as the military option is concerned.

You have also tried this military option and I say that it has been a dismal failure, and I say that it will continue to be a failure. It will continue to be a failure because you cannot fight a whole population which have been antagonized. There have been most rich and powerful countries that have tried to subjugate other countries and found that it has been a failure.

Now, what is at the bottom of this crisis? Everybody knows that the United National Party identified the grievances of the Tamil people. They put it down in their manifesto for the last elections. They put it down in their manifesto and said that they will summon a conference of all political parties to discuss the grievances of the Tamil people. They did not do that for seven long years. And it took 1983 and the trauma of 1983 for the All Party Conference to be summoned.

The All Party Conference was another fiasco. I charge you, you promised to implement Annexure C; you promised Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Gandhi promised the TULF, but you came here and reneged on Annexure C. Then after that so many things happened. One year passed, and the Round Table or the All Party Conference totally collapsed. What is the position today? You have been having discussions with India. I do not know what they are, but you have been having discussions. The Government must show willingness to settle. First of all, it must show that it is ready to settle.

Yesterday, the Minister for National Security said they will pursue the political option. Then, last night, the President says that those who are not with them will be considered terrorists. In that case you will have a whole lot of terrorists on your hands because there are a lot of people who are not with you. (Interruption) Of course, including me and including those Buddhist Priests who are doing satyagraha. They are all not with you, so they are terrorists. Now how can you pursue a political option for a settlement if you say this kind of thing? I charge this Government that not knowing what option they are pursuing, they do not know whether they are doing the political option or the military option. Actually they are doing neither. That is why as far as we are concerned, I say that this has to stop. This brutal insensible killing has to stop. Those who are dying are either fathers of children or sons of aged parents. They may be militants from that side and army men or police men from this side. But none of them deserve to die. Particularly, take the case of the police. The police were never trained to fight the war. The police were trained to take down information and complaints in the Information Book, colour it up and go to court and give some evidence. That is what they are trained to do in the Police Training School. Now you put them in the heart of guerrilla territory and say "Fight". I think that all Members are aware that today the country is rife with all sorts of stories as to what happened to this police station and that police station and all other police stations, how the "kota" lorry came and all sorts of things. (Interruption) I do not want to say it is hardly a time for levity. That is what is happening to the police.

I want to appeal to the Government to show some willingness to settle; show that you are willing to settle, show that in your statements, from the President downwards. If you say that those who are not with us

Extracts

Parliamentary Human Rights Groups

SRI LANKA – A NATION DIVIDING

*Report of a visit to Sri Lanka on behalf of the
Parliamentary Human Rights Group*

February 1985

**Robert Kilroy-Silk M.P.
Roger Sims J.P., M.P.**

House of Commons London SW1

We visited Sri Lanka for two weeks in February 1985 at the request of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group to examine the human rights implications of the recent communal disturbances in that country.

"Neither of us had been to Sri Lanka before. We had no previous special interest or constituency involvement with Sri Lanka and embarked upon the task assigned to us devoid of any predisposition towards any section of the community.

"Whilst in the country we were the guests of the Sri Lanka government. We would like to put on record our thanks for the generous hospitality and the unfailing courtesy with which we were treated and the help that was provided in ensuring that we saw all that we wished and met everyone that we asked to see. The government could not have done more to help us in our investigation. The only limitation on our activities (admittedly a major one) which we suffered was our inability to visit Mannar and Jaffna. Roads and railway lines to the north were said to be mined and helicopters apparently subjected to rocket attacks. We had no alternative but to accept the official ruling that the dangers were such that we could not visit these areas..."

"There are many examples, including within our own shores, which demonstrate that when a minority harbours real or imagined grievances with no apparent prospect of them being redressed by political means, some of that minority will turn to violence to achieve their ends. The state is bound to react and possibly overreact both in seeking to apprehend offenders and to deter political terrorists.

In such circumstances some violations of human rights will take place on both sides either by design or accident. This is certainly the case in Sri Lanka today...."

"There is a considerable body of evidence that the army kills innocent civilians. An ill-disciplined Sinhalese army unit finding one of its own lorries and some of its own member literally blown to bits tends to assume that the inhabitants of the nearby village are responsible and takes revenge into its own hands. We were told that after the 4 December incident at Mannar mentioned above, men working at the local post office were lined up by the army and shot, and two buses passing nearby were stopped, the passengers made to alight and 37 of them including a Sinhala conductor and a Muslim driver, shot dead. Other indiscriminate killings of civilians in the neighbourhood are also reported and the total deaths are estimated at over a hundred. On an earlier occasion, in August 1984, many homes, shops and industrial properties were burned and looted..."

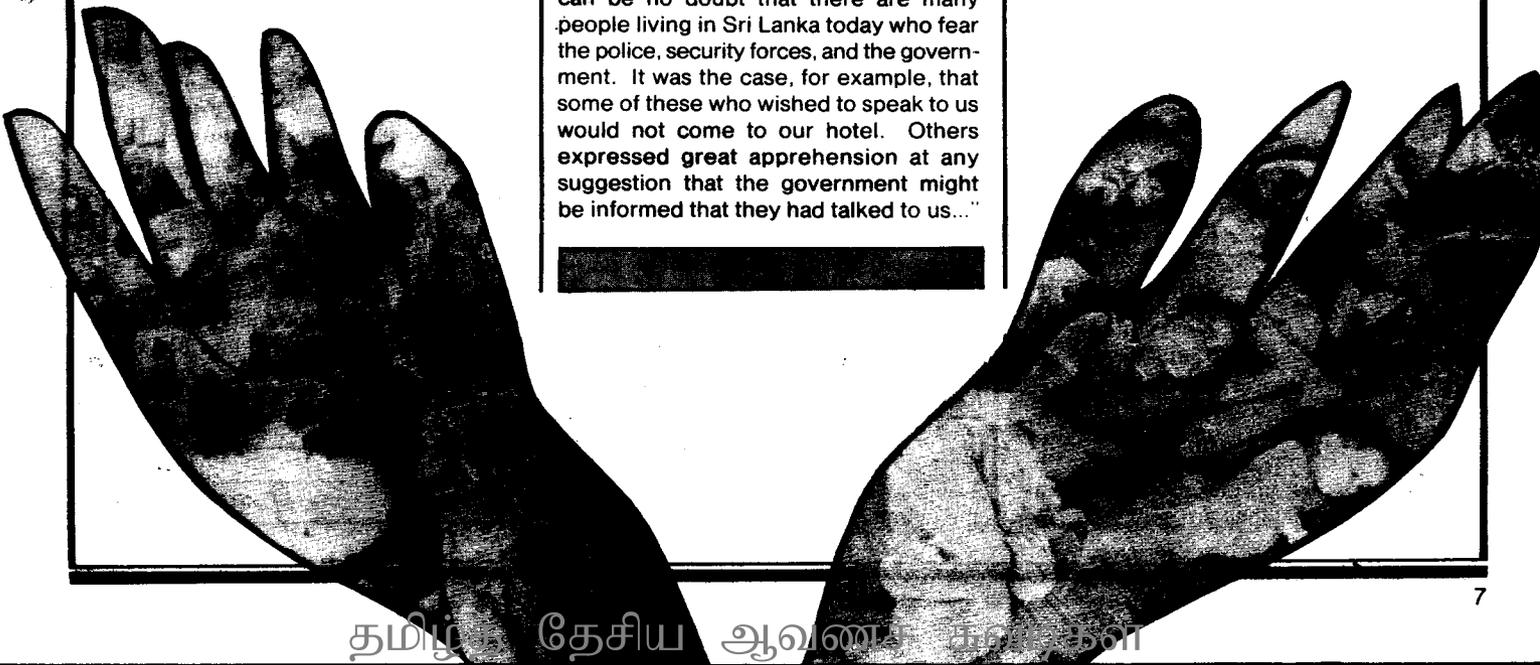
"Such incidents appear to be common place and loss of life and property extensive. They are often not disputed by the authorities who, at least in the case of the Mannar incident in August 1984, have effectively admitted responsibility by agreeing to pay compensation..."

"Whether is the truth about the atrocities supposed to have been committed by both sides in the north and the east, there can be no doubt that there are many people living in Sri Lanka today who fear the police, security forces, and the government. It was the case, for example, that some of these who wished to speak to us would not come to our hotel. Others expressed great apprehension at any suggestion that the government might be informed that they had talked to us..."

"Some idea of the scale of the disruption of ordinary life in the north and east is indicated by official government figures of the number of refugees that we were able to obtain. These show that some 48,256 persons from 12,062 families are refugees in Mannar. The majority of these, the Government says some 48,000 individuals, are Tamil fishermen "displaced due to surveillance zone". Again, there were 60,305 Tamil refugees in Jaffna "displaced due to surveillance zone". An indication of the kind of accommodation these people inhabit is shown by the census of the further 7,997 refugees, both Tamil and Muslim, displaced in Mullaitivu. They are living in churches, schools, garages, and temples. These are the lucky ones. Those in Mannar and Jaffna are not in Welfare Centres but rather are left to fend for themselves.

"Obviously normal life, eye witnesses kept telling us, has come to a halt in the north and the east. Indeed, we are told that there were no longer any young men available to arrange Tamil funerals. They had been killed, arrested or had fled to India. Certainly there can be little schooling taking place when so many of the buildings are being used to house people. Witnesses also confirmed allegations made to us that whole villages have been emptied and neighbourhoods have been driven by the army from their homes and occupations and turned into refugees dependent on the government for dry rations.

"We met a number of people who spoke of relatives having fled to India and a representative of the Indian Government confirmed that refugees were crossing the Palk Strait at the rate of many hundreds per day.



The human rights transgressed in such a course of action do not need to be detailed here. We cannot believe it is necessary. More important is that rightly or wrongly it tends to lend credibility to the view so frequently put to us that it is the Government's objective either to drive the Tamils out of the north and east in sufficient numbers as to reduce their majority in the north and in the east, a process that would be aided by the Government's announced policy of settling armed Sinhalese people in former Tamil areas — as was done with such terrible and destructive consequences in the Dollar and Kent farms : or to drive the Tamils out altogether..."

"It was admitted to us by both the army and Ministers that every time there is a terrorist incident in the north or the east the army rounds up all the men in the vicinity aged between 16 and 35 years. These are taken to the local police station for identification and interrogation. Some are released. The rest the Minister of National Security Lalith Athulathmudali acknowledged, after being pressed several times, that these amounted to well over a thousand — are taken some 200 miles South to the army camp at Boosa..."

"When we visited the camp, it contained 351 detainees. Several important issues arise in the context of their detention.

"First, it was clear to us all that the prisoners were cowed and afraid. It was also clear that very many — if not all of them — had been ill-treated. The torture — which seemed to take the form of beating, mainly on buttocks with plastic pipes (we saw the terrible scars that such a beating leaves), being hung by the feet over a chilli fire, having pins pushed down finger nails, and lighted cigarettes snubbed out on the — body appears to be mainly carried out by the police at the point of arrest. For fear of implicating certain honourable individuals or causing retribution to these in captivity, we do not intend to specify the source of our evidence..."

"We should also make it clear that we do not believe that the government condones this practice. Indeed, Ministers we spoke to were as horrified as we were at what we had heard and seen. But we need also to record that a senior policeman confided in us that it was routine for the police to beat up pickpockets because the prisons that they are sent to are like

'holiday camps'. If that is the case, and if it can be admitted as it was to two foreign MPs known to be investigating alleged abuses of human rights, the reader can draw his own conclusion about the way in which suspected terrorists of the Tamil minority might be dealt with by a Sinhalese policeman or army officer in the aftermath, say, of an attack on an army or police establishment.

