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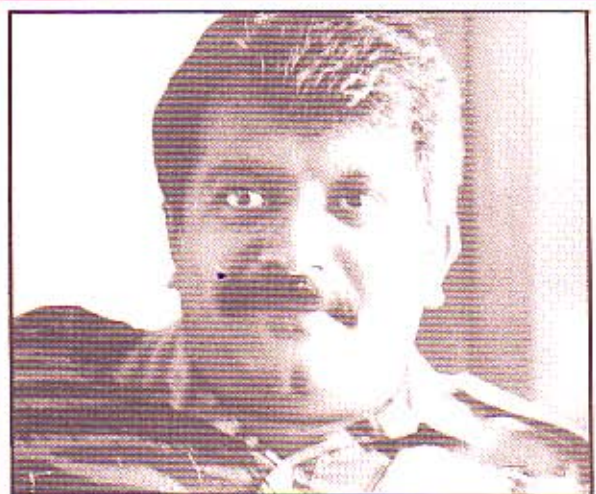
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PEACE PROCESS DRIFTING INTO WAR OF WORDS



President Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga



LTTE Leader Mr. V. Prabhakaran

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- ★ Sub-Continental Scene

- ★ 'LTTE No Longer Insist on a Separate State'
- ★ Whither the Peace Process?
- ★ After Six Month in Govt.
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- ★ Government and the Media on Collision Course
- ★ Corruption Probe Provokes War of the Generals
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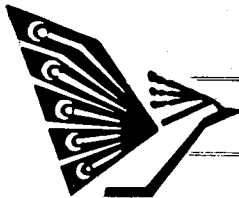
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*I do not agree with a word
of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it.*
- Voltaire.

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Whither the Peace Process?

The recent disclosure of letters exchanged between the Government and the LTTE and the press statements containing charges and counter-charges have caused disappointment among the vast majority of the people who harboured great expectations from the peace process in which both parties were engaged. The disclosures may not have fatally damaged the peace process. But they have certainly raised a serious question mark.

The fact is that Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga boldly spelt out the platform on which she fought the elections and obtained a clear mandate for a negotiated peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict and she initiated the peace process. Recognising the developments in the south of the island, and the mood and expectations of the Tamil people as a whole, the LTTE too positively responded.

It also has to be noted that one of the salutary features of the prevailing political environment in the country is that, unlike in the past, there is no significant opposition to the peace process.

The beginning of talks between the government and the LTTE, the lifting of the ban on the transport to Jaffna of a majority of the items and the subsequent formal declaration of cessation of hostilities between the parties are distinct achievements in the development of the peace process. For the first time in years the guns have gone silent and bombs are not being dropped. There can be no doubt that what has already been achieved has brought considerable relief to the beleaguered people of the north.

The expectation of the people, both the Sinhalese and Tamils, and the international community is that both parties should get on with the task of serious negotiations and bring about a settlement that will guarantee peace.

What is reflected in the recent publicised exchanges between the parties are disputes arising from an emphasis placed on what can be regarded as secondary or consequential issues resulting from the primary problem, the unresolved national question which resulted in the armed conflict. When the basic problem is discussed and resolved, the consequential problems would automatically disappear.

It is advisable for the leadership on both sides to take advantage of the prevailing conducive political environment in the country and get on with the task of negotiating on the primary issue. The government says that it is prepared to address the issue through negotiations with the LTTE. And the LTTE is also on record as being prepared to settle the ethnic problem on a federal basis without insisting on its earlier position of a totally separate state. If that is the true and genuine position of both parties, the stage has been reached when both parties should exchange proposals reflecting their respective positions. Obviously one would expect a gap between the two positions. It is to narrow down and then ultimately to eliminate this gap through a process of give and take that negotiations take place. In case of irreconcilable differences arising, by mutual agreement, the parties ought to seek the assistance of an outside independent personality or an organisation of sufficient competence in the field of conflict resolution.

The prudence and efficacy of the methodology hitherto adopted in the negotiating process between the government and the LTTE is questionable. Whatever merit the principle of transparency may have, protracted intractable problems between parties with entrenched positions cannot be resolved by discussions surrounded by the glare of publicity. The recent public disclosure of letters exchanged between the President and the LTTE leader has confirmed fears about this methodology. It looks as if the peace process has already drifted into a war of words.

The resolution of the ethnic problem and bringing back peace is the most pressing issue facing the country. It should be on the top of the government's agenda. Expressions of commitment to the peace process are not enough. Nominating civil servants and outside professionals, however loyal they may be to the government, who are otherwise engaged on a full-time basis and expecting them to take a part-time role in the peace process whenever time permits is not adequate for the enormity and urgency of the task. If the peace process is not to be allowed to go adrift, the government should appoint a team of competent persons having an adequate grasp of the political, ethnic and military dimensions of the problem in all its ramifications to deal with the peace process. That team must be specifically dedicated to tackle the issue on a fulltime basis until it is resolved.

After Six Months in Govt.

from Rita Sebastian

Already six months into her new government and three months into the Executive Presidency, Chandrika Kumaratunga is finding the honeymoon with the Sri Lankan electorate wearing thin.

The populist platform that brought her to power is, by common consent fairly shaky. No government can survive on election pledges. Neither can it survive on the misdeeds of the previous regime. It can only survive in translating pledges into action for the large mass of the people.

There are two strands to the People's Alliance government, both equally important.

One is resolving the 12 year old ethnic conflict, healing the wounds of war and removing the disparities between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil and Muslim minorities.

The second, the revitalising of the economy, instilling investor confidence and securing industrial peace.

Nobody can fault the President's peace initiative. She undertook it with a dogged determination, knowing full well the political and personal risks she was taking.

Although the talks for the moment seem deadlocked over several issues, with charges and counter charges being traded by both sides, there is no doubt that the living conditions of the Tamil people in the peninsula have improved. A substantial relief and rehabilitation package has also been pledged.

Optimistic noises regarding the peace process continue to emanate from government politicians. And Defence Deputy Anurudha Ratwatte has acquired a civilian Defence Secretary, the former Elections Commissioner Chandrananda de Silva.

A seasoned bureaucrat, de Silva's appointment although not welcomed by certain sections of the armed forces seems to be the right signal to the LTTE who have been complaining that the military is holding President Kumaratunga hostage.

However the sceptics who feel that the LTTE is preparing the ground for Eelam are not convinced that Sri Lanka is on the threshold of peace. They argue that the LTTE has got more than what they have given, and come back into the east

from where they were expelled under former President D.B. Wijetunge.

The rehabilitation process in the north will bring an end to the alienation of the masses to the LTTE. The calculation is that people will propel the LTTE in the direction of peace.

Only time will tell whether the sceptics are right or wrong in their assessment of the LTTE or the Kumaratunga government which has shown a clever pragmatism. However the Kumaratunga government must reckon with the fact that if hostilities breakout at some future date, it will be a blow from which the PA government will find difficult to recover.

Chandrika Kumaratunga has no magic wand. It is the people on both sides of the ethnic divide that must consciously contribute to helping the peace process forward whatever the roadblocks.

Her belief that no community must be deprived of basic essentials necessary for day-to-day living made her lift the embargo on several items into the northern peninsula. There is of course criticism that at the army checkpoints the free movement of goods on which the ban has been lifted is still manipulated by the army rank and file.

Goods that should be flowing free-

ly into the peninsula are only trickling in. And of course the often humiliating search of your belongings in public doesn't say much for confidence building among the ordinary citizens.

Meanwhile the budget which was an exercise in good housekeeping made no references to the give-away largesse that some of the populist minded Ministers in the government had wanted. Commentators see it more as a take-away rather than a give-away budget.

This however is not strictly true for the Rs. 3 million subsidy for bread continues intact. The fertiliser subsidy also continues with the government not having broken away from the subsidy culture. The trouble with subsidies is that they are taken for granted and the appetite is whetted for more.

It goes to the populist credit of Ms. Kumaratunga that she has protected the bread subsidy. However the budget has no direction on the future course of employment schemes. The dole promised to the unemployed youth and impoverished families is not sanctioned yet. No mention being made for it in the budget has been a disappointment to supporters.

According to Minister of Science and Technology, Bernard Zoysa, a pink hued socialist, socialism can come from plenty not from scarcities. He was quoting from Lenin but such appropriate quotes will not satisfy supporters.

Cautious Optimism in the East

by Rita Sebastian

BATTICALOA - Two lengths of black cord hang round his neck. One carries a tiny metallic cross, the other a cyanide capsule. It is only the cyanide capsule that identified Jeyam, 20, as a fighter of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), for he carried no gun, nor was he in battle fatigues.

We met Jeyam in army controlled Vakarai, the town turned army camp, 50 km north of Batticaloa. He is not an LTTE 'infiltrator' as some would describe him. He has only returned home to his village and his family after two years of fighting in the jungles.

For the first time after failed peace talks led to a fresh outbreak in hostilities in June 1990, Tiger cadres are moving about freely in towns

and villages. They are identifiable by the cyanide capsules around their necks.

It is the January 8th truce between the government and the LTTE that has made his return possible. The same truce that has also made it possible for the military to move on the road from Vakarai to their camp in Palchenai 4 miles away, or to Kathiravalli a further 4 miles, watched by LTTE cadres.

'We have no wish to fight. We are just as committed to the peace process as the government for we want to see our people live without fear and in freedom' says Thilagar who oversees the group's economic activities in the district.

Thilagar denies that the LTTE has set up new camps or is stocking up fuel and food for another round of

hostilities. He however admits to their extending the perimeter in one or two camps. And explains away the large quantities of fuel and food as being necessary for meeting their daily requirements, having been deprived of them for 4 years.

Thilagar is optimistic that the Kumaratunga government will alleviate the hardships of the civilian population. It is only now, according to him, that with restrictions lifted on fishing, and a truce in place, that the men have started going out to work.

'Unfairly accused of collaboration with us, so many of the men and boys have been victims of the army brutality' says Thilagar. Even now he says the army faults people for talking to the LTTE.

Whatever the grumbings from either side, the very fact that the guns have gone silent for four weeks, has brought fresh hope to the people in this mainly Tamil dominated district.

Batticaloa, one of the nerve-centres of the bloody ethnic conflict between government forces and militant Tamil Tigers battling for an independent homeland in the island nation's north and east, is quietly returning to a normal and sane existence.

'The guns have remained silent and the people are happy', says young Marian Deepa, who works with an aid agency. 'For the first time in years people have begun to venture out to earn a livelihood, whether it be fishing or working in the fields', she adds.

Marian is engaged in the sad task of enumerating the women widowed by the civil war, their family situation and their immediate needs. 'Hundreds of them have lost their husbands in the war', says Marian.

The devastated populace is slowly picking up the threads of existence to build a new life structured around changed realities. Most of the citizens are hopeful that the eventuality will not arise and praise the government for taking the initiative to talk to the Tigers.

'It was a bold step taken by the new government to initiate peace talks and resolve this longstanding conflict', says Bishop Kingsley Swampillai of the Roman Catholic Batticaloa Diocese.

Viewing the situation with what he calls 'cautious optimism' the Bishop is 'cautious, because there can always be a slip; and optimistic

because of the approach of the government in making this a national priority' says Bishop Swampillai.

And he calls on both parties to approach the problem with the seriousness it deserves for on its success, he says, depends the future of the nation.

Bishop Swampillai is not alone in voicing these sentiments. It is a refrain you pick up as you travel the district.

In the Muslim village of Kathankudy, Abdul Jawath, lawyer and former Citizens Committee chairman, believes that the truce will hold and the government able to work out a settlement that will not overlook Muslim interests.

Old enmities between the Muslims and the LTTE seem to have been forgotten. For Mohamed Haniffa from Eravur, who claims two of his brothers were killed 'in an LTTE massacre' what is important now is that the guns have been put away. 'We want to live in peace with the Tamils' he says.

'We see them when they come into town to buy provisions', says Abdul Majeed, 22, a taxi driver. 'We have no problems with them coming into town. But there is a fear that if peace talks break down there could be war again and we would become the victims', he adds.

But Majeed favours forgiving the militants for the atrocities committed against his minority Muslim community and giving them a fresh chance.

Kandasamy Balakrishna, the Democratic People's Liberation Front's (DPLF) leader for the district, says he has not seen any gun-carrying LTTE cadres in Batticaloa. He has only heard the rumour and is not at all keen to substantiate press reports. A security official himself dismissed the reported truce violations as 'minor'.

The Sri Lankan army has been replaced by a strong police contingent in the town. The police are understandably wary of the LTTE. In Batticaloa alone they lost 584 men in June 1990 when fresh hostilities broke out following the failed peace talks. This time, though they are tight-lipped about what would happen if hostilities broke out, you get the feeling they have mapped out their own strategies.

Today the policemen manning the checkpoints in the district come in daily contact with LTTE cadres as they move into the towns and vil-

lages openly identifying themselves.

Although the police are hoping that peace will hold and the government will be able to negotiate a political settlement with the Tigers, they stress that they are prepared to 'face any eventuality' this time.

In the Mahaweli settlement of Magulpokuna, a village in Welikande on the eastern border, Wedegedera Ananada, the President of the village peace committee, is ready to dismiss some of the alleged LTTE violations as 'perhaps the work of LTTE dropouts'. 'Isn't it better to have peace rather than have people getting killed on both sides' asks Ananda whose 22-year-old son Leelaratne is a Home Guard.

It was a soldier sitting at a lonely checkpoint on the road to Vakarai who asked 'Have there been any bombs?' An answer in the negative had his face break out in smiles. For him as long as the truce holds he knows he will not have to fire his gun, or be fired upon.

Return of Tamil Refugees

The 'voluntary repatriation' of Sri Lankan refugees, the overwhelming majority of whom were Tamils, who sought asylum in southern India resumed on 28 February after a six-month monsoon-season suspension, according to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Colombo.

Initially eight trips by ship would have been scheduled from Tamil Nadu in India to Tailamannar on the north-west coast of Sri Lanka, taking some 3,500 people. In March 4,000 more people are expected to be returned to Trincomalee in eastern Sri Lanka, the UNHCR said.

Almost all Sri Lankan Tamil refugees who had been in India following the outbreak of communal violence in July 1983 are expected to be repatriated to Sri Lanka if the peace process continues to progress.

The UNHCR will assist the returnees in their journey to their home villages whether in areas held by the LTTE guerrilla forces or under government control, the UNHCR said.

Of the more than 200,000 refugees, mostly Tamils, who fled Sri Lanka after 1983, more than 86,000 have already returned to Sri Lanka under the UNHCR assisted scheme.

PEACE PROCESS: DRIFTING INTO WAR OF WORDS

LTTE STATEMENTS

The following is the text of a letter dated 25 February from the leader of the LTTE, Mr. V. Prabhakaran to President Kumaratunga:

This is to thank you for your letter dated 16th February. On the 13th February we addressed an important communication to Presidential Secretary Balapatapendi, and were awaiting a response from him; and hence the delay in replying to you.

It is regrettable that in his very brief letter, Mr. Balapatapendi failed to respond to any of the vital matters that we raised. His letter was also silent on issues such as the modalities in implementing the agreement on the cessation of hostilities; the functioning of the monitoring committees, and the continuation of the talks.

He appears to have marginalised the many issues we raised by merely saying that the government had taken various steps to solve the living problems of the Tamil people.

You are quite aware of our stand on the question of opening a route between the Peninsula and the northern mainland, and your government has negated our proposal on this question which we hold important. But to go ahead and make a unilateral declaration that the government has decided to open both the Pooneryn and Elephant Pass routes to the public can only help to gain propaganda yardage for the government. It cannot be of any use in taking the peace process forward. We are surely disappointed over this.

This unilateral declaration makes one thing very clear: the government is intent in giving priority not to the needs of the people but to military subterfuges!

The talk about lifting the embargo on all essentials is another piece of deception. You well know that the embargo is yet in force on various items. Items such as fuel, diesel, vehicles, motor spares, batteries which are essentials in any civilised society have been identified as military ware; not merely a piece of sophistry; it can neither reduce the sufferings of our people, nor can it help in the peace process.

Now, on the question of a cease-fire, there appears to be a paralysis of will. It really astonishes us that you are not showing any keenness to extend the present temporary cessation of hostilities into a permanent, durable cease-

fire. We have time and again referred to this, in the many letters that we have sent to your government. I have also explained the various confusions that have resulted in not working out the modalities in the implementation of the existing cessation of hostilities agreement. We have yet to receive any concrete responses from you. This has in turn resulted in delays in getting the foreign heads of Monitoring Committees to begin assuming their functions. Further delays on this question can jeopardise the entire peace process.

There is a further need to hold consultations regarding the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war ravaged areas. Towards this purpose, a decision making body has to be set up, composed of representatives of the government as well as the LTTE. This was in fact agreed to, by your representatives at the last round of talks. We therefore wish to stress that whatever steps that are taken in this regard should be done on the basis of the understanding reached between both sides at the previous rounds of talks.

Yours Sincerely,
V. Pirabakaran
Leader, Liberation Tigers
of Tamil Eelam.

The following is the text of a press statement issued by the LTTE in Jaffna on 27.2.95 and released through its London office:

The Political Committee of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in a statement issued from its Headquarters in Jaffna yesterday (26.02.95) said that the Presidential Secretary Balapatapendi had written to the head of the LTTE political section Thamichelvan stating that the government was ready to open both the Pooneryn Sanguipiddy and the Elephant Pass routes for public use. In pursuance of this, the government had decided to shift the forward positions of the army camp at Pooneryn 500 metres behind. The news added that the embargo on all items except those that could be put to military use would be completely lifted and that the Presidential Secretariat was awaiting a response to this from the LTTE.

In responding to this letter, Mr. Thamichelvan said:-

'It would seem that this unilateral decision by the government while fail-

ing to concede the various requests that we have been placing before them, amounts to nothing more than a posture meant to lull the outside world into the belief that the government was very keen to take forward the peace process.'

