

# Tamil TIMES

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## ★ SRI LANKA DRIFTING INTO ANARCHY ★



*Rohana Wijeweera, JVP leader*

- ★ JVP'S CAMPAIGN OF DISRUPTION
- ★ *JAFFNA – PEACE AMIDST WAR*
- ★ **POLITICS OF THE 'UNIDENTIFIED GUNMAN'**
- ★ ELECTION FEVER IN TAMIL NADU

### ★ THE ILL-FATED COUP



*The alleged leader of the abortive plot to topple the Maldives Government being led handcuffed at the end of a rope through Male on 9.11.88, as Mr Abdulla Lutifjee, aged 38, was led ashore after being captured by Indian forces who helped to squash the coup attempt which was hatched in a poultry farm near the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. A second Maldivian, Mr Saagar Nazeer, was also paraded through the streets of Male.*

- ★ **LTTE TO CONSIDER  
OPPOSITION PROPOSALS**
- ★ *IN THE KILLING FIELDS OF SRI  
LANKA*
- ★ **INDIA'S LOW INTENSITY WAR**

### ★ TAMIL MERCENARIES ?

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Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor or the publishers.

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## POLITICS OF THE UNIDENTIFIED GUNMEN

Reports are being received from the Tamil areas of the north and east that several people have fallen victims of 'unidentified gunmen'. In the present context of Tamil politics, it does not require much imagination to identify these 'unidentified gunmen'. Additionally we have reliable evidence that these killings are due to internecine armed conflict between Tamil militant groups. The groups concerned, according to our sources, are mainly the EPRLF, ENDLF, TELO and the LTTE.

It is a fact that the LTTE is currently engaged in a military confrontation with the IPKF and the latter is busy trying to subdue the former with a view to ensuring the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, the process of this confrontation, it is also a fact that the LTTE has been militarily weakened and its leadership scattered.

On the other hand, it is also not a secret that the EPRLF, ENDLF and TELO have the support of the IPKF because these three groups have agreed to the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. In fact they have participated in the Provisional Council elections and are expected to assume control of the newly constituted North-East Provincial Council.

In this context, without commenting on the rights and wrongs of the respective positions of the LTTE on the one hand and the three groups on the other, it is understandable that there is considerable rivalry.

We are also not unmindful of the internecine armed conflicts that took place long before the arrival of the IPKF. That was the time when the LTTE had superior military might. The first casualty to this superior might of the LTTE was the TELO which was virtually liquidated. Thereafter, the EPRLF was confronted with a similar fate, although it was not liquidated totally. PLOTE on the other hand made a timely retreat from the Jaffna peninsula and other areas before it was dealt with in the same manner. Whatever reasons the LTTE gave for these actions, the fact of the matter is that it prevented other groups from operating among the people by the use of superior violence on the part of LTTE. At that time we did not hesitate to condemn those actions of the LTTE.

It would seem, from all available evidence, that the EPRLF, ENDLF and TELO are presently bent on settling old scores against the LTTE. Not only known LTTE members are being targetted, but even family members, distant relatives and others who are sus-

pected of having rendered material assistance to the LTTE in the past are falling victims in this campaign of brutal revenge. While the IPKF itself is gunning for the LTTE in order to subdue it, these groups with the support and protection of the IPKF are said to be engaged in the process of liquidating the LTTE so that it may not raise its head again. Now we have no hesitation in condemning the actions of these groups.

Besides, let them be warned that the IPKF is not likely to be of assistance to them for ever. Sooner or later the IPKF will leave, and these groups will find themselves deprived of the support and protection they are receiving now. Does it require much intelligence or foresight to anticipate what will happen then.

The bane of the Tamil resistance movement has been the capacity of the different Tamil militant groups to turn the gun against each other. There is a total absence of a sense of fraternal feeling as groups, despite differences, engaged in a common cause – a cause to serve the community, although that is what they all claim they are doing. They are obsessed with group loyalty to such a fanatical extent, they do not have a common feeling of belonging to the same community. They do not even share anything in common as human beings. The only thread that seems to connect these groups is their mutual desire to eliminate each other.

There was a time when Tamils living in the south of the island turned to the north and east fearing actual and potential violence in the south. Now thousands of Tamils, even members of the militant groups, are crowding in Colombo and its suburbs because of the fear of violence in the Tamil areas not by the security forces of the Sri Lankan regime, but by members of this or that militant group. The safety of the south cannot be guaranteed in the unfolding developments there. As has happened in the past, forces are still there which can mischievously manipulate the situation to produce generalised anti-Tamil violence as a means of diverting the present thrust of developments.

In this context, it is time that the Tamil militant groups reassess their attitude to each other respecting the democratic right of existence of all groups, whether militant or non-militant, whatever their differences may be. The practice of the gun culture through the phenomenon of the 'unidentified gunman' should give way to the practice of civilised democratic discussion. That is the only way they can serve the community. That is the only way they can avoid self-destruction.

# COLOMBO NEWSLETTER

by Chithra

## SRI LANKA DRIFTING INTO ANARCHY

Ordinarily, the Presidential elections for which nominations closed on 10 November and to be held on 19 December would and should have dominated the political scene in Sri Lanka. On the contrary what is engaging the minds of the people, the government and the media is the widespread disruption of civilian life and social order accompanied by murder and generalised mayhem.

In the current state of affairs, the Presidential election campaign would appear to have become peripheral to the main need for the restoration of normal conditions. While the Presidential candidates, R. Premadasa for the UNP, Mrs. Srima Bandaranaike for the SLFP and six-party opposition Front, and Mr. Ossie Abeygunasekera for the SLMP, are preoccupied with their campaign strategies, there is a much different and violent tragic drama that is being staged out on the streets in which the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) is playing a leading role.

The people living in the south of the island, who had led a relatively cosy and peaceful existence, the Tamils of the north and east were going through years of traumatic violence and counter-violence, suddenly find themselves caught up in an epidemic of 'hartals' and 'strikes' enforced by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Terror tactics employed by the JVP ensured that the people obeyed the hartal call. Often people learn about the launching of the hartal only the previous day through leaflets or posters or through friends who have read or seen them. Sometimes they learn about it as they come out of their homes when they find the roads deserted without vehicles or shops being shut.

### Enforced Strikes

The posters or leaflets would ask shop-keepers to shut, bus operators to cease running their vehicles, hotels and restaurants to close etc. on a stated day accompanied by threats of dire consequences if the hartal order was disobeyed. People were compelled to obey without protest for they knew what had happened to others who did not comply - shop-keepers have been gunned down and hotels made targets of bomb attacks for disobeying.

Then there are the enforced strikes by workers. Whether from an industrial establishment, offices, banks or transport services, the workers are not called out on strike by trade unions to which they belong. Leaflets are distri-

buted in work places or posters put up near them almost ordering the workers to strike often accompanied by threats. When business establishments, hotels etc. are closed, workers are automatically on 'strike'. When transport services are disrupted, those travelling to their workplace are stopped from doing so and remain home-bound or stranded.

The Universities have been closed for a long time due to student unrest. 'O' Level students are made to believe that there is no point in attending classes and sitting examinations as there was no possibility of entering universities which are closed. Students constitute the battering ram in JVP inspired demonstrations. This year the largest number on record, 550,000 have applied to sit the GCE 'O' Level examination scheduled to be held in December. But due to inspired unrest, about 115 schools have been closed.

While the events of the first two weeks of November have almost paralysed economic and social activities and the country was drifting into near anarchy, the situation had deteriorated sufficiently serious during the previous weeks for THE SUNDAY TIMES (Colombo) to editorially lament on 23 October: "With each passing day, the crisis before the nation worsens. The entire education system has come to a standstill, the people no longer have confidence in their security. Shops and mercantile establishments come to a close with a sorry regularity shaking the man on the street about the continued existence of the state".

The JVP's violent campaign has been continuing for several months, mainly in the form of mafia-style political assassinations of government politicians and those belonging to the opposition United Socialist Alliance, and such assassinations were intensified in the months of September and October. The security forces responded with large number of arrests of suspected JVP members.

### 247 Killings in a Month

On 20 October, the government ordered the suspension of military operations against the JVP for one week, and according to the Minister of National Security Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, it was their intention to get the JVP to stop political killings and give the opportunity to the JVP to enter the democratic process. On the same day, as the National Security Minister was making this announcement, the Minister of Parliamentary

Affairs, Vincent Perera, in the course of the debate in parliament on the motion to extend the state of emergency, said that 247 persons had been killed during the period 16 September to October 14. The victims included civilians, militants, security personnel including those belonging to the IPKF. And he added, "A concerted campaign of the so-called belonging to the IPKF. Deshpremi Janatha Vyaparaya (DJV) death squads resulted in 75 political killings during this period".

Clearly the government's order for the suspension of military operations was intended as an olive branch to the JVP. The JVP disappointed the government within 24 hours of the suspension of operations when several UNP and USA members were killed in the spate of unmitigated violence. The victims included a lawyer, Mr. Keerthi Nanda, who was a member of the UNP Working Committee. A bomb attack upon a group of people attending a UNP meeting at Kotahena in Colombo resulted in the death of 7 persons and 70 injured.

Seven opposition parties, the SLFP, ELJP, MEP, DWC, SLMC, ACTC and LP were now making strenuous efforts to form a common front and put out a common programme with Mrs. Srima Bandaranaike as their common candidate in the Presidential elections. These parties were eager to get the JVP also to join the Front. And Anura Bandaranaike, on behalf of the SLFP, was making several pro-JVP statements in public meetings and promising to give cabinet portfolios to the JVP after they came to power. However, the JVP did not officially participate in the opposition Front's meetings, but was presumed to be represented by its front-organisation, the Inter-University Students Federation.

### SLFP not immune

As the opposition Front was making some headway and preparing to back Mrs. Bandaranaike's candidature, the SLFP soon discovered that it too was not immune from JVP's terror tactics. Several SLFP meetings, beginning with the meeting to be held on 21 October at Uva Paranagama had to be cancelled following threatening letters and leaflets distributed by the JVP. Shop keepers and residents of Badulla were instructed by leaflets not to attend SLFP rallies. The leaflets accused the SLFP of being merely interested in winning the Presidential elections and that the SLFP had secretly promised the Indian government not to abrogate the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and not to send back the IPKF. The leaflets signed by the DJV said that the SLFP meetings were banned and speakers at the meeting would be punished. When the SLFP went ahead with the meeting in Badulla on 22 October, a bomb was thrown behind the stage. Five SLFP members were found killed in the area

the same week. Posters appeared in the southern province warning the SLFP organisers of dire consequences if they engaged in political activity.

Leaders of the seven-party opposition front met President Jayawardene on 21 November and submitted their formula for restoration of peaceful conditions in the country. The Front wanted the release of students and political prisoners in custody, an immediate end to all military operations including those of the IPKF and the announcement of dates for the Presidential and general elections and also suggested talks with the JVP. The Front assured him that, if he acceded to their requests, they would persuade those who were engaged in acts of violence to halt such actions. The President would appear to have agreed to meet the opposition delegation again the following week with a response.

#### Priestly intervention

On 22 October, four leading Buddhist Mahanayakes of the Asgriya and Malwatte Chapters and Amarapura and Rammanna Nikayas wrote to the President expressing grave concern at the present situation in the country and urged the government and the general public to take the following steps immediately to bring about peace in the country:

- The Government should notify immediately the dates for the Presidential and parliamentary elections;

- The Parliament should be dissolved and the Presidential and Parliamentary elections should be conducted under a Caretaker Government.

- Meaningful steps, which in general are acceptable to all citizens of Sri Lanka should be taken after dissolution with Party leaders for conducting fair elections in a manner that will win the confidence of the people.

- Party leaders and the general public should conduct their affairs with restraint and patience considering the present dangerous and volatile situation in the country.

The President replied to the Mahanayakes acceding to all their suggestions but said that they could be implemented if all the other political parties, including the JVP were committed to the stated objectives. It was only if the JVP was agreeable to the process that the objectives of the government and the other political parties in this context could be achieved.

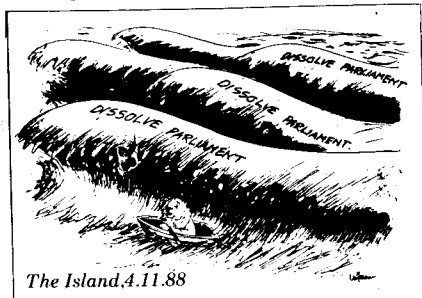
#### JVP'S Hartal

On 25 October, the JVP through posters and leaflets launched a 'hartal' (a day of protest) and called upon every household to send out at least two members of the family on to the streets and workers to stage walkouts from their workplaces to participate in demonstrations in support of JVP demands which included the abrogation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement,

sending out of the Indian Peace Keeping Force, scrapping of the Provincial Councils, dissolution of parliament and the resignation of the President. The 'hartal' call was preceded by a bomb attack on the previous day in Colombo upon a group of people who had gathered for a meeting of the ruling UNP which resulted in the death of seven persons and 70 injured.