"Again, it would seem that a large proportion of those detained are innocent. That, at any rate, was the inescapable conclusion we drew from the documented evidence that was made available to us. Relatives of the detainees are enabled to write to the Minister of Defence asking for the case of the relatives to be reviewed. This is conducted by a three-man Advisory Board that examines the police evidence against the prisoner, interviews the police and the prisoner and makes a recommendation.

"We believe that the men of the Advisory Board are honorable and conscientious and that they carry out their jobs competently. Thus a majority of the cases coming before them end in a recommendation for release. The problem is that it frequently takes several months for the parents' or relatives' letter requesting a review to reach the Advisory Board via the Minister of Defence. And, once the Board has made its recommendation, it takes several more months before the Ministry of Defence acts upon it.

"When presented with this information, the Minister of National Security at first discounted it. Then, on being presented with several dozen cases, the Minister pleaded that there was a shortage of clerks. We found his attitude extremely disturbing..."

"Nor does it seem to us to be necessary to prevent the prisoners receiving visits from their relatives and friends. That they are some 200 very difficult miles away may mean that such visits would, in any case, be infrequent, though that is a case for locating the camp in a more accessible place. The Minister of National Security's argument that such visits would be a means of passing on information that would be of use to the terrorists was not one we were impressed by, especially as so many of the detainees were obviously innocent of terrorism ..."

"We do feel, however, that the Tamil minority is under threat. Certainly the Tamils, of all classes and from all parts of the country, believe that to be the case.

While we would not wish, at this stage, to lend our support to the view that there is a deliberate and coordinated plan to reduce the rights and status of the Tamils, there is little doubt that the sum total of separate measures taken in respect, for example, of university entrance and colonisation in the north and east, amongst others, in fact, achieves such an objective. We see no possible justification for such measures..."

"We were asked to look at human rights in Sri Lanka and it will be clear from this report that we are in no doubt that in the present situation human rights are being violated or infringed to a substantial extent. Some of these violations are unavoidable where terrorists believe they are fighting for a just cause and the State considers it has a duty to defeat the terrorists. But a number are the result of lack of training, lack of discipline, lack of imagination, bureaucratic delays, sometimes sheer incompetence and lack of will on the part of the government..."

Thatcher under fire over Tamil refugees

British public opinion has been coming out strongly against the Thatcher government policy of restricting the inflow of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka. Here are two letters published by the TIMES, London in its issue of May 31st. The letters are from MARTIN BARBER, Director, The British Refugee Council and SHIRLEY WILLIAMS, President, Social Democratic Party.

Sir,

The Home Secretary's announcement of the imposition of a visa requirement for nationals of Sri Lanka conceals the nature of the tragedy affecting the Tamil community in that country.

Every day we listen to the horrific personal accounts of young Tamils telling of repeated arrests, torture, homes looted and burned, and random shooting of young men. The security measures of the Sri Lankan government may be "aimed at Tamil terrorists and their organisations" (leader May 29), but they are in effect carried out against the young male Tamil population generally.

This situation has been building up inexorably over the past two years. During that time Britain and her European partners have done nothing to put pressure on the Sri Lankan government to bring the island's communities together. Urgent diplomatic initiatives are now needed.

The Home Secretary's response to the

threat of a "flood" of Tamil refugees in Britain is deeply disappointing. France and Germany have received many more Tamils than Britain and yet have allowed them all to remain temporarily. When events in Poland and Iran demanded it, the British Government agreed not to force refugees back to these countries. We strongly believe that the same treatment should be available to the Tamils, who are in addition Commonwealth citizens.

British voluntary agencies and Tamil community groups here are willing to assist the Home Office in a planned programme for Tamils arriving in Britain. We have an obligation to provide a safe haven to those who need it until the situation in Sri Lanka allows them to go home. We look forward to a dialogue with the Government on how this can best be achieved.

Yours faithfully,
MARTIN BARBER, Director,
The British Refugee Council,
Bondway House,
3/9 Bondway, SW8.

From the President of the Social Democratic Party

Sir,

Reports of continuing intercommunal violence in Sri Lanka are not reassuring for Tamil refugees who may be forcibly returned there. Whatever the intentions of the Sri Lanka Government, substantial areas of the island are not under their

control. The refugees might be sent back from Britain to their deaths.

In 1969, when Idi Amin was threatening to expel the Ugandan Asian community, many of them British passport-holders, I met the then Indian Foreign Secretary, Swaran Singh, who said that India would take, on a temporary basis, East African Asian refugees on the understanding that they had the right as United Kingdom passport-holders eventually to settle in Britain. India later admitted thousands of refugees from East Africa on this basis.

The Tamil refugees in Britain should be offered a temporary right to stay until order has been reestablished in Sri Lanka and their lives are not at risk. As in the case of the East African Asians, the voluntary organisations in Britain might be willing to set up and manage temporary accommodation, and the refugees could be required to register with the police. Immigrants are detained for months while their right to settle here is investigated. Surely they could be maintained for a few months to assure their right to live.

Britain has a proud tradition of protecting refugees. It would betray that tradition to force the Tamils back to Sri Lanka until their safety is assured.

Yours faithfully,
SHIRLEY WILLIAMS, President,
Social Democratic Party,
4 Cowley Street, SW1.



Three Tamils safe in suburban Wimbledon. From left : Terence Rajasooriyar, Anthony Pillai and Mrs. Vimala Sebastian.

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

Sir,

The announcement, during a parliamentary recess, of visa restrictions to prevent the entry to Britain of Sri Lankan Tamils who are genuinely in fear of persecution is a callous and unprecedented move against Commonwealth citizens who were, until two years ago, British subjects.

The British Government's panic move has indeed added to their danger. Visa restrictions were enforced only 10 hours after the Home Secretary's announcement: thus hundreds of Tamils are now stranded

in Colombo, having bought air tickets which have now become worthless. They are sitting targets for the persecution they fear, precisely because they are seeking, and failing, to leave the country. They therefore face harassment and imprisonment in Colombo or a hazardous return journey to the north of the island.

It is not the first time that Britain has imposed a visa requirement in order to prevent the arrival of refugees. Iranians were similarly restricted in 1979; but they at least were given a week's warning of the change. Tamils received no such warning: the need to prevent their arrival

here was felt to be so urgent that it overrode any humanitarian considerations.

Fear of immigration from the Indian sub-continent has therefore eroded Britain's tradition of hospitality to refugees, just as it has eroded Britain's human rights record at the European Court of Human Rights.

Yours faithfully,
FIONA MACTAGGART,
 General Secretary,
 Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants,
 115 Old Street, ECI.

Sympathy from the British Press

The OBSERVER in an editorial dated 11th August 1983

The Government has been panicked into illiberal and probably unnecessary steps in its attempts to discourage Tamil refugees arriving in Britain. This so-called 'flood' of refugees amounts to some 1,500 people, fewer than have gone to either West Germany or Switzerland — neither of them countries with any traditional links with Sri Lanka. The great majority would have returned home after their six-or 12-month stay in Britain ran out. But in matters like these, the Home Office is easily panicked.

The Tamils in Sri Lanka face a desperately difficult situation. It is small consolation for them to be told that it was the act of their own extremists, the Tamil Tigers, which provided a pretext for the repression of their whole community. There is ample evidence that the Sri Lankan security forces, while unable to take any effective

action against the terrorists, have been involved in many acts of indiscriminate violence against innocent Tamils. Young men are particularly at risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, or worse. Many have been torn from their home, or off buses, doused with petrol and burned. Small wonder that some have tried to escape.

The answer, of course, does not lie in large-scale emigration of Tamils from Sri Lanka, as the Tamil organisations there are the first to insist. But was that ever a serious prospect? Under the old rules, Tamils coming into Britain had to possess a return ticket and sufficient money to support themselves, a financial barrier substantial enough to exclude all but a small minority. Now they will have to queue up at the High Commission in Colombo to seek a visa, exposing them-

selves to observation by the security forces. In theory, the procedure is designed to sort out 'genuine' refugees from the rest; in practice, it is hard to escape the conviction that it is simply designed to frighten Tamils off.

The introduction of visas would be more defensible if the Government had made a greater effort to improve the situation inside Sri Lanka, one of Britain's largest aid recipients. Britain should say clearly to the Government of Mr. Jayewardene that it expects dramatic improvements, soon, in the behaviour of his army and police. Without such changes, the situation in Sri Lanka will collapse into chaos and bloodshed on an unprecedented scale, with an exodus of refugees which will make the present 'flood' look like a light spring shower.

The GUARDIAN in an editorial dated 11th August 1983

Here — shades of the hysteria about Ugandan Asians — we go again. A nation which can open its doors to Vietnamese boat people and pursues to Ethiopian refugees, is, suddenly, all uptight about tidal waves of Tamils from Sri Lanka. The headlines ramble on about phoney refugees "flooding in." There will, we read, be "no open door" for self-styled

and probably self-seeking "refugees" from Sri Lanka. Even so, it is said, abandoned military bases and disused hospitals may have to be opened up to handle the latest peacetime invasion.

According to international conventions and protocols, to which this country is party, a refugee is a person with a "well

founded fear of being persecuted" at home. Recent events in Sri Lanka suggest that the Tamil minority has well-founded reason to fear both persecution from the mob and the supposedly unauthorised activities of the army. The government of Sri Lanka insists that it is not encouraging atrocities and that may well be so. But it has little relevance to the question of refugee status.



WAITING IN HOPE : Tamils at Ganapthy Temple, Wimbledon, look to the Home Office to let them stay.

► If Tamils are fleeing from atrocities committed by an army which tends to run out of control then they are as much refugees in international law as if they were fleeing from a government sponsored final solution. Further, it matters nothing in law if Tamil terrorists sustain the appalling rounds of tit-for-tat killings. A well founded fear of reprisal is enough.

Enough, that is, to establish refugee status. But that status does not automatically allow asylum or right of residence

in this country. What it does mean is that the nation at the receiving end has a duty to work out with the UN commissioner for refugees where best to send those it will not accept but who are in genuine fear of persecution back home. What would no longer be possible is the recently-introduced and utterly inhuman practice of allowing a mere 24 hours for appeal against deportation and then packing the losers off to the tender mercies of the folks from whence they fled.

There are good and bad reasons for not wanting to grant blanket refugee status to Sri Lankan Tamils. The worst is that we have embarrassing residual responsibilities to the Tamils, going back to Independence in 1947, when we promised to sort out their citizenship worries and failed to deliver. If Tamils do become a refugee race then a lot could reasonably seek asylum here. Almost as bad is the Foreign Office fear that we might upset the erratic rulers of Sri Lanka by suggesting that theirs is a state which generates refugees. More honourable is the suspicion that, if so provoked by institutionalised international opinion, the government of Sri Lanka might encourage a once-for-all exodus of a difficult to assimilate minority. Tamils have lived in Sri Lanka for several hundred years. The object today must be to find a solution which allows them to continue there "without well-founded fears," not to scatter them around the globe.

What then should Britain do ? First, recognise as refugees those who fit commonsense definitions — then take in a fair number. (Stress, here and now, that refugees go home when things are sorted out.) Negotiate with the UN about what happens to the rest. Insist that India accepts some minimal responsibility for its own kith and kin — especially those with Indian passports. Insist further that Indian aid to the terrorist Tamil Tigers cease forthwith. Tell Sri Lanka that the aid tap will be turned off, completely, if the killings continue. But the one thing, this Government should not do is to play along with an artificial "swamping" scare, which restricts its own domestic freedom of action, damages prospects for the Tamils and once again, erodes our international credibility. ■

POLICY ... **the NEW STATESMAN** of 7 June "The Home Office accuses Tamils of abusing refugees status. **AMRIT WILSON** exposes the lie", it said. **Writes AMRIT WILSON**

In the last few weeks, France and Germany have offered asylum to 19,000 and 20,000 Tamil refugees respectively from Sri Lanka. Britain has received about 2,000.