The fact is the government has been using its privileged position to brief foreign news agencies of various claims that are contrary to ground realities.

The assurances regarding the lifting of the economic embargo are only on paper. None of the items on which the embargo has been lifted reaches Jaffna in any appreciable quantity. The armed forces impose their own restrictions on various items like fuel, kerosene, motor spares, vehicles, fertilisers, radio batteries etc. Whenever we point these out, the government responds by giving assurances that are never kept.

As for the opening of a safe route for public travel to and from the mainland, while not demanding the shifting of the 30 year old strongly fortified army camp at Elephant Pass, we suggested the removal of the recently set-up Pooneryn army camp. The government has refused to accept this.

We asked for the lifting of the ban on fishing in the north-east waters, so that our fisher folk can carry on with their traditional occupation. Even within the limited areas and hours conceded, our fishermen are unable to continue their fishing in safety. The naval authorities at Karainagar have recently arrested three of the fishermen at Araly waters.

Making unilateral announcements such as opening of both routes to the public, that are meaningless in practice, while failing to attend to the basic day-to-day needs of our people, begins to shake our confidence in a government on which we have placed trust from the beginning. We even wonder whether supplying sunshine stories to the outside world is only part of the government strategy to throw the ball into the LTTE court all the time. Trying to win foreign aid for the apparent purpose of reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-ravaged north-east, which could again be used for war purposes is certainly not the best way to win the confidence of the Tamil people.

The following is the text of a press statement issued by the LTTE in Jaffna on 7.3.95 and released through its London office:

PEACE PROCESS: DRIFTING INTO WAR OF WORDS

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Jaffna released on 6 March the text of a letter dated 25th February from LTTE leader Mr. Velupillai Pirabakaran, to Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga. The letter was in response to a letter dated 20th February from the Sri Lanka President.

In his letter to the Sri Lanka President, Mr. Pirabakaran said: 'It is our desire that the talks between the Liberation Tigers and the Sri Lanka Government should be open and not secret. In a situation where the international community as well as our people are closely watching the progress of our talks with the Government, we do not see that it would be proper or advisable for us to exchange views in secret through a private individual. We have examined with care the questions that you have raised in your letter. We desire that the talks should take place between representatives appointed by you on behalf of the Sri Lanka government and those appointed by us. Your representatives can make clear your views and our representatives can do the same on our behalf. It is talks on this basis between the two sides that will be fruitful. Our problems have today attracted international attention. The international community and our people are today giving their close attention to the Tamil ethnic question. Our people wish and expect to be kept informed of the talks between the two sides and its progress. In this situation, it will not be proper for me to exchange views with you through a private individual in secret.'

At a press conference in Jaffna on Monday the 6th March, Mr. Anton Balasingham referred to the correspondence between the LTTE leader and the Sri Lanka President and said: 'How did a letter sent to the LTTE leader marked top secret reach newspaper reporters? Having marked the letter secret, the fact that the Government themselves are now talking about its contents raises grave doubts in our mind. How are we to believe what is being said? Furthermore, government connected organisations have spread the false propaganda that the LTTE is opposed to mediation by a foreign country. The fact is that the Liberation Tigers have at no time opposed mediation by an outside country.'

However, the Liberation Tigers do not desire mediation by a private individual from a foreign country. President Chandrika Kumaratunga in

her letter had wanted to send to the LTTE leader a French diplomat who had served in Haiti and Ethiopia and who had retired from service. Although this private individual was from France, he was not acting on behalf of the French government and therefore we were unable to accept him as a mediator. At the same time, he was a close friend of the President and his selection as a mediator was controversial. Again, this individual was not known to the Liberation Tigers. In this situation, how can we expect that he will act in a fair way as a mediator? This being the true situation, LTTE leader conveyed the position of the LTTE clearly to President Kumaratunga by his letter of 25th February. But it appears that the Chandrika government seeks to damage the LTTE in the international frame by spreading false information. Hence, we wish to talk directly with the Sri Lanka government. If the talks between us and the Sri Lankan government fail, we will welcome media-

tion by foreign countries. We are looking forward to the next round of talks. We have always been ready for these talks and we continue to be in a state of readiness for these talks. It is the Sri Lanka government which has not yet fixed the date for the next round of talks. At a time when foreign diplomats are due to visit Jaffna, the Sri Lanka government is trying to tarnish our image in a planned fashion.

The letter of 20th February to the LTTE leader by President Chandrika Kumaratunga said that she desired to send a representative from a foreign country, in a private capacity, to meet the LTTE leader and that such individual would help the exchange of views between the two sides. It was also said that this individual would not place his own views and would not be acting as a representative of a foreign country but as a private individual. The Sri Lanka President said that although this individual was from France, he would not be acting on behalf of that country.

GOVT'S STATEMENT

The following is the text of a statement dated 6 March, issued by the Government in response to recent letters sent by the LTTE leadership:

The Elephant Pass and Pooneryn-Sangupiddy routes were re-opened by the government on February 24. This was considered a necessary step for the normalization of the living conditions of the people in the North. Since the LTTE has rejected this gesture, the Government has decided to release this statement, including the text of three letters exchanged with the LTTE, in order to explain to the people the correct position.

1. When the People's Alliance government started negotiations with the LTTE about five and a half months ago, the government first proposed to take the following measures to alleviate the difficulties of the day to day life of the people in the North:

- (i) Reconstruction of Roads, irrigation facilities, schools and hospitals and the provision of electricity and transport facilities;
- (ii) Supply of food, clothes, medicine and other essential commodities;
- (iii) Taking steps to open the Elephant Pass and Pooneryn-Sangupiddy roads, in order to ensure the provision of the above services and facilities.

This clearly demonstrates that the

government has taken meaningful steps to provide for the day to day necessities of the people of the North. As for (ii) above, the list of items and quantities sent to Jaffna during the very brief period since peace talks were initiated, belies the LTTE's claims that the government has not made any effort to ease the difficulties of people living in the North.

2. In the second round of talks, the subject of discussion was the cessation of hostilities.

The two sides agreed to a cessation of hostilities, commencing from January 08, 1995.

3. The government held the view that all this should culminate in a negotiated political settlement of the war and the ethnic question.

The government continuously suggested that talks with this objective should commence simultaneously with the commencement of cessation of hostilities and the reconstruction works of the North.

The LTTE expressed its satisfaction at the first round of talks, and by a number of letters, with the government's proposals for the rapid reconstruction of the North and agreed to extend their fullest cooperation to the officials who would be sent to the North to carry out repair and reconstruction work.

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Accordingly, the government presented to the LTTE a detailed reconstruction plan and obtained their suggestions as well. The entire project was estimated to cost Rs. 39,000 million.

Her Excellency the President in her letter of February 16, 1995 informed Mr. Pirabhakaran of the government's willingness to start initial work of the Reconstruction Programme of the North. She also said that initial work could commence on February 20th 1995 and the rest of the work on March 01, 1995.

The LTTE's reply to this proposal, which came in the letter dated February 25, which is annexed to this statement, requested that a number of new conditions that were not directly relevant to the issue, be fulfilled before the commencement of work. The government wishes to inform the people in the North as well as in the South, that the imposition of these new conditions, has in effect delayed the commencement of the reconstruction programme in the North. The conditions laid down by the LTTE were as follows:

- (i) A total lifting of the embargo on goods transported to Jaffna,
- (ii) Opening up of the routes to Jaffna,
- (iii) Transformation of the cessation of hostilities into a cease-fire,
- (iv) Establishment of an Authority to implement reconstruction projects.

With regard to the first condition, the government has taken steps, on two occasions, to reduce significantly the number of items on the embargo list, particularly goods essential for the day to day life of the people. The embargo now remains only for goods that can be used for military purposes.

Although there have been extensive talks with the LTTE regarding the opening of passages to Jaffna, no final agreement could be reached since the LTTE insisted on the total removal of the Pooneryn camp as a condition to opening the roadways. It was in this context that the government reopened both the Elephant Pass and Pooneryn-Sangupiddy routes on February 24, in order to facilitate rapid development work in the North, as well as to facilitate free passage for the people. The LTTE, which has been demanding the re-opening of safe passages to Jaffna has unfortunately not accepted this move; it has not yet removed the fences which they themselves erected blocking these two routes, while the government has removed all fences put up by us.

The LTTE coupled the opening of safe passages to Jaffna with the removal of the army camp located near

the Pooneryn-Sangupiddy road. The government has repeatedly pointed out to the LTTE that removal of this camp before a final conclusion of the war is arrived at, would be detrimental to public security. Although the government informed the LTTE that steps would be taken to move the perimeters of the Pooneryn camp by 500 metres, the LTTE has continued to insist that the camp should be removed altogether. As continuous closure of these two routes has been a major obstruction to the people and to development in the North, the government believes that the solution to this problem is the opening of both routes, and not the removal of the camp.

With regard to the LTTE's condition that the prevailing cessation of hostilities be transformed into a stable cease-fire, the government's position is that the cease-fire situation should be stabilized once the 'Committees of Investigation into Violation of the Terms of Cessation of Hostilities' (Peace Committees) begin to function effectively. It is relevant to mention here that the LTTE has repeatedly avoided participation in these Committees.

When the government proposed the setting up of Monitoring Committees on January 3 1995, the LTTE agreed unconditionally. When the LTTE informed the government that they wished to meet the foreign representatives of these Committees, they were taken to Jaffna. Mr. Pirabhakaran and LTTE leaders met them and held discussions with them.

The LTTE has, since then, asked for the inclusion of new conditions before the Committees begin to function. Their main conditions are:

- (i) Total removal of restrictions on fishing and the free movement of boats off the North-Eastern shore.
- (ii) Permission for LTTE cadres, who were previously confined to their hideouts in the jungles of the Eastern Province, and are now moving about due to the cessation of hostilities, be permitted to do so while carrying arms.

With regard to condition (i), more than half the restrictions on fishing activities off the North-Eastern shore have already been removed.

With regard to condition (ii), military commanders and local LTTE leaders in the East have already reached appropriate written agreements regarding the movement of LTTE cadres.

Government has informed the LTTE that these issues can be further discussed and resolved once the Monitoring Committees, consisting of foreign representatives and representatives of

the LTTE and government begin to function. Because of the inability of the Monitoring Committees to function, there is no independent body to look into the alleged violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement. The government has therefore repeatedly asked the LTTE to allow these Committees to function. The LTTE's insistence on new conditions has so far prevented the Monitoring Committees from functioning.

It is regrettable that after agreeing to the function of the Committees, the LTTE should suddenly put forward new demands after the foreign representatives went to the respective areas assigned to them for monitoring.

With regard to the condition that a separate authority should be established to implement development projects in the North, the government has already appointed a special task force, headed by a Cabinet Minister, and work has commenced. The government is quite prepared to accept LTTE participation in this task force.

The government has continuously proposed to the LTTE for the past three months that direct talks between the two sides be held, aimed at finding a political solution to the ethnic question. The LTTE has so far not agreed to this proposal. Thereafter, the government proposed, in a letter to the LTTE, that preliminary talks could be initiated at least through the medium of an independent, foreign person under the patronage of a foreign government. Mr. Pirabhakaran's letter of February 25, 1995 has rejected this proposal. Although Mr. Pirabhakaran has stated in that letter, that direct talks between the government and the LTTE would be more appropriate, he has not yet set a definite date. The third letter in this press release pertains to this issue.

The LTTE's claim that the government has refused to accept their proposal to start peace talks is factually incorrect. From the outset of the commencement of the second round of the dialogue in November 1994 the government has asked for a definite date for negotiations of a political solution. The LTTE repeatedly took up the position that it was too early to start political negotiations. This is their stand even now, as demonstrated by their insistence that political negotiations cannot begin until their conditions are met. The government's position has been that while certain basic issues are being resolved, negotiations for a political solution could begin parallelly. This continues to be the position of the government. The government's proposal is that instead of

solving issues one by one, simultaneous talks should be held, aimed at resolving the day to day problems of the people in the North and finding a political settlement to the ethnic problem. The LTTE has not agreed with this proposal and has refused to agree to a date for commencement of talks concerning a political solution. The LTTE invitation for government representatives to visit Jaffna again is not to start peace talks aimed at a political solution, but to discuss other issues such as permission to navigate freely in the North-East sea, enabling their cadres in the East to freely carry arms when they move about and the removal of the Pooneryn army camp. This is clearly evident from the letters which Mr. Pirabhakaran has written to Her Excellency the President. Therefore, the statement made by Mr. Pirabhakaran and the LTTE that the government has refused to initiate peace talks is far from the truth. The government regrets this state of affairs.

The path to peace is not strewn with roses. The government has never entertained the illusion that the achievement of peace was an easy task. Nor has the government believed that the LTTE, which has so far been an exclusively military organisation could easily accept the path of peace and transform itself quickly from a military to a democratic organisation.

Nearly two decades of short-sighted policies of the UNP government has caused so much distrust and hatred between the government and the LTTE that any tendency to engage in democratic dialogue is seriously impaired. However, the government continues to work towards an honorable peace, acceptable to both sides, which is the desire of the vast masses of the people both in the North and the South.

This war, which began during the previous UNP regime and has continued for 12 years, cannot be resolved in a matter of a few days or months. The most important achievement of the People's Alliance government's policy towards resolving this conflict is the acceptance by the people that the solution is not war, but a political settlement. It is also unprecedented that a cessation of hostilities should last as long as it has at present. The LTTE spokesman and one of its main leaders. Dr. Anton Balasingham has also stated that they were willing to accept extensive devolution of power as an alternative to separatism. In addition to official talks, mutual trust between peoples in the North and the South have also been consolidated during this period. Many people from the South have begun to visit the

North. Foreign visitors also now go to Jaffna and meet with the LTTE leader. All these developments testify to the success of the peace process.

It is now clear that people in the North also want to solve the ethnic problem through a democratic process. The most constructive result of the government's peace effort during this very short time span is the paving of the way for the resolution of the murderous conflict by democratic dialogue.

Although the LTTE has slowed down the peace process by not ade-

quately responding to government's efforts to hasten the establishment of peace, the government reiterates its abiding commitment to the peace process.

The outcome of the recent elections, as well as the responses of the people in the North amply testify to the firm desire of the people in the South, as well as in the North, for a lasting peace through dialogue. We therefore invite Mr. Pirabhakaran and the LTTE to do their part in order to make lasting peace a reality.

6th March 1995.

Rebuilding Northeast

Sri Lanka has told foreign donors that rebuilding the war-ravaged northeast would cost \$1.3 billion. The government is hoping to obtain aid from donor countries for reconstruction and rehabilitation work in the northeast.

Briefing the donor community representatives in Colombo, Public Administration Minister, Mr. Ratanasiri Wickremanayake, said that the entire rehabilitation plan would take some years to complete with the first phase expected to start soon and which is expected to be completed in three months.

The first phase would include rebuilding roads, hospitals, schools and restoring electricity supplies as a matter of priority. Before power lines are repaired, as an interim measure the government has already started sending electricity generators to Jaffna.

The second phase of the plan, estimated to cost 4110 million, would cover Jaffna and the entire north. Further work, in both the northern and eastern regions, would then follow at a slower pace.

It would seem that donor countries have expressed their willingness to provide the required aid provided there is a guarantee that peace would be fully restored in the troubled regions.

Record Aid for Peace

If Sri Lanka strikes peace with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by April, she can expect record aid pledges from all its donors, a World Bank official said on 23 February in Colombo.

The Resident Representative of the World Bank Roberts Bendtjevodt told reporters here that an Aid Group meeting is scheduled to be held in Paris on April 27 and 28 to discuss aid to Sri Lanka and some other South Asian countries.

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Peace Mission Receives Warm Welcome in Jaffna

About 2,000 people shouting for peace and ethnic harmony received the Peace Mission composed of politicians, religious leaders, journalists, artists and human rights activists who arrived from Colombo by special train at northern town of Vavuniya on 16 February on their way to LTTE-controlled Jaffna peninsula.

The special train left with peace campaigners at 6 am on 16 February from Colombo Fort Station. Hundreds more joined at several railway stations enroute to Vavuniya.

The Peace Mission was sponsored by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, representing over 30 non-governmental organisations, which has been engaged in a popular campaign throughout the country to bring about a negotiated political settlement to the ethnic problem. The Mission included Peoples Alliance parliamentarians Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Y.P. de Silva and Lakshman Perera, several Buddhist monks including Ven. Baddegama Samitha Thero and Piyaratne Himi Thero, journalists including Lucien Rajakrunanayake and Manoranjan, university don and human rights activist Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda, Secretary of the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) Mr. S. Balakrishnan, independent International Observers from Peace Brigades International Michale Valliant and Nollaig O'Coilain and a dozen journalists.

At Vavuniya a public meeting attended by over 2000 persons and an exhibition of anti-war and pro-peace paintings and photographs were held at the Town Hall.

The Peace Mission received a warm welcome in the north. Crowds, including school children, lined the 120 km (75 mile) stretch of road beyond Vavuniya, the northernmost town under government control, all the way to Jaffna, to catch a glimpse of and touch the passing motorcade.

The peace team distributed over 10,000 leaflets, containing appeals to the government and the LTTE, as well as postcards in Vavuniya, on their way and after their arrival in Jaffna.

A 17 member delegation of the Peace Mission comprising 3 MPs,

two Bhikkhus and two women arrived in Jaffna on 17 February to a rousing welcome from the people shouting for peace. Townfolk who lined the streets in their thousands cheered the peace emissaries who marched along shouting anti-war slogans. Some among the local folk responded in Tamil, 'Yuddham Vendam, Samadhanam Vendum'.

The three MPs and Dr. Uyangoda representing the peace team met the LTTE leaders for a three-hour discussion at their Chundikuli headquarters and submitted an appeal for an end to the war, a negotiated peace and demilitarisation and democratisation of life in the northeast. The LTTE was represented by Anton Balasingham, Tamil Chelvam, Hudson, Ilangkumaran and Ilamparithi at the discussions. The delegation had expressed its keenness to meet the LTTE leader Mr. Pirabhakaran, but could not do so as he was indisposed.

