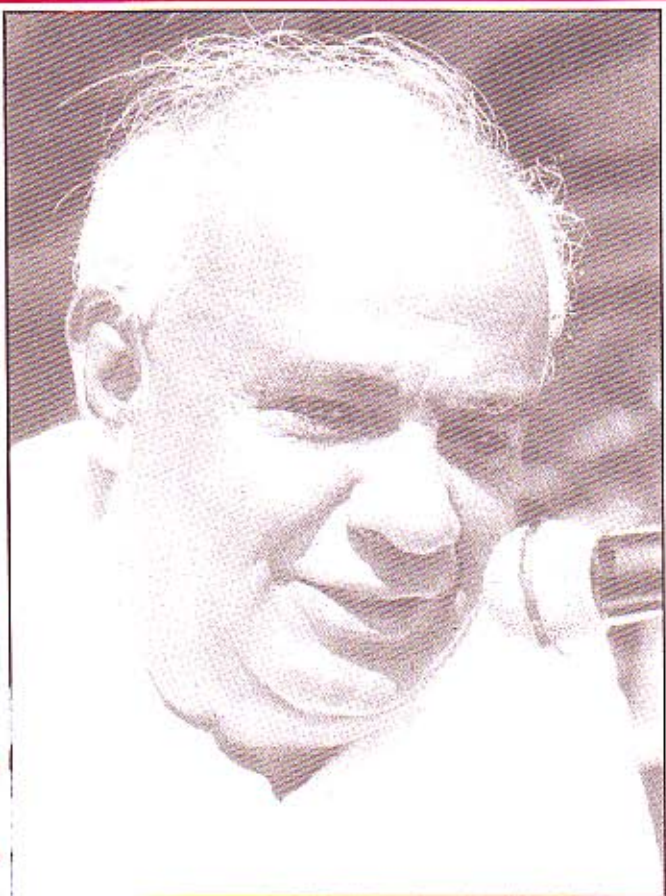


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defend to the death your
right to say it.
- Voltaire.

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War and Human Rights

It is said that the first casualty of war is truth because human experience over centuries has demonstrated that the parties to the conflict always lie about the atrocities they commit against each other. What is worse is that they lie about the atrocities they commit on the civilians on either side who are not active combatants. In short what occurs is that they lie about the violation of internationally recognised human rights of the people and the norms set down by international humanitarian law, and this has been occurring in Sri Lanka since the armed conflict commenced. Arbitrary deprivation of life and limb in a variety of ways – shooting, bombing, landmine explosions etc., torture of the captured, destruction of property making normal civilian life impossible and forcible evacuation of civilians from their homes have been a common practice in the conduct of this conflict.

The question that has to be asked therefore is whether war can be fought without violating the human rights of the people caught up in it and infringing internationally recognised humanitarian norms. Recent experience in Somalia and Bosnia has shown that when troops engaged in war-like operations even under the auspices of the United Nations, which is regarded as the repository of the duty to guarantee the protection and promotion of human rights the world over, gross abuses have taken place in contravention of the standards and norms laid down by the UN itself. The answer must therefore be that engaging in war almost inevitably leads to the violation of human rights of the people. Hence the duty of those who want to ensure that the human rights of people are not endangered is to do everything possible to avoid contributing to the creation of circumstances that inexorably lead to war or armed conflict, and in the event that war or armed conflict occurs to make every effort possible to end it as soon as it is practicable.

However, how does one protect the people's human rights in the context of a continuing war or armed conflict and ensure that the parties to the conflict observe internationally recognised humanitarian norms? The presence of third parties who have no part in the conflict, organisations committed to the protection of human rights, humanitarian agencies and journalists will go a long way in achieving this. Firstly, the truth about what is actually happening on the ground will become known, and publication of such knowledge will determine the reaction of the international community to what is actually occurring. Secondly, the fear of adverse reaction by the international community will have a deterrent effect on the behaviour and conduct of the belligerents.

In the case of Sri Lanka, therefore, there is an absolute need for the people of the country and the rest of the world to know what has been and what is happening in the war torn areas of the Northeast. The government claims that the Tamil people support the government's peace efforts and that its forces have been engaged in liberating the people from the clutches of the Tamil Tigers. It says that thousands of Tamils have been forcibly evacuated by the Tigers from their homes against their will and it is appealing to the people to return to the Jaffna peninsula which has been recaptured by the military promising that they would be looked after fairly and in freedom. On the other hand, the LTTE asserts that the people who left the peninsula did so because they did not want to live in areas under the control of the military. It also says that those who have already returned to those army controlled areas have not done so voluntarily. The government says that Tamil civilians have been killed in the course of indiscriminate but sporadic attacks by the Tigers upon the army. On the other hand, the LTTE says that hundreds of Tamil young men and women are being held in detention in the peninsula or transported to Colombo on the mere suspicion of being connected with the LTTE.

There is only one way of assessing the veracity of these conflicting claims and counter-claims and that is to permit access by human rights and humanitarian organisations, independent third parties and journalists, both local and foreign, to all areas in the Northeast, particularly the Jaffna peninsula, and the districts of Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya. Representatives of these organisations must be granted unrestricted access to these areas and the people living there should be able to speak to them freely and without intimidation so that they may obtain information as to what is really happening on the ground.