Last week two new immigration rules were introduced without reference to parliament aimed at keeping Tamil refugees

out of Britain. The first requires all Sri Lankan citizens to have a visa before they can enter Britain. Never before has such a requirement been placed on the citizens of a Commonwealth country. It ensures that anyone trying to flee the country would draw the attention of the regime.

The second rule cuts to 24 hours the time within which an MP can appeal on behalf of those refused admission. After a stop is put on a deportation by telephone, an MP usually has about a week to make a written appeal. The British government will not risk upsetting President Jayewardene.

Home Secretary Leon Brittan declared these steps were being taken to protect the interests of individuals who might

otherwise be kept longer than necessary in less than satisfactory conditions at immigration detention centres

Home Secretary Leon Brittan declared these steps were being taken to protect the interests of individuals who might otherwise be kept longer than necessary in less than satisfactory conditions at immigration detention centres'. According to many refugees the most distressing aspect of arrival in Britain was the racism of the British immigration authorities.

Most people, some with young children, were made to wait 10-12 hours without food or water in the Immigration Hall at Heathrow. The lucky ones were sent on to temporary accommodation in hostels or with relatives. Of the rest, families

were taken to Harmondsworth detention centre and single men to Ashford Remand Centre where, having fled from the horrors they had experienced in Sri Lanka, they were treated like criminals. At least one group of 41 refugees from a British Airways flight on 13 May was actually taken to Ashford in handcuffs.

Most of the 2,000 refugees who have entered Britain are still in these various places waiting to know whether Britain will accept them as refugees. Although the official criteria include a well-founded fear of persecution in practice they vary according to the person's race and the politics of the country they are fleeing from. A Home Office official has been quoted as saying that only 1 per cent of the 2,000 are likely to be eligible.

For one young refugee from northern Sri Lanka, "convincing the officials here seems impossibly difficult. Each one of us has lost close relatives and friends, we have had our houses burnt and at every stop on our way from Jaffna to Colombo we have seen half burnt mutilated bodies of our people." But all this isn't enough." Sinnapen Maharasingham of the Tamil Action Committee, which is

handling about 200 cases, says that not one of the cases he has heard of is an 'economic refugee' as the Home Office claims. "They are refugees from a consistent pattern of repression in which Britain is deeply and directly involved because of the arms it sells to Sri Lanka and the training provided by so-called 'ex' — SAS men to the Sri Lankan army".

Most of last week's arrivals were young men from the north of the country. The experiences of Gerald Joseph, a Christian Tamil, are typical. He was kidnapped last October from Jaffna and held in an army camp for two weeks. He was beaten up and witnessed torture, killings and the use of drugs to force confessions. Since his release he has faced constant harassment for no apparent reason.

Nochulebbe Mahroof is a Muslim Tamil from eastern Sri Lanka who is hoping for refugee status. The Sri Lankan government claims his community is being attacked by Tamil guerrillas and protected by the army. But Mahroof claims that Sri Lankan army commandos, trained by the Mossad, Israel's secret service, are 'taking revenge' on the Muslims of two large

villages, Akkaraipattu and Katangudi. Muslims there protested last spring against Israel's involvement in Sri Lanka. In Akkaraipattu on 17 April this year the commandos rounded up young Tamil Hindus, shot dead 14 of them and burnt alive another 22. The commandos then kidnapped a number of youths from the Muslim minority, tortured them and threatened to kill them if they did not burn specified Tamil homes. In the already tense atmosphere this was enough to light the spark of communal violence. In Katangudi, and the area around it, similar methods were used. The resulting communal violence destroyed the local economy, which has depended on co-operation between Hindus, Muslims and the small Christian minority.

Now, says Mahroof, people are starving and stealing from each other in a breakdown of the community. Mahroof tells of 45 people in his village — close friends and relatives of his — who were kidnapped and have disappeared. He thinks as a prominent member of his community he was next. Whether he'll qualify as a refugee remains to be seen.

Indian Embassy request : U.S. Candlelight vigilance called off

A Candlelight vigilance in the United States in sympathy with Tamils killed in Sri Lanka, which was proposed to be held on the night of June 13th was cancelled. The vigilance rally in which several hundred Tamils belonging to the Tamil Sangam of Baltimore were to have taken part was scheduled to be held at a place close to the Indian Embassy at Washington DC, during the visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The cancellation took place at the request of the Indian Embassy.

However, a signature campaign was organized and a memorandum submitted to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by representatives of the Sangam consisting of Indian Doctors, Scientists, Engineers and learned man in all fields.

Here is a copy of the memorandum sent to us by Dr. Benjamin Rajah, Secretary of the Tamil Sangam :-

Meanwhile an appeal from the Tamils in the Washington Metropolitan area has gone to Prime Minister Rajiv through Tamil

Nadu Political leader Mr. Kumari Anandan calling upon the Prime Minister to save the Tamils in Sri Lanka from further killing.

Honourable Mr. Rajiv Gandhi,
The Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi 110 001 INDIA

Dear Prime Minister,

MEMORANDUM

We, the Tamils of Indian origin living presently in the United States of America are deeply concerned and grieved about the escalating violence against Tamils in Sri Lanka. There are large scale state sponsored mass murders of innocent people including women, children and the elderly. Rape, arson and lootings are committed in Tamil areas everyday. Hundreds of Tamils are killed and thousands are driven out of their homes compelled to find refuge in India. If this is allowed to continue any longer, it would truly be a genocide of unprecedented magnitude

of a people who share a common culture and heritage with India.

We are grateful for all the efforts our Indian government has made so far to resolve this problem through her good offices. We sincerely feel that this has been a dismal failure due to intrasigent attitude of Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan government has blatantly disregarded all such efforts. The government there is involved in the brutal murders of Tamils, to destroy Tamil villages and to colonize traditional Tamil lands with state armed ex-convicts.

We feel that time has now come for decisive action on the part of our government before it is too late. It is our firm conviction that any further delay in intervening militarily will only result in greater loss of life and the increasing induction of arms from foreign sources and entrenchment of these same forces, which would also endanger the peace and neutrality of the Indian Ocean and the security of India.

A SRI LANKA HISTORIAN'S COMMENT ON TAMIL HOMELANDS

National identity and communal-consciousness are generated by a number of factors of which historical memory is one. In assessing historical significance of nationality, what is important is the perception of a people of its historical antecedents. Sinhala and Tamil people in Sri Lanka have different and sometimes conflicting memories of their past and no amount of contemporary polemics will deny the validity of one or the other.

Much of Sri Lankan history has been based on myths and legends which were preserved in Buddhist chronicles written in Pali and Sinhalese. Most of the historians of early Sri Lanka relied uncritically on these chronicles, particularly the *Mahavamsa* and the *Chulavamsa*. Much has happened in the 1970s and 1980s in archaeological work and in the critical examination of myths and legends. A new generation of historians is re-examining the foundations of civilization in Sri Lanka and this has rendered archaic much of the known early history of the island. The most prominent of these scholars are : Professor Leslie Gunawardena, Dr. Senake Bandaranayake, Dr. Susantha Goonatilake, Dr. W.I. Sriniveena, Prof. Liyanagamage, Prof. K. Indrapala and Dr. S. Pathmanathan.

Their writings explore the myth of Aryan descent of the Sinhala, the plurality of the origins of civilization in Sri Lanka, the almost contemporaneous presence of Dravidian people and settlers from the north India from the very earliest periods, the myth of unified sovereignty over the whole island, the existence of several dynastic kingdoms contemporaneously in many parts of the island, the role of South India in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, the myth of Sinhala-Tamil conflicts and a heap of other issues which put in proper perspective the pluralism of culture in Sri Lanka. For some of their conclusions see *Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka* (Colombo 1984).

Professor Leslie Gunawardena, in an important article, has shown how in the 20th century, Sinhala politicians popularised and exploited myths and legends to give a racial ideology to Sinhala nationalism (R.A.L.H. Gunawardena, *People of the Lion*. The Sinhala Identity and Ideology



Equestrian statue of Sankili the last King of Jaffna at Nallur.

in History and Historiography. *Sri Lankan Journal of Humanities*, V, Nos. 1 & 2 (1979) pp. 1-36). This theme of racial view of history has also been taken up by other scholars such as Prof. Kumari Jayawardena. It is to be hoped that people interested keep up with the latest enlightened thinking of Sri Lanka on these matters and put their influence on the side of a genuine liberal nationalism rather than repeat hoary

myths and out-dated legends which only foster racism. It is amusing that some persons talk of expeditions abroad by kings of Sri Lankan kingdoms. If they were to follow up what happened to some of these expeditions, particularly those of Parakrama Bahu I to Burma and to South India, they may not be so enthusiastic!

Though the Tamils had existed in the island of Sri Lanka from the middle of the first millenium B.C., the growth of their consciousness as a separate people in a Sri Lankan milieu dates from the Tamil Kingdom of Jaffna around 1250. Thereafter the kingdom existed as an independent political entity until overthrown by the Portuguese in 1621. The kings of Jaffna had close relations with a number of South Indian Kingdoms, including the Pandyan Kingdom, the Vijayanagar Empire, the Nayakdoms of Tanjore, Madura and Mysore, and the Zamorin of Calicut. On some occasions they paid tribute to those kings, in return for assistance of one form or the other. Kings of Jaffna also had relations with the Kingdoms of the south — Kotte, Gampola and Kandy. On various occasions, Kings of Jaffna, when they felt able to do so, invaded the south and occupied parts of Sinhalese territory for brief periods. On other occasions, Kings of the south, especially of Kotte, invaded the north. One of these invasions, by Parakrama Bahu VI, was successful for a brief period but at his death the old Jaffna dynasty recaptured the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Kandy continued to exist in the interior of the island, after the destruction of the Kingdoms of Kotte and Jaffna. As the only indigenous ruler in the island, the coastal territories having been conquered by the Portuguese and then the Dutch, the King claimed overlordship of the whole island and added many of its districts to his title, including places like Colombo and Galle which were ruled by the Portuguese and the Dutch. These claims were not taken seriously. In traditional Indian Kingship, it was not what you claimed but what you administered that mattered.

The Portuguese claimed sovereignty over the territories ruled by the Kingdom of Jaffna by right of conquest and these rights passed on to the Dutch and then to

the British. Portuguese chroniclers like Queyroz and Couto, in their potted histories, used fragments of Sinhalese chronicles like the *Rajavaliya* and *Pujavaliya* which naturally exaggerated the territorial claims of the Kotte Kings who were the patrons of the authors of the chronicles. This entire evidence has been considered in a monograph on *The Kingdom of Jaffna* by S. Pathmanathan (Jaffna 1878, Ph.D., Thesis, University of London).

Thus from about the 13th century, a major demographic movement took place in Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese drifted towards the southern, western and central regions and the Tamils to the northern and eastern coastal belts. The situation has been virtually frozen in this fashion for 700 years. The only exception to this was the migration of about a million Tamils from South India to the plantations of the central highlands in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The question of traditional homelands of a people is a highly complex one and some people show no effort to understand and appreciate the feelings of minority communities in this respect. When multi-ethnic communities are brought together

into a unitary state, mechanisms should be devised to preserve the integrity of each of the constituent units. In multi-ethnic states like those in the Balkans, the Soviet Union, India, autonomy of diverse levels is conceded to these self-sufficient ethnic or linguistic groups to provide them with security and to integrate them into the largest polity.