During the talks with the LTTE leaders, on behalf of Peace Mission, Vasudeva Nanayakkara had asked the LTTE to put forward their own proposals for a political settlement, free soldiers and policemen in their captivity, as well as Tamil dissidents including the well known woman poet Chelvanidhi Thiyagarajah and undergraduate T. Manoharan.

The Peace Mission's visit coincided with a three-hour demonstration attended by thousands of people followed by a public rally in the town on 18 February addressed by LTTE spokesmen and supporters. Vasudeva Nanayakkara who headed the Peace Mission also addressed the gathering. A memorandum addressed to President Kumaratunga containing many demands adopted by the gathering was handed over to Mr. Nanayakkara.

Following the visit, Mr. Nanayakkara said: 'I set off on this Peace Mission with some trepidation and anxiety. After all, the delegation was not the first and the people of Jaffna have long encountered disappointment with each set of Sinhalese from the South during successive Governments raising their hopes to dizzy heights only to be brought down like deflated balloons.'

'But words alone cannot express my feeling at the warm welcome of my Jaffna brethren and their unwavering desire for peace expressed through banners and shouts of joy at seeing such large delegation bringing them a message of hope. All I can say is they deserve peace in this war-weary peninsula and by whatever means they should get it soon, if not sooner. So tired and worn out are the people that it is time that all this unnecessary loss of lives, strife and economic hardships burdened on the Jaffna people came to an end.'

'LTTE No Longer Insisting On a Separate State'

— Vasudeva Nanayakkara

The following is the text of an interview published in The Sunday Island (27.2.95) given by Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara, M.P., who was one of the leaders of a Peace Mission organised by NGOs which went to Jaffna and had talks with the LTTE leadership:

Q: After your visit to Jaffna what are your perceptions about peace returning?

A: I am very hopeful that peace will return because I find that the people in the North are in a positive mood for peace and the corresponding desire for peace in the South among the Sinhalese seems to have in-

creased consequent to the contacts made by the peace mission.

Q: Did you get any firm indication that the LTTE wants peace?

A: Yes...the LTTE wants peace, there's no doubt about it but the question of the contents of a settlement to be reached would be the point of contention and hard bargaining.

Q: Did they say what they want — Federalism? Confederation or separate state?

A: They very clearly said that they are no longer insisting on an independent state but would be content

with a federal form of government with sufficient powers devolved which could meet the national aspirations of the Tamil speaking people. I added to this that the process should also improve the ethnic aspirations of the Muslims, too. The LTTE appeared to have understood and they approved my suggestions.

Q: Do they want the Eastern Province as a part of North?

A: Eastern Province will be the issue. With the *de facto* power the LTTE wields in the North the question regarding the North seems to be a settled question. The extent of power the LTTE would demand for itself will pose a question. This is more true of the East.

Q: Is the LTTE trying merely to bluff this time too?

A: I don't think they are bluffing. They are desirous themselves to normalise the conditions and commence their 'new' responsibilities in administering and building up the area. Secondly, they are not in a very happy position *vis-a-vis* the external relations. Above all the LTTE will not be able to stand in opposition and carry on regardless of the mood of the people there. If only the government would act wisely and righteously to immediately release the embargo inclusive of fuel etc; and provide the basic amenities and start reconstructing while relaxing the restrictions on fishing and providing the refugee islanders with fishing gear and finally opening an easy route to have access to Jaffna via Pooneryn, the LTTE will not be able to resist the urge for peace by the people in the North.

Q: Why can't they get down to core issues while reconstruction and re-

habilitation are being discussed?

A: All things must proceed simultaneously in my view but priority is needed to alleviate the sufferings of the people there. The LTTE does not seem to be intransigent to my mind when they referred to the Pooneryn Camp withdrawal. It was not demand but only a request.

Q: Did the issue of the North East 'merger' come up?

A: The merger did not arise as we the delegation had taken it for granted that any resolving of the conflict will have to necessarily flow from the present North East Provincial Council as its reference.

Q: You know the LTTE is branded as a group of terrorists who indulge in brutal killings of innocent civilians and many others. What are your comments?

A: The LTTE has an army and it presently holds semi state power. Therefore, they are today in control of territory with armed bodies of men and women to enforce their laws, inclusive of machinery to administer primary criminal justice. Interestingly, these institutions co-exist with those of the Government of Sri Lanka who provide mainly the services such as education and medical and has its representatives in the Government Agent.

The methods used by the LTTE in combat have been ruthless but they also regret measures like driving out the Muslims.

This shows the LTTE is re-thinking on matters. Therefore, the attacks on innocent people as acts of revenge could possibly stop or become less as they become more confident of their power. Speaking of terrorism, the state terrorism practised by the armed forces in this

conflict has not been less barbaric. The bombing and shelling of Jaffna, devastating the city and the life of the innocent as against a force that did not have anti-aircraft guns would seem to me as equally or more immoral.

Q: What have you got to say about the peace mission that you led?

A: We took a peace message printed in Tamil. There were 5,000 copies and the people thronged the public meeting we held there to get it. It contained our points made to the government and the LTTE where we have raised the question of the freedom of the political prisoners held by the LTTE, the right of Sinhalese to visit Jaffna freely and engage themselves in ordinary work or trade, the need for the LTTE to pronounce their own formula for peace, respect human rights and democracy, the need to rehabilitate Muslims driven away, to desist from attacking innocent villagers in border areas.

Q: Did the LTTE give an immediate response to these contents?

A: The LTTE did not give an immediate response but wanted time to discuss with their executive bodies and consult the leader. We are hopeful and our hope lies in the people of North and their urge for peace and the consciousness to find a way out of their present impasse.

Q: Finally, what impression does the LTTE have about the government peace delegation which held two rounds of talks in Jaffna?

A: The LTTE thinks the talks were inadequate. They would prefer those with political will and persons with a background than the bureaucracy. They also want long hours of discussions as there are many issues.

The peace measures launched by the Chandrika Government should be strengthened further as the people in the North are worried over the delays and believe the present peace initiatives could also be a fiasco as happened in the earlier government', said Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda, who was recently in Jaffna with the peace delegation headed by Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara.

Dr. Uyangoda, the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute made his observations during his tour in Jaffna and quipped, 'rather than talking and discussing with the representatives of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) I listened to them as much as I could'.

Tamil People Worry About Breakdown of Peace Talks

According to Dr. Uyangoda the people of Jaffna are very much relaxed and moving freely without the fear that there may be bombardments and shellings following the cessation of hostilities which came into effect last month. The cessation of hostilities between the LTTE and the armed forces has been considered as a healthy sign towards bringing about a constructive settlement to the blood curdling north-east issue. Therefore it is the utmost responsibility of the Chandrika Gov-

ernment to prevent the delays in the negotiations with the LTTE. There were signs of campaigns by the LTTE coming up accusing the Chandrika Government that it had fallen into the hands of the chauvinist forces in the South and she is helpless in continuing the peace measures as she had campaigned during her election rallies. The innocent Jaffna civilians also start to think about this campaign as there were

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Memorandum to President

A mass demonstration and public meeting was held in Jaffna town on 18 February attended by several thousands of people and organised by the Federation of Public Organisations. A memorandum containing 8 demands was thereafter handed over to the Jaffna Government Agent to be forwarded to President Mrs. C. Kumaratunga.

The following is the text of the memorandum:

We of the Federation of Public Organisations functioning at 291, Stanley Road, Jaffna are involved in the task of identifying the problems that affect our people and in ascertaining how they can be helped to live in an atmosphere of durable peace. We held a massive rally on this day to focus attention on these issues and are herewith submitting the following for your humanitarian consideration and suitable action.

You are no doubt aware, of how successive Sri Lankan Governments have in the past brought tragedies and disasters on the Tamil people through their communal attitudes and actions. Having undergone various social and economic stresses particularly through the effects of the war, the Sri Lankan constituency placed confidence in you and entrusted you with the responsibility of finding a peaceful, permanent settlement of the conflict.

Unfortunately, we detect in recent times a hesitation on your part in resolving the many problems that affect the Tamil people. How can you take forward the peace process when our people are continuing to grow under the day to day economic problems that beset their lives, the social stresses that follow their displacement from their homes and hearths? At the same time we also realise your continuing faith in non peaceful means of achieving a settlement. Any hesitation on your part is bound to bring more impediment at this juncture. Your statements and expression of attitudes at the beginning of your term of office gave us tremendous hope. We receive them with enthusiasm. But the continuing military pressures are diminishing our hopes. There is even a fear that the Tamil people could be cheated again.

After all,

1. Yours is a government that came with the mandate from the Sinhala people to resolve the ethnic

conflict.

2. As President, you wield enormous power.

3. The International Community is extending its co-operation and willingness to find a solution to the conflict.

4. The Tamil leader has extended his hand of friendship in order to find a workable settlement to the on going conflict in his desire to see that the Tamil people benefit by a permanent peace.

When such favourable conditions exist, enabling you to take constructive steps towards a quick settlement, it disappoints us to see that you do not exhibit enough political will. At this point of time when the LTTE itself has come forward to examine the required steps to find a peaceful settlement, we are forwarding to you what we consider are reasonable demands that enjoy unanimity among our people:

1. We stress the fact that whatever political settlement that you have in mind, should fulfil the total aspirations of our people and recognise our right of self determination as a people.

2. In removing the economic blockade in full you have to ensure that our people are provided their basic needs in full, and at prices that are reasonable.

3. In order to ensure a safe and free movement of our people the

army camp at Pooneryn should be dismantled and the Sangupiddy-Kerativu passage be open so that our people could travel without fear.

4. The army should vacate areas they have forcibly occupied and army check posts be removed so that our people who were forced to vacate their houses and property and living elsewhere as displaced people could go back to their original habitats.

5. Conforming to the cessation of hostilities agreement all restrictions on fishing should be removed enabling our people to carry on their traditional livelihood.

6. Work on reconstruction and rehabilitation in the Northeast be launched without delay.

7. Extend the cessation of hostilities and work towards a permanent cease-fire.

8. Win the trust and confidence of the Tamil people through the above measures so that a permanent and peaceful political settlement becomes possible. It becomes your responsibility to continue the peace talks with the LTTE and end this long drawn conflict.

We are of the firm belief that the measures we have outlined would certainly bring about a reconciliation between our peoples and ensure a durable peace.

Knowing your own concern in bringing about a peace of mind among people we submit this memorandum to you on behalf of the Tamil people.

Continued from page 11

no signs of healthy progress in the peace measures initiated by the Chandrika Government', Dr. Uyangoda said.

Commenting on the LTTE's point of view towards a settlement to the ethnic issue Dr. Uyangoda said that even though the LTTE had agreed to a political settlement, they largely remain a militant organisation. One could not think that the LTTE is in a weakened state or it had given up its militant struggle. Now the organisation has started to realise the realities that the war cannot drag on and there should be an end to the conflict. They are prepared to give up the Eelam campaign if there is an alternative which could fulfill their aspirations, most preferably the federal system of administration in the North and the East. They have expressed their desire to work out a peace package on the basis of a federal system. Therefore, it is the

rulers in Colombo who should act fast and respond to their expectations.

The civilians in the North have not uttered a single word on what sort of a political settlement they need. It appeared that they only want peace in whatever form. They were mainly pointing out their sufferings. They even staged a mass demonstration in Jaffna highlighting their grievances. Why is this step motherly treatment towards us by the government was the question they raised when they spoke to us', Dr. Uyangoda said.

He also suggested that the negotiators must not categorise every aspect of the peace measures into official level. 'Things must be very flexible and extremely cordial beyond the negotiating table. Mutual trust, between both sides must be built up before the serious areas of the negotiations crop up', Dr. Uyangoda said.

Govt. and the Media On Collision Course

The recent appointment by the Government of a five-member ministerial committee to formulate a Code of Ethics for media personnel has come in for widespread criticism. The Committee is to be headed by Mr. Dharmasiri Senanayake, the Minister of Information, Media and Tourism.

Questions have been raised as to whether it is government's job to formulate the Code of Ethics for journalists, or whether it is the job of the journalists.

Ajit Samaranyake, editor of *The Observer* and *Sunday Observer* said: 'There are committees appointed under the Minister of Media, but one should always remember that only professional journalists could draw up guidelines for journalists. We have to mobilise all the support we can get and protest vigorously through our newspapers or even by taking to the streets if we are compelled to further arrest this situation.'

The appointment of the ministerial committee comes in the wake of a sharp worsening of relations between the government and the printed media and journalists in the recent past. Recently President Kumaratunga told the Foreign Correspondents Association that free media policy that the government envisaged would not give journalists the freedom of the wild ass: 'We don't see why the press in this country should have the freedom of the wild ass, and we shall bring it into line with the kind of regulations that exist in other democratic countries. We think that media freedom we have given is being abused in an unacceptable manner even within a democracy... there is utterly irresponsible journalism going on at the moment in some parts of the press'.

The government has accused certain newspapers and journalists of 'irresponsible journalism' and concentrating on personal trivia concerning government ministers and the President in particular.

There is no doubt that certain newspapers, particularly the *Sunday Leader* editor Mr. Lasantha Wickramatunga's column and *The Sunday Times* 'Gossip Columnist' have gone out of the way to highlight what they describe as the President's lifestyle, including midnight dinners and private cocktail parties at top hotels and often giving intimate details of her social life and that of what the papers describe as her close friends.

The President and some Ministers have responded by accusing some journalists and columnists of abusing their newly found freedom to indulge in what they call character assassination. On the other hand, journalists have accused the government of going back on its 'free media' policy and seeking to pressurise them to toe the government's line. While many experienced and respected journalists do not subscribe to some journalists delving into personal and trivial matters concerning the private lives of individual politicians, almost all journalists are agreed that state regulation or extra-legal means is not the way to deal with the issue.

It is in this backdrop that Lasantha Wickramatunga, the editor of the privately owned *Sunday Leader*, and his wife Raine who works as features editor for the same paper, were attacked by four masked men near their home in Colombo on 6 February. They suffered cuts and bruises and needed hospital treatment following the attack.

Members of Parliament belonging to the opposition United National Party (UNP) promptly condemning the attack accused that it had been carried out by the supporters of the Government whose Ministers also joined in the condemnation and strenuously denied any involvement on their part.

The *Sunday Leader* has not only been critical of government policies, but also engaged in what government politicians described as 'muckraking' and 'irresponsible journalism'.

Journalists became habitual targets for physical attack for several years under previous UNP regime, and the present rulers then in opposition gained immense political mileage by condemning the UNP's intimidation of the media and suppression of freedom of expression. Now the present rulers were being denounced for the same offense.

The ever vigilant Free Media Movement was quick to highlight the emerging threat: 'The Free Media Movement unequivocally condemns the assault of two journalists... we note that for the first time the victims are the Editor of widely circulated English weekly and a woman journalist... assault, threats and intimidation are not part of the democratic process, which the people sought to restore in recent elections. We express grave concern that this assault could

signal the re-emergence of period when journalists were under constant threat and attacks during the Premadasa administration... We call upon the President to make a clear declaration of the Government's policy and attitude with regard to developments of this nature, which threaten civil liberties and the democratic process.' The FMM also called for an immediate impartial inquiry to identify and apprehend the assailants.

The attack on the two journalists assumed an intriguing dimension when the injured editor Mr. Wickramatunga told police that a week before the attack on him, the Media Advisor to the President Mr. Sanath Gunathilake had spoken to Mr. Ifham Nizam, a journalist of the *Sunday Leader*, and threatened to 'cut up with a knife and kill' the editor if anything about them was ever written in the paper. Since then, Mr. Gunathilake while admitting having made the threat in a state of anger through Mr. Nizam has denied any involvement in the physical attack on Mr. Wickramatunga and his wife.

Ravaya and *Yukthiya* are two Sinhala weeklies which had relentlessly and bravely campaigned against the previous government and its efforts at muzzling the press and for instigating physical attacks on journalists. Their campaign in no small measure helped the coming into power of the Peoples Alliance. Making reference to the physical attack on editor of *The Sunday Leader* and his wife, the *Yukthiya* editorial of 12 February said.

'After seventeen years of semi-dictatorship, it must be admitted that it is not easy to clean up politics overnight. The politics practised in the seventeen year reign of terror was thuggery as neither J.R. Jayawardene nor R. Premadasa gave a chance to non-violent politics.

'The people of this country rejected political violence and wanted peace and democracy instead. And they expected the PA government to fulfil this wish. This is mainly why Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was voted into power as President with a majority over two million votes.

'However, this hope is now being torn into shreds by various incidents of political thuggery taking place one after another. The truly democratic forces within the PA government should not allow political thuggery to progress any further. Or else without a shadow of doubt, an extremely tragic political environment will be created'.

The *Ravaya* in its editorial on 12 February, touching more on the government's proposal to formulate a code

of ethics for journalists, stated:

'It is now clear that politicians out of power who talked volumes about the right of the media to criticise and highlight issues to build a strong democratic society, when in power start talking about too much freedom enjoyed by the media.

'It must be said that media freedom has been won by the efforts of the media people, and not been handed on a platter by the previous regime or the present PA government.

'According to norms prevalent in democratic countries, a code of conduct for media personnel is set by media personnel themselves and not by politicians. Media personnel are not prepared to accept regulations laid down by Cabinet sub-committees. It should be said that before laying down a code of conduct for media personnel, it will be more beneficial for the country if a special code of conduct is laid down for politicians who as a rule tend to dance the merry devil after coming to power'.

Another incident in which Mr. Sinha Ranatunga, the editor of *The Sunday Times*, was questioned by detectives of Criminal Investigations Department on 23 February for possible criminal defamation of President Kumaratunga has also been the subject of a great deal of critical comment.