Journalists Revisit Jaffna

Shops and banks in the northern Jaffna peninsula are taking down their shutters and reopening for business, but some traders complain about the lack of stock and some customers moan about high prices, a Reuter report datelined 19 June by Mick Macfie stated following the visit by foreign and local journalists to Jaffna for the second time since the army regained control from the Tigers.

The report added that Jaffna town was all but deserted when army marched in last December after the Tigers withdrew and forced the residents to flee from the northern peninsula across the picturesque Jaffna lagoon to the mainland.

Now businesses are returning, with banks, shoe shops, groceries and pharmacists in the Jaffna Grand Bazaar dusting off their counters. Customers are keen to buy, but the shops have little to sell.

A private school advertises "Spoken English with Grammar." Typing has become a growth industry. Men set up their ancient manual typewriters on the pavement and type letters to the government appealing for compensation for damaged property. The fee for each letter range from Rs.30 to Rs.40 (\$0.55 to \$0.72).

People have money, Jaffna is good with foreign money," said C.Selvaratnam, a customer at a clothes store, referring to money sent home by Tamil expatriates. "The money is enough by there are not enough things."

Shop proprietor Sinnappu Naguleswaran stated that all his stock dated last year, before he fled the fighting. He reopened his shop to find his shop just as he left it, although someone had been inside it. "More and more shops are opening up but we don't have enough stuff to be sold," he said. "We have to buy on the black market, or we do barter exchange. Nothing is coming from Colombo."

The government is concentrating its activities on getting necessities to as many people as possible so a semblance of normal life can return to the peninsula as quickly as possible. It supplies limited dry rations, and sells staples such as flour rice and kerosene through government agencies. But the

difficult task of working out wrinkles in the fledgling distribution system has spawned a thriving black market. "The black market people are making big money," a shopper Selvaratnam said. "They fill all the queues at the Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society."

A bicycle tyre and inner tube selling for Rs.230 (\$4.25) sells for Rs.500 (\$9) or more on the black market; and a kilo of rice selling for Rs.16 (\$0.32) sells for Rs.50 (\$0.90), Selvaratnam said. Asked about whether it was the LTTE which was behind the black market, he said he did not know. "It is dangerous to talk about these things," another shopkeeper said.

T.Vallipuram is the manager of the National Savings Bank in Jaffna which reopened in April this year and now has 45,600 savings accounts. Business is improving all the time. Despite the inflow of expatriate money, unemployment is a serious issue in the Jaffna peninsula where fishing, a major earner, is restricted because of security concerns.

"Half the town has not come back yet," Vallipuram said, adding that some of her staff were still due to return to the peninsula. "Now the situation seem to be coming back to normal. But we don't know what will happen in the future."

In further Reuter report datelined 20 June, Mick Macfie says: The Jaffna Hospital is battling stray dogs defecating in the corridors, the university can't get its students back for exams, a leading girls' school has lost all its text books and there is no electricity. But the people are back and life is Jaffna town appears to be slowly returning to normal; washing is appearing in the backyards, roofs are being repaired and roads are being rebuilt.

The recovery effort is a herculean task for a government having to pour money into security to keep the guerrillas at bay while struggling to revive a national economy devastated by more than a decade of war with the Tamil Tigers.

"When you come from Colombo, you will find a marked contrast in facilities and amenities," Somapala Gunadheera, Chairman of the Northern Province Rehabilitation and Resettlement Authority, told reporters on

18 June. "before you pass judgement, you must have an idea what it was like on April 19 when Operation Riviresa 2 started." "There was no population to speak of" in the northwest Valigamam area of the peninsula including the Jaffna town.

Now there are more than 250,000 people with problems which neighbours on the mainland can only imagine. One banker said that he was living in his own house again but it did not have a roof. "When it rained it is not good," he said.

There is no electricity except in and around Jaffna Teaching Hospital, which is short of drugs, x-ray equipment and needs 60 more doctors and 600 more beds. Since reopening in May, hospital staff have found four landmines and are battling stray dogs which roam the open corridors searching for food from the wards. Each morning dog faeces have to be scraped off the concrete. "We need strychnine to kill them," said a hospital Director, Dr.M.Kanagaratnam.

Some schools have reopened, but conditions are poor. "we have no books, no electricity, no PE (physical education) equipment," said Selvanayaki Gnaneshwaran, a teacher at the town's once-famed Hindu Ladies College. The government promised to give us books, but they still haven't arrived."

The Jaffna Hindu College for boys reopened last month and students said they were worried about exams due in August. "They don't know how they are going to cover the syllabus," said an English teacher, Arumugam Jeyanithy. "Some of the students want to postpone the exams."

Nearly half the students and staff at the Jaffna University were still outside the peninsula, said acting Vice-Chancellor Pillai Balasundaram adding that exams are due on July 15. They must also fix the roof and replace computers that went "missing" during the few months the university was closed.

Another report datelined 20 June by Dexter Cruz of Associated Press stated:

The widow squatted on a low stool and told her story to the barefoot old man tapping away on a rusty manual typewriter. Since her husband was killed in the civil war two years ago, she had lived in a quiet village of Tamil farmers, ironing clothes for a living. When government forces approached in September, she fled. She returned home last month to find her two-room

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from page 5)

house destroyed -her furniture gone. Now she and her two small children live with a friend, depending on government handouts because no one has money to pay for ironing.