In response and presumably fearing further violence on 25 October, the government imposed a dusk to dawn curfew enforced by the army which was under instructions to shoot violators of the curfew on sight.

In Colombo, foreign embassies remained shut and tourists and foreign correspondents were confined to their



The Island, 4.11.88

Jayawardene under mounting pressure hotels. Transport services, including rail and bus, came to a standstill. Offices, factories, banks and shops remained shut. Universities and schools had already been closed for weeks due to student unrest.

Outside Colombo, there were instances of street demonstrations in defiance of the government ban. In certain parts of the island, police fired tear-gas and baton-charged anti-government protesters.

#### President's response

When the leaders of the opposition Front met the President again on 27 October, he assured the opposition that if the 'JVP and associated parties' desisted from violent acts for one week from that day (27th), he would dissolve the Parliament the following Sunday the 6th. He would then form a caretaker government of all political parties, including the JVP; form a cabinet committee to oversee matters pertaining to elections; and appoint an independent committee to monitor the cease-fire. This way it was made unnecessary for the JVP or DJV to sign any statements eschewing violence or to surrender any weapons. Concerning the demand for the resignation President, he replied that he was willing to do so if it would help the situation. But he pointed out that if he did resign, the Prime Minister, R. Premadasa, under the Constitution would have to take over. Whereupon, it is reported that the opposition had stated that they were not insisting on the demand for the President's resignation.

As political assassinations continued, military operations by the government were resumed particularly in the wake the JVP'S raid on the

National Auxiliary Force camp at Pan-nala on 31 October.

On 3 November, JVP launched one of its familiar 'hartals' in memory of one their dead comrades, Athukorale who was alleged to have been killed while in custody. The hartal brought civil administration, transport, government and private establishments to a standstill for the fourth time in six weeks.

Feverish negotiations among the parties of the opposition Front and the representatives of the JVP did not materialise in any concession by the JVP from its original position, nor would it agree to the request to desist from violence so that the Presidential elections could be held under a caretaker government in which all parties could be represented.

The JVP announced that it was calling for a 'national hartal' for three days beginning Monday 6 November. The nominations for the presidential elections were to close on Friday 10. The opposition Front had still not been formally constituted. It appeared that the SLFP's strategy of using the JVP's anti-government campaign to get the give way in regard to many of the opposition's demands, and expecting the JVP to become a junior partner in an opposition block led by the SLFP was failing.

#### Historic meeting

On 5 November, a meeting lasting two hours, characterised as historic by the Sri Lankan media, between President Jayawardene and Mrs. Bandaranaike took place. It is rumoured that the wily old President manipulated the Buddhist Mahanayakes to suggest to Mrs. B that she should personally meet him and come to an agreement that would help to restore peace. At this meeting the President told Mrs. B. that he was willing to disband Parliament immediately and for the establishment of a caretaker government in which the JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera should become a member of the interim cabinet. Mrs. B's position was that she was not representing the JVP and therefore could not give any assurances on its behalf, but insisted that an announcement of an immediate dissolution of parliament would automatically defuse the violence.

Although the President and his government recognise that it cannot avoid dissolving parliament sooner than later, most government MPs and Ministers are terrified of the prospect of going back to their constituencies without the protection the security services provide while they hold their present positions. They are unconvinced by the opposition argument that violence by the JVP would cease once dissolution is announced.

The question in dispute was: Dissolution of Parliament before peace was guaranteed, or guarantee of peace before dissolution? The dilemma re-



mained unresolved when the JVP's 3-day hartal began on 7 November.

Except the northern and eastern province, the rest of the country was virtually paralysed. Despite the proclamation of emergency regulations declaring many services as essential services, and in spite of threats that employees who did not turn up for work would be sacked, transport services, private and public, including rail and bus, came to a grinding halt. Postal and telecommunication services were disrupted, hotels, shops, business establishments, factories, banks, the port etc. ceased to function.

#### Shot on sight

On 8 November, the government's Tourist Board advised travel agents and tour operators to consider sending home foreign tourists because of the 'unsettled situation' in the country. The advice was given as hotels were effectively closed following threatening leaflets. The threats also led to thousands of dockers refusing to enter the Colombo Port on 8 November and the government had to use the Navy to clear 21 ships waiting to sail. The army

was also called in to drive petrol tankers belonging to the country's Petroleum Corporation. As there were many instances of street demonstrations sponsored by the JVP, the government issued orders to the army to shoot anyone defying the ban on sight. It also imposed nightly curfews.

Although the 'hartal' was initially announced to last three days, the JVP through its leaflets called for the present series of strikes and disruption to continue to the end. Vans with loudspeaker hailers called upon the people to bring down the government. It became apparent that the JVP was intent on sabotaging the nominations for the Presidential election. It accused the SLFP of playing games with the people and that it would not give any party the opportunity to fool the people again. It called for a national 'hartal' on nomination day, 10 November and promised to prevent the Presidential election taking place on 19 December by announcing a national day of protest on that day.

Colombo was virtually paralysed when the candidates of the UNP,

SLFP and SLMP submitted their nominations in the morning of 10 November under one of the tightest security blankets ever imposed.

At least 15 people were killed and several more injured in three separate shooting incidents as the army followed government's instructions to shoot demonstrators on sight. Six persons died when security forces fired on a crowd of about 2,000 slogan chanting demonstrators at Tissamaharma. At Tangalli troops opened fire to disperse about 1500 demonstrators killing 4 persons. A further five were killed after a crowd attacked an army truck at Baddegama. Over 200 demonstrators and rioters were taken into custody.

#### Country Brought to its Knees

Edward Gorman of THE TIMES (London, 11.11.88) reported from Colombo: "Although the Tamil militant groups had fought for years for their state of Eelam, it is the Sinhalese nationalist JVP which has all but brought Sri Lanka to its knees.

Continued on p.17

## IN THE KILLING FIELDS OF SRI LANKA

# HOW THREE YOUTHS CAME TO BE BRUTALLY MURDERED

The stillness of the early morning of October 23 was suddenly shattered and the sleeping villagers of Medogoda on the Wellawaya-Koslanda Road were rudely woken by the noisy arrival of a van followed by a burst of gunfire. Fearing that the reverberating gunfire was the work of 'terrorists', the villagers did not move and remained in their huts. Shortwhile later the van sped away in the direction of Haputale.

The terror-stricken villagers remained in the huts until day break and noting that none of them had been hurt went about their normal daily routine until H. Jindasa, a farmer on his way to work, stepped into the nearby jungle to answer a call of nature and saw the badly disfigured and burnt bodies of three persons lying face downwards on the ground. The screams of Jinadasa brought almost the entire village to the spot.

The police who were alerted came to the scene. The bodies had been tied hand and foot and they had been burnt using petrol or diesel. A post-mortem examination held the following day at the Wellawaya Hospital by District Medical Officer, Dr.S. Ketheeswaran, revealed that the three victims had died of a massive haemorrhage, stab wounds and gunshot injuries; their nails had been removed, feet had been cut open and nails had been driven into their temples. After the post-mortem, the bodies wrapped in polythene sheets were ordered to be buried by the Magistrate.

By now the Ratnapura police were already investigating the disappearance of three youths. On October 22, around 10.45 am, when three youths came out of a boutique in Ratnapura town, a black Pajero motor vehicle drew up near the three youths. Five persons who carried automatic weapons got out of the vehicle and subjected the three youths to severe beating which lasted for about 10 or 15 minutes. Then the youths were forcibly dragged and put into the vehicle which was driven away. At a later inquiry it was revealed that the vehicle in question was driven by Susantha Punchinilame, the son of the UNP Chief Minister of Sabragamuwa provincial Council and a former Cabinet Minister, Mr. Punchinilame. Soon after the abduction of the three youths, a prominent opposition politician, Mr Ananda Gunaratne made an entry at the Ratnapura police station.

Eye-witnesses later stated that the vehicle was driven into an estate in Koslanda, and people in the vicinity subsequently had heard screams from the direction of the estate.

News reports of the discovery of the three dead bodies at Wellawaya alerted the Ratnapura police who were conducting investigations into the abduction of three youths in Ratnapura. The matter was also raised in parliament by the opposition. The opposition Ratnapura MP, Nanda Ellawella, went to Wellawaya to make inquiries.

Sirima Thrimavithana, who had worried about the disappearance of her brother also went to Wellawaya, and when she was shown a pair of trousers removed from one of the dead bodies identified it as belonging to her brother, Luxman Thrimavithana.

On 27 October, following a magisterial order, the bodies were exhumed. At the magisterial inquiry that followed and at which several eye-witnesses and relatives of the victims gave evidence, it was established that the dead bodies were those of the three youths who were abducted at Ratnapura in the morning of October 22, and they were Pathmasiri Thrimavithana, aged 22, of Ambalangoda who was a medical student; Ranjith Perera, aged 22, an employee in the Thulhiriya Steel Corporation and who contested the DDC elections as a JVP candidate; and B. Banduwardene, aged 34 from Kuruwitta.

Police reports indicate that all the three victims had JVP connections.

Subsequent investigations have established the involvement of Susantha Punchinilame, three police officers and three Home Guards in the abduction and subsequent murder of the three victims. All these persons have been taken into custody and detained pending charges.

Following opposition demands, Mr G.P. Punchinilame, the Chief Minister of Sabragamuwa Provincial Council, has resigned from his post after his son's arrest.

## MADRAS NEWSLETTER:

by Arjuna

## ELECTION FEVER IN TAMIL NADU

When it was reported that Ms. Jayalalitha, running a temperature of 102° curtailed her electioneering tour of North Arcot district and when quick on the heels came another report that Sivaji Ganeshan had cut short his triumphant visit to Erode after he developed a temperature of 104°, the word went around among cynics that election fever in Tamil Nadu had really set in! One cannot blame the cynics, because Tamil Nadu today presents the picture of a political circus. One should not perhaps expect morality in politics, but Tamil Nadu is fast saying good-bye to whatever canons of political behaviour that had existed. It has become a vast theatre of intrigue, behind-the-scene manipulation, throat-cutting, cross-overs and double cross-overs in the scale unprecedented at any time before. The urge to merge is there, but so is the urge to split.

## Political Careerism

The most pathetic fate is the one that has overtaken the very party that ruled the state for the past eleven years. It became very clear soon after the death of MGR that the man who ruled the state like a demi-god had no deep interest in seeing that the party he founded should survive after him. With two women in his life who were rivalling each other for his favours during his lifetime, it would have been obvious to any man afflicted with sickness for a long period that his death would certainly not unite them. Apart from that, the AIADMK was never a homogenous party founded on well-founded policies. It was a conglomeration of political careerists and contradictory forces that was held together by the one 'unifying' personality of MGR. This writer remembers a very revealing conversation he had with a leading AIADMK M.P. during MGR's lifetime. We were discussing the problems of Eelam Tamils and he was frank brutally frank. He said: "Look here, I am a fundamentalist. I am as an individual strongly committed to the Eelam Tamil cause, and you know it. I am in this party for certain reasons. But if you expect our party to openly espouse your cause, please forget it. If you are thinking of Eelam ideals, you go to Kalaigarnar (DMK leader Karunanidhi). Our leader can only help you in material terms." If the AIADMK today is split in three directions, it is because of the one common factor that characterised all the Chief Minister's men and women-political careerism. While Jayalalitha has now taken the public stance that her party will face the elections alone, the M.P. who belongs to her party Mr. Kolandaivel has been consistently disassociating himself