After independence, the Ceylon and Sri Lankan governments set about senselessly to change the country's demographic balance. One is not talking here of the right of private citizens to buy and own property in any part of the country. This has never been in question and it has gone on peacefully for decades and will continue, given the right climate of communal relations. One is talking of state-sponsored and state-financed systematic colonization by which an alien ethnic group is brought in large numbers and planted in the midst of an existing group. This has gone on systematically since 1950 and the consequence has been to reduce Tamils from a majority into a minority in some districts.

It should be clear to anyone concerned with the question of national integration that such a policy is most disturbing to a minority, particularly as that minority has settled and established itself in that area for over 700 years. Many liberal and fair minded Sinhalese have accepted this and, at least on two occasions, Sinhala national leaders have incorporated this in the agreement they entered into with the Tamils. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Dunley Senanayake were prepared to go some way to accommodating Tamil grievances in this respect.

The Tamil efforts to keep inviolate what they consider their traditional homelands should be seen in the context of an aggressive Sinhala nationalism and hegemony in the whole island. They have seen this Sinhala nationalism claim for itself a greater and greater share of the political and economic cake, using its majority status to push minorities out of several avenues of participation. The Tamils want to defend their rights at their territorial frontiers and this is something that every Sinhalese will have to understand.

Sri Lanka paper proves British Home Secretary wrong :

"There was no reason to believe that Tamils returning home faced prosecution. This was what British Home Secretary Leon Brittan had said in London on May 20th according to a Reuter report, published on page 1 of the Sri Lanka government owned Daily News of May 22nd. This news item was carried under the headline TAMILS HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR BRITAN.

If only Mr. Brittan would read the same issue of the paper and glance at the same page, he would realize how far wrong he was.

Giving the lie to Mr. Brittan's statement was another news item which said : "A Tamil youth of Jaffna was arrested by the police at Katunayake minutes after his arrival from Dharan, Saudi Arabia, yesterday.

"K.L.A. Police had received information that the suspect was involved in the terrorist movement, propagating its cause and collecting funds. He was arrested with foreign currency to the value of Rs 1,60,000. The suspect was handed over to he CID for further investigation".

A third news item on the same page in the same issue of the paper said :

"The CID yesterday produced 37 Tamil youths before the acting Colombo Fort Magistrate Mr. Walter Jayawardene, in connection with the Nikaweratiya police station attack and People's Bank robbery. The Magistrate remanded them till May 31st... "Sergeant H.M. Jayawardene of the CID who produced the suspects told court that the 37 Tamil youths were taken into custody when they were in a Jewellery shop in Colombo and a Tamil restaurant in the Pettah..."

Also on the same page in the same issue of the paper, British Home Office Minister Mr. David Waddington is quoted to have told the British Parliament on May 20th : "Most people in this country recognize that there are large parts of Sri Lanka where there has been no trouble and one must not assume that every single Tamil is in peril of his life or will suffer hardships when he returns."

All these only go to prove that "most people" in that country (Britain) do not seem to recognise the reality in Sri Lanka. It does not call for communal trouble as the world saw it in July 1983 for Tamils to be in peril of their lives. Every young Tamil whether he lives in Colombo in the

south or in the north or east or whether he returns from abroad is considered by the Sri Lanka Government and the CID as a prima facie terrorist suspect. Once they are taken into custody there are no legal processes available to ensure that they are kept free from torture or even killing.

Mr. Waddington's follow-up statement "It is more logical to look at each case separately, was one engaged in politics, what had happened to his family, and from what part of Sri Lanka did he come", is itself illogical in the light of what is happening in Sri Lanka.

If Mr. Waddington thinks that the part of Sri Lanka from where the Tamil youths come has a relevance to the issue, here is an extract from the same issue of the paper and on the same page which states: "the suspects were from various parts of the country. Some of the towns mentioned in the report are Dehiowita, Galaha Colombo, Dickoya, Udupussellawa, Killinochchi, Batticaloa, Eravur, Akkaraipattu, Matugama, Eheliyagoda, Kotmale, Passara, Kalmunai, Kalawanchikudai, Talawakele, Chavakachcheri, Matale, Deniyaya, Bandarawela, Haputale and Pussellawa"

Tamil Separatist Guerrillas Tie Down Government Forces in Jaffna Peninsula Says WASHINGTON POST



Army guard at Anuradhapura street junction AFTER May 14th massacre.

American Reporter Anthony Davis reporting to the WASHINGTON POST, says in its issue of May 26, 1985

JAFFNA, Sri Lanka — Ethnic conflict involving the Sri Lankan armed forces and minority Tamil guerrillas in the northern part of this island nation appears to be spreading to other parts of the country, with nearly 300 deaths in one week this month.

Here on the Jaffna peninsula in the north, where most of the minority Tamils live and where the fighting has been the heaviest, Tamil civilians are caught between a pervasive militant presence and what has been described as indiscriminate Army retaliation.

The Palali airport here used to cater to civil air traffic until the end of last year. Now it is an all-military installation with helicopter gunships and helmeted troops with automatic rifles scanning the palm-dotted fields beyond. The airport symbolizes the extent to which the Sri Lankan Army is now beleaguered by the growing guerrilla insurgency.

In the Jaffna peninsula, the militants,

estimated to number between 500 to 750, have managed to tie down the 3,000 government forces in the key camps of Palali, Karainagar, Gurunagar and Jaffna Fort.

"There is a real sense of insecurity here," said one prominent member of the Jaffna Citizens' Committee in a telephone interview.

"It's not yet Beirut, but at the present rate of deterioration it soon may well be," commented one western diplomat in Colombo, about 175 miles to the south.

Travel to the Jaffna peninsula, which has been declared a security zone, is severely restricted, but this reporter was permitted to make a one-day visit Monday escorted by Brig. Hamilton Wanasinghe commander of security forces in the region. Information about the violence was also supplied by diplomats and Sri Lankan politicians, journalists, lawyers and other professionals in Colombo, the capital.

For the past 13 years, this island nation

off the southern tip of India has been plagued by the conflict between the separatist Tamils, the predominantly Hindu group in the north, and the majority Sinhalese in the south, most of whom are Buddhists.

Nationwide, 3,000 to 5,000 Tamil guerrillas are fighting the 12,000-man Sri Lankan Army. The guerrillas, many of whom profess Marxist ideology, are seeking to set up a separate state called Eelam in Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern provinces for the minority Tamils. There are four main guerrilla factions.

The Army is predominantly Sinhalese the ethnic group that makes up 74 per cent of Sri Lanka's 15 million people.

Attacks by the Army on Tamil civilians appear to be a key factor in driving Tamil youths into guerrilla ranks and fanning the general sense of insecurity among the Tamil population.

"The Tamil community now identifies itself much more closely with the militants

than in the past," said one former Tamil politician, himself a moderate. "They don't see any other way out."

Recent allegations have focused on a British Broadcasting Corp. report of an alleged massacre May 9 of Tamil civilians by Army troops in the fishing village of Velvettiturai. More than 70 were said to have been killed in that raid, including 25 who were herded into a community centre into which Army troops then threw grenades.

The incident is widely believed to have been a factor behind the slaughter of nearly 150 Sinhalese civilians by Tamil terrorists five days later in the north-central town of Anuradhapura, the holy seat of Sinhalese Buddhism.

The Tamil insurgent attack on Anuradhapura was significant because it marked the first time Sinhalese civilians had been targeted by Tamil extremists beyond the boundaries of the area they call Eelam.

[Earlier last week, Sri Lankan President Junius Jayewardene said he would declare martial law to combat Tamil separatist guerrillas "if the necessity arise," Reuter

reported from Colombo. Meanwhile, The Associated Press reported that hundreds of chanting Buddhist monks demonstrated near Sri Lanka's Parliament Thursday to ask for protection of places of worship after the attack in Anuradhapura.]

A day after the Anuradhapura massacre, an attack on Tamil civilians aboard a ferry travelling from the island of Deift to Jaffna was reported. The government has confirmed that 32 men, women and children were killed by assailants in plainclothes armed with knives and axes, and that about 30 more were injured. But it has denied reports that military personnel were involved.

"The Navy commanding officer has made inquiries and is absolutely certain that none of their people were out of station at that time," said Minister of National Security Lalith Athulathmudali at a press conference. The Army also had denied that any excesses took place at the fishing village of Velvettiturai.

Brig. Wanasinghe said he knew nothing of the reported community center killings. In an interview at his headquarters at the Palali airport, he said that during a cordon-and-search operation, an Army Major was killed and a total of 27 Tamils died, six of whom were confirmed as terrorists following Army intercepts of

insurgent radio communications.

Conceding that civilian casualties "may have been high," he said this was because "troops are not going to take a chance" in a situation in which, terrorists and civilians are virtually indistinguishable. Stories of a massacre, he added, were "false and fabricated."

Political observers of both communities in Colombo call official disclaimers unconvincing. Regarding the ferry attack, Tamil sources pointed out that no Sinhalese civilians live on the Tamil-populated islands and it was "Utterly implausible" that Tamil civilians would have attacked "members of their own community so brutally.

Many observers argue the massacre was retaliation by Sinhalese Navy men for the Anuradhapura killings.

"It's now simple tit-for-tat," said one western diplomat.

Since the December breakdown of a government-sponsored all-party conference aimed at negotiating a solution to grievances among the island's 1.9 million indigenous Tamils, unrest has also spread to the Eastern Province, inhabited by a mix of Moslems, Hindu Tamils and majority Buddhist Sinhalese.

The most striking index of insurgent confidence, according to Athulathmudali, has been a shift from hit-and-run harassment of security forces to frontal assaults on police stations and Army camps, backed by homemade mortars and rocket-propelled grenades.

Growing coordination among the different extremist factions is also giving the government concern.

"Some of these groups have got together and when they come for attacks are using larger numbers of men," said Wanasinghe. Insurgent attacks are now made in units of up to 100, he said.

An April 10 attack on a Jaffna police station in which four policemen died and the building was largely destroyed was one example of militant tactics, he said.

Since then, assaults have been launched on the Karainagar naval base, 12 miles northwest of the town of Jaffna, which was pounded by mortar fire from May 3 to May 4; the Gurunagar Army camp in the town, attacked the same night; an Army camp at Kokavil, 18 miles south of the Peninsula, and the police station at Mannar on the north-west coast, overrun May 10.

Police stations have been relatively easy targets, with the defenders generally

fleeing after only brief resistance. The insurgents have yet to overrun an Army camp, something political and diplomatic observers say they are planning in a bid to give their campaign a major psychological and propaganda boost.

On the Jaffna peninsula, where Army forces are confined to their camps, movement between the strong points is almost entirely by helicopter.

Electronically detonated mines, generally simple but massive charges of high explosive buried beneath road surfaces, have proved highly effective in reducing Army mobility.

"If we have to get from A to B we can," said Brig. Gen. Nalin Seneviratne, commander of Sri Lanka's Army. "But movement is slowed down because we have to clear the roads."

When security forces do venture beyond their camps, they move in force to conduct what are called cordon-and-search operations, set up roadblocks, conduct house-to-house searches and return to their garrisons at night.

The impression among informed Sri Lankans of both communities is also that the government is covering up for the excesses of a military it will not or cannot control. The result, it is argued, is a situation in which a censored press provides the majority Sinhalese community only with accounts of Tamil attacks while avoiding discussion of excesses by the Sinhalese military.