So on Tuesday (18 June) Siththan Arulan, aged 40, trudged to Jaffna city to request the equivalent of \$835 from the government to help rebuild her life. She found the old man in front of a bombed-out grocery store, offering to translate and type such requests for 70 cents a page. "I do not know if I will get the compensation, or how long it will take, but to restart my life I need a home," Mrs Arulan said. Mrs. Arulan's problems are common around Jaffna.

Meanwhile, the people of Jaffna are struggling to adapt to life under the central government. Many like Mrs. Arulan are unemployed, hungry and homeless. They say the government is taking too long to rebuild their homes and distribute food and medicine. With the local economy at a standstill, food and fuel prices have skyrocketed, forcing people to stand in lines for government handouts that they say still aren't enough. The government says that it was unprepared for the return of 400,000 Tamils who fled Jaffna city in advance of the military offensive.

But for all their suffering and frustration after 12 years of fighting, many Tamils say there are also ways in which their lives have improved since the rebels were driven out. For the first time in five years, the bombing and shelling by Sri Lankan forces have stopped. Shop owners no longer have to pay 10 per cent sales tax to the rebels. Taxi drivers no longer have to drive the guerrillas around for free. And Tamil parents don't have to sit helpless while rebel operatives recruit their children from high schools. "Because of the fighting, we have lived difficult lives for years," said Ponnudurai Jeyabalan, a teacher at Jaffna Hindu College, adding "Now we are looking for some sort of tranquility."

In a way, they are finding some. The thousands of soldiers who now patrol the city are less imposing than many people had feared. Columns of troops marching through the streets hardly cast a glance at residents conducting their daily chores. School children ride bicycles past them. At one intersection, soldiers stop to let an old man pass in his ox-driven cart.

THE CHOICE IS DEVOLUTION OR SEPARATION

by Paul Caspersz

To the question, "Will Trinco go the way of Jaffna?" there were several responses: "There can be little doubt but that it will. Both sides to the conflict do not give it any other chance." "Very unlikely. The mixed character of the population makes Trinco very unlike Jaffna."

"What was possible for the Tigers in Jaffna will not be easy at all in Trinco." "Who knows? But we only hope that it will not." "Maybe Batticaloa, but not Trinco, I think."

I recalled what a Tamil fleeing Colombo soon after the communal riots of 1977 told me in Kandy: "I am going back, permanently to settle in Batticaloa. There, there is perfect peace." Yet it did not take many years for Batticaloa too to become a theatre of war.

There was seeming normalcy in the place when I visited Trinco at the end of March, so normal that I wondered whether I had come to the correct place. But beneath the normalcy, there was, I soon sensed, scarcely concealed abnormality - uncertainty, insecurity, doubt about what the future might bring. At best, the predominant attitude seemed to be, let's live for today, then wait for the morrow to bring what it brings.

I had an uncanny and persistently nagging feeling that Trinco today is what Jaffna was when I first visited it with friends in MIRJE in the late 1970's and the early 80's: the feeling of an uneasy but very fragile pause in the violence. Will Trinco go the tragic way of Jaffna?

The "round-ups", as they are now commonly called even in the current Sinhala and Tamil vocabulary, continue. When I asked, 'How often', and answered, 'Maybe once a month?' I was laughed out of Court. "It is not every day" I was told "certainly a few each week". The 'round-up' technique of a van going round with a masked

"Earlier we were afraid of the army," said Kandiah Kunarasah, a retired government worker. "Now we are not because since they arrived they have treated us well. Many of us ask ourselves: Is this the same Sri Lankan Army?"

informer, whose job it is to signify with a motion of the hand or head that a person is a Tiger or Tigress, has now grown so familiar that passers by sometimes do not care to stop and notice.

I was told the armed forces and the police are aware that the technique is sometimes used to settle personal scores and inter-faction vendettas and so there is cross-checking of the information received. Yet the technique smells sinister and should be discontinued. It only serves to intensify the growing alienation of the non-Tiger Tamil population - who are still a majority - from the Sinhala people and the government.

A majority? But let no one presume that it is a pocket borough majority. Unless the government looks sharp and refines its practices, it may even be a majority that will fast become a minority.

Besides the special "round-ups", there are also the numerous checkpoints in Trinco town where either police or army check all comings and goings and ask to look into any bags that are carried. These checkings are often so perfunctory as to be nearly useless. One person told me. "We understand there must be checking, even for our own security. But let them serve the purpose for which they are made." But wouldn't this be called harassment?" I asked. "Precisely" he answered "there has to be careful checking but no harassment. Let, say, every tenth person crossing the checkpoint be checked and checked with some thoroughness. And no one will object if the careful checking is also a courteous one." It can then even be a means of establishing good relations between police and people.

May be some volunteers can be found - retired policemen or army officers, for instance, well known for their kind manners - who can teach the young recruits to police, army, navy and air force how one can be both efficient and yet behave in such a way as to win the hearts and minds of the people. We have heard of 'operation Hearts and Minds' earlier. It is time to make it real, and a good place to

start would be Trinco.

Leave Trinco and go to China Bay or Kantalai or Nilaveli. You will see more of these checkpoints, sometimes protected by sandbags. And on the way, especially at dusk, you may see, as I did two or three groups of soldiers being fanned out by an officer into the jungle. And if they tread on a landmine or are ambushed by men hiding among the bushes, all their families will get will be a few pieces of bone in a sealed coffin and their monthly pension for what would have been their lifetime plus a few other lozenges.