The background to Mr. Ranatunga being asked to visit the Fourth Floor (notorious for its torture methods) of the CID headquarters to be questioned followed a complaint lodged by the President alleging defamation resulting from an allegedly false story that

appeared in *The Sunday Times* by its 'Gossip Columnist' to the effect that he had spent 90 minutes at the plush Hotel Lanka Oberoi enjoying a birthday party given by parliamentarian Mr. Asitha Perera.

Mr. Ranatunga said that he was questioned as to the identity of the source and writer of the allegedly offending report which he refused to reveal stating that he took full responsibility for the story. He had heard the President's denial of the story for the first time when he was being questioned by detectives. Had the President or her office told him that the story was wrong or false, he would have inquired into it, and if it was found to be incorrect, he would have published an apology.

Many newspapers editorially and the Free Media Movement have condemned the way in which *The Sunday Times* editor was treated. They have questioned the need for the editor to be required to go to the 'Fourth Floor' to be questioned, suggesting that it could have been done at the editor's office itself.

The Chairman of the Free Media Movement, Mr. Lucien Rajakarunayake, in statement said, 'We do not wish to go into the merits of the issue involved. It is correct that the President, who, is said to be the complainant in this matter, has every right to seek a legal remedy that she considers fit, in a matter affecting her personal rights, including the right to privacy.

'We note that in this instance, the CID had arrived to question Mr. Rana-

tunga, armed with the necessary warrant issued by a Magistrate, which was not the practice generally resorted to in the past in questioning journalists or searching newspaper offices. We are relieved that as, Mr. Ranatunga says, he has been treated with courtesy.

'However, we do express our concern that Mr. Ranatunga, who is the editor of a leading newspaper as well as an Attorney-at-Law, was taken to the Fourth Floor of the CID for questioning, when his statement could have been recorded in his office where the interrogation began. The image of the Fourth Floor is one which is associated with the more unacceptable aspects of police grilling, which in the past have included assault and torture.

'We trust that the pursuit of legitimate legal action by the President, who is also the head of the Police Department, is not being used by the Police to send a message of intimidation to all journalists'.

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UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Statement on Sri Lanka

The following is the text of the Chairman's statement adopted by the 51st Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights held in Geneva during February-March 1995:

'The Commission acknowledges the statements made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka and the Representative of Sri Lanka on the positive and meaningful steps the Government of Sri Lanka has taken to promote and protect human rights over the past year. The Commission commends the Government of Sri Lanka for these measures and notes the additional steps outlined in those statements, notably the establishment of a Human Rights Commission with monitoring, investigative and advisory powers, and the proposed constitutional reforms that will entail the expansion of the existing scope of protection for human rights in line with internationally-accepted standards.

The Commission wishes to express its conviction that Sri Lanka will sustain and build upon its commitment

to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Commission appreciates the cooperation offered by the Government of Sri Lanka to all human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, including the Commission on Human Rights. In particular, the Commission welcomes the invitation extended to the High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Sri Lanka.

The Commission condemns abuses of human rights by the LTTE and strongly urges it to desist from such acts.

The Commission expresses its support for the peace process initiated by the President of Sri Lanka and strongly urges the LTTE to respond positively and speedily to the steps taken by the Government and to take all necessary steps towards the achievement of a durable political solution.

This acknowledgement will be included in the final report of the Commission under Agenda Item 3.'

Corruption Probe Provokes War of the Generals

As the authorities in Colombo began a wideranging probe into alleged payoffs and kickbacks in corrupt arms deals, a veritable war has broken out between two retired army generals who are believed to be at each others throat. The persons involved are two former Army Commanders, General Cecil Waidyaratne and General Hamilton Wanasinghe.

The investigation into past arms deals follows government receiving information about purchases of equipment, arms and ammunition of questionable quality and not fit for the required purposes accompanied by allegations that large sums of money had been fraudulently obtained.

Matters began to escalate with the recent enforced resignation of Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary, General Hamilton Wanasinghe who is a former Army Commander.

The departure of Gen. Hamilton Wanasinghe offered the opportunity to the President Kumaratunga to appoint a civilian to the post which had been held by men with military background since 1977. There were not many takers for this rather difficult and vulnerable position. Eventually, Mr. Chandrananda de Silva who held the position of Commissioner of Elections for a troublesome tumultuous twelve and a half years was appointed to the post which had been held by military men for many years.

The appointment of Mr. de Silva, who as Commissioner of Elections was in charge of organising nine national elections during a period viewed as the most violent in Sri Lanka's history, for the top Defence Ministry post has been generally welcomed by most people.

Though newspaper reports indicated that the 61-year-old Mr. Wanasinghe, who was formerly Army Commander and later Head of the Joint Operations Command for the conduct of the war in the northeast, was pushed out, he claims that he voluntarily resigned on 10 February to allow the President to keep her pledge of appointing civilians to key positions. His departure came as the government announced the appointment of a Presidential Commission to commence investigations into the various arms deals that the previous regime and the military had concluded with foreign suppliers following allegations of kickbacks, corruption and bribery involved in these transactions.

However, Mr. Wanasinghe strenuously denied allegations of corruption reported in Colombo newspapers and said that he was prepared to face any inquiry. He also denied that his passport had been impounded on the instructions of the Commission on Bribery and Corruption, but later reports confirmed that his passport had in fact been impounded thus preventing him from leaving the country.

Mr. Wanasinghe's lawyers have sent out letters of demand to the Upali Newspapers Ltd claiming damages amounting to Rs. 50 million for publishing material defamatory of his character. An angry Mr. Wanasinghe said that some arms dealers and 'some others' were involved in slinging mud at him by accusing him of getting kick-backs from arms purchases made for the military. He referred to some anonymous letters circulated some time ago containing several allegations to tarnish his image and promised to expose the individuals behind tarnishing his image. He cited an instance where he had been offered \$100,000 in respect of an arms contract which he had flatly rejected.

In the meantime, even as a special CID team started investigating alleged corrupt arms deals by top military officials, a Colombo Magistrate ordered that another former

Army Commander, Lt. General Cecil Waidyaratne's passport be impounded and that he should not leave the country without the Court's permission.

Following his retirement, Gen. Waidyaratne was appointed Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Thailand, and after the PA government came to power he was removed from that position and recalled. According to CID sources, Gen. Waidyaratne is being investigated on 'serious allegations of fraud and malpractices including illegal tender transactions involving millions of rupees during his tenure as head of the Army'. One of the matters being investigated is an alleged discrepancy of Rs.24 million in the purchase of high frequency direction finding equipment costing Rs.72 million in foreign exchange.

Other former and currently serving Senior Army, Navy and Air Force officials are also to be questioned in connection with corrupt arms deals. Gen. Waidyaratne is quoted as saying that he would assist the investigation to find out what had really happened, and as accusing some of his 'enemies of trying to drag him also into the mud where they are now for their misdeeds'.

Those in the know seem to be certain that Gen. Waidyaratne's reference to his 'enemies' is to none other than Gen. Wanasinghe. Both have been at loggerheads for over ten years even while they were serving officers, and it was an open secret that the two levelled charges against each other.

Ask Not Who, But Ask Why!

Answering questions from a group of southern journalists who visited Jaffna on 20 February, LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingham denied the accusation that the LTTE was plotting to assassinate President Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga.

'The LTTE is accused of having plans to assassinate the President. Is it true?' asked a journalist.

Denying the accusation, the LTTE spokesman said, 'She has a better understanding of the problem. We believe that a solution is possible through negotiations with her. She is the only leader whose hands are clean. Vijaya Kumaratunga always looked at the Tamil problem with a tender heart. Chandrika's hands are clean. She has no bellicose mentality'.

Adding that it was more important to analyze why certain leaders were killed rather than trying to find out who killed them, Anton Balasingham said, 'What is more important is to find out why some leaders are assassinated than to find out who assassinated them. Take the case of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Why was he assassinated? His army killed over 10,000 Tamils here. Many families were left orphaned. We can't blame the troops for these killings. The responsibility lay with Gandhi for ordering a war with the Tamils, not with the army. The case of Chandrika is quite different. She received a mandate to restore peace and her hands are clean. She should not

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Sustaining the Peace Process and Going Beyond

by Dr. N. Shanmugaratnam

The fledgling peace process initiated by the People's Alliance (PA) government has yet to move onto a steady course. The Jaffna negotiations have not yet entered the expected phase of a dialogue towards a final political solution. Furthermore, there are some signs of dissonance that can be upsetting to the people who have placed so much hope in the peace process to see an end to their sufferings. It would, of course, be too idealistic to expect the peace process to progress smoothly without any mishaps or disruptions in the early stages, given the past record of peace making in Sri Lanka. At the same time, we cannot afford to forget that if the peace talks fail to lead to a political solution, the inevitable consequence is war again; and this means that we will be slipping back into the same barbarism from which we are struggling to escape. This gloomy prospect and the ever-present probability of it becoming a reality should make all Lankans - Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims - even more committed to peace and to a political solution that can make the peace permanent.

The peace movement in Sri Lanka which originated in the dark days of the UNP rule has been playing a significant role in the South. During the parliamentary and presidential elections, activists of the movement engaged in an intensive grassroots level campaign among the Sinhalese people against the war and for a political solution. They learnt that the Sinhalese people desired peace and were prepared to listen to talks explaining the causes of the war and the genuine grievances of the Tamils. The direct contact with the Sinhalese people gave the peace activists the confidence to openly advocate a solution to the national question based on devolution and autonomy. The activists I know have no problem at all talking openly in the South about a federal solution, something still not so easy for some politicians of the PA to do. We are fortunate to have a politically enlightened peace movement which draws its active campaigners from different political formations, the Buddhist clergy, church groups, women's groups, human rights bodies, trade unions, art and literary workers, and professions such as law and education. Tamils who had the opportunity to join the anti-war campaigns in the rural areas in the South were able to

get a feel of the winds of change blowing in the Sinhalese areas.

Today, there is a great need to expand and further intensify the peace movement in the South, and a greater need to take it to the Tamil speaking people in the North-East. One is not unaware that the LTTE may not permit peace activists to conduct independent campaigns in the North. However, the time has come for the peace movement to make efforts to reach the people in the LTTE-ruled areas on a more sustained basis. There is no doubt that the people in these areas want an end to the war and to the authoritarian rule under which they live. They are fully conscious that the latter cannot be realised without the former; the former, at least, is a necessary condition for the latter. Ever since the change of government, the people of the North have signalled in their own ways their happiness about the end of the UNP rule and their approval of the peace initiatives taken by the Kumaratunge government. However, due to past experiences, almost all Tamils have deep-seated doubts about any government in Colombo when it comes to a political solution to the national question. On the other hand, Jaffna Tamils living in the South and abroad are also aware of the equally deep-seated doubts their friends and relatives in the peninsula have about the LTTE's commitment to a peaceful settlement. To quote a friend living in Jaffna:

'We cannot trust the government even with a new pact until it has really been implemented to a sufficient degree to convince us that the government would not go back on the deal under pressure from Sinhala extremists. On the other hand, we cannot be sure that the LTTE will go through the peace talks until a pact is signed and will finally honour its side of the bargain in the absence of a guarantee to retain its own monopolistic power in the North.'

A people haunted by such a twin-fear can only be persuaded by a powerful and independent countrywide multi-party, multi-ethnic peace movement to believe in the ultimate feasibility of a peaceful political solution to the national question and of democracy in the North-East. There is an important message to be learnt from my friend's

acute statement that so coherently captures the subjective state of the Tamils. That is, it is not only the government that has to be pressurised by the peace movements to be on course towards a political solution and to honour its commitments but also the LTTE.

Our demands for transparency and accountability from the government should be extended to the LTTE as well, on behalf of the people under its rule in the North and the people in the rest of the country. In this regard, Tamils living outside the North-East have a major political and moral responsibility to join the campaign for peace and a political solution and to throw their weight with the forces demanding both the government and the LTTE to eschew war and to stick to the option of reconciliation and negotiated settlement. Lankan Tamils living in the West have not taken any sustained collective action to support the peace process and to lobby for international assistance to sustain it. It seems that, in Europe, it is easier to mobilise Lankan Tamil immigrants to campaign against Western governments' attempts to deport Tamil asylum seekers than to promote the peace process back home.

Tamils should also raise their collective voice against LTTE's authoritarianism in general and its past anti-Muslim actions in particular. They should demand that all Muslims who were driven out of their homes by the LTTE be allowed to return and rebuild their lives as they please. The Muslims should also be compensated for the losses they suffered due to extortion and looting when they were ordered to leave their homes and for the hardships they had to endure during the displacement. The Tamil people are not unaware that a meaningful and workable political solution cannot be achieved without the participation of the political representatives of the Muslims of the North-East in the peace talks. This naturally makes them concerned to know the LTTE's position on the future status of the Muslims in the North-East. To date, the Tigers have not shown any convincing signs of repenting their past anti-Muslim actions and moving toward repairing, in whatever ways possible, the damage they have done to Tamil-Muslim coexistence and harmony and the territorial integrity for autonomy in the North-East.

Tamil intellectuals ought to pay a more sustained attention to the vital ideological question of Tamil nationalism. The dominant form of Tamil

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nationalism today is a militant ideology of ethnic puritanism and military heroism which has been constructed and disseminated over the past fifteen years or so. Unless we cleanse ourselves free of this ideology and the mythologies of exclusivism and martial traditionalism on which it rests, we cannot move forward as a civilised people in a civilised world. I think that all Lankan communities, Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, need to go through an ideological catharsis to be freed of the ethno-centric and fundamentalist world views so as to become equal partners in a multi-ethnic (or multi-national) people's democracy. In this regard, the intellectuals in these communities have a major role to play. Of course, such an undertaking begins by deconstructing the currently dominant ethno-communalist identities and reconstructing our nationalities so as to incorporate them into a larger evolutionary project of a corporate Lankan identity. Deconstruction of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist ideology has been an ongoing project since the late 1970s, thanks to the perseverance of several dedicated Sinhala intellectuals. However, the challenge of popularising the demand for decommunalising public institutions, secularising the state and creating new multi-ethnic Lankan symbols remains to be faced.

On the Tamil side, many writings critical of the dominant chauvinist Tamil nationalism have appeared over the past ten years in Tamil magazines published abroad. Unfortunately, there has not been a coordinated effort to sustain this trend and deepen the analysis. A debate has begun on Tamil nationalism in the Tamil newspaper *Sarinihar* (published by MIRJE). More such debates are needed to work towards a systematic deconstruction of the ethno-centric Tamil Eelamism which has redefined the parameters of Tamil self-determination and nationhood in extremely narrow terms. The works of progressive Sinhalese intellectuals are a great source of inspiration to the Tamil critics of ethno-nationalism. However, there is an urgent need to find the means of sustaining and consolidating the efforts of the Tamil intellectuals.

Some of the Tamil leftist critics of LTTE's nationalist ideology continue to retain the conventional and reductionist theoretical categories based on the formula of 'one nation-one state'. The problem with this approach is that it is too rigid to permit a conceptual separation between the nation and state so as to treat the relation between the two as a heuristic construct

with reference to a given historical context. In the contemporary Lankan situation, the 'one nation-one state' formula imprisons its believers in one form of ethno-centrism or another. The invocation of Lenin does not help the Tamil leftists to avoid this pitfall, given the particularities of the Lankan context. Our own experience has shown that the Tamil leftists with all their well intended defence of the right of the Tamils to self-determination have not been able to prevent the rise of a narrow chauvinistic ideology to hegemonic status in the Tamil society.

Based entirely on the West European historical experience of nation-state formation, the 'one nation-one state' formula represents a minority phenomenon in modern history. Indeed more than 75 per cent of the states that exist today are multi-ethnic or multi-national in character. I think we will do well to shift our debate to an alternative theoretical terrain where a state need not necessarily be national (in the sense of comprising a single ethnic entity turned nation), or conversely, a national community need not necessarily have its own independent state as an expression of its self-determination. I also believe that such a paradigm shift is a precondition to find a theoretical framework that is relevant to the current realities of Sri Lanka. It will certainly help us see the national question more holistically and explore the meanings of self-determination more creatively.

A fundamental guideline for the operation of alternative framework is the willingness of the government to recognise the right of a certain ethno-national group to self-determination while at the same time recognising the potential larger mutual benefits of avoiding a partitioning by opting for a viable alternative. On the same basis, the minority that demands self-determination recognises that autonomy within a unified polity is a better alternative to secession because of the larger mutual benefits that can be generated. Both parties also recognise that there are other minorities whose interests have to be protected and that these interests can be taken care of within the same unified framework thereby furthering the common good.

The most practical question, however, is whether or not the politics of the peace process in its present form can be related to such a paradigm. As alluded at the beginning of this article, the deeper political dialogue on devolution and autonomy has yet to begin. However, like many others sharing my fears and reservations about the current state of the peace process, I am

disappointed to note that the PA government has not been able to put forward a satisfactory political package as an alternative to the LTTE's demand for a confederation.

The highly successful initial moves by the government might have given a distant observer the impression that it was working according to a well conceived strategy towards a final settlement. The revival of public discussion on the federal alternative and the President's talk about devolution and her switch to the term 'unified state' from the usual 'unitary state' might have been construed by many as an indication of the direction in which the PA would move. Unfortunately, so far, all that we know is the government is still thinking within or around the framework of the Banda-Chelva Pact of 1957. One tends to think that the President and her political advisors have just begun to do their home work on the real challenge of working out the regional, institutional and legal dimensions of devolution. I am not alone in hoping that they would, in the shortest possible time, move toward facing the stark realities of 1995. Perhaps, the Banda-Chelva pact is a necessary starting point for the old guards of the SLFP to work towards a more meaningful solution. May be the leaders of the PA need to invoke the spirit of the late Mr. Bandaranaike to gather the courage to move towards a new accord. All this is understandable up to a point, but the government should realise that much has happened since the abortive pact of 1957 – almost four decades of aggravation of the national question into a tragic and barbaric ethnic conflict. Fifteen years of militant secessionism, more than ten years of bloody civil war, and a Muslim community that is deeply hurt and embittered by the conduct of the Tamil militant groups in general and the LTTE in particular – these are realities that did not exist in 1957.