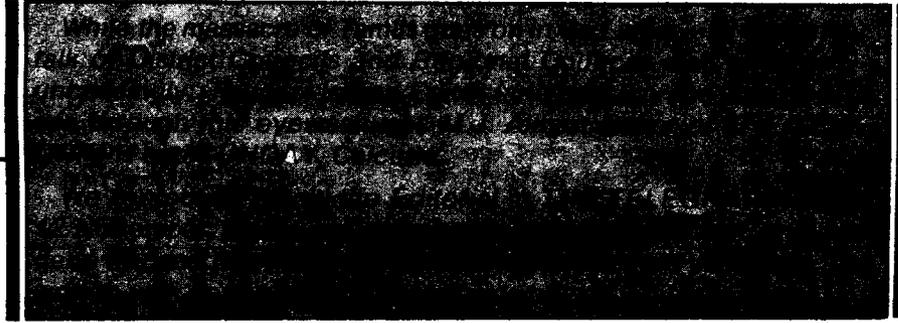
"The government has studiously avoided telling people in the south what is happening in the north," said one Asian diplomat.

While some troops have been discharged from the Army for alleged killings, none has been brought to trial, and there have been no independent inquiries. The government has cited lack of sufficient evidence to secure convictions. But some observers, including a prominent Tamil lawyer, said the failure to bring errant soldiers to justice has led to a steady erosion of professional standards in the forces and a sense that, as the lawyer put it, "they can get away with anything."

The small, inexperienced Army that has traditionally fulfilled ceremonial duties is also ill-equipped for its current role.

The root of the problem, many diplomats and Sri Lankan professionals said, is the government's unwillingness to risk antagonizing an Army that, for all its shortcomings, is the only tool at its disposal to tackle a growing insurgency.

GREATER AUTONOMY FOR TAMILS : Have we not heard this story before?



The only mistake that Mr. G. Parthasarathy may have made during a very difficult week might have been in giving the impression that a major breakthrough had been achieved during the four days of negotiation with the Sri Lanka government on the Tamil problem. In essence the quid pro quo worked out is this; the TULF which swept the last elections in the Tamil majority areas on the slogan of a separate nation will give up its demand for secession in return for a system of government which allows Tamils greater autonomy. The cynical among the Tamils may correctly wonder if they have not heard this story before. The last time there was an agreement between the Tamils and Colombo the district councils were conceived. Today these same councils are treated with contempt and disgust, and all the Tamils on them have resigned. While in theory the district councils promised a large measure of self-rule, in practice they were totally impotent. Not merely was there little money coming from the Centre, but the various ministers in Colombo simply ignored the district councils and continued functioning as they had always done. In fact, the failure of the district councils was one of the sour factors that led to the demand for total independence. The new name for the same game is regional councils. The Presidential communique and the official Indian statement have hyped up this agreement, but no additional details have been given to substantiate how precisely this differs from the past district council apart from a promise that "appropriate powers" will be given. Autonomy will mean nothing without the right to raise and spend resources and the capacity and authority to create and arm an effective police force. Will Colombo allow Jaffna and Vavuniya and Trincomalee to do so? Time will tell

how appropriate the "appropriate powers" are. But if the mood of the Sinhalese is anything to go by then, despite all the pretty phrases, these promises are just an eyewash.

President Junius Jayewardene is in keen need of such an eyewash. He is scheduled to arrive in Delhi to attend the Commonwealth conference, were he will not only meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi but also leaders from the pro-American world on whom his future depends. President Jayewardene could have returned a bit of a hero by being churlish with Mrs. Gandhi, since the Sinhalese today are distinctly anti-Indian, but what answer will he have for the leaders of Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia who will use the meeting in Delhi and recreation time in Goa to ask Mr. Jayewardene some embarrassing questions about the July riots. If he can come to a paper agreement with Delhi on the Tamils, then President Jayewardene will have something to hide his embarrassment with. The irony is that India might have provided President Jayewardene with the face-saving device which he does not in the least deserve — and all for the short-term gain of a passing headline.

There are today strong elements in the Sri Lanka power structure who have no desire to show any compassion towards the Tamils. The first of course is the hardline group led by ministers like Cyril Matthew; this group not only has the powerful support of the lumben youth which organised the July mayhem against the Tamils but also of the Buddhist clergy which is now in the forefront of the nation's politics. The second militant anti-Tamil element is the armed forces, who were also directly involved in the July riots.

Even while President Jayewardene was sounding "reasonable" to Mr. G. Parthasarathy, the army was continuing its humiliating harassment of Tamils in Jaffna on the pretext of searching for the Tigers. Each day the armed forces continue to show the Tamils that they are the rulers and the Tamils the ruled. We deliberately do not use dramatic terms like slaves in the context of Tamils because they would be untrue adjectives; but equally untrue is any assertion that the Tamils and the Sinhalese are equal citizens of Sri Lanka today. But perhaps the most important factor which will ensure that the Tamils get nothing even this time around is the strong popular sentiment against them among the Sinhalese. True, many Sinhalese families in Sri Lanka went to great lengths to protect Tamil friends and colleagues during the July terror, but the average mood is not in the least penitent. At best there might be some regret for the violence, but even such voices ask you to see the reason behind the Sinhalese anger. Both ideologically and emotionally President Jayewardene subscribes to such a sentiment, and it is difficult to see him making any major real concession to the Tamils. And of course there is always the unasked question at the end : would he survive if he gave in, or would the militant leaders of the present ruling coalition, backed by the armed forces, dispense with him ?

President Jayewardene has been able to keep the militants at bay by telling them that they have no option while dealing with India except diplomacy : how long could the Sinhalese army survive if Indian troops landed ? The fear of Indian intervention is a constant in Sinhalese minds. A story doing the rounds in Colombo says that one minister told a suitably aroused audience that if it took

the Indian army 18 hours to capture Sri Lanka, it would take the Sinhalese only 18 minutes to kill every Tamil. Even if apocryphal, the story conveys the current mood concisely. After Grenada, the Sinhalese are no longer sure that America would bail them out from an Indian threat; they also worry that the USA may have already conceded that Sri Lanka was a part of Indian sphere of influence. It is this anxiety which is leading many within the ruling party to advocate an abandonment of nonalignment, in favour of a treaty with the USA.

The current government policy on Tamils seems quite transparent. It is to delay a deal on the Tamils as far as possible, or come to a bogus deal which can be quietly ditched later. After all, success (even paper success) has many parents while failure is an orphan : in other words, both India and Sri Lanka will happily declare to mutual benefit, a great treaty of peace and harmony and the beginning of a new era, with everyone posing for pictures all around. And later, when the regional councils turn out to be as fraudulent as the district councils, Colombo will keep

quiet about it and Delhi will have other things to attend to. The TULF by then will have been discredited because of its surrender on the Eelam question, as will all the revolutionaries who accept this as the new dawn.

Back we will go to another ambush of an army convoy in Jaffna by the next generation of Tigers, and reprisals on the expanding scale in Colombo and across the south and the centre of Sri Lanka. Will India still want to send special envoys? ■

Why is the INDIAN Express so unashamedly pro-Sri Lankan ?

There was a distinguished Indian journalist, the late Frank Moraes, who made a lasting impact on Ceylon journalism over three decades ago; for a brief period, during the immediate post-independence era he edited the once British-owned evening newspaper, the TIMES OF CEYLON, (now defunct) with great distinction and aplomb. Later he was to become a leading newspaper personality in his own country and edit the INDIAN EXPRESS.

When Frank Moraes gave up his contract with the TIMES OF CEYLON to take up a more responsible position in India, leading citizens of Colombo arranged a public dinner in his honour at the Galle Face Hotel — an honour never before or after accorded to any other journalist. The man who led the toasts to the departing guest was S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, then Leader of the House in Parliament and later to become Prime Minister. In a glowing tribute to Moraes he said : when we open the pages of the CEYLON DAILY NEWS (the leading morning newspaper of the time) we know exactly what the paper is going to say editorially on any specific issue. When we open the pages of the TIMES OF CEYLON, we open them with trepidation, because Mr. Moraes has a disconcerting habit — disconcerting to us politicians particularly — of treating every issue on its own merits. The TIMES has no stock view point on any subject.

The tragedy about the INDIAN EXPRESS today is that it has not only a stock viewpoint on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue, but a

viewpoint which is grossly partisan and tilted in favour of the Jayewardene government; sometimes tilted in a way that damages its own country's government !

Here is an example of how openly partisan it can be : On the 23rd May, the paper carried an editorial under the headline — UP, DOWN, UP AGAIN, in the course of which it said, "... The massacre of some 145 innocent citizens by Tamil guerillas in Anuradhapura last week as a gruesome reprisal for alleged excesses by security forces in the Tamil north ..."

Please note the difference in terminology. Where Sinhalese lives are lost, it is MASSACRE OF INNOCENT CITIZENS and GRUESOME REPRISAL; where Tamil lives are taken, it becomes in the Indian Express language "ALLEGED EXCESSES BY SECURITY FORCES". Three cheers for Freedom of the Press !

In the course of the same editorial, the paper made a further abuse of Press freedom. Pointing this out, the following Letter to the Editor was handed over to the Madras office of the paper, for favour of publication. The Letter never saw the light of day. Here is the Letter :-

Sir,

There was a time when Tamils in Tamilnadu and in Sri Lanka used to be concerned over opinion expressed in your editorial

columns on issues affecting the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Now, we no longer attach either importance or credibility to what you say; in fact, your views have become easily predictable. My purpose in writing this however is not to complain about your right to comment but to point out that you are guilty to breaking a journalistic code; in your editorial comment under the above headline (May 23) your have passed off as a fact something which is untrue. You say : "The Anuradhapura massacre was further aggravated by the senseless shooting at the Bo tree, an act of sacrilege calculated to inflame Buddhist passions". May I refer you to the Sri Lanka government's OWN communique published in your OWN paper (15/5) :- "The communique said no damage had been done to the sacred Bodhi tree". The same report spoke about shooting "in the area around the Sri Maha Bodhi, the world's oldest tree ...", not shooting AT the Bodhi tree. I hope you will have the courage to retract your statement, or at least in fairness to Truth, publish this letter in full.

S. Sivanayagam

We can understand the difficulty in publishing this letter. There was no defence or explanation that the Editor could have offered. It could have further eroded on the credibility of the paper.