One thinks of all these petty bourgeois cries of "no let up with the war". It is not their sons who go to the front line in the lower ranks but the poor youth of our villages. I have not thought of the rights and wrongs of conscription but would, I think, support it for the school leavers of our "big Colombo and Kandy schools. It will be a way for them to repay the country for the "bigness" of the education they have received and also a way of muting the hawks.

Some persons in the South - is it wrong to say that the South began to be commonly called such only two or three years ago? - say that they are against the devolution proposals because they will lead to separation. They ought to consider carefully whether, quite contrarily, it is only devolution - real meaningful effective devolution - that can, as things now stand, prevent separation. To misquote Colvin R De Silva: no separation, then devolution: no devolution, then separation. And while it is said that separation is preposterous and utterly inadmissible, such is done in the name of anti-separation actually to foster it. Take, for instance, the tamashas at the "fall of Jaffna", the crackers and the feasts of welcome to the heroes of the capture. But to speak of the fall or capture of Jaffna is in practice to admit that there was a separate capital of a separate state which has now been recaptured. And what of the feelings of the Jaffna Tamils? To them Jaffna means at least as much for their culture and identity as Anuradhapura for the Sinhala people. Shades of Sapumal Kumaraya!

Brigadier Kobbekaduwa had a different idea. He was convinced that military victories would be hollow without political solution. And in recent speeches it is fortunate to note that even very high-ranking armed officers now speak of military action

only as a necessary evil for the attainment of a political solution.

The political solution must not be delayed is a day that further isolates Trinco and Batticaloa from the South. Every day of delay is a delay that in effect works towards separation. There was a time less than 25 years ago when one could leave Kandy or Colombo early on a Saturday morning to spend a day on the eastern coast on what are some of the finest beaches in the world. Or one could travel up leisurely on the Friday of a long weekend in an old Volkswagen to spend two days in Jaffna with former pupils or friends and return in time for work on Monday. Iced palmyra toddy, Jaffna mangoes, honey red-bulb varaka, Jaffna 'cool' made out of 'kotta kelangu' were added items on the menu of the charming hospitality of the Jaffna people. He once came from Jaffna. Will we never come again? We once went to Jaffna. Will we never go again?

There are of course many other reasons why the political solution brooks no further delay. The deputy finance minister in his last budget speech on 8 November, 1995 said:

"Mr Speaker, when I presented the first budget of the People's Alliance government on 8 February, we had budgeted Rs 24 billion, and for the next year we are making provision for Rs38 billion for military expenditure."

Rs 38 billion per year means more

than Rs 104 million per day or Rs1208 per second. A part of this money goes to pay salaries to soldiers and so increases effective demand in a way that Keynes may have commended. But by far the greater part could be used not for planes (and commission) but for more or better hospitals, not for tanks but for more or better schools, not for more soldiers and officers but for more teachers and dedicated nurses and doctors! There have been other cases in history where countries have been ruined by military expenditure which the country could not afford.

There is yet another important reason: we have to stop, before it enters irremovably into the psyche of our naturally kind and happy people, the increasing brutalisation of all sections of our people, which is a direct result of the protracted conflict. Today human life in our country has become cheap and assaulting someone for something with anything until the person falls and bleeds or is even maimed for life is commonplace.

It is altogether too dreadful to think that, unless we are careful, Habarana might become like Thandikulam for those who want to go to Trinco to sea bathe below the Dutch Fort or Kadurawela become a "beyond at your own risk" point for those who want to go to hear the Singing Fish in Batticaloa or to bird watch in the eastern woods.

Hindu Council Submits Comments on Devolution

The Hindu Council of Sri Lanka is a federation of Hindu societies and Boards of Trustees of Hindu Temples. It represents a broad spectrum of the Hindus who form about eighty-five percent of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. It was formed 11 years ago to consolidate and establish a Hindu point of view on important issues affecting Sri Lanka in general and the Hindus in particular.

Hinduism believes in the oneness of humanity and our approach to the ethnic question is based on the universal concept of live and let live. We are also strengthened in our belief by the famous dictum of the great Tamil poet of the Sangam age, Poonkundranar who said "Yaadhum oore; yaavarum kelir". - which means, every country

is my own and all the people are my kinsmen.

We feel that the continuation of this conflict in our multi-ethnic, multi-religious country will ultimately destroy the social fabric of Sri Lanka and all communities will suffer immeasurably. It is incumbent on all patriotic citizens to stop this internecine war and to help build a united Sri Lanka where every citizen could live in honour and equality, free from fear or want.

On the eve of 16 August 1994, parliamentary elections, the Hindu Council issued a statement calling upon the people to elect a government that would settle the ethnic question, which was creating a culture of vio-

lence, which if not arrested in time, would destroy our civilised way of life. We made it clear that any political party which aspires to seek political power should have a clear cut policy on the ethnic question and how it proposes to resolve it. The ethnic question is really a Sinhala-Tamil problem that could be resolved amicably if there is a political will to settle it. The Sinhalese and the Tamils have a long history of self-rule, a distinct language, a religion and a culture with many common strands and a definite area, which each has been occupying for a long period of time. Any lasting solution must take into consideration these facts, which means that power has to be shared in a united country. Devolution of power is therefore the answer.