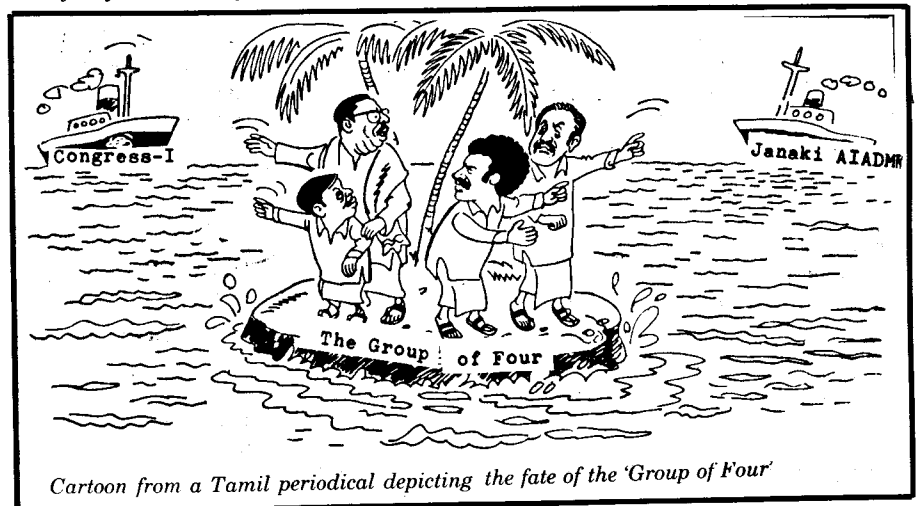
with all Opposition moves and walk-outs in Parliament in Delhi. The Group of Four - Nedunchezhiyan, 'Panrutti' Ramachandran, Thirunavukkarasu and Aranganayagam - all ex-ministers in MGR's cabinet who walked out on Janaki Ramachandran because they could not, among other reasons, stomach the leading presence of R. M. Veerappan threw their lot with Mr. Jayalalitha. Later, when they found that they could not stomach the performance of the leading lady herself, and her overt dependence on the controversial Natarajans (the government official and wife Shashikala), they found themselves thrown out. Finding themselves in a no-(wo)man's land, and not having the kind of grassroots support to stand on their collective feet, the Group of Four are now in a quandary. While Nedunchezhiyan takes the position that despite current rumours they would have nothing to do with Janaki Ramachandran, there is persistent talk that Thirunavukkarasu and Panrutti Ramachandran have been making secret overtures to MGR's widow; and that she had been having secret parleys with the two at the residence of her adopted son Appu, without the knowledge of her strongman sponsor Veerappan! Those two are believed to be acting as political brokers for a Congress-I. - Janaki AIADMK alliance, and the impression is given that Janaki is not averse to the idea. If the move succeeds both R.M.V. and Nedunchezhiyan might find themselves left out in the cold, a prospect neither will relish: that could well mean a near-end to their political careers. On the other hand, Mrs. Jayalalitha has been exuding absolute confidence. Front-rank leaders in her party have expressed the view that the party would fare better if it contested all the 234 Assembly seats instead of going in for electoral alliances. They say that in any alliance with the

Congress-I, the latter would demand at least fifty per cent of the seats and the question as to who was to be Chief Minister would also arise after the elections. Besides, political observers point out that in any alliance there would be confusion. They cite the example of the DMK getting only 38 seats and the Congress-I 30 in a House of 234. But despite this brave public posture, Jayalalitha has apparently not abandoned hopes of an electoral pact with Congress-I. The message that she is trying to pass on to Delhi is two-fold: firstly, the Congress-I will have no chance of regaining power in Tamil Nadu, except with her party's help; secondly, their failure to seek her assistance will almost certainly result in the DMK emerging as the victor, a prospect that would suit neither of them. DMK leader Karunanidhi has been the main target of her attack in all speeches. The sticky point therefore is the question of the Chief Ministership. As far as Jayalalitha is concerned she is no compromiser on that. It has become a personal obsession with her that she and she alone has the right to succeed to the MGR legacy, a point that she wants to prove to all her enemies in the AIADMK fold. This obviously cannot suit Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Congress-I in the centre, who are determined somehow to install a Congress administration in Tamil Nadu headed by G. K. Mooppanar. After all, twenty years is a long time to have waited. Anyway, it is a now-or-never chance; if the DMK is allowed to regain power in the state, dislodging it in the near future could prove well nigh impossible.

But on the other hand, if the Congress-I accepts the hard assessment that they cannot win it alone, it is quite possible that on the basis that half a loaf is better than none, a compromise on the question could be found; this, coupled with the fact that Mooppanar does not command the desired complete support within the Congress-I itself, within the state.

## Electioneering

But right now, the desperation with which the Rajiv administration is



Cartoon from a Tamil periodical depicting the fate of the 'Group of Four'

wooing the Tamil Nadu voter is astounding. Government machinery, Government largesse, the government media - Doordashan and Radio - are being fully enlisted for the purpose. No other Prime Minister of India has so extensively toured Tamil Nadu as Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has done during the past few months. Every month since August he had been spending three to four days in Tamil Nadu and has so far covered three-fourths of the twenty revenue districts. He is due again on a 3-day tour from November 10 covering the Madras, Chengalpattu, North Arcot and Dharmapuri districts, and having returned to Delhi is scheduled to be in Madras again on November 14 to release the Congress-I election manifesto at a rally in Madras in connection with the Nehru centenary celebrations. Admittedly he had been attracting very large and enthusiastic crowds wherever he went. Along with wife Sonia trailing behind him wearing a single plait of hair, which she does only when she accompanies her husband in Tamil Nadu, and driving his own custom-made, bullet-proof jeep, and stopping every 100 kilometres or so, listening to the people's grievances, patting a baby's cheek here and wrapping a shawl on another there much to the delight of the mother and the onlookers, bending low to enter some villager's hut, with security plain-clothes men scurrying around but easily identifiable by their safari suits and the tension in their behaviour, the whole thing comes out as sheer spectacle not only the TV viewers in the urban homes, but to the below-the-poverty line villagers to whom the cinema and election meetings are the only recreation. The cinema at least is always there, but electioneering tamashas come only once in a long while!

#### Electoral Alliances

What has brought a greater sense of urgency to the Rajiv Gandhi administration was the DMK's first-time participation in the National Front of opposition parties. This has suddenly brought the DMK into mainstream politics, and a DMK victory in the south will necessarily strengthen the hands of the opposition in the north. It will also solidify the national opposition when it comes to the general election which should be, according to schedule within one year from now. But Congress-I have reason to feel optimistic too. The Tamil Nadu unit of the Indian Union Muslim League, which had been a long-standing electoral ally of the DMK has now parted ways with the latter. Its leader Mr. A. K. Abdul Samad has declared his party's readiness to enter into an electoral alliance with the Congress-I, whether this would prove more substantial than a fringe benefit remains to be seen, with the Muslim League suffering a split in the process. Splitting now

having become an affliction overtaking many politicians, the Tamil Nadu Janata Party has also split right in the middle with the newly elected President P. Vijayaraghavan and the General Secretary Thampan Thomas not "recognising" each other. While one section says it will have no truck with either DMK, or AIADMK or the Congress-I, another section is for offering support to the DMK. The Congress-I is pinning its hopes in another direction - the Vanniyar Sangham which represents a very large community and has sizable influence in a third of the 234 Assembly constituencies. The Vanniyars have been carrying on an agitation for the past few months and had been taking the aggressive stand that they would not only boycott the elections but also prevent any party from entering their majority areas. The Congress-I is now in the process of wooing them and is obviously promising to meet many of their demands if it comes to power. If the negotiations succeed, the DMK could be the main loser.

#### Sri Lanka Tamil Issue

Meanwhile, the credibility of the DMK on its stand on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue is beginning to be questioned. Although the DMK firebrand V. Gopalasami has not shown any signs of weakening on the question, the popular impression is gaining ground that leader Karunanidhi and DMK M.P. Murasoli Maran are trying to soft-pedal the issue. It is also rumoured that Karunanidhi who is grooming his son Stalin for eventual party leadership does not look with favour the high-profile ascendancy of V. Gopalaswami both within the party cadres as well as in the state. If the rumour that Gopalaswami is under party orders not to pitch the Eelam Tamil issue too high is true, it appears that was nullified by the strong exchange of words that he had with the Indian Prime Minister in Parliament recently on the role of the IPKF. (The Madras English-language Press for some reason or other played it down). Whatever may be the truth in all these, one politician who seems to have sensed a vacuum in the Eelam Tamils issue is S. D. Somasundaram, surprisingly the Deputy General Secretary of the Jayalalitha group of the AIADMK. Summoning a Press Conference in Madras on November 2, he accused Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of betraying the Sri Lankan Tamils for which the "Tamils in India would teach his party a lesson". He warned the Congress-I that its reputation would ever remain sullied if LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran was harmed in the current IPKF operations. The IPKF, he said, had not lived up to its name as a peace-keeping force but was indulging in killing militant leaders and bombing their hide-outs. The statements of

Prime Minister Premadasa and nominee for the presidential elections in Sri Lanka that the Indian troops would be sent out and the merger of northern and eastern provinces cancelled in the event of his election had depressed the people of Tamil Nadu. The way the Sri Lankan Tamils issue was being handled by the Indian government raised the question whether the Prime Minister's adviser were incompetent or anti-Tamil or whether Mr. Rajiv Gandhi himself lacked political acumen. Mr. Somasundaram said that the Prime Minister had greatly harmed the Tamils by asking the IPKF to disarm the LTTE and thus betrayed them to the Sri Lankan army, police and the "Sinhalese goondas". A strong stand indeed, but Ms. Jayalalitha herself has not come out with any statement on the Eelam Tamil issue until now. Although SDS is one who had come out with forthrightness on the Eelam Tamils issue even four years ago in 1984 when he was a member of the MGR cabinet the surprisingly anti-Rajiv statement today in the context of a possible Jayalalitha-AIADMK alliance with Congress-I, is certainly baffling. Obviously, Mr. Somasundaram could not have summoned the Press Conference without his leader's permission. Such is the state of pre-election stances, postures, attitudes, that it becomes difficult to accept the statements of politicians at face value. The irony is, while it is not difficult to identify Tamil Nadu politicians who have expressed strong support to the Eelam Tamils cause, for example, SDS himself, V. Gopalaswami, Aladi Aruna, M.P. Nedumaran, DK leader Veeramani, none of them is in the same party.

The prospects as at present are, irrespective of which party gains maximum vote, three large chunks are going the way of DMK, Congress-I and the Jayalalitha AIADMK. Unless the DMK is able to secure a clear majority, the next alternative could be a coalition government of the Congress-I and the Jayalalitha faction; which is not likely to help in establishing a firm government in Tamil Nadu.

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# INDIA'S LOW-INTENSITY WAR

A.W.Singham

*Professor Singham left Sri Lanka as a boy. He has travelled extensively and taught in universities in Europe, Africa and the Americas. He currently lives in New York where he has covered the non-aligned movement from the United Nations for the past ten years.*

A most puzzling aspect of India's involvement in Sri Lankan politics is the naivete of its political advisors and strategic thinkers about the internal situation in Sri Lanka. At the political level, there appears to be a lack of understanding about the character and nature of the Tamil movement, the Jayewardene regime, and politics in the South. At the strategic level, there is a lack of understanding about the dangers of involving a large modern army in a low-intensity war. A tragic consequence is the damage being done to India's leadership in the Third World and its long-established tradition of non-alignment.

Non-alignment, carefully crafted by Nehru, and in spite of some pitfalls meticulously implemented by Indira Gandhi, has been the centre-piece of India's foreign policy for decades. Foreign policy-making became the primary responsibility of the Prime Minister and a cadre of officials trained within the framework of Indian independence. At the administrative level, India devised an ingenious mechanism where younger Foreign Service members were able to rise through ranks while older ones retired early. However, even during retirement, senior members could be invited to serve in an advisory capacity. This unique administrative structure gave India one of the most efficient Foreign Service establishments in the Third World and, no doubt, led to the pursuance of the imaginative policy on non-alignment during the past three decades. It also helped to make India a major regional power and a global leader for peace and economic reconstruction. This group of 'mandarins,' however is now facing its most severe test in inadvertently involving India in a low-intensity war.

## Sordid chapter

For the most part, Indo-Sri Lankan relations have been well managed, in spite of the tragic situation faced by the Indian Tamil workers in the tea estates - a sordid chapter, not only in colonial history, but in the history of independent Sri Lanka and India. Relations between the two countries have been a remarkable example of how a small state could co-exist with a large neighbouring state. The eruption of the Tamil revolution, a protest movement which began as a struggle for equal educational rights only to quickly become an armed struggle for self-

determination, has put a new strain on the relationship. Even during the most tense stages of the revolution, the liberation movement and the regimes in Colombo retained close relations with India. It was because of this long record of trust and friendship between the government of India and the Sinhala and Tamil leaders that an accord was signed.

The most remarkable aspect of this accord was Jayawardene's willingness to have an Indian Peace-keeping force enter the country and attempt to reconcile conflicts between two communal groups and resolve intra communal tensions. This unusual action immediately brought laudatory comments from such diverse elements as United States President Ronald Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and indeed the leaders of the whole non-aligned world. But an unanticipated consequence was that the peace-keeping force, the Indian army found itself in conflict with the Tamil guerilla force to which the Government of India had previously given its tacit support. This put the government of India and the Indian army in an embarrassing position with the indigenous Tamil population in India, which has had to comprehend this about-face. Within a short period, India was trapped in its first low-intensity war.

In addition the Government of India found itself protecting the Jayewardene regime which has lost the confidence of not only the entire population of Sri Lanka, but much of the world. Suddenly India appeared to be propping up a corrupt weak regime not unlike the 'United States' policy in Central America.

## Shift in foreign policy

When the J.R. Jayewardene regime came to power in Sri Lanka it enjoyed a great deal of popular support and moral legitimacy. JR was able to put together a major caste coalition in the South and promised internal stability. Most importantly, he promoted economic growth by advocating the Singapore model for Sri Lanka, that is, industrialisation by invitation to foreign investors. The other face of Sri Lanka's foreign policy was to maintain good links with India and the Arab states through the policy of non-alignment. So as not to alienate her historical friends, Foreign Minister Hameed was appointed primarily as Minister of Non-aligned Affairs as Mervyn de Silva in the *Lanka Guardian* has aptly described.