Let us face the hard facts: the Banda-Chelva pact was a courageous move and the late Prime Minister deserved credit for the farsighted and quick step he took just within a year of his making Sinhala the only official language, a shortsighted move in the first place. It was a valid solution for the conditions of 1957, but Mr. Bandaranaike and his government were unable to find the strength to swim against the chauvinist tide unleashed by the UNP under the leadership of J.R. Jayawardena. That was a tragedy indeed but wouldn't an attempt to re-enact in 1995 the Pact of 1957 amount to a farce? Let us hope the government will prove itself realistically creative, speedy and courageous.

Marxism and Ethnicity: Rethinking the Fundamentals

by Dr. Kumar David

The terms ethnic and ethnicity are used in this paper to include religious, racial, linguistic, tribal and similar divides which are activated in socio-political conflict in the present age. The use of a single generic term is justified by the palpable fact that the common features of these conflicts greatly overshadow the particularity of their religious, racial etc. character. Indeed a religious conflict in one place may have more in common with, say, a linguistic problem in another, than with some other religious conflict. The unfolding of events in a specific case depends much more on the particular political antecedents, economic conditions and problems of state, than on whether the phenomenon manifests itself as, for example, a language or a religious conflict. It needs to be stated at the outset that this paper is concerned with ethnicity in relation to political conflict in the present period and that categories and concepts are advanced for this purpose.

The paper takes it as an agreed and given fact that ethnic conflicts have assumed major proportions and become an important feature of political life in the third quarter of this century. It is taken as agreed that the scale, intensity and persistence of these conflicts is persuasive evidence that we are not dealing with ephemeral events or accidental reflections of some other predicates. That is to say, it is taken as agreed, that ethnic conflict cannot be reduced to a distorted or indirect reflection of class conflict – it is asserted that such reductionism is false. This is not to deny that class conflicts are themselves fundamental determinants of history but rather to emphasise their intertwining with ethnic issues.

Ethnicity as a Category

Superficially, ethnicity is associated with a sense of identity arising from shared customs, language and culture, physical characteristics, and so on, and appears to be far removed from the material categories of economic and social life. In the context of the discussion in this paper, this is far from adequate as an appreciation of the role of identity as a political factor. True enough ethnicity as a category in modern political conflict exists at the level of consciousness, but it is a reflection in consciousness of very real, concrete and material circumstances.¹

Consciousness does not reflect material reality in some mechanistic way, and indeed a consciousness of ethnic identity can persist long after the material foundations that engendered it have withered away, or emerge in advance of the proper consolidation of an immanent identity.² Nevertheless, there is a firm causal link between the consciousness of ethnic identity and the material organisation of social life.

The material circumstance that underlies an ethnic unit is more simply illustrated by drawing attention to the periphery, or boundary, of a socio-economic unit which, of course, possesses its own internal structures or mode of production. This is most obvious in the case of the separate tribes or the homogeneous kingdoms and nations of previous ages. A well defined and specific set of people, a common territory (land, water, wild life) and frontiers that must be guarded against invasion, delineate the boundary of production. The boundary, or periphery of a mode of production, is a material fact – a feature it shares with the productive powers of society and its internal or class divisions.³ The sense of identity and the sense of security derive at the level of consciousness from the material reality of belonging within the mode of production, of being within the periphery.

A stark example is South Africa where Boer worker, for example, identified with Boer landowner and bourgeois than with his black class brother. But these identities were consolidated by separate economic existence, and its concomitant of war, conquest, slavery and territorial expansion, from the earliest settler times. In South Africa, historically, the Boer and the numerous African economic units were distinct enclaves, distinct modes of production, and modern capitalism supplanted this only much later and especially so only after the consolidation of British imperialism at the turn of the century. The extreme form of apartheid consciousness and of separate identity is deeply rooted in a now largely defunct, but at one time very real, sub-division of the economic universe into distinct and warring units and modes of production – war, subjugation and peonage, of course, being in those times but an adjunct to economics.⁴

It is in the light of this process that

racial nationalism must be understood. The Boers' espousal of a doctrine of African inferiority, justified on biblical grounds, was interconnected with their desire to justify peonage. And why not? These people have inherited from their settler forefathers feudal-like institutions with rigid hierarchical structures. For their ancestors, 'race' had provided a suitable principle on which to create a servile population. Their religious leaders found in the Bible the 'Curse of Canaan', which they adapted to justify their activities.

The theoretical approach developed in this paper also provides the answer to the question of why some ethnicities are activated but not others. For example, why do Tamils, including Tamil Christians, take one side and Sinhalese, including Christians, the other? Why not Buddhists against Christians instead of Sinhalese against Tamils? The answer lies in seeking out which material identities were historically separate and significant and hence were consolidated into ethnicities; which material boundaries of cohesive socio-economic units formed important peripheries to modes of production. Tamil Christians were internal to and a part of Tamil (or Jaffna) society, economy, trade, agriculture and so on. Sinhalese Christians were, similarly internal to another cohesive socio-economic unit. There is not Christian or Buddhist ethnicity, there are Sinhalese and Tamil ones. In the Punjab, or in Northern Ireland, the superficial division is precisely the opposite, religion being the determinant of cleavage in the ethnic civil wars. The argument from historically sustained economic separateness functioning as an original delineator of ethnic identity does not suffer from the contradictions that superficial theorisation is prone to and is wholly plausible in all of these examples, many oversimplifications in conventional left thinking, for example Bipan Chandra (see note⁵) not withstanding.

This approach also explains why, however slowly and tortuously, ethnicities disappear or become politically irrelevant. What became of Vandals and Goths? How did German ethnicity replace it? What on earth happened to Normans and Saxons and who on earth is an Englishman? Why are the Protestants and Catholics in England, or in Germany, not at each others' throats in emulation of their faithful brothers in Belfast? The answer lies wholly in material categories – membership of a common mode of production, shared material intercourse and

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consanguinity which follows this have been realised in Germany and England a long time ago. Such too will be the future of the USA, that great melting pot of innumerable people, where ethnic particularity appears destined to disappear.

Though ethnicity as a category in political conflict and the concomitant consciousness of identity is linked in this way to material life, it would be a great mistake to overlook their dis-synchronous time scales of development and the consequent relative autonomies of their particular dynamics. For example, it would be hard to argue that the Boers and the Blacks of South Africa do not even today co-habit the same material socio-economic entity. But it is obvious that consciousness of racial identity is not changing at a pace which is synchronised with these material transformations. Ideology will finally align itself with reality but not until it has exhausted its own tortuous and extended life span. Furthermore, the very history of material change has brought about a new overlapping of class with race in South Africa,⁶ and is given a new and more complex rationale to perception of ethnic division and identity.

New Nation States

In current discussions of ethnic conflict it is not uncommon to hear remarks about the 'arbitrary boundaries of new artificial nation states which have been created by colonialism'. What is partly at least implicit in this is the assertion that these nations are entities which are in some way irrational and have little right to exist. What is at issue here is not colonial conquest *per se* but rather one specific aspect of the colonial legacy, the new nation states as they actually exist. It is necessary to re-examine the immanent critique of the right of such 'artificial' entities to exist. But the very posing of the question raises difficulty – surely it is not possible to suggest that the world should return to the patchwork mosaic of a myriad kingdoms, tribes, principalities, states and fiefdoms, surely it is not possible to suggest that Germany should return to the dozens of independent or semi-independent units that preceded the conquest and unification of these lands by Napoleon?

It is worth pursuing this argument a little further and to push to its limits the view that India, for example, is an artificial entity created by British Imperialism. Implicit in some formulations of this assertion could lie the

value judgement that the sub-continent be divided into 6 or 16, or whatever, ethnically more homogeneous entities. The examples can be multiplied. Why not Matebeleland and Shonaland instead of a single Zimbabwe, why not a separate Eritrea and Ethiopia, why not Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia instead of Yugoslavia, why not a separate Quebec and a separate Tamil Eelam and a separate Moro-Philippine, and so the list goes on. It is necessary to take this argument at face value and to respond to it seriously and in general terms.

Looking at the world as it has emerged out of centuries of colonialism and its legacy of forced amalgamation of people and races, and taking into account the numerous separatist movements that exist today, it is perfectly reasonable to take the following hypothesis as a serious agenda for discussion: 'What is so magic about the number 150 (or so), what is wrong with a world consisting of 300, or for that matter 500, nation states? Long live the slogan: A STATE FOR EACH ETHNICITY!'. The hypothesis, of course, fails at first sight because it can simply be seen to be absurd, but this does not amount to a considered refutation. A considered response, formulated in a general way, as to why the sub-division of the world into an ever larger number of smaller entities, or put it more starkly, why the subdivision of India into say 16 ethnic states, would be irrational and reactionary, consists of the following three points.

a) Large national units, without carrying the idea to absurd limits, and taking into account specific and practical constraints in each case, are capable of marshalling their resources more efficiently and organising their economic production more rationally for example the USA and China.

b) A mosaic of small nations all with their own flags are a positive hindrance to the full development of the spiritual, intellectual and cultural potentials of the human species. The removal of artificial impediments of this nature within the EEC, for example, quite apart from its intrinsic economic rationality, and the way in which people are taking advantage of this enhanced freedom of movement and interaction, are pointers to how a more unified world of the future should look.

c) Integration into larger national states in the case of the less developed countries reduced the scope for external exploitation by more

powerful imperial or neighbouring states. For example, a separate Puerto Rico on the borders of the USA and Puerto Rico as the 51st state in the federation, are very different entities in this respect. Or again, China was not Vietnam in relation to Soviet interests in the last three decades.

In general, therefore, there are very strong economic and spiritual-intellectual-cultural reasons for dispensing with divisions and integrating people into nations which owe their *raison d'etre* to considerations other than ethnic particularism. To complete the discussion, however, it is important to point out that against these arguments must be considered the possibility of economic exploitation of specific ethnicities within an expanded state, the possibility that a minority identity or culture is oppressed within an existing state, and the likelihood that a heritage of backwardness may make the largeness of a unit not an advantage but a problem in relation to efficient and rational economic management. The generalisation that has been previously attempted therefore is not without exceptions, but in other words, the real significance of the generalisation lies not in the fact that the exceptions are less numerous than the norm, but rather that for the exceptions too the generalisation points to the long term future.

I will mention, without extended discussion for reasons of brevity, a few examples which to my mind are, on balance, exceptions to the generalisation for one or another reason. Clearly the dismemberment of the old Pakistan into Bangladesh and Pakistan is a forward step; probably it was better for all concerned that the Baltic state ceded from the Soviet Union; it is difficult to justify China's continued occupation of Tibet. I make the last remark without prejudice to the arguments put forward by each side whether Tibet is, or is not, historically, a part of China.

These are indeed possible exceptions, and in specific cases, indeed, the particular history and circumstances may be compelling. The concept of an exception, therefore, needs to be located and understood more precisely. There is a historically progressive and general trend towards the integration of nations politically and economically, as well as culturally, into larger entities. However, while this trend has been self-evident over time spans such as centuries or decades the process is also an uneven one since it is mediated by concrete and specific factors of shorter historical duration but of great though ephemeral intensity. Hence,

reversals of the general trend, from time to time, in specific instances and along one or another of its axis (that is political [state], economic or cultural axis) will take place. It would be correct in certain such instances to support some specific 'reversal' if in the final analysis it is conducive to a progressive historical trend. However, even in doing so, that is in formulating the particular form and nature of the support to be extended, the longer term progressive world historical view must be kept in mind, and in the long run must assert its priority. This is the essence of the concept of exceptionalism.

It appears, therefore, that those who say that modern India is a creation of the British Raj, forgot to add that, nevertheless, it is an irreversible one. The meaning of the concept of irreversibility needs to be stated more precisely: economic production and the market in India have been sufficiently well integrated that its continued existence as a unified nation is in the interest of all of the classes of the modern society, the bourgeois and proletariat included, and the strength of these classes is likely to overcome fissiparous pressures from remnant classes of previous (pre-modern) society when they do arise from time to time. Secondly, even culturally, modern cultural contents are, on the whole, strong enough to overcome fissiparous remnants from previous historical times. This is the essential content of the concept of irreversibility as used here; it does not purport to make prognosticative statements about what might happen in, say Kashmir, but rather it is a concept whose meaningfulness arises in the context of the general thesis of human progress that underlies this discussion.

The demise of the Soviet Union gives rise to some important attitudinal questions. The unresolved confrontation regarding the economic system in the nations issuing from the former USSR is shot through by a perpendicular emergence of ethnopolitics and widespread armed nationalist conflicts. We are witnessing, simultaneously, a political revolution (the overthrow of Stalinism), a social counter-revolution (the attempted restoration of capitalism) and also a resurgence of ethno-politics. The class-state axis, that is to say the question of the restoration of capitalism, remains the supreme issue of the moment. As the resolution of this issue mediated by the intervention of world capitalism works itself out, and irrespective of whichever direction this resolution takes, a period of nationalist political conflicts and wars will follow. It is not entirely

unreasonable to suppose that the disintegration of the Soviet Union may produce some economically viable and politically stable nations, nevertheless it remains paradoxically true that ethnic conflicts are the greatest impediment to long term progress.

The importance of understanding each particular example on its own terms places the methodological emphasis on concrete analysis, with abstraction and generalisation forming a necessary, but only a background of knowledge. Or as Clive Thomas says.⁷

There are... further methodological advantages to this approach. One is that the use of concrete examples allows us to study simultaneously the similarities and differences in the form that the state takes in peripheral capitalist societies. We can then avoid two dangers. One is oversimplification - that is, an approach that is premised on the view that since each society is different, that there can be no general theories; the other is overgeneralisation, which result from a preoccupation with similarities.

References and Notes

¹ There is a rich accumulation of literature attempting to define and discuss ethnicity in the modern world. Anthony D. Smith places it in the context of modernisation in *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*, Cambridge University Press and *State and Nation in the Third World: The Western State and African Nationalism*, Wheatshaf Harvester, 1983. Cynthia Enloe examines the issue in the context of class and tribe in relation to imperialism and the modes of production debate in 'The dialectics of class and tribe', *Race and Class*, xx,4 1979, pp. 347-372. An essentially idealist discussion will be found in Walker Connor, 'Nation building or nation destroying', *World Politics*, XXIV, 2, pp. 319-355. Readers are no doubt also familiar with a mechanistic incorporation of ethnicity into class analysis which was common at one time and is now dismissed as crude or mechanistic Marxism.

² The emergence of a new ethnicity, right now in the mid and late 20th Century in the Jharkhand region is described by Javeed Alem, 'India: Nationality formation under retarded capitalism,' in *Ethnicity: Identity, Conflict, Crisis*, eds. Kumar David and Santasilan Kadiragamer, Arena Press, Hong Kong, 1989, pp. 45-69.

³ The concept of 'conditions of production' to supplement those of 'forces and relations of production' was first introduced by B. Borochoy, 'Nationalism and Class Struggle: A Marxist Approach to the Jewish Question', Greenwood Press, Westport, pp. 157-165. A more recent discussion can be found in R. Munck 'The Difficult Dialogue: Marxism and Nationalism,' Zed Books, London, 1986.

⁴ Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane, 'The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa', Monthly Review Press, New York, 1979 pp. 32-33.

⁵ The following is taken from Bipan Chandra, 'Communalism in Modern India', Vani Educational Books, New Delhi, 1984 p.13.

'Not only did Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or Christians not form a nation or a nationality, they did not even form a distinct and homogeneous "community" except for religious purposes. That is, they did not separately form a "monolithic social structure" or a cohesive unit on a religious basis with common economic, political, social and cultural interests, or bonds or outlook. The religious coordinates did not coincide with the class, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural coordinates. There was no sharply etched or articulated interests of Hindus or Muslims "standing in juxtaposition to one another"; in particular, the conditions of Hindu and Muslim workers and peasants was the same.

Historically, of course, this assertion is not valid. The history of the Muslim invasion of the Indo-Gangetic plain followed by several centuries of war, the establishment of Muslim rulers, the attendant court and of civil society around it, subsequently religious conversions and the linkage of conversions to castes which were oppressed by prevailing Hindu society, and finally the partial separation of Hindu and Muslim villages even up to recent times, is the history of societies which were to a considerable degree materially divided. These centuries constitute the historical roots of ethnic consciousness. The remark about the common interests of workers and peasants, in a current political context, is certainly, but that is a separate dimension of the discussion.

⁶ Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane, op.cit., pp. 163-192.

⁷ Clive Y. Thomas, 'The Rise of the Authoritarian State in Peripheral Societies', Monthly Review Press, New York, 1984, p. xx.

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forget that and she should understand the problems of the Tamil people and solve them'.

When questioned as to whether the LTTE intended to kill political leaders in the future, Balasingham specifically stated that the LTTE need not kill any political leaders and added, 'There is a pact between President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Velupillai Pirabhakaran that they will not kill or kidnap any person. This pact has been signed by both leaders'.

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THE SUB-CONTINENTAL SCENE

Crisis in Congress-I Deepens

by T.N. Gopalan, Madras

The inevitable has happened at last. Former Union Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh, who had been threatening to become the rallying point for the dissidents in the ruling Cong-I, has been expelled from the party.

But such is the torpor into which the party has fallen, so wary the Congressmen are of upsetting the apple cart however unsure they might be of the fate awaiting them all, that such a major event as the expulsion of a senior leader like Arjun Singh has not caused many ripples in the party, barring some routine denunciations here and there. Not a single dissident leader has quit the party in protest nor is there any sign of a split. At least not as yet.

Prime Minister and Cong-I President Narasimha Rao appears to be sitting pretty, having quelled an incipient rebellion with surprising ease. But, as the cliché goes, appearances could be deceptive, and the party could go through yet another bout of convulsions once the results of the Assembly elections in four front-line states are out by the third week of March.