Certain sections of the Sinhalese who are against the devolution of power must realise that peace cannot be obtained without the consent of the governed and that economic progress and social justice cannot be realised without peace. Peace to be enduring must be based on equality and justice. This becomes all the more important as some Sinhalese feel that they have only Sri Lanka to call their own.

At present there is no Tamil political leadership elected by the people at a free and fair election, who could speak on behalf of the Tamils. Tamil political parties and interested groups should endeavour to create a climate of mutual trust and understanding so that an acceptable solution could be reached. Care should be taken that the earlier policies of barren confrontation should not be adopted, which had not helped the Tamils to live in peace with honour and equality. In reality this negative policy weakened the Tamils as a community in Sri Lanka especially in the districts where they traditionally formed the majority. The failure of the Tamil political leadership contributed substantially to the rise of the Tamil militant movement.

Since independence the country suffered due to the narrow, misguided policies adopted by the mainstream Sinhala and Tamil political parties and today we are in this tragic situation thanks to their unenlightened leadership. Our approach to the problem must change. There should be a change of heart and a willingness on both sides to live and let live. After years of suffering brought about by

this conflict a new awareness has dawned in the minds of the average Sinhala and Tamil person that this conflict should end and that they should live in peace with one another. Beating of the communal drum did not bring political dividends as shown in the last parliamentary and presidential election. This new trend augurs well for a political settlement.

Critical Juncture

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga came into the political scene at this crucial juncture. She not only represented this new awareness, but played a courageous and decisive role in consolidating and strengthening this line of thinking. She has openly acknowledged that the Tamils were the victims of discrimination and is endeavouring to bring about a political settlement by proposing a series of changes in the constitution of Sri Lanka to enable the Tamils to manage their own affairs in certain specified subjects in their region. Earlier governments held consultations and conferences but did not openly put forward their specific proposals to resolve the conflict. However, it must be noted that the United National Party and the left parties are committed to the concept of devolution of power in terms of the thirteenth amendment to the constitution.

We are in general agreement with the concept of devolution of power, the subjects assigned to the regions and the necessary institution to work the system. It is necessary to emphasize that the spirit and intention of the constitution should always be kept in mind by the centre and the regions in performing their respective rolls. Unlike in the past there should be sincerity of purpose and a willingness by the centre to make the system work. Our observations are made on matters that need clarification or change:

1. Chapter II - Buddhism

We agree with 7(1) of the proposed draft. However, we feel that there is no need to include 7(2) and 7(3) of the proposed draft in the constitution. The government could act as the need arises as is being done now. Unnecessary problems could be created by including 7(2) and 7(3). It could make the Maha Sangha to be involved in day to day politics. In any case if 7(2) and 7(3) are included they should not in any manner, directly or indirectly,

affect the equal rights granted to the other religions in the constitution.

2. Chapter III - The devolution of power to the regions

(a) Unit of Devolution

We feel the present North-East Province minus the district of Amparai should form a region and it should be called the North-East Region. We have come to this conclusion after taking various factors into consideration. This unit of devolution forms one contiguous area and comprises mainly of Tamils, who have lived in this area for centuries.

We are against non-contiguous areas forming an autonomous region. This concept has been rejected for the most part in the 1995 Dayton Peace Accord on Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was not successful in the United Nations partition plan for Palestine in 1947 nor with the partition of British India in 1947, as subsequent events have proved. If the principle of Muslim majority non-contiguous enclaves forming an autonomous region is acceded to in the North-East Province then it should also apply to Muslim majority enclaves in the Western, North-Western and Southern Provinces. About two thirds of the Muslims are outside the North-East Province. Moreover, this same principle of non-contiguous areas should also apply to plantation Tamils in the Central and Uva Provinces. All Provinces are heterogeneous in population and the principle followed in other provinces should also apply to the North-East Province.

Weighted

Another proposal based on the principle of weighted representation of giving two equal sub-councils in the North-East ie one Tamil and one Muslim - has to be rejected. The North-East has to remain territorially coherent and viable. It should not be subjected to conditions which do not apply to other provinces. There should be uniform procedures of devolution and if the principle of weighted representation is given to the Muslims of devolution and if the principle of weighted given to the Muslims in the East, it should also apply to the Sinhalese in the East and to Tamils in other provinces.

As suggested by us, since there is a

The government is facing severe problems in endeavouring to assert its authority on several fronts. The obvious one is from the Northeast where the security forces have to confront the Tigers day in and day out.

The other is from the south not only from its political opponents, but also from the extremist sections which are set dead against the government's move on devolution of powers and allied constitutional changes in respect of which even one or two of the constituent parties of the Peoples Alliance coalition are also creating trouble for the government.

At the same time, there is mounting opposition to the government's move to privatise enterprises which have hitherto been in the public sector. The recent devastating strike by the power workers is a manifestation of this opposition.

In dealing with the political opposition from the United National Party (UNP), the government is seeking to present its military successes in Jaffna as an indictment against the UNP which, it says, failed to achieve during its 17 year rule what the PA government had done within less than two years - that is to reassert the government's writ in Jaffna.

Whether one likes it or not, southern politics is not insulated from the

consequences of the central problem facing the country - the continuing war in the Northeast, and therefore any discussion inevitably leads to the discussion of the Northeastern crisis and of necessity about the Tamil Tigers as they continue to remain the main player in that crisis.

without any guarantee of success in the north. They never believed that the Tigers would withdraw without putting up a significant fight. As it turned out, the UNP is no longer in a position to conduct a propaganda war against the government on the northern military issue.