The JR regime then undertook a right-wing, pro-Western, Reaganite

economic policy that gradually dismantled the welfare state built up carefully over fifty years. Earlier, this welfare state had won many accolades in global bodies for providing some protection for the working class and impoverished peasantry. And as the right-wing coalition within the Sri Lankan Cabinet become more powerful and aligned itself with the ultra-right western coalition of the United States, Great Britain, West Germany and Japan, the regime shifted its regional policy and began to distance itself from India and, increasingly, became an ally of the conservative ASEAN coalition.

## Ideal model

Sri Lanka quickly became the ideal Asian model for the expansion of Reaganism in the region. The neo-conservative in the US found two major allies for their economic doctrines: one in the Caribbean, led by Edward Seaga in Jamaica, and the other in Sri Lanka, led by JR. A great virtue of the JR regime for the Reagan administration is that it came very cheap; it did not require the massive subsidy that was demanded by Jamaica. Hence, Sri Lanka's new domestic and international stance was strongly supported by the West, which saw in JR a leader of the third force within the Third World.

Euphoria for the JR regime ended when the Tamil militants, who had been treated as an annoying protest movement, suddenly became vociferous and took up arms to overthrow the existing compromise leadership that had governed Sri Lanka since independence. That compromise leadership consisted of a coalition of the Goyigama caste in the south and the Vellala caste in the north who, with their monopoly over the knowledge of English, were able to control the country peacefully for nearly fifty years. When JR came to power he was convinced that he and his Royal-Thomian College proteges could deliver the goods in the economic sphere and put an end to the perennial Tamil question.

Over a period of time there was a gradual erosion of this caste hegemony. The Vellala Tamil leadership was challenged not only by the lower castes in the north, but by a new coalition of young militants no longer satisfied with what the old elites had delivered. Some members of the Tamil Vellala elite have openly collaborated with their Sinhala counterpart and forged a new political coalition, isolating them from their own mass base in the north. A mass social movement emerged in the north insisting that the only way out of the mess created by the

past ruling classes was a separate state. The leadership in the north came from the youth, who have been affectionately or paternalistically, called 'the boys'.

The development of the northern separatist movement coincided with major changes taking place in the world revolution. A number of liberation movements in Latin America, Southern Africa and the Arab world were making similar demands for the armed overthrow of the existing state apparatus. What began as a small protest movement in Sri Lanka quickly became part of a large world revolutionary movement calling for national self-determination.

### Prabhakaran & Wijeweera

At the end of the Bandaranike regime it has become clear even to Sinhala/Goyigama elite of the south that a revolution was brewing, a revolution not merely confined to the lower castes, but a national populist movement with a crudely defined ideology combining Buddhism, Marxism, anti-castism and ethnic chauvinism. This movement was led by the JVP. The new generation of political leaders came from non-elite educational backgrounds marginal to the power structure but with a mass following. Wijeweera, chief of the out-lawed Janata Vimukti Peramuna and Prabhakaran symbolised the new leadership of this era. The politics of generational competition was challenging the old party coalitions. The new Tamil and Sinhala youth were an alienated and unemployed underclass who were not going to be satisfied by the trinkets of capitalism coming from the Singapore model.

On the political level, they challenged one of the major components of the Sri Lankan elite hegemony; a state apparatus which used the parliamentary system for social control and repression.

The politics of peaceful elite competition was giving way to the politics of violence. As the youth organised themselves into militant gangs, the state responded with violence. Group terrorism was met by state terrorism. Within a short period the peaceful self contented Buddhist and Tamil populations of Sri Lanka were being characterised as armed terrorists. Sri Lanka, which was known as the haven of democracy in South Asia, was quickly becoming a garrison state and society. The gradual transformations of the Sri Lankan society is without doubt one of the most tragic chapters in the history of South Asia. But a good deal of the blame must be put on the shoulders of the architects of the regimes of the past two decades whose political and economic designs culminated in the communal riots under the JR regime.

In order to continue its conservative economic policy, the JR regime has had

to suppress the Tamil militant struggle at all costs. It quickly developed a strategy well-known in Central America: employing the rural youth as a local contra force and sending them into the battlefield to destroy the insurgents. Thus, ill-trained and unemployed Sinhala youth soon became the cannon fodder used by the Sinhala elite in a war that they personally did not want to participate in. However, in the north the Sinhala army met with resistance, fighting a losing war against a broad coalition of Tamil forces convinced that theirs was a just war.

### New leadership

This type of guerrilla resistance in the north created a new type of political leadership, non-English trained and linked with the local culture. Their training and political understanding of the terrain was, in part, a result of changes in world politics. To the surprise of Tamil and Sinhala elites, the youth were able within a short period to acquire and master the use of the most modern weaponry. This guerrilla-trained army proved more than a match for the Scotch-drinking and Sandhurst educated military commanders of the south who had very little in common with their own troops. In the north, an obscure young man from Velvettithurai emerged as the folk hero of the entire Tamil community of Jaffna, Batticaloa, and all of South India.

What was surprising was that the Indian army did not study the experiences of the Sinhala army or the failures of the JR regime before undertaking a protracted war with the Tamil militants. The Indians could have been told by the foremost thinkers of the Pentagon that a modern army is an easy target for a hit-and-run guerrilla force. Americans have painfully learned that low-intensity wars cannot be fought by a foreign army, and that the best strategy is to employ domestic contras. If the government of India had wished to succeed in such a meaningless activity, it would have been better advised to hire domestic contras as in Nicaragua or Contra leaders of the likes of Jonas Savimbi in Angola. However, India's relationship with the Tamil movement was qualitatively different.

The Indian army was seen by most of the Tamil population as an army of liberation, not repression. Hence, it was no surprise that when the Indian soldiers first appeared they were received by weeping women and joyful children. How did such a joyous occasion become such a sour one within a short period.

### Low intensity war

There are at least two major factors that normally lead a nation into a low-intensity conflict. The rationale for involvement is usually the danger on

an internal conflict spilling over and becoming a border war. Internal conflicts can affect International relations, making intervention necessary. The Sri Lankan situation was pregnant with opportunities for a number of nations. India has historically annoyed the Western alliance, especially because of its policy of non-alignment and friendship with the Socialist bloc. The Western alliance had no intention of assisting India in extricating itself from this difficult situation. India is also becoming a major economic power in the region and its development could be curtailed by a low-intensity war. For the entire Western alliance, which includes Japan, this low-intensity war would tarnish India's status as a peace force in world politics and India would become just another aggressive regional power.

Israel had long been smarting from the moral legitimacy given by India to the Palestinian cause. Its economy has become an armaments economy dependent to a large extent on low-intensity wars in the Third World. A low-intensity war in South Asia could fulfill two of Israel's policy needs. It could politically embarrass a supporter of Palestine and provide a market for Israeli weapons.

### Neo-conservative coalition

Pakistan has been historically an enemy of India. The Sri Lankan situation provided a splendid opportunity to both occupy the Indian army in the south and embarrass an army which had embarrassed Pakistan over the years. Furthermore the conflict in Sri Lanka would remove India's capacity to intervene meaningfully in Pakistan's internal crisis over Afghanistan.

The neo-conservative coalition of the ASEAN countries also found an opportunity to exploit in the Sri Lanka situation. If India's economy was hurt by a low-intensity war, the ASEAN countries, along with Japan, could become the major economic force in the region. India's entanglement in Sri Lanka could also affect its relations with China, where there were already major differences over Vietnam and Kampuchea. China, which had had a close connection with Sri Lanka during the Bandaranaike period, now also found itself with a new potential friend in JR.

The Soviet Union, preoccupied by internal and external crises, has not paid much attention to the situation in Sri Lanka. Leonid Brezhnev left behind an unpopular war in Afghanistan. Mikhail Gorbachev has not only faced a conservative foreign policy establishment within the Soviet Union especially over Afghanistan, but simultaneously has had to deal with a conservative economic establishment bent on challenging his economic policies. But war-torn India would destroy any hopes for the Indian Ocean becoming a peace zone. Thus, the Sri Lanka

situation presents a delicate security problem for the USSR.

### Terrible dilemma

Within the non-aligned movement India's staunchest friends were, in the final analysis, the anti-interventionists, who were caught in a terrible dilemma. To oppose India would lend support to the Right-wing Reaganites and their allies; to back India would lead to ideological contradictions. The accord, therefore, came as manna from heaven, a brilliant India diplomatic coup of pulling the chesnut out of the fire. But, this manna quickly turned out to be a bitter fruit.

The domestic consequences for India and Sri Lanka of the peace-keeping forces activities were equally explosive. The first and most dangerous was the politicisation of the Indian army. The role of the Indian army in Pakistan and now in Sri Lanka unleashed once again the ominous phenomenon of communalism within the army. Indian Tamil officers found themselves in a delicate position in their relations with non-Tamil counterparts, and vice versa. The destruction of the morale of a modern army especially when it engages in combat with liberation movements, has been well recorded in recent history. For example note how the well-oiled military machine of Israel quickly found itself incompetent to deal with the Palestinian adolescents.

The Indian army was also asked to play local politics in Sri Lanka, an additional burden. The Tamil liberation movement is divided and the army was forced to become partisan and to exploit divisions to gain control. As the Indian army was not equipped to play this kind of political role, the RAW, India's 'intelligence agency', has had to undertake this function. The RAW has had a long history of penetrating Tamil liberation movements over the years, and has had close contact with all factions. But it has been in the unenviable position of finding its policy in contradiction with that of the army. And, as we have seen in the case of the Pentagon and the CIA, such contradictions result in a disastrous foreign policy.

India's diplomatic and political policy in Sri Lanka is being conducted by the 'mandarins' of South Block in New Delhi. They have had a set of rules for diplomatic negotiations which differs from both the RAW and the Indian army. The Sri Lanka episode, with its conflicting responses from the various Indian administrative bodies has done considerable damage to India's Foreign Service J.N. Dixit the Indian Ambassador in Sri Lanka and his South Block experts have been placed in a no win situation. The fall-out of this on the Indian political executive is now history. It has torn apart the congress-I, left Rajiv Gandhi's capacity and moral leadership in serious doubt, confused

Tamil Nadu politics, and inflamed ethnic violence, both in the north and the south of Sri Lanka. India has indeed paid a very high price for this low-intensity war. But the old question remains: it is easy to jump into a quagmire, but how does one extricate oneself?

### Two revolutions

The fundamental question in Sri Lanka remains the protection of the human rights of all the Sri Lankans, both in the north and south. The behaviour of the JR regime during this entire period reveals that it has lost the moral confidence and legitimacy of the people of Sri Lanka and almost all of its avid supporters. The history of the country especially the post-independence period, has been a sad one: thousands have had to give up their lives in internal conflict; thousands have become refugees. A small beginning could be made by having fair elections with international supervision.

It is important to recognise that two revolutions are taking place in Sri Lanka. The revolution in the north led by Tamil militants has been in the process for some time; the southern revolution led by the Sinhala youth and the JVP is now going into full force. All reports suggest that the people of the north and south are exhausted by this protracted violence. They are crying for peace and they deserve peace. Peace is not merely a matter of keeping the adversaries apart. Peace means the capacity of developing mechanisms whereby the adversaries can live together with respect for one another. In order to achieve this new peace, new institutions have to be created

### A new dialogue

The architects of the accord deserve one accolade. A major step forward was taken by giving the east and north regional autonomy. The willingness of the JR regime to have coordinated elections in the north and the east is only a beginning. These elections in the north and east will be an opportunity for a new experiment in Sri Lankan politics. While this experiment is being undertaken, new political processes will have to be initiated. The old dialogue between the Tamil and the Sinhalese elites has proven useful, but insufficient. A new dialogue must begin between the new forces irrespective of the positions taken by them on whether or not they are going to live as one or two nations.

It has become obvious that there has to be a new Government in Colombo that enjoys the support of all the political forces so that it can enter into negotiations with its Tamil counterparts. The Tamil liberation movements also will have to put an end to their existing fratricide and present a rational solution for the Tamil population in the north and the east. It is only under

these conditions that a new dialogue can begin about the future of Sri Lanka and as to whether it will remain one country or two. India has a vital and indispensable role in creating this new process.

## TAMIL NADU POLL

There is not even a remote thinking about extending President's rule in Tamil Nadu, the Governor, Dr. P. C. Alexander, said.

Elections to the State Assembly would have to take place well before January 29, 1989, unless the Constitution was amended providing for the extension in extraordinary situation as it happened in the case of Punjab, he pointed out while answering questions at a press conference.

The Prime Minister, he said, had made it clear that there would be no further extension of President's rule and that there was no question of amending the Constitution. He would be sending his report to the Union Government 'when I am fully satisfied about the time and urgency of it', he added.