More than the tenure of a septuagenarian in the prime ministerial throne or even the chances of the Cong-I to return to power in the General Elections slated next year, it is the very future of the Indian polity, the continued survival of the country in one piece, that seems to be at stake.

But such considerations apart, the Arjun Singh episode has indeed set the dovecote aflutter, and there are animated discussions at various levels of the issues raised by the expelled leader and of the way his fate was sealed.

It may be recalled here that though Narasimha Rao was catapulted to prime ministership because of the leadership vacuum in the party in the wake of the assassination of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi – in the absence of any charismatic leader around, the party managers decided to opt for the seniormost leader, perceived as non-controversial and

with no political base of his own and hence considered pliable.

Congressmen were indeed grateful to Rao for keeping the government intact though the party was in a minority in the Lok Sabha – he even engineered some defections later on from some other parties, but even now the party enjoys only a slender majority.

By allowing his Finance Minister Manmohan Singh to go ahead with his ruthless drive for liberalisation, achieving some semblance of stability on the economic front and earning international plaudits in the process besides almost making a fetish of indecision, allowing issues to drift, he seemed to be succeeding in defusing passions on a whole host of fronts. Though the Babri Masjid demolition proved a vicious blow to the minorities, the good performance of the party in the Assembly elections in the Hindi heartland in 1993 strengthened the hands of Rao even further.

Arjun Singh and others of his ilk from the North who had come to see the party as almost the exclusive domain of the northerners were not amused at the sight of a southerner calling the shots, but they preferred to bide their time.

And their moment did come in November last when the Cong-I was badly mauled in the two southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the former being the home state of the PM. The scale of drubbing in both states was something unprecedented and was very much a personal defeat to Rao.

When the South had all along been considered a bastion of the party, such a crushing defeat there was indeed an ominous signal especially so in the context of the fact that the party was in a shambles in many northern states and the General Elections were due in another year.

Yet another worrisome factor about the A.P. election results was that the Telugu Desam party which coasted to a landslide victory had promised the electorate cheap rice, ridiculously cheap in fact, and the latter had been taken in – it was a

resounding slap indeed for the no-free-lunchers.

Also the Rao regime had been hounded by a variety of scandals in the last three years or so, the securities scam, sugar import muddle and so on.

Arjun Singh picked upon precisely such issues when he raised his banner of revolt after the debacle in the South. He demanded a serious introspection by the party over the issues before it. He also sought to precipitate matters by resigning from the cabinet.

But the Cong-I has long since lost its capacity to do any soul-searching, assuming that it still has a soul left in it! Since Mrs. Gandhi's return to power in 1980, no leader at any level has mustered enough courage to question the ways of the leadership – they are all happy so long as they have their own respective shares of the pie. And so except for some disgruntled elements here and there, not many bothered to respond to Arjun Singh's call. Instead they chose the occasion to demonstrate their unswerving loyalty to Rao.

Still Singh would not give up. He started going round the country, addressing partymen and raising issues like loss of confidence of the minorities and weaker sections, corruption, accountability and so on. And leaders like N.D. Tiwari in U.P. and Vazhapadi Ramamurthi in Tamil Nadu joined hands with him and organised rallies.

After some dithering the High Command suspended Singh. When the latter reacted by intensifying his attacks on the leadership, he was expelled from the party.

Again the heavens did not fall, but the High Command was red in its face when a member of the Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC) of the party – which was supposed to have taken the decision on expulsion – A.K. Antony, questioned the majority decision and even insinuated that the DAC was only executing a command performance, obviously at the behest of Narasimha Rao. Antony had left the cabinet in a huff when some press supporters sought to frame him in the sugar scandal with which he had nothing to do. And the media too was critical of the way the High Command had attempted to crush dissent instead of coming to grips with the issues raised by Singh.

The latter concentrated his fire on

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the Rao government's failure to stop the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, arrest a spiralling inflation, zero in on the guilty in the securities scam and to pursue vigorously the Rajiv assassins.

Though the issues did strike a chord in the hearts of many a Congressman, they preferred to wait and watch. They were and are weary of a split which could result in the unseating of the party at the centre - facing elections in such a scenario would be courting disaster, they seem to fear.

While men like Antony promised to 'work for reconciliation' and 'fight the tendency for intolerance of dissent', others like Vazhapadi Ramamurthi who had accused Rao of doing a Gorbachov to India - ushering in an era of disintegration - confined themselves to condemning the expulsion. What next by way of solidarity they would not say.

Arjun Singh himself vowed not to split the party or float a new one and declared that he would remain a humble Congressman to the end.

In the absence of any public show of support from Mrs. Sonia Gandhi for Singh - as had been expected in some quarters - the dissidents have decided to lie low for now.

Yet again neither is Arjun Singh a charismatic figure nor a paragon of virtue. Unlike V.P. Singh (who is also a Thakur, a powerful land-owning community of the North, like Arjun) who galvanised the entire polity with his call for integrity in public life, the latter day rebel has had a shady past.

The whole of his family was involved in a lottery scandal in his home state of Madhya Pradesh, and he is yet to come clean on it. Nor yet is he willing to fight whole-heartedly the liberalisation measures despite his avowed concern for the poorer sections of society. In effect he too would like to continue with his rival's policies in almost every sphere except of course he would refuse to cosy up to the Hindu fundamentalists as Rao has been doing all these days. Anyway he and the other dissidents would like to wait for the results of the elections in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa and Bihar. Opinion polls have predicted that the Cong-I is likely to bite the dust in all the four states. If such an eventuality does come about the Congressmen would be constrained

to look around for a new leader who could revivify the party and win back the confidence of the people.

When elections were held for the Congress Working Committee, the highest policy-making body of the party, for the first time in 1992 after a gap of more than two decades and Arjun Singh won hands down, a senior leader from the south had told this correspondent, 'Look you're reading too much into these party elections... Actually they are all staking a claim to leadership after Rao disappears from the scene... No need for Rao to worry...'. But how wrong he has proved to be. His leader is now in search of desperate measures to shore up his position.

First and foremost the budget for 1995-96 to be presented in March is expected to contain a number of sops for the weaker sections. However sound theoretically the supply-siders might pretend to be, it is a bitter fact of life it take a helluva lot of years before whatever that trickles down reaches the lowermost strata. The latter may not be inclined to wait for two or three generations for the World Bank-IMP prescriptions to have any meaningful impact on their lives. They need something here and now to quench their hunger, clothe themselves

with and a roof over their heads. When in actuality their living conditions take a turn for the worse during the so-called gestation period, they will take it out on their rulers.

Sensing this stark reality the high-priests of Manmohanomics are said to be engaged in a serious exercise to evolve some measures to soften the blow on the poor.

With a double digit inflation making life difficult for even the middle class, food prices going up by 40 per cent in the last few years hitting at the poor, increased subsidies and some price control measures might be round the corner.

And if Congressmen decide to replace Rao after a possible debacle in the Assembly elections now on, the new regime might even feel compelled to roll back liberalisation to some extent.

Finally what is the future of the polity itself when the Cong-I is fast disintegrating or losing popular support almost everywhere and could be reduced to the role of a regional party in the next elections? And when there is no alternative unifying factor at that? Will India indeed go the way of the Soviet Union? The next few years should prove very crucial for the country as a whole.

TAMIL NADU NEWSLETTER

Jayalalitha's Birthday Bash

T.N. Gopalan, Madras

Citizens of Tamil Nadu woke up on the morning of February 24 only to find themselves drowned by a crescendo of slogans proclaiming 'Hail the Revolutionary Leader' (Jayalalitha)!

Most of the major cities and towns in the state were simply awash with huge wall-posters greeting Her Majesty on her 47th birthday, besides AIADMK flags and festoons.

Only the mandatory cut-outs (portraits mounted on wooden structures) were conspicuously absent this time. That was in due deference to the Chief Minister's wishes - she had appealed to her followers to keep out the cut-outs by way of abjuring ostentation! What a remarkable simplicity attended on her birthday celebrations!

Not only were the cities and towns

decked up to mark the occasion, the AIADMK-men would not spare the auditory senses either. Right through the day party and film songs blared on the streets and the alleys. And street-corner meetings were held when the people were told how fortunate they had all been to live at a time when such a magnificent personality like Jayalalitha was living and ruling them to boot.

Most ministers and party functionaries took out big ads in newspapers singing hallelujahs to the great revolutionary leader and expressing their profound gratitude to her for vouchsafing on them whatever favours they had received from her. A favourite and almost give away refrain was 'Ungalaal Naan-

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READERS FORUM

PUTTING RIGHT HISTORIC BLUNDERS

WAR begins in the minds of men and so does peace. The UNP regime of 17 long years was corrupt and thriving on the war. They did not have the will to negotiate for peace despite calls from their adversary.

A military solution to the ethnic problem, created by majoritarian tyranny, did not succeed and the war prolonged for 11 years sapping the economy and demoralising the people. The people therefore evicted the UNP and elected the Peoples Alliance under the leadership of Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumarathunge. The mood had changed from war to peace.

The Justice and Peace mandate given to the P.A. calls for the abolition of the Executive Presidency, ending the ethnic war. The new President called for Peace negotiations and the LTTE wholeheartedly agreed. Now they have arranged a temporary cease-fire for 14 days hoping to extend it, if it holds. The goodwill created by the Pope who visited the island last month, no doubt would have contributed to expedite negotiations.

Although the military agreed to negotiations, they are not prepared to yield any ground. The new P.A. Government has not decreased its Defence Budget, and it does not seem correct under the circumstances. The Tamils have faith in the charming lady's peaceful intentions, and appreciate that there are certain things that cannot be rushed and we hope that this matter would no doubt be reviewed.

However, there is a lurking suspicion regarding the statement made by her that a military solution has not been ruled out. May be this was said in order not to upset the large reservoir of chauvinism in the UNP and the south. If the military option is true, then it would mean to the Tamils, that it is a foregone conclusion that the Tamil nation unless they break free, will always have to be 'creepers of the Sinhala tree' as ex-President D.B. Wijethunge said. He also said that 'no Tamil will ever be able to be the President of Sri Lanka'. From this it follows that should the UNP come into power

again, which is probable, there will never be racial equality in multi-racial Sri Lanka, and Tamils would be once again forced to take up arms to fight for their freedom.

The pattern of elections in Sri Lanka indicate that the ruling party has alternated between the UNP and the SLFP being the largest two parties. The SLFP returned this time as the Peoples Alliance in alliance with other smaller parties so one would expect the UNP to be back in the saddle next time, or in a few years. When they do return they could reverse many changes that have been made and so if peace is to endure irrevocable changes will have to be made now. Anything that falls short of Tamil aspirations to freedom with dignity will only be temporary.

The question of autonomy for the Tamils cannot be considered without changing the constitution. For a regional solution like Federation there will have to be changes in the constitution when power will have to be granted to the peripheral unit without interference from the centre. Otherwise the centre could overrule the periphery and rule from the centre at the 'drop of a hat'. If the Presidential system is to remain, he or she must be answerable to Parliament through a minister and cannot be above the law. These matters will then have to be sorted out early if the process of granting autonomy to the Tamils is to begin. This can only be done if there is sufficient goodwill with the Sinhala majority.

In any case, Sri Lanka could never expect to return to the same equality status as before 1956, as the 'Sinhala Only' language policy, which is universally accepted as a historic blunder, ethnically divided the country. With two streams of education for the children in their formative years, it created two separate nations in the same island. As the late Dr. Colvin R. de Silva said in Parliament, 'One language, one nation, two languages, two nations.'

Successive governments since independence were bent on using repressive measures on the Tamils because they were better educated and better employed than the rest. These four historical blunders given below, will now have to be redressed as part of the solution to the so called 'Tamil problem', which is really a Sinhala Buddhist problem:

1. Sinhala Only language policy.
2. Altering the constitution to

repress the Tamils.

3. Forcing the peaceful Tamils to take up arms.

4. The Sinhala colonisation policy to change the ethnic demography in traditionally Tamil areas.

Ultimately, all these blunders will have to be put right in keeping with the laws of national justice and the aspirations of the long suffering Tamils, to live as a free people in the island in equality and with dignity. Considering the large reservoir of latent chauvinism still present in the country one would imagine that it is going to be a formidable and possibly an impossible task for the P.A. Government.

Even if there is going to be a complete change of attitude by the opposition, it would take generations of time and we have no such time. It is therefore essential that the Tamils are allowed to live free of Sinhala hegemony in a separate state, if there is no other alternative and we will have to prepare our minds for such an eventuality.

The Sinhala leadership bereft of statesmen, lacked the wisdom to comprehend that Mahavamsa thinking would be counter productive and would create a divided Sri Lanka - a division forced on the Tamils who did not ask for a separate state, at the time of independence from the British Government.

However, it must be said that 'hope lives eternal in the human breast'. So let us hope, as the President said, the people of Lanka will work under the Government to 'transform that difficult and beautiful dream into a living reality'.

Lt. Col. Anton J.N. Selvadurai

8 Blenheim Court,
Alsager,
Stoke-on-Trent, U.K.

TAMIL BIOGRAPHIES

I ENDORSE the perceptive and valid criticism presented by reader T. Pathmanathan on the need for more efficient use of editorial scissors to contributions which ooze with questionable scholarship (*Tamil Times*, Jan. 1995). After reading Prof. S. Ratnajeewan Hoole's 'Study in Tamil Biographies' (*TT*, Dec. 1994), I also felt the same thoughts that struck T. Pathmanathan.

For the benefit of readers, I summarise the essence of Hoole's

Continued on page 26

critique. He has concluded that, 'the Tamils in writing biographies have a proclivity to inexactness and fuzziness, with a view to self-glorification, self adulation and self congratulation'. Are Tamils the only culprits who suffer from such a 'disease' of faulty vision? Certainly not.

Since the academic background of Prof. Hoole and myself is similar (being science, in a general context), I offer him some evidence in this parish to disprove his conclusion on Tamil biographies. For the past four years, to compile an 'Einstein Dictionary' (which will be published later this year by the Greenwood Press, USA; and to which chemistry Nobel Kenichi Fukui has written a foreword), I have read in depth

more than a dozen biographies on Einstein, published between 1939 and 1989. All these were authored by non-Tamils, such as Gordon Garbedian, Philipp Frank, Leopold Infeld, Peter Michelmores, Banesh Hoffman, Jeremy Bernstein, Helen Dukas, Hilaire Cury, Abraham Pais and Kenji Sugimoto. All these were adulatory in nature. I'm sure Prof. Hoole would have heard of Marie Curie. Has he read the biography of this foremost female scientist of this century, authored by her daughter Eve Curie? I have read it for inspiration, and it presents only the virtues of Marie Curie. But we all know that she was not a saint, as presented in that popular biography. How about the hundreds of adulatory biographies which have been written on

Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy or for that matter Vladimir Lenin. Certainly, all those who authored biographies on this century's icons were not Tamils. So, how could Prof. Hoole write nonsense such as, 'It has been the Tamil/Indian tradition to mention only the good side of the subject, even to the point of exaggeration'.

I can only suggest that Prof. Hoole should read more biographies written by non-Tamils on non-Tamils, before arriving at a conclusion on Tamils, which can stand on solid grounds.

Sachi Sri Kantha,

5-16-305 Tsukimicho,
Fukuroi City,
Shizuoka 437-01, Japan.

ON PRESENTATIONS AND PROPRIETIES

YOUR issue of 15 January, 1995, carries a letter headed: 'From an Average Reader', on how to write on sensitive issues, and how to use the English language.

I found there to my amazement an extensive treatment of myself, ostensibly on my personal career, and on my involvements on our Ethnic issue, the whole taking almost a good half of the entire letter!

The person who had originally referred to my roles on the Ethnic issue was, I believe, Mr. Rajan Hoole (whom I do not know and whose views are solely his, but who I presume was at an important Lecture delivered by me at the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science, late last year).

The writer obviously could not have known much about me, considering the things that he has said. However, his self assurance could naturally mislead your far flung and respected community of readers to accepting their veracity. My purpose in writing is thus purely to share some things at least with this wider community of ours.

There is a reference to the writer knowing me intimately (I shall not dwell on whether the reference to me as 'a worthy gentleman' is to be taken literally or metaphorically). I am not aware of any intimate association with the writer at any time, except that he has indeed met me from about 40 years ago which he mentioned.

I am told that I had a 'stint' in

Government Service. One wonders what 18 years of service must be, roughly the first half of which was with Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike working closely with him on numerous aspects of Local Government, Finance, even Devolution. Bandaranaike was going to abolish the Kachcheries and set up Regional Councils, 40 years before they finally came!

It is said that my entire working life was with the United Nations Specialised Agencies. I was a U.N., N.Y. Cadre, career International Civil Servant having been variously, Deputy Executive Secretary of the U.N. Economic Commission for Asia (second highest post for Asia); Director, world-wide, for Education Training and Technical Assistance of UNEP (being at the second echelon of the Organisation as one of four Directors); and the first Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific for Environment.

Whether I served with distinction is a matter which the writer adjuncts with the record 'perhaps'. As it happened, I was responsible for, or directly associated in, the setting up of such leading institutions as the Asian Development Bank, the Bangkok Trade Agreement, the Asian Clearing Union, the Coconut Community, the Co-operative Associations for Environment in ASEAN and South Pacific and the First South Asian Co-operative Body (before SAARC) for South Asia, all of which still stand witness to our work. At the end, I was invested by the King of Thailand at the Headquarters of the U.N. for Asia as Knight Commander, for distinguished services to Asia while in the U.N.

With my retirement, as perhaps known, I accepted the position of visiting Professor at LSE. Here in Sri Lanka I head a voluntary organisation, The Centre for Regional Development Studies that is now both active and actively sought after.