Problems Facing the Govt

From a purely political point of view, the success of the military in the northern front has dented the propaganda cutting edge of the UNP. It had expected, even one might say welcomed, counter attacks from the Tigers resulting in significant military reverses. Its leaders thought that, when the inevitable reverses occurred and the body-bags came to the south in their thousands, the government could be faulted and denounced for its debacle. This was on the premise that the military was not capable of bringing the whole of the Jaffna peninsula under its control. In fact, at the beginning of the government's military campaign in the north for which thousands of troops were transferred from the east to the northern front, the UNP leaders criticised the action for exposing and weakening the eastern front

If the government is seeking to confront its political opponents in the south by reference to its successes in the military front, the opposition is seeking to exploit the consequential problems caused in the south on the economic and social front - problems which are by no means unrelated to the resources it had deployed to achieve those successes.

Bringing down the prices of essential food items like bread, flour, milkfood, rice et. had been the battlecry by the Peoples Alliance during both the general election and presidential election campaigns. The belief was that by adopting a strategy of initiating negotiations with Tamil Tigers, the war could be ended with a political solution based on increased devolved powers to the regions. At the same time, government believed that the resulting peace dividend would not only benefit the country, but also it could fulfil its election pledges. For this strategy to succeed, the LTTE and its leader Pirabhakaran had to play ball with the government, but they had different ideas about the whole game, and the sinking of the two naval gunboats in the Trincomalee harbour on the night of April 1995 leading to Eelam War III put paid to the government's well intentioned strategy and at the same time to the expectation of fulfilling its election pledges from the benefits of the peace dividend.

As far as the economy of Sri Lanka is concerned, it is virtually impossible to conduct the war devoting substantial manpower, financial and material resources, and at the same time produce and implement in development terms, popular and attractive schemes which result in significant impact upon the economy and the lives of the people.

War? Or development schemes and measures to benefit the country and to reduce the cost of living? That is the choice. The choice had been made on 18 April 1995 by the LTTE, and though President of the country, Chandrika Kumaratunga had no say

(Continued from page 7)

substantial number of Muslims and Sinhalese in the Amparai district a compromise could be worked out by removing Amparai district from the North-East Province.

If this is not acceptable then we should continue with the present arrangement of a North-East Province under the thirteenth amendment. The question of a referendum could be considered after normalcy and the displaced people return to the North-East Province.

(b) State Land

If the centre makes use of state land for a reserved subject, it is presumed the centre will as far as possible give first preference to persons in the district and then to persons in the region in recruiting persons to run the project.

(c) State of Emergency Within a Region

As regards 26(4)(e) we would sug-

gest the Chief Justice be made the chairman of the tribunal. Dissolution of a regional council is a serious matter and as far as possible we should have a tribunal, comprising independent and eminent people to decide on the correctness of the decision by the centre.

(d) Finance

As regards 27(8) 4 and 5 consulting the Finance Commission by the Minister of Finance in 4 and by the cabinet of ministers in 5 may prove useful.

One cannot expect to have all that one wants. The draft proposals submitted by the government appear to be an honest attempt to settle this vexed question, which has defied solution for decades. Let us implement them in good faith and make a beginning in creating a climate of mutual trust and understanding between the various peoples so essential for peace and harmony. The workings of this amended constitution could be reviewed after a lapse of five years. ●

in the matter.

Some sections of society may tolerate their sufferings by the emotional satisfaction they receive from the so-called successes in the war effort. But when problems arise which affect their personal lives resulting from governmental measures, people begin to think and act differently. The issue of the government's move to privatise major sectors of the economy naturally concern the people working in those sectors and their families, because their very jobs and their future are at stake. The recent strike by the power workers which plunged the country into darkness is a manifestation of this natural concern, and the attempt to portray it as a conspiracy to overthrow the government is laughable.

As far as the UNP is concerned, it seems to have opened up a different, but not unexpected front against the government. Having hitherto remained ambivalent and uncommitted on the government's devolution proposals, it has started to say that it would support only proposals that would guarantee a unitary state and that the union of regions as proposed by the government would lead to separation. That is the position it seems to take in the Select Committee discussing the devolution proposals. Any hope that the proposals would pass the initial hurdle seem to have been destroyed by the change of stance by the UNP. The government has only a majority of one in parliament, and even with the support from Tamil MPs sitting in the opposition, it cannot hope to get past the initial hurdle obtaining the required two-thirds majority if the UNP chose to vote against.

"Preservation of the unitary state" seems to have become the latest battle cry of the UNP to hit at the government, and in this the UNP is bound to have the support of the extremist chauvinist sections in the south. While glorifying the military, and not the government, for its military successes, Chandrika and her government would be portrayed and denounced as the wrecker of the unitary state.