Dr. Alexander said that in July last two problems had prevented the State Government from going ahead with the elections. One, the indefinite strike by Government employees and teachers and this was subsequently resolved. The other, the Vanniyar's agitation, he said. 'I am confident that we will be able to arrive at a reasonable understanding, satisfactory to not only the Vanniyar Sangam but also the others, and the elections will take place peacefully.'

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### Deserting the Sinking Ship

Political circles in Colombo are buzzing with stories about leading government politicians, their associates including members of the new rich which emerged under the open economy of the UNP are making arrangements for a quick getaway from the island at the first sign of the dissolution of parliament, even without waiting for the general election to take place to see whether the UNP would win or not.

The developing situation has resulted in a crisis of morale and a feeling of desperation. To them, the fall of a government is not only a loss of power, but a danger of losing everything they have got. It is important that they not only save their skin, but also benefit from the vast sums of money they have accumulated within the country and foreign banks. Some of them have even acquired a real estate in far away continents.

The resignation of Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne, the Justice Minister, is a manifest example of deserting a sinking ship. Intriguingly he has suddenly become conscious about his responsibility, as Minister in charge, for the riot and attempted escape by over 1500 prisoners at the Colombo Welikade prison on 5 November and mass escape of over 100 prisoners from the Pelawatte prison on 6 November. So much so he could not wait to return to Sri Lanka to resign from his cabinet portfolio. The Minister was in Paris when these incidents occurred, he did not rush back and instead sent his letter of resignation to President Jayawardene, presumably by telex. Et Tu, Nissanka, the President must have exclaimed.

On July 25 and 27 July 1983, 53 Tamil political prisoners in three maximum security prison in Colombo were brutally murdered allegedly by fellow Sinhalese prisoners when prison officers either assisted in the crime or just nodded and winked as the victims cried for help. In September of the same year, there were two mass jail breaks from the Batticoloa prison. This same Minister not only did not deem fit to resign, but also failed to institute an impartial judicial investigation into the murders in the Colombo Prison. 53 were killed, but not even one attacker was identified or punished!

### WHEN THIEVES FALL OUT . . .

Talking of deserting the sinking ship, it was former Finance Minister, Ronnie de Mel, who first jumped out and

now he is in the SLFP ship which he thinks will sail safely to power in the near future.

Is it true that President Jayawardene made arrangements to get out of Sri Lanka with his cabinet colleagues and their families in Indian helicopters if the situation had become out of control in the wake of the violence that erupted following the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement in July last year?

At a recent public meeting, Ronnie, said, "Indian ships carrying helicopters were anchored in the harbour behind the President's house during the anti-government violence in July last year to allow President J.R. Jayawardene, Cabinet Ministers and their families to escape in the event of trouble . . . President Jayawardene had to get down three Indian ships carrying 14 helicopters each capable of ferrying at least ten people following the violence after the Indo-Sri Lanka accord was signed". (*The Island*, 22.11.88)

Ronnie, at that time, was known to be one of the staunchest advocates of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord and, in fact was the Minister-in-Waiting for the Indian PM when he came to Colombo to sign it. If what Ronnie says is true, he and his family would have been the first ones to have taken off in Indian helicopters.

In the same speech, Ronnie also alleged that "there was a certain senior Minister in the government whose declared assets in 1977 were one house and Rs.30,000. By 1980 this had risen to five houses in Colombo alone, two shops in Chatham Street and Rs.30 lakhs! When the Income Tax authorities had queried the phenomenal increase in Minister's assets, he had answered that the wealth had come from an election bet he won in 1982!" **Question 1:** If the Minister won the bet in 1982, how come he had acquired the assets mentioned by Ronnie by 1980?

**Question 2:** As Minister of Finance and in charge of Income Tax, what action did Ronnie take when the Minister narrated such a cock and bull story?

**Question 3:** Why doesn't Ronnie name the 'Senior Minister' concerned?

### JVP PENETRATION

It would seem that the JVP has succeeded in penetrating the security services and it is so confident of the extent of its influence in various sections of armed forces that in one of its latest

documents it has suggested that the President should dissolve parliament, himself resign and hand over power to the 'patriotic sections of the armed forces'.

Many of the raids on military or police establishments carried out by the Deshapremi Janatha Viyaparaya (DJV), reputedly known as the armed wing of the JVP, in which large hauls of weapons were taken away have all the hall marks of operations being undertaken with information provided from inside or with active assistance and participation by security service personnel. JVP's previous raids at the Katunayake air force base and on the Kotelawala Military Academy at Ratmalana were found to have had assistance from inside.

Investigations into the latest raid on the National Auxiliary Training Camp at Pannala in which the raiders got away with over 400 weapons have established definite collusion from inside.

It is understood that one NAF soldier had gone up to Lieutenant S.P. Thalгода and addressed him as, 'Loku Mahathaya' and demanded the keys to the armoury. The Lieutenant refused and he was instantly shot through the head by the NAF soldier who himself was later killed in the ensuing battle.

It has also been revealed that the Pannala Camp was rendered incommunicado from the day previous to the attack. Telephones had mysteriously gone out of order and the radio link to the camp was dead.

### Tamil Mercenaries?

The Tamil exodus from Sri Lanka and their arrival into foreign countries, particularly those of western Europe, Canada and Australia as a consequence of the continuing violent ethnic conflict in that island, the human rights violations to which they were subjected and the armed struggle waged by Tamil militant groups against the government made sure that the world came to know that there existed an ethnic group called Tamils. The words and phrases like, Tamils, Tamil refugees, Tamil militant groups, Tamil Tigers etc. entered the vocabulary of the international media.

Tamil mercenaries? Never. But the ill-fated attempted Coup-de-tat in the Indian ocean islands of Maldives has assured that. It is one thing for some stray individuals among Tamils or any other community becoming mercenaries to earn a quick buck. But when it is said that those among the mercenaries who went to Maldives were Tamil militants who came into being on the basis of liberating the Tamil people from oppression? Of course Tamils the world over are ashamed.

The ill informed western media promptly identified the mercenaries

with the LTTE, presumably because they are the better known among the Tamil militant groups. It soon became clear that the Tigers were not involved when the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, Mr. J.N. Dixit, cleared them of any involvement.

A Reuter report alleged that they were from the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), but the PLOTE promptly denied any responsibility. While all reports indicated that the coup attempt, hatched in a poultry farm in Kelaniya, was instigated by some Maldivian businessmen based in Colombo, the PLOTE's information centre in London attributed it to a never-heard-of organisation called the Maldivian Liberation Front (MLF) and characterised it as part of a liberation struggle against the dictatorial regime of President Gayoom. It also claimed that the MLF had approached progressive liberation movements outside Maldives for their assistance.

In the meantime, The Times (London, 5.11.88) reported: "A Maldivian businessman who took an active part in the coup, Abdullah Luthfee, has implicated Mr. Uma Maheswaran (leader of PLOTE as the mastermind behind the coup. Maheswaran wanted to seize the Islands because of its 'rich investment possibilities'. Was Mr. Luthfee saying this to save his skin?"

Rita Sebastian of THE SUNDAY TIMES (Colombo, 13.11.88) who visited Male, the capital of the islands, soon after the coup was foiled and the plotters were captured spoke to Captain Jayadevan of 'Progress Light', the vessel hijacked by the gunmen for their getaway. The captain's story was, "The gunmen identified themselves as belonging to PLOTE and it was one of their leaders, R. Raghavan, better known as 'RR' who was their radio operator and kept in touch with their headquarters in Colombo. They told me that they had set sail in two motorised launches from the seas off Jaffna on October 28th".

Who is this Raghavan? The answer to this question will be most revealing.

### The JVP-DJV CONNECTION

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) has never admitted to any of the mafia-style political assassinations and armed raids on military establishments although the government (Prime Minister R. Premadasa excepted) and the security forces accused it. In fact the parties belonging to the United Socialist Alliance (USA) have accused the JVP/DJV of being responsible for the murder of many of their members. Captured JVP/DJV men have confessed to some of the crimes. The JVP has denied that the Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya Patriotic Peoples Movement constitutes its armed wing.

On 6 and 13 November, THE SUNDAY TIMES (Colombo) published detailed written answers given by Rohana Wijeweera, the leader of the JVP, to written question submitted to him. The second in the series of questions was:

**What is the connection between the Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna? Is it true that the DJV is the armed division of the JVP?**

In a detailed reply to this question, Wijeweera said, "The Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya is not the armed division of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. That story is incorrect... You ask what the connection between the DJV and the JVP is. As far as we are aware, the Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya is a mass peoples organisation. There are members of the JVP, as well as members of the UNP, the SLFP and other groups... The more the government came under the control of Indian imperialists and their fifth columnists, the Tamil Eelam terrorists, it began killing the patriotic people who opposed them. When the public protested peacefully against the Jayawardene-Gandhi pact of betrayal, 142 people were shot. It is in this situation that

Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya was born on a solid foundation. It cancelled the monopoly that Jayawardene and Indian fifth columnists held on the use of violence... We will help them. Support them. We respect them".

The last paragraph of the answer to the first question, which made no reference to the DJV at all, addressed to Wijeweera read:

"You have not still joined the People's movement and therefore you do not see it. Therefore join the **patriotic peoples movement** today, then your problems will be solved... It does not matter if you were in the wrong place politically all this time. Give it up and join the **patriotic peoples movement**" (our emphasis).

**Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya (DJV)** rendered in English is **Patriotic Peoples Movement** which has, according to the JVP leader, "cancelled the monopoly that Mr. Jayawardene and the Indian fifth columnists had on the use of violence". And the JVP leader is calling upon the others to join, not the JVP, but the **Patriotic Peoples Movement/Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya (DJV)**

Any more proof needed for the JVP-DJV connection?

## JVP GANG GETS AWAY WITH OVER 400 WEAPONS IN RAID ON ARMY CAMP

Over 100 men allegedly belonging to the Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna launched an armed assault lasting nearly two hours on the Pannala Auxiliary Force Training camp in Kurunegala at about 1.30am on 1 November killing Lt. L. Thalgahagoda, Corporal Abeyratne and two more National Auxiliary Force men. One civilian driver was also killed by the attackers when they seized his bus to use it as a get away vehicle. Four of the attackers were killed when they were fired upon from inside the camp.

The JVP men took away with them a massive haul of 447 weapons of various types including some 20 Chinese made T-56 guns, 9 pistols, 178 shot guns, 252 303-rifles and 7 LMGs and may thousand rounds of ammunition.

The raiders had arrived at the camp in many vans and motor cycles and made good their escape in some army vehicles and a civilian bus which they seized following the attack.

The attackers would appear to have had assistance from inside which has led the investigators to conclude that there was collusion by some men belonging to the Auxiliary Force.

The attackers would appear to have been somewhat choosy about what they wanted judging by the fact that they had, in the course of their escape after the attack discarded many of the obsolete self-loading rifles which they

apparently thought did not fit in with the required quality.

### QUOTE... UNQUOTE

"They say that Sri Lanka is a living democracy. They are wrong. It's a dying democracy. Tolerance is one of the major features of a democracy. But in this country... while the power hunters fly the democratic banner, those who are not favour of the T-56 are being sent to meet the Maker! Right now, the sole democratic right exercised widely is the right to kill with impunity".

- Sarath Premadasa, WEEKEND, 6.11.88

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# LTTE TO CONSIDER OPPOSITION PROPOSALS FOR ETHNIC SOLUTION

The six-party Front of opposition parties headed by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which has adopted Mrs.S. Bandaranaike as their candidate in the forthcoming Presidential election is reported to have submitted its proposals for the settlement of the ethnic conflict to the LTTE representatives in London.

An LTTE spokesman in London confirmed that the report was true, but declined to state what the details of the proposals are as they were still under consideration. However, the Sunday Observer (Colombo) of 6 November, quoting 'sources with close connections with the LTTE in London' reported that the Front's plan was for a permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces except the areas to be retained for the Muslims living in the east.

Under the proposals, Sri Lanka would be divided into seven units of power. Two of these units would be based on ethnic considerations such as the unit forming the northern and eastern provinces for the Tamils, and

Amparai districts and other Muslim majority areas in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts for the Muslims. The scheme is to provide one unit with a Tamil majority and the other with a Muslim majority.

The plan also provides that the legislative provisions relating to powers of devolution and composition of the units shall not be altered except by a two-third majority in Parliament and a referendum of the people living in those areas.

On colonisation, there will be an immediate stop to the on going Sinhala colonisation, but those who have been forced out of their lands they occupied in the north and east will be rehabilitated fully in their former areas.

The Front undertakes to put into effect the plan it has submitted within six months of its coming to power.

However, the WEEKEND (Colombo) of 15 November, referring to the opposition proposals submitted to the LTTE, reports that the plan for devolution envisages the formation of three units of devolution in the country to be

termed Decentralised Government units instead of Provincial Councils. The Units will be divided into Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim areas depending on the ethnic composition, but the minority communities in such units will enjoy all the rights of the majority.