It has been stated that I had no 'ring side view' (whatever that may mean), of the ethnic situation. The writer vouches with particular vehemence for this (even vituperation), claiming to have held special positions of vantage, and relations as M.P.s in Sri Lanka. It is not my intention to comment on the veracity of others' claims even if I were in the know, and leave this to others as appropriate. Speaking only for myself, the writer is pathetically ignorant of the continuous contacts that somehow developed in many cases often not out of my making, right from the time of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to whom I have already referred, up to date.

The linkages are too many, but I may briefly mention the B-C Pact; Membership of a Special Officials Committee on District Development Councils set up by Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1963 (and precursor of the Dudley-Chelvanayakam understanding); personal discussions on invitations, with Premadasa during the Peace Process of that time; meetings with LTTE in Jaffna on invitation; and continuing, informal discussions by political party representatives of all shades.

On some trivia relating to the positions held by the writer (and members of his family in Parliament) I may say that requests for me to be in Parliament began from

as early as the '40s, (not only from Tamil parties), continuing right up to recent times. There were also initiatives, either informal or formal, to bestow highest honorary awards during recent years. All these I declined politely and humbly.

Specifically, on family members themselves in Parliament that the writer thought fit to mention, I

happened to have had until recently three, sometimes four, of them in Parliament, who never changed loyalties and served no masters other than their own people. However, I fail to see the relevance that the writer attaches in them, to our own public contributions.

Doubtless, anybody is welcome to ascertain the details on these any

time from me, although I am sure almost all of us are more interested in continuing modestly to do what we can, in our own ways, to serve our public causes.

Prof. C. Suriyakumaran,

Colombo 3,
Sri Lanka.

BOOK REVIEW

Devolution and Development in Sri Lanka: Edited by Sunil Bastian, (International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo and Konark Publishers (Pvt) Ltd., Delhi 1994) pp.232.

by Prof. Bertram Bastiampillai

This new book on a subject which has been of serious concern in Sri Lanka ever since Independence (1948) consists of six chapters, an introduction and five other chapters. All the chapters, but one, have been the result of studies undertaken by well known Sri Lankan research scholars. The last chapter is by Amrita Shastri, not a new scholar on devolution in Sri Lanka, but from the San Francisco State University, U.S.A.

Jani de Silva writing the first account proper, deals with 'Centripetal Pressures and Regions Change in the Post Colonial Sri Lankan State.' There is a scrutiny by the writer of centralization that had been in vogue since Independence in Sri Lanka. The end of this process was noticeable in the shift toward authoritarianism about two decades ago.

The study of Jani de Silva is laden with theoretical expositions and relevant concepts get analytically discussed. To the author, divisions based on class and inter ethnic relations in the island seemed to have arisen from the character of the state. It is indicated that authoritarianism profits from centralization but centralization paradoxically need not deny to those being governed all political history.

A recent work 'Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Democracy and Capitalism' edited by Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison and Gary Rodan appears to bring

out the thesis of Jani de Silva. A lengthy study, it touched upon other theoretical constructs and conclusion, too, providing a basis on which the conclusions of the papers that follow could be better considered.

The next chapter on 'The State and the Process of Devolution in Sri Lanka' by Jayadeva Uyangoda is a valuable and analytical review of the evolution of devolution in the country. Devolution, however wanting it be, presaged important changes in the machinery of the island's state. Dr. Uyangoda's chapter shows how devolution, even within a federal framework, had been visualized before Independence but had not been regarded seriously unfortunately by the powers that were. Thereafter the attempts to decentralise or devolve taken in response to the pressure from a discontented minority of the Tamils had been aborted owing to the politically opportunist steps of the myopic opposition to the governments that were in power.

The reluctance to devolve and resistance toward devolutionary or decentralizing measures had been strongly manifested time and again by the Sinhalese especially extremists elements. As the writer sums up devolution in 1987 was really a vital change in the political attitudes that had prevailed hitherto. Perhaps, it is that devolution was compulsorily introduced and reluctantly accepted that has created so many 'roadblocks' on the path to devolution.

Radhika Coomaraswamy's survey on 'Devolution, the Law, and Judicial Construction' demonstrates that with the introduction of devolution a new social contract had been forged. It was designed to facilitate power sharing between the majority and a minority community (Tamils) that had fought long for this right. Second, the process was meant to enable widespread development to be carried out by allowing to administration in the outer areas a share of authority. The 'imposition' of the measure rather than it being the outcome of negotiations; and how

strongly resented it was became quite clear.

Even of the judiciary it was allowed to get across by a wafer thin majority and with so much 'learned' opposition. The author analytically examines these. Finally almost as a case study, there is the illustration afforded of the 'Transport Statute Case' of 1989 which brought into contention an issue raised by the North East Provincial Council Administration, the only administration that functioned under a party other than the ruling party (UNP) which controlled all other provincial structures. The author sometimes indicates reservations but ultimately qualifies these thereby justifying what really took place. But for the resolution of conflicts like this she prefers a procedure that permits compromise rather than pure adversarial confrontation.

Chapter 5 treats the topic of 'Liberalised Policies and Regional Autonomy'. The author is the editor himself and he examines the distinctive two significant developments in contemporary Sri Lanka: the introduction of a 'a new phase of capitalist development...' and 'a form of regional autonomy', so as to solve the protracted ethnic conflict that had been endemic. Prefaced with a theoretical introduction that devotes attention to the economy, ethnicity in plural society and the more recent growth of capitalist relations and Sri Lanka's 'Liberalised Phase'.

The author in Part II of this study concentrates more pointedly on the Sri Lankan political situation. Part III is particularly illuminating on the shortcomings of an administrative approach to devolution. The inter relations between the liberalizing of the economy, the working of devolution and the approach to it is traced critically. It provides a good understanding of the shortcomings noticeable in the process of devolution.

The last chapter is of great interest since in it Amita Shastri

Continued on page 29

Jaffna Central College

Old Boys' & Girls' Association
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A.G.M., Dinner and Social

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Tickets £6.00

For tickets and information,
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Continued from page 27

analyses the Provincial Council System as a solution to the ethnic problem. Even though governments have referred to decentralization as a way of developing the periphery and spoken of devolution as a means of attaining this objective effectively it is actually worsening of the ethnic conflict that provided the immediate impetus for introducing it. After all, it was the demand for autonomy and self management of the territories where they mostly lived by the Tamils that accounted for the ideas of devolution and provincial councils to be worked out in 1987.

She correctly concludes after citing convincing evidence that devolu-

tion was not sincere and that the Centre was unwilling to allow it. One cannot but consider it correct that the present process of or set up for devolution is unsatisfactory. For a peaceful, democratic resolution of the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict - 'Substantial concessions to the minority population in the form of enhanced devolution or federalism' are inevitably needed. Otherwise as the author sees the unwinnable conflict will go on, and the state will not succeed in subsummary ethnic sub-nationalism. The ability to coerce is insufficient to build a nation.

This book is a timely release, particularly when talks of a peace initiative and plans to work out a

solution to the civil war of attrition are being aired. The book deals with the themes of autonomy and devolution and both themes are very relevant. In a book of this sort with diverse contributors the views can at times overlap and even differ. The theoretical construct although interesting may at times be questioned as whether appropriate or useful to understand the local situation. However, Sunil Bastian in a clear and comprehensive introduction takes the reader easily through the study.

It is a book for politicians, policy makers, academics and those of the public. It is an useful scholarly contribution.

Continued from page 24

gal vaazhkirom. . . ' (we are having a fine time thank you!).

Senior leaders and her cabinet colleagues vied with each other to come up with ever more ingenious ideas to celebrate the great event. If one person organised a mass marriage, of 47 pairs of course, another distributed doles to 470 persons. Yet another organised blood donation from 47 persons, his or her rival distributed notes books to 4,700 students and yet another outclassed them all by arranging public meetings for 47 successive days, expounding the virtues of the great leader.

And there was also this instance wherein the non-official chairman of a quasi-governmental body, of course an AIADMK functionary, sought to win the attention of Jayalalitha and also earn the gratitude of those under his charge in an almost farcical manner. He decided to promote 47 of them to the next higher grade. But there was a minor hitch - there were not as many vacancies in that grade and he was not empowered to create any new postings. But he was not to be put off. If bureaucratic rules came in the way of his propitiating his leader, he could make use of the same to serve his purpose. He simply directed a few officials in the next higher grade to go on leave in order to make up the shortfall and thus successfully promoted 47 persons.

Well some among the promoted would stand reverted when those on leave return to work! But who cares!

Forests Minister and supposed to be very close to the Chief Minister, Mr. K.A. Sengottaiyan, decided to extend the celebrations to the anim-

al kingdom too. His department set up huge water tubs from which animals could drink water at, you said it, 47 different points in forest areas. And the tubs were JJ-shaped - Jayalalitha Jayram.

The birth of a private TV channel, JJ TV, believed to have been floated by CM's confidante Sasikala's clan, was also announced on that day.

But easily the most moving sight was the way the AIADMK-men sought to invoke the blessings of the gods and goddesses above for their leader through a variety of self-flagellating deeds - to be fair many of them did so by proxy!

One arranged a fire-walking ceremony in a suburb near Madras in which 470 persons participated. Another got a multiple of 47 persons to eat food served on bare floors, on the foot-steps of a temple, a ritual called 'Mann soru unnal', meaning eating food off the ground. Yet another, this one a lady member of the Legislative Assembly, rolled on the grounds within the precincts of a temple. Another lady MLA carried a fire-pot in her hands and went round a temple. The more squeamish among them joined hands to pull temple chariots.

Lashed out S. Thirunavukkarasu, a long-time minister in the MGR cabinet and who was one of those to promote Jayalalitha initially but who has now become one of her bitter critics, 'This is all absolutely shameless. . . She seems to be set to take the Tamil people back to barbaric ages even as we are entering the 21st century. . . She's so megalomaniacal that she seems to believe that the whole world should rejoice at her having been on this earth. . .'

It is difficult to say about the world as a whole, but her supporters in the United States, going by the name of the World Federation of Tamil Youth, faxed a press release to newspaper offices to the effect that governors of as many as nine states in the US had declared February 24 as Dr. J. Jayalalitha Day.

The Governor of Nevada especially issued a proclamation, hailing the 'visionary lady Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu' and saying that she had 'created history by ushering women to a new era of justice and progress'. (However no independent confirmation of the celebrations from the US Embassy sources here were available.)

Next time round celebrations in Mars? wonders a wag.

Incidentally with her mentor MGR, birthdays were quiet private affairs. Of course he did not want to be reminded that he was ageing. Even still the personality cult and the razzmatazz associated with it never touched the levels they have now. And he had some scruples about invoking the favour of the divine powers - in public that is - since he was presiding over an avowedly atheistic Dravidian party.

No such qualms for his protegee who believes that she can get away with anything.

A fitting birthday gift for the people of Tamil Nadu was the announcement on taking over a large chunk of land from the Anna University - to which engineering colleges are attached - and assigning the same to the Dr. Jayalalitha Film City, a huge complex set up with all necessary facilities for filmmakers, in the heart of Madras.

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna parents seek professional partner below 40 for doctor daughter employed in USA. M 776 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu uncle seeks professional groom for pretty niece, mid-thirties, graduate, in employment in international firm. Send horoscope, details. M 777 c/o Tamil Times.

Sister seeks good-looking qualified girl of any religion for highly qualified, tall, good-looking brother, 37, from respectable Christian family, in high position in U.S. M 778 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu brothers and sister, British citizens, seek suitable groom for sister, 37, fair, employed in Computing in Colombo. Send horoscope, details. M 779 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu sister seeks educated bride for brother, 32, doctor recently arrived in U.K. Send horoscope, photo and full details in first instance. M 780 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Surendran son of Dr. & Mrs. Nadarajah of 4 Sedgfield Way, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 0BE and Tapashi daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Subodh Kumar Roy of 103 Cotterill Road, Surbiton, Surrey on 5th March 1995 at bride's residence.

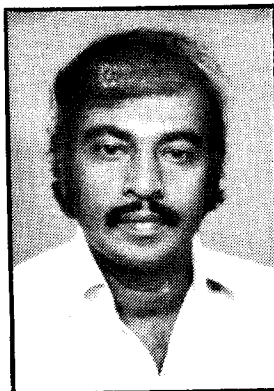
OBITUARIES



Mrs. Raninayagam Tharmalingam (83), Retired Deputy

Head Mistress, Urelu Ganेशa Vidyasalai; beloved wife of the late Tharmalingam of Urelu; sister of Mrs. Annaratnam Pathinathan, Mrs. Aputham Rajanayagam, Mrs. Sellamani Thuraisingam and Rajanayagam; mother of Ling-anayagam (UK), Tharmathurai, Tharmachandran, Tharmagunaloshana (all of Urelu), Tharmasekeran (Australia), Tharmagunapooshana (Badulla), Tharmajeyasuriar (Bank of Ceylon, Chunnakam), Tharmagunavathana (Germany) and Tharmagunabhavani (Urelu); mother-in-law of Vimaladevi, Mangaleswary, Sornaladchumy, Sinnathamby, Gnaneswary, Arulanantham, Rohinidevi, Shanmugarajah and Sivapalasundaram; grandmother of Raj, Eric, Victor, Mathan, Mohan, Mala, Mohana, Narayini, Kugan, Kumuthini, Anusha, Sivanithy, Nishanth, Thenukan, Vignaraj, Ushanthi, Thenuka and Aarani passed away in Urelu on 10.1.95. We thank all friends and relatives who sent messages of sympathy, helped in several ways and participated in the Athma Shanathi Poojah at the London Murugan Temple - Linganayagam and Devi, 88 Orchard Street, Kempston, Bedford MK42 7JJ. Tel: 01234 856612.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of Muthuthamby Gnanasambanthan (Gnani) on the first anniversary, of his falling asleep suddenly on the 13th of March 1994.

We never thought that morning.

The sorrow the day would bring, If tears could build a Stairway, and memories a lane, We could walk right up to Heaven and bring you home again.

Greatly loved, deeply missed and always remembered by loving wife Jayanthi, daughter Sai, relations and friends.

**In loving memory of
 Mr. Chandrasegaran
 Balachandran
 son of late Mr. & Mrs.
 Kandasamy Chandrasegaran**



**Born: 5.9.1933
 Died: 5.3.1994**

Tenderly we treasure the past With memories that will always last.

Sadly missed by his everloving Brothers, Sisters, In-laws, Nephews and Nieces.

In Loving Memory of Our Beloved

Daddy Mummy

**Ponnampalam Vemalaranee
 Kanagaratnam Kanagaratnam
 Born: 11.10.1908 10.7.1923**



Rest: 2.3.1982 31.3.90

Gently with love your memory is kept

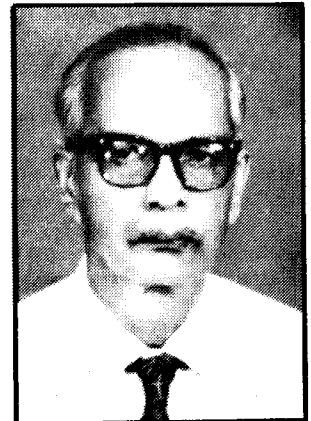
Your affection and kindness We will never forget

You both are always in our thoughts

And for ever in our hearts.

Remembered with love and affection by sons Sara, Brem and Dubsy; daughters-in-law Lalitha and Shyamala; and

grandchildren Janarthan, Mehala, Uthistran, Arani and Anuja. - 19 Huxley Place, Palmers Green, London N13 5SU. Tel: 0181 886 5966.



In loving memory of Mr. Nalathamby Sivathasan on the first anniversary of his passing away on 8.3.94.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by daughters Sivamani and Sivadevi; son Sivanesan; sons-in-law Pararajasingham and Dr. Sivathasan; daughter-in-law Sunthari; grandchildren Bhamini, Aravindan, Kuhan, Nirupa, Vathana, Priya and Harry - 303 Hempstead Road, Hempstead, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3QJ, U.K.



In everloving memory of Mrs. S. Vimalachandran (Tooting Broadway, London SW17) on the first anniversary of her passing away on 6.4.94.

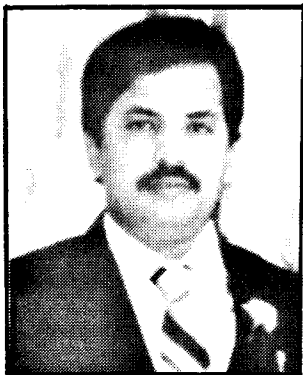
Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her son Mohan; daughter Nirmala; daughter-in-law Judy; son-in-law Rathindran and grandchildren Dale, Mark, Davina and Nadine.

We hold you close within our hearts

And there you shall remain To walk with us throughout our lives

Until we meet again.

- 16 Northumberland Road, North Harrow, Middx. U.K.



In loving memory of Mr. P. Vijayakumar (Viji), Foreman, National Paper Corporation, Valaichenai, on the 4th Anniversary of his passing away on the 23rd of February 1991.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving children Niroshan and Niroshini; parents Mr. and Mrs. T. Poopalasingam; Brothers Jeyakumar and Balakumar; sisters Vijayarani, Jeyarani, Indrani, Kalaivani and Kavitha. - 23 Covington Road, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

April 1 6.00pm Saiva Munnetta Sangam (UK) presents Variety Entertainment at Langdon School Hall, Sussex Road, Eastham, London E6. All welcome.

April 1 6.30pm Brent Tamil Association presents Dance Drama at Alperton High School Hall, Stanley Road, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0171 388 3536.

Apr. 2 Fifth day of Lent.

Apr. 2 1.00pm Shropshire/Staffordshire Tamil Association Annual Lunch and Entertainment at Main Hall, Stourbridge Town Hall, Crown Centre, Stourbridge, West Midlands. Tel: 01785 665327.

Apr. 4 Sathurthi.

Apr. 8 6.30pm London Tamil Centre celebrates Tamil New Year at Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0181 904 3937.