The PA government is also suffering from internal dissensions among its coalition partners. While in a coalition such as the PA, one would normally expect tensions even in public, the recent manifestations divisions appear to be of a serious nature. The worst culprit is the Democratic United National (Lalith) Front (DUNLF) whose leader Mrs. Sirimani Athulathmudali is a member of the PA

cabinet. While other ministers like Prof. G.L. Peiris are going about the country to sell the government's devolution proposals, Sirimani has been going around raising objections similar to those raised by extremist sections in the south. The lady's natural home is the UNP, but so long as the UNP does not ditch the legacy of former President Premadasa, she would find it difficult to join it particularly after the emergence of evidence of a link between Premadasa and her husband's assassination. The lady also would not want to quit the PA because she would find herself in the political wilderness. So she is likely to remain in the PA and the cabinet and continue to stir trouble for the government.

The LSSP also has been showing open signs of opposition to the government on other issues - voting against the government on the extension of the emergency and also on the privatisation issue. On the devolution issue the LSSP is solidly behind the government.

The other trouble-maker is none other than the eternal survivor of Sri Lankan politics in recent times, Mr. S. Thondaman the leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress and a cabinet minister. Thonda and his MPs contested under the UNP ticket during the last elections in August 1994. He joined the cabinet, but neither he

and his MPs have resigned from the UNP, nor has the latter taken action to expel them which might result in them ceasing as MPs. Thonda is prone to make statements in public which contradict the government's position on the ethnic issue, but when asked about cabinet collective responsibility, he would defend himself by saying that he was making those statements as leader of the CWC and not as a cabinet minister. Thonda sits in the cabinet but his MPs sit in the opposition. In one of his recent press interviews, he openly said that the CWC was not a part of the government. Again recently, he permitted one of his MPs to even move vote of no-confidence against one of his cabinet colleagues. While Thondaman will not oppose the government on the devolution proposals, he certainly presents problems for the government on many other issues. Some of his critics doubt his reliability as a genuine partner of the PA is open to question.

As the situation stands, President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the PA government she leads are facing difficult times ahead. One way of meeting the challenge may be to take the calculated risk of dissolving parliament and calling a general election seeking a bigger majority. That will depend how confident is the government on winning such an election. ●

A Catholic Call for Peace

Pace is in fact a divine gift, but it is also a task, a challenge, a moral responsibility of the men and women of our time. It has always to be forged step by step. My parting wish for all Sri Lankans is that, like your manel flower which, no matter its surroundings, opens up and blooms into its full glory in the light of the sun, true good and true peace will blossom on this beautiful island, because they flourish in the heart of each and every one of you. (Pope John Paul II, Colombo, 21 January 1995).

It is with these words still echoing in our minds that we, the members of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development in Sri Lanka wish to share a few thoughts with all our fellow citizens on the situation of our country today, especially in that which concerns

peace. These thoughts are the fruit of our common reflection and hopefully could contribute in some way towards the cause of peace in our beloved motherland.

Most of us in Sri Lanka profess religious traditions which consider values, such as non-violence, absolute nobility and sacredness of life in all its forms, tolerance, love and readiness to forgive and forget, concern for justice and equality of all human beings, as being of absolute importance for personal or communitarian liberation.

In this sense we are sad to note an increasing crescendo of voices that advocate violence and war as the only way to resolve conflicts. War and peace are concepts that are diametrically opposed to each other and to believe in or propagate the ideal "war for peace" is in itself a contradiction.

Perhaps this ideology has caused an increased militarisation of the present conflict with grave consequences for the people and the country.

Violence

War and violence can only lead to hate and a total breaking of hearts. It will be easier to solve an armed conflict but a wounded relationship between races is even more difficult to heal. The continuation of this race based violence and war will only lead to an unhealable split of hearts. Is it worth it? We wonder.

Secondly, in this violent conflagration young people, Sinhala or Tamil, the greatest asset of this nation, are dying or are being rendered incapacitated in their thousands. Family life is being disturbed. Close to a million of our people have become refugees both among the Sinhala and the Tamil populations. Valuable assets of the nation are being wasted for the purchase of weapons - bought by all parties in the conflict. Valuable foreign exchange is lost and it only helps to enrich arms producers and pedlars.

Our economy is seriously disturbed. Terror attacks in Colombo and other places have killed many innocent civilians and made life miserable for many. Fear has gripped families of office workers and others who trek to the cities for employment. The tears and heartburn of the children who lost their parents, parents who lost their children, wives who lost their husbands or vice versa and families who are rendered destitute, displaced are all crying out to us, men and women of whatever religion or ideological persuasion, political leaders be they Sinhala or Tamil, the leaders of the rebels - "Enough war, allow us to live in Peace".

Among these we cannot but especially think about the poor be they Sinhala or Tamil, who constitute more than half our national population and who suffer the most due to the ill effects of this senseless violence. They are the voiceless once whose life, means of income, meagre life support and protective welfare support systems are normally badly disturbed by this conflagration. They too cry out for an end to all of this.

We are convinced that among the poor there is no feeling of racial or linguistic discrimination. At the same time we also note with sadness the

constant crescendo of voices that seek to inflame the feelings of the general public with statements that are detrimental to peace and harmony in this nation.

Among these are -

(a) The notion that this nation belong to a particular race or religion only - often loudly stated by some of our leaders - political or religious.

(b) The view that attempted solutions to this problem tried out by different governments would only lead to a division of the country - the truth being that already there is a de facto division of this country with certain areas being unaccessible to most of our citizens. What has to be attempted now is to unite that which is thus divided.

(c) The view or prejudice that the Sinhala leaders cannot be trusted and that the only possible solution the Tamils have to solve their problems is to aspire for a state of their own.