But the question to be answered is : Why is the INDIAN Express so unashamedly pro-SRI LANKAN ? ■

May Diary

Government Terrorism and Liberation Struggle in Tamil Eelam :

May 1 :	Big security alert in Colombo for May day.
May 2 :	D.M.K. MP L. Ganeshan says in the Rajya Sabha that India's desire for a negotiated settlement had only emboldened Sri Lankan government to surround Tamil areas by armed forces.
May 3 :	<p>Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi reiterates Indian Government's concern for Sri Lanka Tamils while speaking at the Rajya Sabha and says they had to see that the refugees went back with honour, safety and all freedom to work and live there.</p> <p>In Colombo, National Security Minister Lalith Athylathmudali tells AFP that Home Guards have found 116 bodies, some of them decomposed, in a jungle in north-east Sri Lanka. The report was given to the Mutur police.</p> <p>Karainagar naval base attacked by Tamil militants for the second time. Simultaneously, Gurunagar army camp and Jaffna Fort housing the police station also attacked. Militants mine the road from Jaffna to Karainagar to prevent army reinforcements. Casualties reported on both sides, including Lebanon - trained Chinnavan of the EPRLF military wing.</p> <p>Armed men stop private bus with Tamil passengers going from Colombo to Jaffna around mid-night near Chilaw, rob passengers of all cash and jewellery and valuables. Two women passengers raped.</p>
May 4 :	<p>Gandhi Kamaraj National Congress leader Kumari Anandan urges India to bring back Kachchaitivu Island under India's occupation.</p> <p>In Colombo, Lalith Athulathmudali says that an investigation had revealed no trace of the discovery of the 116 bodies in a jungle in north-east Sri Lanka.</p> <p>More than 1000 Tamils in Karainagar area flee their homes after armed forces go on rampage.</p>
May 5 :	In Kalmunai in the eastern province, Tamil militants blast 2-storey District Education Officer's building, razing it to the ground. The building was to be converted into an army camp.
May 6 :	<p>In Colombo, Minister Thondaman urges recognition to the Tamil Liberation forces.</p> <p>Over 4400 D.M.K. Volunteers arrested for picketing post offices in connection with agitation on behalf of Sri Lanka Tamils.</p>
May 7 :	<p>Five soldiers killed near Valvettiturai in the north when Tamil militants blast an army truck.</p> <p>Troops go on a rampage near Murikandy and kill several Tamils.</p>
May 8 :	<p>Sri Lanka cabinet takes "strong exception" to statement made by Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Khurshed Alam Khan, and threatens to boycott South Asian Regional Conference meeting in Bhutan.</p> <p>Australian Foreign Minister Bill Hayden in New Delhi expresses concern over Sri Lanka and calls for political solution.</p> <p>TULF leader Amirthalingam tells Indian Express that any future talks between the Sri Lankan government and Tamils will not be meaningful unless militant groups also participate in them.</p>
May 9 :	<p>48 Sri Lankan soldiers killed in TELO attack on army camp at Kokkavil near Murikandy.</p> <p>In Valvettiturai, Major Sri Lal Mendis and 5 soldiers killed in grenade attack by lone LTTE guerrilla.</p> <p>In Colombo, several Sri Lankan Ministers demand cancellation of Australian Foreign Minister Bill Hayden's visit because of "derogatory statement" made by him.</p> <p>PTI correspondent in Colombo Krishan Anand arrested by Sri Lanka police, interrogated 5½ hours and later lodged in maximum security Welikade prison.</p> <p>India lodges protest with Sri Lanka government against arrest of PTI correspondent.</p> <p>TULF leader Amirthalingam leaves for Australia on a 10-day tour.</p> <p>Over 200 Tamils killed and hundreds missing when armed forces go on rampage on the northern coast extending from Thondamanaru to Point Pedro. Violence begins in the early hours and continue unabated till late evening in combined orgy of killing, loot and arson in Thondamanaru, Valvettiturai, Polikandy, Thikkam, Vathiry, Udupidy, Kerudavil, Navindil, Karanavai and Point Pedro. Women raped and elders and children mercilessly killed. Over 50 persons locked up inside a community centre building and blasted alive with bombs. Thousands of people flee inland.</p>

May Diary

Government Terrorism and Liberation Struggle in Tamil Eelam :

<p>May 10 :</p>	<p>Mannar Police station destroyed by assault unit of LTTE and large quantity of arms and ammunition captured by militants.</p> <p>Members of Indian parliament call for release of PTI correspondent.</p> <p>In Thimpu, capital of Bhutan, Sri Lanka boycotts standing commission meeting of SARC.</p> <p>PTI correspondent Anand released on bail in Colombo.</p> <p>TULF President M. Sivasithamparam tells PTI that there was little hope of the party returning to the negotiating table. Asked if the militants should be invited for talks, he said all those engaged in the "Liberation struggle" should be invited.</p> <p>TULF President M. Sivasithamparam urges in a telegram to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to take immediate and effective steps to put an end to the genocide of Tamils in the north.</p> <p>In London two British MP's report on "substantial" violation of Human Rights in Sri Lanka against Tamils, in a report published by the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group.</p>
<p>May 11 :</p>	<p>Jaffna public library, once burnt by Sri Lanka policemen in 1981 again attacked with bombs. Reading room, lobby and other areas of the building damaged.</p>
<p>May 12 :</p>	<p>Sri Lanka changes its mind and agrees to participate in SARC meeting in Bhutan.</p> <p>12 Sri Lankan soldiers killed and several others injured when Liberation Tigers ambush army convoy on the Kodikamam-Kandy road, about 20km. from Jaffna.</p> <p>13 Sri Lankan Police Commandos killed and several others seriously injured at Uppuveli and Sampaltivu near Trincomalee in the course of 2 ambushes by Liberation Tigers.</p> <p>In Kalviankadu village in Jaffna about 500 army men harass women and children, ransack homes and rob jewellery and valuables on the pretext of combing the area for "terrorists".</p>
<p>May 13 :</p>	<p>President Jayewardene sends his Foreign Policy adviser Esmond Wickremasinghe as special envoy to Delhi.</p> <p>D.M.K. President M. Karunanidhi elected chairman of Thamil Eelam Supporters Organisation, (TESO), a new outfit sponsored by DMK, DK, Kamaraj Congress and other parties.</p> <p>Several Tamils killed and over 300 houses set on fire by the army in the Kilinochchi area in the past few days according to a statement by TELO.</p>
<p>May 14 :</p>	<p>Shock waves throughout Sri Lanka when over 150 Sinhala civilians are massacred in Anuradhapura. Government rushes doctors, nurses and medicine and appeals to the people to remain calm.</p> <p>Young Tamil expectant mother of we two children from Kalviankadu complains to Jaffna G.A. of sex assault by army men who had come on house search of the area. She was later hospitalised.</p>
<p>May 15 :</p>	<p>Angry over police and army ineffectiveness in preventing Anuradhapura killings, Sinhala mobs stone Anuradhapura police station.</p> <p>Navy men in civils attack Tamil passengers in a boat off Delft island in the north, killing 48 and injuring several others. Government denies navy men were involved but state that investigation will be ordered.</p> <p>Gurunagar Army Camp in Jaffna closes down! 160 flats in the area ear-marked for army personnel to be handed over to members of the public.</p> <p>Sinhalese army corporal shoots down six Tamils in Anuradhapura who were among 25, who had sought refuge in an army camp. Government later says the corporal who became temporarily "mad" was shot and killed in turn by a Major.</p>
<p>May 16 :</p>	<p>President Jayewardene's Foreign Affairs adviser Esmond Wickramasinghe calls on Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.</p> <p>D.M.K. President Karunanidhi arrested along with thousand party volunteers at Kanchipuram for picketing a post office in connection with agitation on behalf of Sri Lanka Tamils.</p>
<p>May 17 :</p>	<p>Sporadic violence continues in some part of the Island. Seven Tamils killed in Vavuniya by armed Sinhalese.</p>

May Diary

Government Terrorism and Liberation Struggle in Tamil Eelam :

<p>May 18</p>	<p>In London B.B.C. commentary alludes to the possibility of Sri Lankan army resorting to mutiny.</p> <p>Four active Tamil militant groups composed of LTTE, TELO, EROS and EPRLF issue joint statement condemning Anuradhapura killings.</p> <p>Reports reach Madras that about 40 Tamil youths were buried alive during the previous 48 hours by armed forces in Kalmunai district. The youths were ordered at gun point to dig their own graves.</p> <p>Another 16 Tamils killed in Trincomalee by armed personnel under cover of unofficial curfew.</p> <p>In Jaffna army men suspecting an attempt to blow up the Jaffna Fort by Tamil militants set fire to the air-conditioned Regal Cinema and kill at random several Tamils in the vicinity.</p> <p>Sri Lanka government to buy 9 British-built "Cougar" naval boats to be fitted with 22 mm guns, and carry a crew of eleven. The boats have a cruising speed of 50 knots and a range of 400 km. Delivery of all boats to be completed by September. Two British built 46 seater Avro planes also purchased for transporting troops from Colombo to Jaffna. China to supply more patrol boats and T-56 assault rifles. Pakistan to supply small arms and ammunition including AK-47 and M-16 rifles.</p>
<p>May 20</p>	<p>Tamil militants belonging to EROS blow up Manampitiya bridge. Two Policemen killed and 3 injured.</p> <p>Opposition members in India's Rajya Sabha urge government to take steps to stop continuing atrocities on Sri Lankan Tamils. EROS militants ambush police commando team at Kiran about 16 km from Valaicheni on the east coast. Government admits death of five police commandos and injuries to seven others.</p>
<p>May 21</p>	<p>In Holland, Dutch government decision to send the majority of some three thousand Tamils, seeking asylum in the Netherlands back to Sri Lanka, sparks protest from refugee organisations.</p>
<p>May 22</p>	<p>Australian Foreign Minister Bill Hayden on a visit to Sri Lanka says in Colombo that while his country upheld the sovereignty and integrity of Sri Lanka, there was no reason for Australia to support suppression.</p>
<p>May 23</p>	<p>President Jayewardene tells the ruling UNP parliamentary group meeting that he will not hesitate to impose martial law if the need arises. He also said that MPs may be conferred with executive power.</p>
<p>May 23</p>	<p>An American, Mathew Flanagan wounded by police fire in Colombo. Police sources say Flanagan, failed to obey a 'halt' order during a sudden black-out.</p>
<p>May 23</p>	<p>PTI correspondent in Colombo Krishan Anand acquitted and case against him withdrawn.</p> <p>Opposition leader Anura Bandaranaike predicts in Colombo that President Jayewardene will visit new Delhi "within the next two weeks".</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>Nearly 200 Tamils taken into custody in Colombo during a combined house-to-house search operation by police and army in predominantly Tamil localities.</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>Sri Lanka sets up a joint operations council to direct security operations with President Jayewardene as chairman.</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>TULF leaders A. Amirthalingam, M. Sivasithambaram and R. Sambanathan arrive in New Delhi from Madras for consultations.</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari leaves for Colombo.</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>Several influential US Congressmen to discuss Sri Lankan issue with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, it is announced in Washington.</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv to meet "in the next few days", according to Cabinet spokesmen in Colombo.</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>In London, British Home Office announces that all Sri Lanka citizens should get visas before seeking entry to UK. This follows sharp increase in the past week of Tamils arriving at Heathrow Airport.</p>
<p>May 24</p>	<p>TULF leader urges India to set conditions before having further talks with the Jayewardene's government. President Jayewardene to arrive in Delhi on June 1st according to a New Delhi report and hold discussions with Rajiv Gandhi on June 2nd.</p> <p>D.M.K. leader Karunanidhi released at Kanchipuram.</p>

David Selbourne on Sri Lanka

TAMIL POPULATION IS DROPPING !

David Selbourne was on a lecture tour to the United States recently. Here is a report published in the student newspaper of the University of Maryland, the DIAMONDBACK.

Sri Lanka, once a peaceful island, has become an economic and political disaster area plagued by the persecution of its Tamil minority, according to a leading British political analyst.

Speaking to about 100 people in the computer science building yesterday, David Selbourne, a Sri Lanka government specialist and reporter for the Manchester Guardian, said Sri Lanka's crimes against the country's 18-per cent Tamil minority should be an international concern. He added that thousands of Tamil refugees seek havens in other nations.

"Much of what has been happening in Sri Lanka is painfully evident," Selbourne said. "There have been significant attacks on the (Tamil) minority community. People in this room will deny these continuous torrents of violence," he added, as several Sri Lankan natives in the audience shouted their dissent.

When the outbursts ended, Selbourne told of atrocities he said the Sri Lankan

government has committed against the Tamils.