Apr. 9 Passion Sunday. 6.30pm Institute of Tamil Culture celebrates Ninth Anniversary and Tamil New

Year with Cultural Evening at Holy Cross Convent Hall, Sanddal Road, New Malden, Surrey. Tel: 0181 399 6167/949 2888.

Apr. 10 7.00pm Colombuthurai Yogar Swamigal Gurupoojah at Sri Ganapathy Temple, 123 Effra Road, London SW19.

Apr. 11 Eekathasi.

Apr. 13 Pirathosam.

Apr. 14 Yuva Hindu New Year.

Apr. 15 Full Moon. Easter Vigil.

Apr. 15 6.30pm Brent Tamil Association celebrates Tamil New Year with Dance Drama, In Issai and Vil Issai at Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 0171 388 3536.

Apr. 16 Easter Sunday.

Apr. 16 7.30pm Sri Lankan Sports & Arts Foundation Dinner Dance at North Ealing Leisure Centre, Greenford Road, Greenford, Middx. Tel: 0181 381 1342/864 9876/01923 825219.

Apr. 19 Sathurthi.

Apr. 22 7.00pm Kokuvil Hindu College O.S.A. presents Variety Entertainment at Heath Clark

Tertiary Centre, Cooper Road off Dennington Avenue, Waddon, Croydon. Tel: 0181 864 0096/761 0358.

Apr. 25 Feast of St. Mark, Evangelist.

Apr. 29 Amavasai. Feast of St. Catherine of Siene.

Apr. 29 6.00pm Jaffna Central College O.B.&G.A. (UK), A.G.M., Dinner and Social at Lola Jones Hall, Greaves Place off Garratt Lane, Tooting, London SW17 0NE. Tel: 0181 689 4638/715 5204.

May 20 6.30pm MIOT Annual Muthamil Vizha at Kelsey Park School, Manor Road, Beckenham, Kent. Tel: 01634 376517/0181 460 5235.

At the Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 0171-381 3086/4608.

Apr. 29 6.45pm Bharatha Natyam by Nandini Ramani, Disciple of the late Legendary Balasaraswathi.

Two Decades of Tamil Theatre Activity



A scene from 'Muhamilatha Manithargal' directed by K. Balendra

Malai (Rain), based on the script of Indira Paarthasaarathi and staged in 1976, was the play that laid the foundation for the establishment of the Tamil Avaikkatruk Kalaik Kalagam (Tamil Performing Arts Society, TPAS) In 1978, with the intention of establishing a serious Tamil theatre movement through the continuous staging of plays of quality. The total number of stagings of plays exceeds one hundred and sixty. The rapid growth of theatre awareness among the Tamil people in Sri Lanka since the seventies was rudely disrupted by the anti-Tamil violence of

1983 and the TPAS ceased to function in Sri Lanka, only to regroup and resume their activities in London two years later.

The ten years of activity in London included new productions, annual drama festivals in London since 1991, and three children's plays in collaboration with the Brent Tamil School. The radio and television that were accessible to the TPAS in Sri Lanka have evaded them in London, largely because of the lack of a large and culturally aware audience among the Tamil people in the UK and the consequent lack of demand for radio plays and teledrama in Tamil. Other avenues have been explored for the expansion of theatre activity following a brief impromptu demonstration the two-day Ilakkayach Chanthippu (literary get-together) in December 1989. One consequence was the staging of two plays in Utrecht in the Netherlands during the Ilakkayach Chanthippu in 1993. This was followed by an invitation to perform in Switzerland, and a five-day tour took the TPAS to four cities there to stage seven plays. A highly successful trip to Canada followed later in the year with some performances selling as many as eight-hundred tickets at the gate. This year the TPAS will visit Paris for a two-day session in March to perform eight plays and a short program of light music. This is to be followed by a visit to Norway in April, Germany in June and two months after to Thamilnaadu on the invitation of Tamil theatre activists, including Professor Indira Paarthasaarathi.

The TPAS has been wrongly accused of emphasising plays in translation at the expense of original scripts in Tamil. In fact, eighteen of the thirty five plays staged by the TPAS have been based on Tamil

originals. Of the rest, a majority are adaptations, as opposed to translations. The plays from non-Tamil sources are those of eminent playwrights including Bertolt Brecht, Anton Chekov, Garcia Lorca, Badal Sarkar, Tennessee Williams, Vaclav Havel and Harold Pinter. Plays from the last two were adapted for productions initiated in London and the work by the well known American playwright Arthur Miller, based on a play by Hendrik Ibsen and successfully adapted by Satyajit Ray, is to soon join the list of adaptations.

It is hoped that the exposure to good plays with sources within and without the Tamil community will encourage writers of theatre script in Tamil and especially those with an interest in contemporary themes and the modern stage.

S.S.

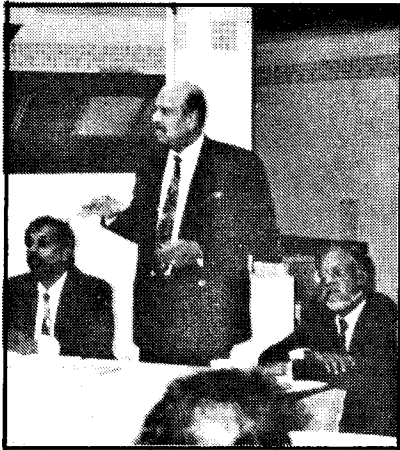
Sivan Kovil For London

The London Sivan Kovil has been established at premises 4A Clarendon Rise, Lewisham, London SE13 5ES and has been functioning for the last 15 months. It caters to the religious needs of the community, primarily of the South Eastern Region of London. The daily pooja times are 8.30 a.m. to 12 noon and 5 to 9 p.m. and devotees are most welcome to partake in poojas, abhisekams, archainais, festivals etc. Outdoor services are also available.

The London Sivan Kovil Trust has entered into agreement to purchase the freehold property adjacent to the temple. The agreement stipulates that the Trust has to fulfil its obligations within the next three months. The cost of the purchase is £140,000. The Trust has already collected over £20,000 of this amount and has to

collect the balance of the deposit before securing the purchase through a bank loan. It has also got to spend over £110,000 for immediate renovations and furnishings. It appeals to devotees and wellwishers for generous contributions which could either be made by cheque payable to 'London Sivan Kovil Trust' or directly to its account No. 70600482 at Barclays Bank Plc, Catford Branch, sorting code 20-49-81. Further details could be obtained from the Secretary on Telephone No. 0181 690 0401 (Home) or 0181 318 9844 (Temple).

Dr. Chandran Launches Sports & Arts Foundation



Dr. Raj Chandran, an old boy of Kokuvil Hindu College and Commissioner for Racial Equality in UK launched the Sri Lankan Sports & Arts Foundation at a well attended meeting held at Bromyard Sports Centre, Acton, London W3.

The Foundation aims to promote friendship and fellowship among all races of Sri Lankan origin domiciled in the UK, through sports and arts.

Mr. Sri Ranjan, Foundation Secretary said: 'Functions will be held throughout the year. A Sri Lankan New Year Dinner and Dance on Sunday, 16th April will be our first. The highlight will be a Grand Cricket Carnival and Family Fun Day on August Bank Holiday Monday, 28th August 1995. Cricket Clubs of Sri Lankan players and school cricket clubs are being invited to compete for Big Prize Money, the winning team receiving £2,500. There will also be a netball tournament'.

Mr. Nivj Deva M.P. speaking in support of the aims of the Foundation, congratulated Dr. Chandran for his noble efforts, and suggested a Scholarship Fund for Sri Lankan students in the UK, if profits are made.

Jaffna Hospital Thanks For Donation

The British Association of Young Musicians had remitted £1,200 (Rs. 88,133/-), the net proceeds of a Bharatha Natyam recital by Indhumathi Srikumar organised by them on 17th October 1993. The Director of the Jaffna Hospital, Dr. (Miss)

N. Kanagaratnam while thanking the Association for this donation writes as follows:

'I am informed that the Young Musicians staged a programme, recently, in London to collect this large sum of money in aid of our Hospital. The Staff of our Hospital are deeply touched by this act of yours and it certainly gives us a lot more encouragement to carry on with our tasks during these difficult times.

'I take this opportunity to wish you all and your Association well and for your programmes to achieve success'.



A Promising Vocalist

In their monthly programme on 27th November KALABHAVANAM sponsored a young vocalist **Selvi Yasotha Mithradas**, a product of Ramanathan Academy of Jaffna. The confidence with which she handled her maiden performance in this country spoke well of her scholarship and ability. Endowed with an unspoilt attractive voice and modulation free this young lady shows full of promise. Taking a full repertoire of cutchery pieces Yasotha went through a varnam in Kathanakuthookalam, keerthanams in Keeravani and Lathangi, and some well known Tamil pieces and finished with a Meera Bhajan and Tillana. The well beaten Pillaithamil 'Peratharikum Adiyavar' in ragamalika enthused the audience. Sudhananda Bharati's 'Eppadi Padinaro' was a repeat of Pattammal's Karnataka Devagandhari, but the artiste announced it as Bimplas. Sri P.P. Kanthan well known musicologist speaking on the occasion paid encouraging compliments to the artiste. Young Yasotha is a promising vocalist deserving a high place among performers in London.

Mridangam Strong Favourite

In the field of Carnatic music learning in London Mridangam seems to be the favourite with youngsters. Rhythm assimilation is easier than sruthi grasp in our system and hence we find more and more youngsters are taking up training in mridangam rather than vocal or string music.

Among the latest entrants to this percussive art is twelve year old Kavin Satchithanathan, a disciple of Bangalore Sri R.N.

Prakash, a highly rated mridangam and gatham specialist. His arangetram performance on 15th October last was something special. The main vocal lead was given by a fresh Carnatic vidwan from Madras, Sri T.V. Ramaprasad, whose baritone voice and mature style elevated the whole programme. Dr. Lakshmi Jayan's violin accompaniment gave additional support. As mridangam maestro Karaikudi Krishnamurthi commented in his address, the whole programme looked like a real cutchery rather than an arangetram. With all the intricate swara singing and variations in rhythmic rendition young Kavin kept up his high standard of playing, a result of expert training and dedicated practice.

In spite of expert training and good grasp of rhythmic variations most of our young artistes do not seem to show their inner appreciation through their expressions. This will have to be imbibed by constant exposure at concerts.

S. Sivapatha Sundaram.

AUSTRALIAN NEWS LETTER

Special Assistance to Srilankan Citizens

The Minister of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Senator Nick Bolkus has approved the establishment of a Special Assistance Category (SAC) from January 9th 1995 for Sri Lankan citizens who have close relatives in Australia.

'The decision to implement a SAC for Sri Lanka reflects the desire of the Australian government to assist people in Sri Lanka who are in vulnerable situations and for whom resettlement is considered appropriate' Senator Bolkus said.

SACs were introduced to the government's program in 1991-92 to reach people with close links to Australia, who suffered hardship because of upheaval in their homelands but who did not fit the traditional refugee and humanitarian categories.

'Its purpose is to enable these people, who would not otherwise be eligible for migration to Australia, to settle here permanently' Senator Bolkus said.

The Srilankans who will be eligible are those living in Sri Lanka with close family links in Australia, whose lives have been seriously disrupted by fighting in Sri Lanka during the past 18 months. The program will be open to people who have suffered and continue to suffer substantial discrimination because of their ethnic origin or political beliefs. Senator Bolkus said that Srilankan community leaders have been closely consulted in the development of this program. 'I have taken special note of the request that the program should not be directed towards members of any particular ethnic or political groups, but be available to any Srilankan citizen whose circumstances come within the SAC criteria' he said.

Out of 6000 places allocated under the SAC program, only 250 have been allocated to Sri Lanka, in the current financial year. As with all SACs, a near relative of Sri Lankan applicants will be required to provide a written undertaking to assist successful applicants in the first six months of settlement to help cover (a) food clothing, accommodation and household goods (b) personal support (c) access to community and public services (d) obtaining employment (e) language interpretation and securing English instruction (f) community involvement and self-reliance.

Arrivals under the SAC program are granted permanent residence in Australia and can access Commonwealth benefits on arrival. They or their relatives will be responsible for arranging and funding their travel to Australia. Processing of the SAC applications will be undertaken by the Australian High Commissioner in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Application and Sponsorship forms are available at the office of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in Australia.

Sri Venkateswara Temple Anniversary Celebrations

The first traditional Hindu Temple to be built in Australia was the Sydney Sri Venkateswara Temple which was consecrated in 1985. The main deities were Lord Venkateswara, Sri Mahalakshmi and Sri Andal with a separate shrine for Sri Ganesha.

After 1992, separate temples for Lord Shiva, Sri Parvati, Sri Durga, Sri Murugan, Sri Rama, Sri Hanuman and the Navagraha Murthys were constructed and the Maha Kumbabishekam was held on 23rd January 1994. The first anniversary of this momentous event was celebrated on 9th morning followed by Abishekams and poojas for all the deities.

On 11th February a grand Kalyana Utsavam was held for Lord Shiva, Sri Murugan, Sri Rama and their consorts. This was followed by the Veethi utsavam when the Panchamurthys were beautifully decorated with masses of garlands made from fresh flowers and taken around the temple in procession, witnessed by a vast crowd of devotees.

It is proposed to construct a large mandapam to enclose the Saiva deities and a Rajagopuram for the Sri Venkateswara Complex. This is the largest temple in Australia and probably in the Southern hemisphere. Temple administration would welcome donations towards the Shiva Mandapam and the Rajagopuram. Donations may be sent to the President Dr. A. Balasubramaniam or the Treasurer Mr. N. Mahadeva to Sri Venkateswara Temple, Temple Road, Helensburg, NSW 2508, Australia with cheques in favour of Sri Venkateswara Temple Association Inc.

Vinayagar Temple in Brisbane

A Vinayagar Temple has been consecrated in Brisbane in Queensland on 5th

February '95. The Hindus in Queensland though much smaller in number than those in New South Wales and Victoria have been able to collect sufficient funds to construct a temple. The Maha Kumbabishekam was conducted by priests from India and Sri Lanka and was witnessed by a large number of devotees.

Sri Ganesha is the main deity with Sri Shiva and Sri Parvati on either side. The other deities in the Prakaram are Sri Vishnu, Sri Murugan and the Navagraha Murthys. The temple has a Gopuram and all the features of a traditional Hindu temple. In one corner of the Mandapam is a statue of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Vembadi Old Girls' Association, Sydney

The Annual General Meeting of the Vembadi Old Girls' Association of Sydney was held on 26.2.95 at The Uniting Church Hall, Carrington Avenue, Strathfield.

The meeting began with the singing of the School Anthem in Tamil. The outgoing President Mrs. Jeyamani Kirupainayakam thanked the members for the support and cooperation extended to her and wished the Association well in the future. The Secretary Mrs. Geetha Amilthan presenting her report pointed out that the entire efforts of the Committee had been directed towards collecting funds to finance the sound and lighting equipment for Thambiah Hall at Vembadi. Mrs. Kala Thiruchelvam, the Treasurer in her report announced that \$1690 had been sent by telegraphic transfer to the bank account of the Vembadi O.G.A. in Jaffna. Mrs. Devi Balasubramaniam, the outgoing Vice-President, spoke about the future plans of the Association.

The following were elected to the new committee for 1995. President: Devi Balasubramaniam, Vice-President: Thilala Mylvaganam, Secretary: Shantha Fonseka, Asst. Secy: Geetha Amilthan, Treasurer: Nirmala Manoharan, Asst. Treasurer: Kala Thiruchelvam, Committee Members: Shivani Narendran, Sivajini Rajkumar, Jeyanthi Pari, Romani Sunilraj, Vanasi Rajapobalasingam, Niranjana Mahendran, Nanthini Kanthasamy, Thilaga Jegannathan, Sivagowri Manmohan, Shanthi Sarvendran and Kanchana Sriharan.

The new Committee suggested that a dinner be organised to enable old girls in Sydney to get together and the idea was approved. It was decided that whatever profit made should be sent to Jaffna. The meeting closed after the singing of 'Dare To Do Right', the School Anthem.

CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

Weather

Unusually mild temperatures were recorded this winter, making many days look like spring. However this did not deter the usual flight of 'snow birds' from Canada to

Florida. Many Sri Lankan Canadians too joined the snow bird flights this year. They took advantage of a Canadian-Sri Lankan owned motel in Kissimmee, Florida and returned pleased with the trip. This motel situated in Central Orlando made it easy for Sri Lankan first timers to see most of the Florida attractions at minimal cost and also provided apartment type accommodation with full kitchen facilities that enabled many participants to cook their meals and make a camp out of it! Enjoyable all the way.

Pongal Celebrations

The Sri Lankan Graduates Association of Toronto celebrated 'Pongal' by organising a cultural show on January 21st at the Midland Collegiate Auditorium, Scarborough. This was a well attended function with the Premier of Ontario Hon. Bob Rae and His Worship Frank Faubert, Mayor of Scarborough as Chief Guests.

The Sri Lankan Graduates Association was formed in 1989 to campaign for the recognition of Sri Lankan qualifications in Canada. It has a membership of 200 and is headed by the popular personality S. Sathiamoorthy. The other office bearers are Vice President: M. Jesurajah, Secretary: C. Ramanathan and Treasurer: V. Nantheeswaran.

Appointment

Sri Guggan Sri Skanda Rajah, well known in Canada for the last 15 years for his outstanding work in the field of Race Relations and Human Rights has been appointed by the Government of Ontario as one of the six full time adjudicators to hear cases under the Employment Equity Act, Ontario Human Rights Code and the Pay Equity Act. Prior to this appointment, Sri Guggan served as one of the members of the Royal Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System. Earlier he was a member of the Federal Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, where he adjudicated cases of Refugee claims. He was also President of the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada and was the first recipient of the Dr. Wilson Head award for outstanding work in the field of Race Relations and Human Rights.

Sri Guggan is the son of the late Justice P. Sri Skandarajah of Sri Lanka.

Aloy Ratnasingham.

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