One serious omission in the opposition plan is that there is no specific provision for the protection of the ethnic identity and rights of the Tamils living in the plantation areas numbering over a million-and-a-half who are likely to be subsumed in the decentralised unit in which the Sinhalese will be in a preponderant majority - 10 to 1.

The Eelam Peoples Democratic Front (EPDF) the political wing of the PLOTE, has already considered the opposition proposals and regards them as an advance on the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the previous Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, but it is of the view that only a national government in which the JVP is also part can implement the proposals, according to an interview given by D. Sitharthan, the leader of the EPDF.

## OPPOSITION'S 'CONDITIONS FOR PEACE'

Seven opposition political parties have submitted several conditions to be fulfilled by the government if normalcy and peace is to be restored in Sri Lanka.

In a letter addressed to President Jayawardene on 17 October, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Muslim Congress, Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, Democratic Workers Congress, Eksath Lanka Janatha Pakshaya, All Ceylon Tamil Congress and Liberal Party have expressed 'deep Concern about the situation in the country in the last few days' adding that it '... would seem that very fundamental causes for which your government must take the fullest possible responsibility underlie this situation of violence and instability'.

The conditions submitted by the opposition parties were: (a) release of all students in custody; (b) release of all political prisoners; (c) immediate end to all military operations including those of the IPKF directed at the civilian population; (d) announcement of the dates of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections; (e) appointment of an interim council of representatives of recognised political parties to govern this country until the conclusion of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections; (f) suspension of the North-East Provincial Council elections; (g) suspension of all powers of the Provincial Councils until after the conclusion of

the Presidential and Parliamentary elections; (h) disbanding of all paramilitary organisations; and (i) dissolution of all local bodies whose terms have been arbitrarily extended.

The letter to the President further states, 'We feel that the situation cannot be permitted to deteriorate... It is our unanimous view that a climate of peace and normalcy can only be created if your government fulfils these conditions'.

## PARTS OF SKELETON DUG OUT AT JAFFNA CAMPUS

Parts of a human skeleton were dug out from behind the Ananda Kumaraswamy Women's Hostel at the University of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka on 27 October 1988.

Workers engaged in digging for the foundations for a new hostel block accidentally discovered the skeletal remains comprising a skull, human hair of a female and jewellery including silver rings normally worn by Tamil women on the second toe of their foot.

In another spot, inner garments normally worn by women and an artificial (Jaipur) leg were also discovered.

The four skeletal remains were accidentally found by villagers who had gone into the palmyrah grove to pick fruits. The hapless family were given a 'community burial' by the villagers with police permission.

## LAND MINE KILLS 12

Nine soldiers belonging to the Indian Peace Keeping Force and three civilians were killed on October 20 in Kiran in the Eravur police division in eastern Sri Lanka when a land mine exploded.

Among the dead soldiers was an officer. The soldiers were travelling in a truck at the time of the explosion. The three civilians were walking along the road at the time the mine exploded.

The IPKF imposed an unofficial curfew in the area after the blast and conducted a cordon and search operation.

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# Jaffna – Peace amidst War

Gently the plane descends to the tarmac of Palaly airport and the landscape rises to its magnitude. Small plots of land, well looked after, straight roads and hedges, not even an inch which is not used to inhabit or cultivate. The Jaffna peninsula, the most northern part of Sri Lanka, from up here reminds me of my own country, the Netherlands. How different from what I expect to see: The northern district of Sri Lanka devastated by war. It is this first impression which remains with me throughout my stay in Jaffna: Normalcy amidst War. At Palaly airport we are given a friendly welcome by the authorities of the Sri Lankan army. It is early morning and the Commander offers tea. Outside the airport premises, the Indian army is in control. On the way to Jaffna-town there is not much discussion. I seem to be one of the very few foreigners in Jaffna today. Every four or five kilometers we see an Indian army sentry point. At every major junction, in every village they had cleared a private house, asked its occupants to find another place to stay and had put up a small sentry point at the road side. Though their presence is felt, very strongly, life continues to move around these 'enclaves of war'. Yet, 'No photo's, no English'. Two worlds apart!

## Run by Women.

From sunset to sunrise there is curfew. I expected that during the night hell will break loose and firing will be heard. In my imagination I thought of roaring tanks, jeeps, planes loaded with bombs, boots, voices, and weaponry. During my visit I indeed could not close my eyes, but not because of the war; but because cocks, dogs, crickets, crows and many other birds do not allow me to sleep a wink.

During a visit to a small village a woman explains to me how the whole economy of the peninsula is virtually run by women. She gives me three good reasons as to why this is so; First of all there are not so many men left, one man for every seven women she reckons. Secondly, if there are men in the house, they would rather stay at home for it is not always safe for them to venture out on the roads. "But", and here she smiles. "most of all we do much better, you know".

People in Jaffna live mainly from agriculture, animal husbandry, small scale self employment, trade, professionals, with 'white collar' jobs and fisheries. Although the last has suffered a lot from the war. Fishermen are not allowed to fish in deep sea and transporting fish out of the peninsula has come to a standstill. Jaffna is densely populated. Approximately 800,000 people live on 750 sq. miles, i.e. 400 persons per sq. mile. Because of this, land-holdings are small: mostly

Jan Bruinsma, as project officer at the Asia desk of the Dutch co-financing institution HIVOS, visited Jaffna recently. He feels that the picture created of Sri Lanka through the media is only part of its reality. Besides human rights abuses, killings, war and destruction, there is also a certain form of normalcy. Amidst war life goes on, and the women realize this best. He argues that the government of Sri Lanka and the foreign donors too need to adopt a similar position.

less than 1/2 an acre. The farmer grows chillies, red onions, plantains and vegetables. The Jaffna farmer is poor. 60% of the families receive food assistance from the government. About 30% of the population can be considered middle class and 10% rich.

## Co-op Movement

Jaffna historically has the strongest co-operative movement in Sri Lanka. More than 600 small farmers' co-operatives are active today. The farmers try to save a little money with the co-operative in order to obtain interest and take loans in return. About 360 of these so-called primary societies have formed a union which now has 14,000 members, of which 70% are women. 45 primary societies consist entirely of women members and are managed entirely by women. Their savings amount to more than 2 million Sri Lanka Rupees. These savings are set out among the member farmers with great success. 98% of the loans are recovered by the co-operative. The farmers know that they are working with their own money. Normalcy amidst War!

Started in 1982 with only 42 primary societies, the union has, in war time, grown more than 7 fold this number in 6 years. An explosive growth generated by the own efforts of the women of Jaffna peninsula.

Does this mean that war has ceased? That fear, intimidation, death and destruction are no longer in existence? No! not at all!

## Enormous drive

What I see is a people determined to survive with enormous drive to work and build their own lives. For them war has become an unavoidable reality and they learn to live with it. Jaffna is not a bleak hole; neither is it a heap of ruins with a group of women sitting on top of it, weeping over their beloved ones. War has become a part of reality in Jaffna and, according to a Jaffna-man, as the cards have been played up to present, by the Indians, by the Sri Lanka government as well as by the militant groups, (mainly the LTTE-tigers), this will remain so for a long time, whether accord or discord, provincial council elections or not.

It is this recognition of reality, and coping-up with it, which is very much lacking in Colombo. Government bureaucracies, development organizations, foreign missions, and the Colombo based big non-governmental organizations (BINGO's) seem to be

waiting for solutions, i.e. politically or militarily, whereby first the war has to end, or at least be under control, before rehabilitation and reconstruction could begin. One cannot invest in War. Thereby implying that as long as there is war in the north and east, and more or less in deep south of Sri Lanka as well, the people will be deprived of Government assistance, foreign aid and development projects.

## War and militarisation

While, awaiting peace, the government structures, decentralization models, working relations with foreign donors and the NGO establishment are geared up to receive the enormous quantities of money meant for the reconstruction of war stricken areas. So far very little of these monies have reached the targeted areas; local government structures are not operational enough at present. Only a limited number of relatively small NGO's (some foreign aid agencies included), are able to work and give relief.

War and militarization in Sri Lanka are sad facts. However, this is not a process that one can reverse easily. At present the militant groups, the LTTE and JVP, the Government and its military apparatus, as well as the Indian army, leaving aside their verbal dedication to a political solution, are resorting to their military might to solve the disputes. One can argue at length on options, possibilities, strategies and parties. Such arguments are useful and can open new avenues for direct discussions and in future may lead to a better understanding between militant groups, India and Sri Lanka. Suffice to say that these efforts, so far have not had the expected results. Militarization, extra judicial killings, disappearances, draconian laws, and further destruction by all parties involved are on the increase.

## Economic thought

The trend of militarization has been rapidly increasing since 1977, and coincided with an open and outward-looking economy. It abolished import controls, it cut back on subsidies, and encouraged foreign investment in a major push for competitive self-sufficiency and faster economic growth. In doing so, it was a step with various interests. It was in line with a body of economic thought that believed this formula would generate growth in developed and developing countries. It reflected a position voiced in advice

and prescription of international financial institutions, and in turn it resulted in record levels of foreign aid.

Foreign Aid can of course not be held responsible for what has happened in Sri Lanka during the last decade. However, they are as much part of the problem as they can be part of the solution. Not underestimating the dynamics of the ethnic conflict itself, it should be recognised that the new economic policies since 1977 have increased capitalist expansion in the country, which meant rapid growth for a minority, creating jealousy and frustration for the majority. Rapid changes in the social-economic environment also meant a shock for many, creating space for nationalist politics and racist propaganda, both within and outside the government of Sri Lanka. This happened with the silent and sometimes open support of the donor countries and their missions in Colombo.

#### Assistance needed now

Sri Lanka's problem seems not to be

a lack of foreign and local resources but how to make good use of it. The Jaffna farmer needs assistance now, not tomorrow, and so does the whole working population in the north and east of Sri Lanka. The short time relief in the form of hand outs to the most affected is needed. But this is also a task for which the western countries are well equipped. However needed, part of such aid entails: 'Teach the farmer how he can get his rice free and he will never cultivate again', making Sri Lanka more and more aid minded. More than relief, what is needed is preventive aid. Aid aimed at assisting local structures and strengthening those. How to make decentralized provincial planning and decision making a priority in development at provincial level, as wished by the Sri Lanka Government and foreign donors alike. It is not sufficient to strengthen the national Government structures. Where the local Government structures cease to be operational it may

well be that those organizations which are still working; namely, in the private sector, the NGO's, the co-operative movement and the universities, form the key to initiate such processes. It is very disturbing to discover that ethnic wounds are so deep that these organizations and institutions also have to face discrimination and deprivation, whereas they are essential in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts.

#### Normalcy in war

Normalcy amidst war. War has been recognised as part of reality. It is a difficult but unavoidable position. The women of Jaffna realize this. Governments and foreign donors will need to adjust their development policies for Sri Lanka. Rehabilitation and reconstruction need to be integrated into their policy approach. Only then can they reach out to those sections of society whom they say they want to reach: Those who need it most.

## CITIZENS' CHAIRMAN SHOT

The Secretary of the Jaffna Citizens' Committee, Mr. Sivanandasundaram was shot dead on 21 October by unidentified gunmen when the victim was returning after addressing a commemorative meeting held by the LTTE.

The killing took place at the Valaiveli highway in the Vadamarachchi area while Mr. Sivanandasundaram was travelling in a bus.

Mr. Sivanandasundaram was one of those nominated by the LTTE to the illfated Interim Council for the north and east proposed after the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. The Jaffna Municipal Commissioner, C.V.K. Sivgnanam who too was nominated by the LTTE to the Interim Council was shot at last month, but he escaped with injuries.

On 27 October, Raja Shankar, the President of the Thenmarachi Citizens Committee in Northern Jaffna peninsula was shot dead by a gang of gunmen.

These attacks have been attributed by the LTTE to those belonging to the EPRLF which has begun to make its presence felt following its return to the peninsula allegedly with the assistance of the IPKF.

## SHORTAGE OF NURSES

Hospitals in northern Sri Lanka are suffering from an acute shortage of nurses.

According to the Director of Health Services, Dr. S. Kanagasabai, efforts to recruit more nurses have not proved successful. Although there are over four hundred vacancies for nurses in hospitals in the north, only 185 responded when applications were called to fill these vacancies.

## CHANCE TO SIT MEDICAL & ENGINEERING ENTRANCE EXAMS IN TAMIL NADU

Sri Lanka Tamil students living in Tamil Nadu as refugees will now be allowed to appear in a special entrance examination to qualify for admission to the State's medical and engineering colleges. The Government of Tamil Nadu is to issue orders to this effect. This was announced by the State's Governor, P.C. Alexander.