The 2,000-year conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamils will probably will never be resolved, he said.

"It would require very great wisdom that is not found in Colombo," the Sri Lankan capital, Selbourne said. "The problems are very deep-seated. I believe that these cynical (Sinhalese) politicians have no intention of seeking political accommodations with the Tamil movement."

Attempts at negotiation between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in the late 1950s, and again in 1982-84, broke down and violence ensued, Selbourne said.

In July 1983, tensions between the two groups erupted and more than 2,000 Tamils were massacred by the government, Selbourne said. "Nobody will know just how many people were incinerated."

Selbourne described an incident in which two Tamil sisters were brought out into a Colombo street and murdered. An 11-year-old girl, he said, was out with a knife by a Sri Lanka Soldier and decapitated. Her sister, 18, watched her die before being raped and then set afire, Selbourne said.

According to Selbourne, such incidents spurred many journalists like himself to expose the tragedy occurring in the tiny South Asian country.

"This is why journalists want to see a resolution," Selbourne said. "More hundreds of people have died since the massacres in 1983. Ambush and collected punishment symbolize this vortex of destruction."

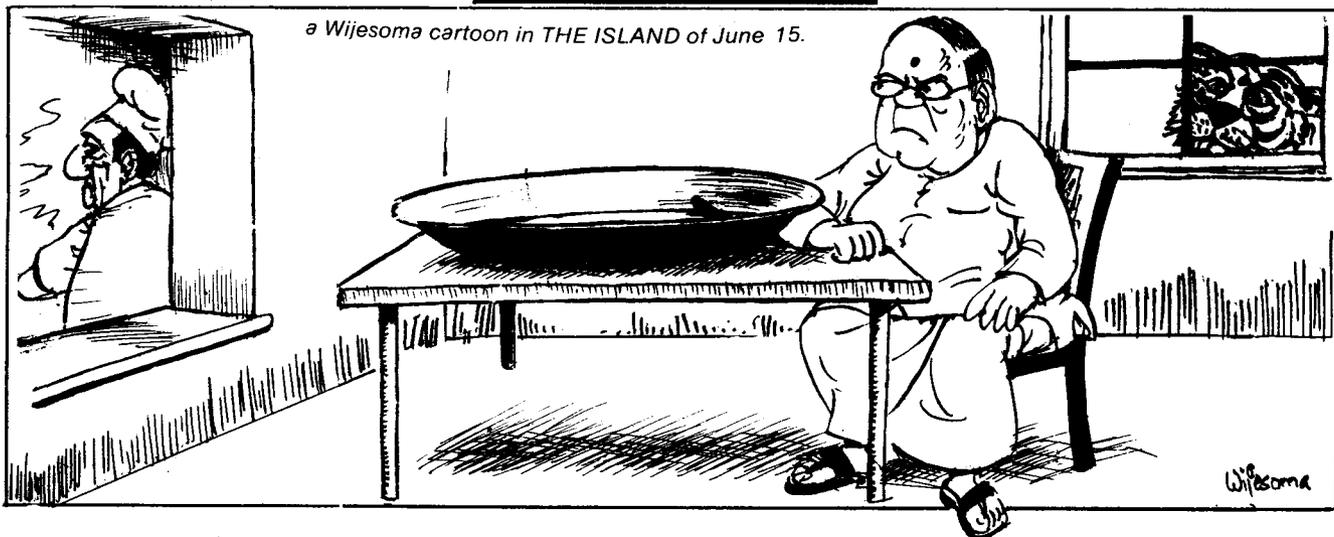
The Tamil population in Sri Lanka decreased from 27 per cent in 1909 to its current 18 per cent, and continues to drop in the ongoing bloodshed and increasing exodus of the persecuted, Selbourne said.

The United States still considers Sri Lanka a democracy — an assumption Selbourne said is completely wrong because Sri Lanka has a 12-year-old appointed parliament; its government bars elections and not only denies the Tamil party political representation, but has proclaimed it illegal as well, he said.

And the Tamils are not the only victims of the current system, Selbourne said, explaining that the Sinhalese will never be able to live in peace until the Tamils are granted rights and autonomy.

Both the Sinhalese and the Tamils have a minority complex, he said, explaining that though the Tamils are a minority in Sri Lanka, 50 million of them live in nearby India.

He said while the Tamils have the power to overwhelm the Sinhalese, he doubts that will ever happen. But "a fear of a greater Tamil force scares the Sinhalese."



How the government lost the scent at Wilpattu !

Wilpattu is Sri Lanka's biggest Wild Life Park. Bordering the sea on the west, it is a sanctuary for Elephant, Leopard, Deer Bear and other wild life and is a foremost tourist attraction as well. Although Sri Lanka has no tigers of its own, May 14 saw the entry of two-legged "Tigers" for the first time into this wild life park ! And wasn't the acting Park Warden Abraham shocked ?

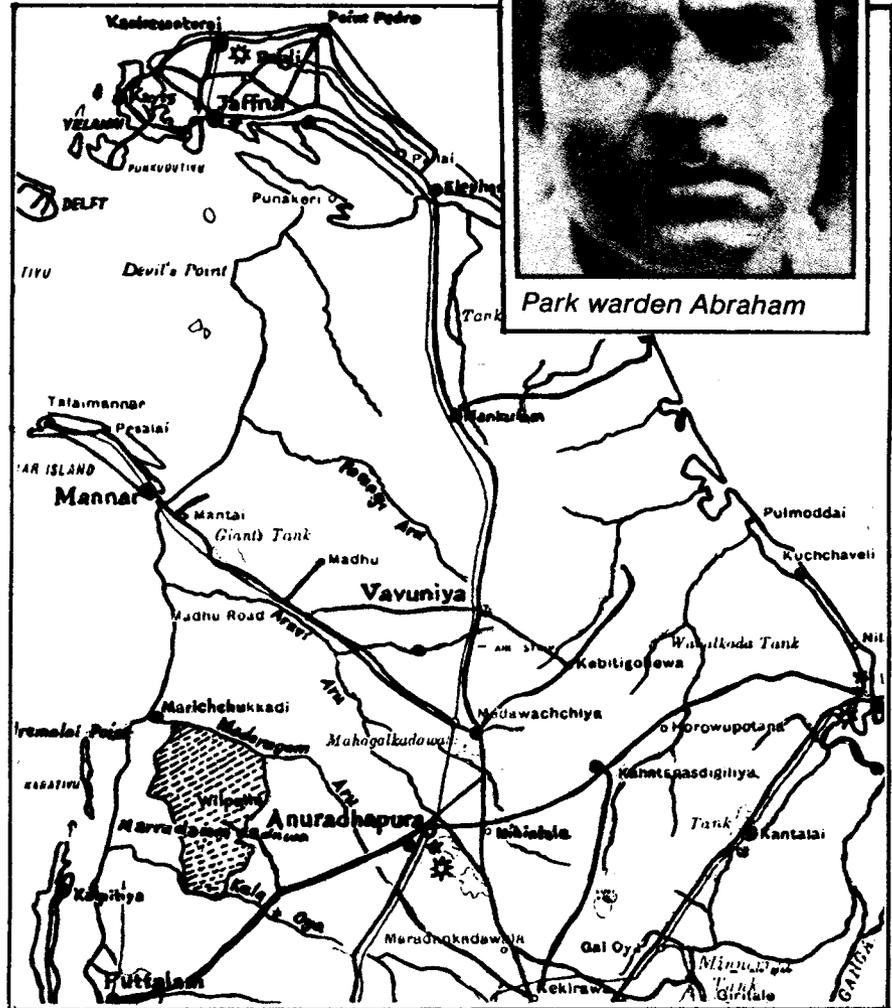
The day's events began of course at Anuradhapura. Government newspaper columnist Spectator of the Daily News said in his column five days after the Anuradhapura incident : "The Anuradhapura tragedy has jolted the government to a fresh realization for intensified security arrangements. The brazen manner in which terrorists stormed Anuradhapura, though apparently well fortified, has shaken even the Security Council which met in the wake of the terrorist swoop".

What happened thereafter at Wilpattu was the subject of the lead story in the same government newspaper, the Daily news, on May 20. Reporter William de Alwis wrote this account :

Business had been slack at Wilpattu, and when the coachload of what they thought were local tourists pulled up at Hunuwilagama on Tuesday morning, it was a welcome sight.

Silpadhithage Abraham, the acting park warden, ran his eye over the roster of park trackers for the day. One would have to be assigned to this party and he wondered whether the man was at hand.

A moment later he was staring into the barrel of an A K-47 and the truth of what was happening crashed home with mind-numbing suddenness. He had heard of terrorists, and he was now looking one straight in the eye - a bearded young Tamil who could hardly be 25-years old, but who held his weapon with the ease of the expert.



Park warden Abraham

"Within minutes they had us lined up with our hands up... there were around twenty-five of them and each was going about his work, some looking for serviceable vehicles, others rounding up the men in our quarters..."

Abraham, the 45-year-old wild life department man who was of the few who lived through that rampage of murder, told the "Daily News" yesterday of his ordeal.

"Six of our people were shot as they stood in a row. I waited for my turn, thinking my last thoughts of my wife Somalatha, and our 10-year-old son Dharshaka... I had seen one of the terrorists walk into my quarters." (Both Somalatha and Dharshaka escaped when the terrorists who searched her for jewellery walked back to a comrade looking for a weapon).

"They asked me why the jeeps would not start, where the keys were and where the drivers were... Of course I did not tell them the truth. We usually immobilise

our vehicles at night as a precaution against this type of thing".

He saw driver Subasinghe offering to start a jeep without an ignition key. "Subasinghe had always been a witty one... he was among the first five to die."

Abraham told me he was asked to guide the group to Poonkulam on the north-west boundary of the park. He was pushed into the only Land Rover which worked and they moved on.

I was asked to sit between the driver and another in the land rover and show them the way. The rest followed in the coach. "They seemed disappointed that they had not been able to secure more land vehicles, and were in hurry.

"On the way we met Bandara ... a veteran tracker, he was also asked to get into the vehicle". (Bandara is still missing and not counted among the dead).

Abraham said the driver of his vehicle

was not very efficient at the wheel and the man next to him seemed so confident of himself that he even placed his sub-machine gun on his captive's lap.

"A little while later he also placed a grenade on my lap, and I remember thinking I could blow us all up if only..."

At Maradammaduwa, the jeep lodged two wheels in loose earth, and a gang of labourers and department men who were working with Game Ranger Wilson came up to help.

"I tried to signal them away, but the terrorist beside me slapped my wrist down... We all got down, and our men joked as they walked up..."

"Just then a helicopter was heard overhead... this was at Maradammaduwa where there is cover from the jungles and everyone was asked to crouch low.

They removed our multicoloured shirts and hid them, and they took up position to fire at the helicopter if it came within range...

"I was placed near the man who had a very serious gut wound... and I saw the patch which I could take if I was to make a break... The chance came and I took it, moving casually at first and running for dear life as I reached thicker cover".

Abraham fell into the waters of the Maradammaduwa and walked into it among the weeds. He remained there neck deep. He heard the spatter of machine gun fire and the vehicles move away.

"I moved out of hiding and met Moonesinghe, a 25-year-old labourer with whom I began to walk back towards Hunuwilagama... We walked into a rearguard of four terrorists then ... and ran. Their bullets

struck all around me. Once I fell in a pool of water and though I had been hit. A while later I felt myself over and as there was no blood I began running again. They fired again and again I escaped".

Abraham kept to the jungle from then on, and reached Hunuwilagama more than four hours after the terrorist attack began. His first thought was for his wife and son.

Mercifully they were alive, and so were quite a number his colleagues who had made a dash into the jungle when they knew what was happening.

With Abraham in Colombo yesterday was E.V.P. Sirisena, who owes his life to the fact that he had a late night and was asleep when the terrorists struck.

"My quarters are nearly 100 yards from the office, and when I awoke I had enough time to run without being spotted..."

Tamil guerrilla fighters training in Sri Lanka"

NEWSWEEK
photograph
June 17



Anuradhapura and After

are against us, they are terrorists and we will arrest them and so on and in a few days time we will teach them a lesson, well, that is not a sensible way to approach this problem. I say, Sir, as far as this House is concerned, we should jointly appeal. As far as I am concerned I appeal to all those groups who are fighting, the militant groups among the Tamil people, to cease fire immediately and pursue the political option, because the President has said in the presence of Mr. Romesh Bhandari at Inginiyitiya that he is prepared to discuss with them if they cease fire. So we appeal to them to cease fire and appeal to the government to start discussions with them.

Secondly, the Prime Minister is on record as having said in this House that if they cease fire, at 12 o'clock at 12.05 the army will be withdrawn to barracks. What is the position today? Apart from the chaos that is

happening in the Sinhala areas, in the Tamil areas, according to the information that I have, there has never been a time of such insecurity as now. So the people will welcome the ceasing of all military activities on both sides and the beginning of talks.

Now, Sir, I want to ask the government if it is aware that the Rev. Bellanwila Wimalaratana

(Mr. Laliath Athulath Mudali)

If your appeal for a cease fire is accepted there will be no difficulty on the part of the government to respond.

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

Very good. Then Sir, I make the appeal with all the more vehemence that I can that this should immediately happen. You should start the process, negotiate with them and then try to come to a settlement.

Sir, Rev. Bellanwila Wimalaratana is alleged to have

told the Asgiriya Meeting that the United Religious Organisation was trying to set up a meeting in Singapore with these militants and possibly with the Government. As far as I know somebody on the part of the Government is alleged to have had some discussions with certain groups. I believe the Minister for Rural Industries had discussions at one time (Interruption) I say it is very good to have discussions.

(A Member)

Why are you bringing in a Vote of No Confidence?

(Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama)

There is no vote of no-confidence. You want one to be brought or what? If you want, somebody can table one!

Then, Sir, Gamani Navaratna of the "Saturday Review", went and met these people in Madras; he has published it in the "Saturday Review" and said that they are

Continued from Page 24

prepared to talk. Sir, I want to tell the Government that it is a very complicated situation because this is not like where you are fighting one group. If you are fighting one unified group, it is easier for the group, it is easier for you. You are fighting a multitude of groups, may be over 30. It is difficult to get a consensus for any particular step. I suppose, amongst all those groups. We have worked in trade unions, we know that when there are rival trade unions, one trade union puts up a Rs.100 wages demand and the other trade union shoots it up to Rs. 200 and it goes on like that. So there is that problem but it is a problem that has to be tackled by some serious negotiations.

All I can say on behalf of the people of this country on behalf of the Sinhala masses and Tamil masses, is that nothing can work now except a cease-fire and your military solution will never work. It will go on. I think you yourself one day said about a 'no win situation. (Interruption) No. Irish rebels have been fighting in Britain. All sorts of groups have been fighting on ethnic issues; there is no win or no defeat. And I want to say that your Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne, the Head of the Army, told Reuters, "We can never win this, our writ does not run beyond the sand bags that cover our camps, and we can only do a holding operation." What more do you want? I am not going to say that you are going to loose this battle. You are not going to suddenly cave in and surrender but you are not going to win it, going on like this, and in the process every day policemen are going to die, army officers are going to die and now, as it is, civilians are going to die and Tamil civilians are going to die. How long more are you going to wait? Must these people die in thousands before you think of a political solution? Must they die in millions? What is the meaning of this? Is it not enough what we have had?

True, it is not entirely a matter on your side; it is a matter that requires a response from the other side. But you cannot sit here and make statements. "Those who are not with us are all terrorists, I will destroy these people" do this, do that, do the other thing and expect this to happen. It certainly cannot happen. A mood for such a reconciliation cannot exist if there is attack and counter-attack on both sides. If Anuradhapura is repeated, if Valvettiturai is repeated, if Kuthiramalai is repeated, then there will not be anything. Sir, we have to stop this straightaway and get down to the process of negotiations.

As far as the negotiations are concerned, I hope the Members of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party will not think me too presumptuous if I were to say this: that it is imperative, history has shown that it is imperative that the Sri Lanka Freedom Party takes an active part in those negotiations because it is not possible for any Sinhala party, basically the main Sinhala party, to make concessions to the Tamil people without the co-operation of the other side. The Bandaranaike Chelvanayagam Pact, the Dudley Senanayake Chelvanayagam Pact and more recently the All Party Conference all show that unless it is an all-embracing settlement, neither the United National Party nor the Sri Lanka Freedom Party will be able to settle this by way of negotiation. Sir, I want to say that there is enough basis on which to settle it. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party has the Bandaranaike Chelvanayagam Pact, the United National Party has Annexure C. These are all bases for starting a discussion.

As far as the Communist Party and the other Left parties are concerned, I think we will support wholeheartedly by a negotiated settlement of this problem. (Interruption) Well, as far as I know, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Mahajana Party because I have had discussions with them; I do not know, there may be others also (Interruption). But whatever settlement, a reasonable, fair settlement, if it is a settlement that both sides are accepting, we will support it even if we

do not think it is a proper settlement because what we want is an end to this killing, because as far as we can see there is no way out. We have reached an impasse. You are in the middle of the tunnel, you do not know whether to go to that end of the tunnel or this end of the tunnel, you are going to be in the middle for a long time. So that is the position.

As far as we are concerned, Sir, I want to reiterate the position of the Communist Party in respect of this matter. We have our own solution, which is a solution that can only be brought in a socialist way. It has been all over the world in socialist countries. There are autonomous minority ethnic groups within socialist countries. Some are federals; others are autonomous bodies. That is another matter. However, while conceding to the Tamil people their right to determine their own future, the Communist Party itself does not advocate the setting up of a separate State. We do not advocate it, not out of some great power chauvinism that we feel as Sinhalese, not because of some old history; we do not advocate it because we do not think that it will be in the interest of the working people of either the Sinhalese or the Tamil Community. We do not advocate it because we do not think that the small States that would result from a carving out of Sri Lanka States which Lenin characterized as dwarf States we do not think that dwarf State of that nature would be able to retain their political independence, would be able to exercise their economic viability or even in fact, to retain their geographical feasibility, because they will be too small; they will be swallowed up by other States. We do not advocate the setting up of a separate State, but we certainly feel that the Tamil people, just as much as the Sinhalese people, are entitled to all the rights that we have. We believe that Tamil people must be given some high degree of autonomy to run their own affairs, to decide the course of their lives, to decide what they should do for themselves and for their future children. We believe unless that is done there will be no settlement and we call upon this Government you have been dilly-dallying for so long, you have failed in the military option, you have not exercised the political option, you are frightened you who have the responsibility of ruling this country, to get together with the other parties and solve this problem. Otherwise, you are going to lead all of us into a situation where we would not know whether they are coming or going.

Then, Sir, I want to speak about this Emergency. As far as I am concerned, I have opposed this Emergency regularly. I do not see any reason to change my attitude now, because this Emergency has proved to be futile. You have all the powers of the Emergency. But for one hour people stalked about Anuradhapura town shooting at innocent civilians. With all the Emergency powers that you have, nothing was done to stop that. The Prime Minister said there was nobody to shoot at a tyre of a vehicle. I know of a very good person to deal with tyres; anyway, I would not say that now, that is the position. Nobody to fire! the point is this. This is military option? I am asking you today, if there is an attack further down South, what are you going to do the military? You do not need 16 people. You just need one man with a self-repeating revolver just some maniac to come and do this because of some either real or imaginary grievance. Your military option, I will tell you can never stop it, because your military option is exercised according to the time-tables of the attackers and not according to your time-tables. The location is decided by them, the time is decided by them and you have to just wait for something to happen. Even when you get information you do not act upon it, as it happened in Anuradhapura. That is why I say that this Emergency is futile and I will oppose it.

Now something much worse is happening. Sir, the Government has been saying, "This a Marxist plot". As I said earlier, this is a very convenient peg on which to hang inconvenient clothes. Now this is gradually unfolding. For the last three days, under this very Emergency which we are now debating, several people have been

arrested, not terrorist not even Tamils. Sinhalese people are also now being arrested. The day before yesterday a lawyer in Avissawella who is said to be having sympathies with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna appeared in Court and when he came out of Court he was arrested. He is Mr. Saman Wickramabandu. A teacher who was teaching in a school in Balapitiya and who follows a diploma class in the University on weekends, one Dhanasiri, was arrested. There were no charges; he was just arrested. You are now gradually building up, like in July 1983, some alibi. At one time you were saying that Mr. Balasingham has said that there is going to be trouble in the South and that Leftists in the South are going to create trouble, that is, to help the people in the North. Now what has happened? It is not Leftists in the town it is well known that they are in the South but people who came from the North to the South who did this.

Now you are trying to arrest Sinhalese people militants, leftists and JVPers. Only God knows where the net will spread in the future. Only God knows where it is going to spread. His Excellency the President says, "All those who are not with us are terrorists". What is the future for us? We are not with him. So are we terrorists? The SLFP are not with him. Are they terrorists? Some of the Buddhist priests who are performing Satyagraha are not with him. Are they terrorists? I do not agree with the demands they are making, but that is another matter. There are all sorts of parties here such as the MEP, the JVP and so on. None of these parties are with him. But are they to be branded as terrorists?

What is going to happen then? You are then going to misuse this Emergency as you misused it during the time of the student trouble. You are going to misuse this Emergency and arrest your political opponents and make a big international story that there is a big Marxist plot to overthrow the Government. Therefore, I say this is an attempt by the Government to try to put some different hue on this whole story.

I want to say that in Sri Lanka I do not want to take any more time than is allotted to me we are living on the edge of a crisis. We are living on the brink of democracy. I think we have already passed the brink in some way. You know that I have repeatedly said earlier that if you go on dilly-dallying like this there is a danger that other people will think of using the situation to come to power. I have said that earlier. Even the UNP Government is better than a military dictatorship. Much as we oppose you, even you are better than a military dictatorship. But at the way you are going, you are leading this country towards only God knows what.

May be that some people feel secure in those situations. But as far as the people of this country are concerned we have fought for the liberty, that we enjoy. We have fought for the rights. We have fought for political and for trade union freedom and I do not think people are going to give those up very easily in this country. That is the position.

At one stage I had some serious doubts whether you ever wanted to solve this problem because as I said in one of the earlier Emergency debates this is like the beggar's sore. It can go on. But now it has gone completely beyond control. You have to settle this, and you have to settle this by negotiation. I want to tell you that if you seriously appeal the Government, the SLFP and all the groups together to the Tamil militants to cease fire and discuss, and tell them that you are prepared to discuss, that you are prepared to make the concessions, not necessarily through war but through discussion and negotiation, that you are prepared for a via media where we will learn to live together, then I think there will be some response from that side. Otherwise, if you go on like this you will completely put this whole country one hundred years back and we will be a country where there will be no civilization left and as on one occasion the father of the Hon. Minister for Maharagama said, the Neanderthal man stalks the land.

TAMIL Information

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- Sri Lanka
- Switzerland
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- U.S.A.
- U.S.S.R.
- Yemen
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

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