The order will benefit nearly 200 Sri Lankan Tamils who have been denied admission to medical and engineering colleges following an earlier blanket ban in the wake of the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement. Following this ban, several Tamil organisations made representations to the Indian government, and the Tamil-speaking Janatha Dal member of Parliament, Dr. Subramaniam Swamy, took up the matter directly with the Indian PM. Rajiv Gandhi who on August 3 informed Swamy: 'We have asked the Tamil Nadu government to continue to allow these students to pursue their studies in India'.

## LTTE LEADER KILLED

A top ranking leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, Rasiyah Sadacharabhavan alias Francis was among the several LTTE militants killed by the IPKF.

Francis, the LTTE commander of the Amparai and Batticaloa districts was shot dead in an encounter in the north of Kalmunai, according to the IPKF, but the LTTE claimed that he was killed in or near his hideout after being ambushed on information given by 'informants'.

Accordingly, through its order number 11(34)87 dated August 8, the Indian government directed the Tamil Nadu government, currently under President's rule, to admit Sri Lankan Tamil students to medical and engineering colleges provided they complied with the usual formalities.

Seeing the failure on the part of the State's Commissioner of Education to implement the government's directive, on October 15, Swamy held a press conference in Madras to announce his decision to go on an indefinite fast from October 26 to force the issue. Shortly thereafter, State Governor Alexander announced his intention to implement the government's directive without further delay and Swamy dropped his threatened fast.

#### From page.5

"The institution of government has virtually collapsed. Essential services are paralysed, and life has become dominated during the day by strikes or hartals, which close shops, businesses and the transport system, and at night by curfews imposed by the Army. Political murders - normally mafia-style individual assassinations - which average up to 10 a day, have been confined to the inside pages of the local press.

"With the government demonstrably impotent, having exhausted ways to solve the crisis, the presidential elections on December 19 are in serious doubt and growing violence in the coming weeks is seen as inevitable".

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– B.C. MAHADEVA, SUNDAY OBSERVER.  
October 18th 1981

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– Muththaiyan, THINAKARAN VAARA MANJARI,  
September 27th 1981

Vijayambigai is a world renowned Indian classical dancer and choreographer, honoured with many titles – GEM OF DANCING (Canada), PEOPLE'S ARTISTE (Sri Lanka) and DANCING LUMINARY (by Dr. Kalaingar Karunanidhi, ex-Chief minister, Tamil Nadu, India) and has danced into the hearts of people in the USA, USSR, Canada, UK, Denmark, India and Sri Lanka.

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# TAMILS IN NO MOOD TO ACCEPT SRI LANKAN FORCES IN PLACE OF IPKF

According to the Indo-Lanka Accord the I.P.K.F. will remain in Sri Lanka until such time that the Executive President requests them to withdraw. Both the presidential candidates have drawn the attention of the nation to the issue of the withdrawal of the I.P.K.F. Hence, whatever the results of the Presidential Election it should necessitate a request being directed to the IPKF to withdraw.

There is every possibility of a wish to the contrary being expressed through the North-East Provincial Council prior to the conclusion of the Presidential election so that an unwilling India may hold on to such a resolution as a defence move.

Assuming that India was sincere in walking into Sri Lanka in order to safeguard the security of Tamil people, she may nevertheless refuse to go and justify her continuance of stay by imposing a precondition that alternative safeguards be insured for the protection of the Tamils before she withdraws her forces.

**With all the allegations against the Indian troops one has to reconcile to the fact that the Tamil people are not in a mood to accept the Sri Lankan forces as a substitute for the IPKF.**

If Mr. Premadasa wins the Presidential Elections he will be forced to implement the Provincial Council Act without any reservation whatsoever. He will also be compelled to part with all the powers that are envisaged under the Provincial Councils Act which will include the power of the Provincial Council to constitute its own Police Force.

Mr. Premadasa will be stopped from repealing or dissolving the Provincial Councils as opposed to Mrs. Bandaranaike because it is his position that he has accepted the opinion of the Supreme Court that the Provincial Council Bill was not obnoxious to our Constitution.

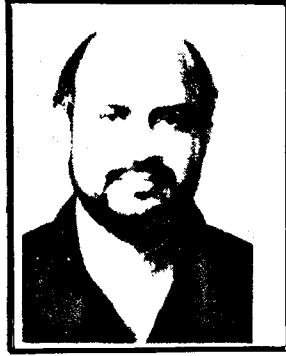
Hence Mr. Premadasa will face the following major difficulties:

1. Sustaining the North-East Provincial Council for the next five years without having the true representatives of the people in the Council.

2. He may have to face the formidable challenge of the LTTE with the strength of the local Provincial Police only.

3. When he realises that the local Provincial Police cannot resist the LTTE (apart from wiping it out) he will be compelled to once again request the IPKF to come to his rescue. Viewed from this angle it will be impossible for Mr. Premadasa to have the IPKF to leave Sri Lanka for ever. He may make use of this only as a political stunt.

"In answer to questions from correspondents the Prime Minister expressed



M.H.M. Ashroff, Leader  
Sri Lankan Muslim Congress

his confidence that the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement will not be disturbed even if there is a change in the Sri Lanka administration."

5. India will also be justified in taking up the position that it will not withdraw its forces until normalcy prevails at least in the North and East. The present Provincial Council has been constituted for the combined North-Eastern provinces by the exercise of the powers flowing from the emergency regulations. Therefore, the moment the emergency is lifted the temporary merger will also cease to exist and the proposed Provincial Council of the North-East will collapse. In which event Mr. Premadasa may have to face a constitutional crisis of the Provincial Council of the North and East. The only way in which he can avoid such a crisis is to perpetuate the state of emergency.

In our view the perpetuation of the state of emergency and the request to the IPKF to withdraw are not consistent with each other.

On the other hand even if Mrs. Bandaranaike becomes the President of the country it is not practicable to expect the IPKF to withdraw forthwith. If the common alliance can put forward the outlines of an alternative but permanent units of devolution for the serious consideration of the LTTE as well as the other Tamil militant groups it may be possible for the common alliance to have a dialogue with the representatives of the Tamil people as well as the Muslims of the North-East region to arrive at a consensus regarding the package of devolution to the units based on ethnicity. These outlines should include reasonable devolution of power including the power over the distribution of State land and the stability of these units through constitutional means.

If one could ensure that there is no specific threat to this package in an interim post election era (during which time the details of the devolution could be worked out by dialogue among the representatives of the people), it may be possible to persuade the IPKF in the



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first place to withdraw itself to their barracks pending the implementation of the fresh package of devolution to the proposed alternative units. Once it is shown to the world that the Tamils and the Muslims of the North and Eastern provinces are prepared to accept these units of devolution and the militant forces are prepared to come back to the mainstream politics, then the necessity for the IPKF to stay will not exist any longer.

In other words the implementation of the alternative package of devolution which should accommodate the aspirations of the Tamils and the Muslims of the Northern and Eastern provinces and the withdrawal process of the IPKF should take place simultaneously.

# BOOK REVIEW

## FROM RAJ TO RAJIV

by Mark Tully & Zareer Mazani BBC Books, London 1988, 174pp. £10.95

This slim volume was put together from a series of radio programmes to commemorate forty years of Indian independence.

Mark Tully is perhaps the soundest and most rewarding of the many British investments in contemporary India. As the BBC's man in Delhi these past twenty years and more, he has become a household name to many thousands of listeners throughout the world. The Tully bridge between Britain and India is as rough, ready and durable as the Bailey bridge in its own setting and may one day occupy a similar place in our lexicons.

Drawing on a rich cross-section of Indian voices, Mark Tully and his producer Zareer Masani in London, have stitched these together with comment and observation into an absorbing narrative of India's first four decades as an independent state.

India's Tryst with Destiny at the stroke of the midnight hour of August 15, 1947 took place against the crimson backcloth of communal bloodletting. Freedom was scarred by partition. Minoo Masani, a member of the defunct big business Swatantra Party, ascribed India's division to the egoism of Nehru and Jinnah. Mahatma Gandhi, he recalled had wanted Congress to offer Jinnah the Prime Ministership of a united India. If this suggestion had been accepted the surgery of partition could have been avoided. A simplistic view surely? Jinnah had let his sectarian genie out of its bottle and despite his early liberal predilections, Zia's Pakistan is the Quaid-i-Azam's true monument.

Mark Tully relates Jawaharlal Nehru's leading contribution to the evolution of India as a democratic polity, his grand vision of industrialisation and economic planning in a liberal Fabian mould, the social reform of the Hindu Code Bill, the active encouragement of science and technology, to which his daughter Indira was equally committed, and a foreign policy based on the concept of non-alignment.

There was the inevitable mixture of failure and success. But Nehru, as the historian Ravindra Kumar cogently remarks, charted the way for India; he set standards for subsequent generations to follow.

However, the integration of the patchwork of princely states into a single administrative entity was the towering achievement of Sardar Vallabhai Patel. Patel is curiously described as "very much a Hindu traditionalist... largely untouched by the

Western influences which Nehru imbibed at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge." Neither institution has any exclusive copyright on "Western influences." Patel had studied law in London and his university career in India was not without distinction.

He was, unlike Nehru, a homespun product who, had he lived longer, would have favoured a purer brand of capitalism, but this hardly makes him a "Hindu traditionalist." Nor does his hostility and suspicion of Jinnah and the Muslim League. There were many outside the traditionalist Hindu fold who developed an intense distaste for both.

Mark Tully takes us through Indira Gandhi's remarkable life. Romesh Thapar, an old friend and later a bitter critic, pointed to her courage and tactical acumen, never displayed to such devastating effect as in the Bangladesh war. It was her moment of supreme triumph.

Mr Tully could have highlighted the fanatical Pakistani determination to purge Bengali Muslim society of what were perceived in Islambad as baleful Hindu cultural influences and the massacres of common people and intellectuals alike to achieve that goal. This would have made clearer the impact on India of American and Chinese indifference to these atrocities and their continued support for Yahya Khan for reasons of Realpolitik.

Again, when discussing the failure of Nehru's China policy, Mr Tully drawing unquestioningly on the specious wisdom of Neville Maxwell's work, blames him for surrendering to Indian chauvinism. Nehru's mistakes and miscalculations are now self-evident but Mark Tully might have emphasised the effect on Indian public opinion of China's invasion of Tibet, its destruction of Tibetan monasteries and slaughter of Tibetans (in violation of Chou En-lai's assurances), leading eventually to the flight of the Dalai Lama and tens of thousands of his followers to India. Beijing's shifting claim lines on the disputed border merely fuelled Indian anger. China is today a vigorous supporter of the genocidal Pol Pot in Kampuchea. There are lessons still to be learnt here.

The story of Mrs Gandhi's descent into Emergency rule and her son Sanjay's excesses is told lucidly and fairly with the aid of witnesses and associates. So, too, is her tragic end.

After forty-one years of independence India continues to encapsulate a

bewildering variety of paradoxes. It has a burgeoning middle class and masses of people clinging to life by the slenderest threads. High technology and the bullock cart co-exist as do enlightenment and superstition, liberty and oppression. Fine arts and the cinema range from the sublime to the near ridiculous and tawdry. India has a lively press and superb cartoonists like Laxman and Abu who delight in humbling the mighty with their well directed shafts. There are voluntary bodies dedicated to the defence of the rights of the socially disadvantaged, of women and the protection of ecology and much else besides. India is a veritable babel of tongues. It functions through a measure of anarchy. And, yes, its armed forces do not interfere in politics.

Why then has India survived with its improbable democratic institutions and spirit intact despite buffetings when in countries around it these appear to have withered? The political scientist Rajni Kothari provides a thought provoking explanation. "This is the only major culture and civilisation in the world which really didn't have a centre. The contrast with China is most clear. The Chinese identified themselves with a clear centre, and empire and an emperor, and there was nothing like that in India. So to that extent, the coming of the British and then the national movement can be considered to be the first steps in the direction of bringing together the tremendous plurality and diversity of the country into a common framework. But Indian nationalism has always flourished through the acceptance of a plural society. That, in fact, is why the interest in nationalism and democracy run side by side. I have constantly maintained that this country was always inherently fertile ground for liberal institutions. It is not as if the British brought them to us."

Preman Addy

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# "THARMAM IS OUR PROTECTOR"

(English translation of part of the speech in Tamil delivered by Mr. Mariampillai Melchior at the meeting in London in memory of Mr. K. Kandasamy)

There is a saying among our people: "Raman andaal enna, Ravanana Andaal enna". Paraphrased it means "What difference does it make to you and me whether Rama or Ravana rules our land". Far from indicating political apathy or alienation among our people, this common saying contains certain philosophical and legal assumptions.

According to Ramayana, Rama was an incarnation of Vishnu while Ravana was a demon king. But both Rama and Ravana belonged to and operated in the Indian world and were subject to the rules of the Indian world. In the Indian world the supreme ruler at all times and in all places was deemed to be Tharmam; every other ruler had to subject himself to Tharmam. The concept of Tharmam was one of the greatest contributions of ancient Indian jurisprudence to civilization. Tharmam is nothing other than the Rule of Law. People were so certain about the supremacy of Tharmam that it did not bother them who their ruler was because they were certain that he would observe the Rule of Law. Failure to observe the Rule of Law meant that the king ceased to have any right to rule at all.

I shall refer only to examples from our corner of the Indian world to illustrate the supremacy accorded to the Rule of Law: one is from Silappathikaram and the other is from Mahavamsa. In the first example the Pandyan king has executed Kovalan for a crime he has not committed. Kannahi proves her husband's innocence and the Pandyan court demands justice. The Pandyan king and his queen are struck dead and his capital Madurai is burnt to ashes. The warning is clear: a ruler who has failed to uphold Tharmam, the rule of Law, ceases to have the right to rule at all. The poet was also hinting that the subjects cease to owe allegiance to such a ruler and are justified in putting his capital, the symbol of his glory, to the torch.

In the episode from the Mahavamsa, the cow has lost its calf crushed under the wheels of the chariot driven recklessly by King Ellalan's son. The cow pulls at the rope attached to the king's bell of justice demanding justice. The king sees no way but to uphold the rule of Law and orders that his erring son should be crushed under the chariot's wheels.

It matters not that these events might not have taken place; the fact that they caught the popular imagination is evidence of the standard expected from rulers in the Indian world.

The Indian world was never organised under anyone human ruler; but it always enjoyed a certain spiritual and cultural unity; one of the factors that held the Indian world together was the concept of Tharmam being the supreme ruler.

The relevance of the concept of Tharmam to Kandasamy's disappearance which we are here to mourn and to condemn is this: this is not an ordinary crime committed by private individuals. It is a crime apparently committed by persons who are claiming the right to rule our part of the world; even before they have reached the threshold of power they have shown that they could not care less for Tharmam which has occupied a paramount place in our culture for over 2000 years. Every ruler in the past who failed to uphold Tharmam lost his right to rule. Are we going to insist that our would-be rulers obey Tharmam or are we going to let them impose an alien philosophy on us? Let us make no mistake about what is at stake: we shall discard Tharmam at our own risk: Tharmam is the ultimate guarantor of everyone's life and liberty. When our people say 'Tharmam Thalai Kakum' (Tharmam saves our head) they mean it quite literally.

Why have the persons who claim to have come forward to preserve our way of life abandoned Tharmam and committed this sin and this crime? Arjunan raised the same question at Kurushetra and the answer was given by Krishna: ultimately it is ambition and the anger born of thwarted ambition which drive men away from the path of Tharmam. When a man does anything other than as a matter of duty he tends to develop a certain attachment; attachment leads to desire; unfulfilled desire leads to frustration and anger; anger clouds his reason and judgment; when reason and judgment are clouded he thinks that he alone is right and everyone else is wrong; the way is open to destruction. Such persons become the prisoners of their own desires and ambitions; they are persons who run after power and glory and cannot comprehend ultimate reality or timeless values.

In the Indian world to which all of us belong, Karma Yoga or the Path of Duty has been held aloft as a goal to be attained by all men and women. Most of us become prisoners of our own ambitions and move away from the ideal of Karma Yoga. In every age a man or woman is born who by his or her way of life becomes an embodiment of Karma Yoga. One such person who was born in our time and in our society

was Kandasamy who was a true Karma Yogi. You may ask 'Who is a Karma Yogi and what manner of man is he?' Bhagavat Gita gives the answer: A Karma Yogi does what he conceives to be his duty; success and failure are not his concern; he is not elated by success or depressed by failure; he does not tremble with fear nor does he go berserk with anger; he does not run after things; he can surrender any position or give up any pleasure without regret; he does not lay claim to anything as his own; he is not arrogant; to him both pleasure and pain are unimportant phenomena; his essential self is not affected by the passage of events; such a man has peace of mind.

From whichever angle we look at Kandasamy he was a true Karma Yogi. In spite of all his work and concerns he was a man totally devoid of ambition and avoided competition in any form or shape. He had the capacity to move with equal ease with both the learned and the uneducated. He worked for the well being of his fellow beings without expecting anything in return.

While we mourn Kandasamy's disappearance let us also be thankful to the Almighty that our society was privileged to have had a Karma Yogi like him in our midst.

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**Jaffna Hindu parents seek qualified working partner** for their 29 year old graduate daughter working in U.K. British citizen. Reply M 256 c/o Tamil Times.

**Jaffna Hindu brother seeks bride** for ICMA final year accountant, 39 years. Write with details to M 257 c/o Tamil Times.

**Jaffna Hindu professional father** with foreign business interests seeks well qualified engineer or accountant groom, preferably working overseas for fair, attractive, highly talented, well accomplished graduate only daughter, 25 years. Write with horoscope to M 258 c/o Tamil Times.

**Jaffna Hindu parents seek attractive, tall, educated, Hindu partner** below 22 years for son 26 years, computer graduate, employed in States, Mars Rahu afflicted. Reply with horoscope and photograph to M 259 c/o Tamil Times.

**Jaffna Hindu parents seek professionally qualified partner** for only doctor daughter, qualified in U.K., 24 years, British citizen. religion no bar. Please send details including horoscope to M 260, c/o Tamil Times.

**Catholic businessman seeks educated groom** with permanent status in country of residence for daughter, 20, completed school studies in Jaffna. Please write for further details to M 261, c/o Tamil Times.

**Aunt seeks partner** for Jaffna Hindu nephew, 33 years, British citizen, professionally qualified and working. Mars afflicted. Chart with details to M 262, c/o Tamil Times.

**Hindu mother seeks partner** for son, 29, U.K. permanent resident, Mars afflicted. Please reply with horoscope and details to M 263, c/o Tamil Times.

**Tamil mother seeks doctor bride**, 35-40 years for doctor son, 49, in high income position in Australia, innocent party in recent divorce. Please write to M 264, c/o Tamil Times.

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**December 3rd, 7pm.** A festival of Christmas Carols presented by Sri Lanka Christian Association at the Asian Chaplaincy, 48 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HA. For details contact: Charmaine, Tel. 01-969 0598

**December 3rd, 7pm.** Bharatanatyam by Shobana Jeyasingh at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 01-381 3036/4608

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### APPRECIATION



**Arthur Joseph Devanayagam Nevins Selvadurai** ADJN to his numerous relatives, friends and wellwishers, passed away in Clombo on 24.9.88. He was the son of the great educationalist and Principal of Jaffna Hindu College, the late Mr. Nevins Selvadurai. ADJN was a highly respected lawyer practising at Huftsdorf but his forte was in sports.

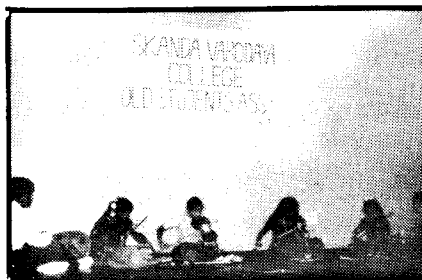
The unquenchable thirst he had for cricket was the hallmark of an extraordinary sportsman and he put everything into it with such religious fervour and commitment, seeking no fame and honour, but simply for the love of the game. Representing St. Thomas College between 1927 and 1929, he virtually bludgeoned the opposing batsman with some painfully vicious bowling. He was no mean batsman either. Against Wesley College, he scored a memorable 144 which included 34 runs (5 sixes and 1 four) in one over. Joining the Tamil Union Cricket Club, ADJN continued his cricketering career with equal zest and vigour. He represented the club with devotion and dedication for over 25 years. He played for Ceylon against Linsay Hassett's Australian Services team which included Keth Miller and all-rounder Cecil Pepper. He opened the bowling for Ceylon and scored a dogged 36 runs.

At athletics too, he had remarkable achievements. He won the Public Schools' Championships in the 100 metres, 220 metres and long jump and won the coveted Wilton Bartleet cup for the best individual performance.

Apart from his cricketering and athletic triumphs, he also excelled in lawn tennis, winning several titles and remained a frontline player of class for a number of years.

A gentleman to his fingertips with a genuine disposition, simple, unassuming and large-hearted, ADJN will be enthusiastically remembered by those who played with him, against him and watched him.

He comes from a large family and leaves two brothers, DJN (Bobby) and BSN (Baba) and several nephews and nieces to bemoan his loss.



"Skanda Varodaya College Old Students' Association (UK Branch) held a well attended A.G.M. and Reunion Lunch on 6.11.88 at Lola Jones Hall, London, SW17 A violin recital by the students of West London Tamil School was one of the items of entertainment at the function."

### OBITUARY

**Reverend Sam Thamboe** - Pastor of the JDCSI Chavakachcheri Church, Sri Lanka, son of the late M. Thamboe of Malaysian Railways and Mrs Rose Nagammah Thamboe, beloved husband of Lida Rasamany, loving father of Joyce (Teacher, Uduvil Girls College), Rohan (Maldives) and Suresh (Madras Christian College), brother of the late Wesley Jayaratnam, Emily Sabapathy, Arulpragasam (UK), Mrs Nesam Singarajah, Mrs Jeyapackiam John Rajah, late James Thamboe, Mrs Gnanammah Punitharajah and Mrs Thavamany Gabrielpillai, expired on 12.9.88 and burial took place at Church Cemetery, Chavakachcheri, Sri Lanka.



**Rasamalar Kandiah** (Retired teacher, Mahajana College, Tellippalai, Sri Lanka), beloved wife of the late Sangarapillai Kandiah, mother of Sriskandarajah, Sri-Ravicular, Varathachayani, Vanithamany, Verlkumar, Thulasibai and Anandanadesan, mother in law of Chandraleela, Theivanayagi, Kanagabavan, Sri Murugadas, Ranjani and Manohara passed away on 26.9.88 and was cremated at Tellippalai - 49 Sudbury Heights Ave., Greenford, Middlesex UB6 0ND

**Mrs S.J.V. Chelvanayakam Ratnam** wife of the late Mr S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, Q.C., M.P. passed away on 5.8.88 in Colombo. A prayer meeting was held at her residence at Tellippalai to synchronise with the funeral service in Colombo. She leaves behind her sister Mrs G.C. Canagasunderam, four sons Manoharan, Raveendran, Vaseekaran and Chandrakasan and a daughter Suseela Wilson, wife of Prof. A.J. Wilson of New Brunswick University, Canada.

**Mrs Kannakai Kandiah** beloved wife of the late Vallipuram Kandiah, mother of Vigneswararajah, Dr. Somasundararajah, Poopalarajah and Pushparanee (all of U.K.) passed away in Birmingham on 6.11.88 - 58 Farquhar Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3RE, U.K.

**K.V. Jagannathan** noted Tamil scholar and Editor of 'Kalaimagal' died after a brief illness in Madras on 4.11.88. He was 82 and is survived by three sons and a daughter. Popularly known as 'Ki Va Ja', Mr. Jagannathan was a rare combination of a good speaker and a prolific writer. He has to his credit over 200 works on a variety of themes covering Tamil literature and culture. He won the Sahitya Academy award for his book 'Veerar Ulagam' in 1968.

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Why did they get together and set up the business in this form? One of the founder members comments: "Firstly to create decent jobs for ourselves. Some of our members are highly skilled people who are working in low paid unskilled jobs, such as petrol station attendants. By setting up a co-op, we not only create jobs, but control our own venture and a share in the profit. We want to learn lessons from this experience that could one day be applied to economic regeneration in Tamil Eelam. We would like to help set up co-ops there. We have felt inspired

by what the Basque people of Mondragon in Spain have achieved. As a disadvantaged minority community in Spain they have built up a tremendously successful local economy based on co-ops. The rules of our co-op are based on their model."

Getting the business off the ground has been a long struggle for Forest Electronic Systems, with a lot of hard lessons learned all along the way. Raising finance has been and still is the biggest headache. Loans and grants that the co-op had expected to get have not been available to them because of the squeeze on local government finance for aid to enterprise and because the Mondragon model is not favoured by some bodies in the UK co-op movement.

As a result the co-op is so far financed entirely from members own contributions. On these slender resources they have managed to acquire premises, fit them out with the necessary capital equipment and launch their marketing effort. A member says: "We now have our first major orders. If we can complete these successfully in the next few weeks, we are assured of plenty of repeat business.

## FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE IN JAFFNA UNIVERSITY

The University of Jaffna is to set up a Faculty of Agriculture next year. The course of study to be offered by the faculty will concentrate on the agricultural patterns and practices in the northern province.

The University Grants Commission has already approved the plans for the setting up of this Faculty. Two other Faculties of Agriculture have already been established in the University of Batticaloa in the eastern province and the Ruhuna University in the southern province.

The estimates for the construction of the building to house the new Faculty have already been completed by the University authorities, and Phase I of the construction will begin early next year.

The new Faculty is to be located at Kilinochchi, approximately 40 miles away from the main University campus. The University authorities will begin first admissions to the Faculty for the academic year 1989-1990.

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