(d) The view that solutions have to be always proposed by the governments only. It is said that no constructive proposals for a definite peace have come so far from the LTTE or other Tamil groups.

We also note that often the public is kept in the dark about the truth of the situation prevailing in the North-East or is deliberately misled by media institutions in the South as well as in the North publishing erroneous reports or events, biased or sometimes even deliberately inflammatory and sometimes help to create a wrong image in the hearts and minds of our people. We wish to remind those involved in this all important and vital field of national life to consider it their sacred duty to act with a sense of responsibility, truth and helpfulness positively contributing to create the conditions for a peaceful and dignified resolution of this conflict.

Conflicts can never be settled with the gun. None of our religious founders advocated such a principle. Hate cannot be overcome by hate but by love alone. All conflicts finally have to end in dialogue, compromise, mutual trust and harmony. We have seen how this has happened in several parts of the world in the recent past. It is happening today in Israel, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Angola and other such places. Not everything will work out

well immediately - sacrifices will have to be made; there will be ups and downs in a process for peace, but, those of us who believe in the essential nobility, goodness and capacity of man to change his life racially, do believe that miracles are still possible for us, Sri Lankans.

Dialogue

Hence, we call upon both the government and the LTTE to abandon the present path of violence and war and to engage in a process of sincere dialogue. This is the only way in which true heroism can emerge and a process of interior healing, building up of trust and mutual respect which is the need of the hour, can be started. We believe that it is possible, auspicious and should be attempted. As is the case in many other parts of the world, such a process may have to be conducted either through informal contacts or with the assistance of a third party in whom at the initial and difficult stages of the dialogue both parties can enshrine their trust. A third party participation does not have to necessarily mean an infringement in our internal affairs or sovereignty. It is rather a help.

We call upon the government to adequately provide for the basic needs of the populations in the troubled areas where facilities are scarce. We also appeal to the LTTE to allow the people now displaced in the areas of the North and East to go back to their original areas of residence. We firmly believe that it is the people who should decide their future and not the political or military leaders - such is the dignified and democratic way. No nation can be built on the principle of force and coercion. People are the nation.

We hope and pray that as dignified human beings with a noble history and noble religious and cultural traditions, we in Sri Lanka can overcome all these divisions, and build a united, egalitarian and prosperous Sri Lanka tomorrow. If there is a will, there is a way. Let us sincerely and humbly venture out to discover the way in which we are to achieve that goal - the way that reflects the best and most noble in our religious, socio-cultural and political heritage.

May God bless Sri Lanka with Peace!

(Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development).

Non-LTTE Tamil Parties and Govt Relationship Under Strain

by D.P.Sivaram

The Five Tamil Party Alliance comprising the PLOTE, EPRLF, EPDP, TELO and EROS appeared before the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on 7 June to argue their case for regional autonomy. The victory of Karunanidhi and the much publicised intention of the five party alliance to call on him in Madras to discuss the present state of the ethnic conflict seems to have given an aura of importance to their appearance before the PSC.

The PSC meeting was well attended and lasted longer than the time normally allotted for the Committee's transactions. However, a very significant point made by the Five Party Alliance as a preface to their presentation was more or less ignored or perhaps not taken seriously by the members of the PSC. The Alliance told members of the PA, UNP, JVP and the SLMC, "Please do not compel us to reconsider the decision that we made many years ago to enter the democratic mainstream".

The parties in the alliance are all ex-militant groups which in 1987 gave up their armed struggle for a separate state of Eelam. They are finding it increasingly difficult to face their detractors today. The question that is posed in public and private to them in the context of the apparent futility of the Select Committee process, is "what have you got to show the Tamil people in lieu of Eelam after nine years of negotiations?". Their detractors also point out that even the quantum of autonomy granted under the thirteenth amendment has been taken away and that no-one has been able to do anything about it.

Having lost almost all grounds to counter their detractors by reaffirming the faith they have in ability of the Sinhala polity to rationally resolve the Tamil problem, they agree with and endorse, privately and sometimes openly, the basic issues raised by their critics. In fact it might be an understatement to say that the Tamil parties are today extremely suspicious of

the PA leadership's bonafides in solving the ethnic conflict. The EPRLF which was once a staunch ally of the People's Alliance is today ever eager to vent its frustration and anger by lambasting President Chandrika whenever it finds a forum.

The PLOTE and the EPDP which routinely vote with the government in Parliament on the issue of the island-wide emergency appear to be biding their time until some substantial alternative to their current material dependence on the Ministry of Defence is found. These two parties evidently fear that once it becomes quite clear to the Tamil people that the PSC will be an utterly unsalvageable fiasco, it will be politically suicidal for them to support the government in Parliament. Even today both parties are fully aware of the fact that part of their unpopularity is due to the support they extend to the emergency laws which the government has imposed island wide. It was noted in a section of the press that Douglas Devananda, the leader of the EPDP, told the President that he could show her the public support he has, if he were to vote against the emergency for three consecutive months.

In these circumstances, the moment the non-LTTE Tamil groups see an opening in India or in Tamil Nadu for shifting their base of activity and material sustenance, they are surely bound to abandon the Chandrika regime. The PA also seems to be vaguely aware of this, most probably advised by some Tamil intellectuals who still cling to the belief that the Tamils will get the best deal they are ever likely to get under the PA's benign dispensation. (Even some of these have grown less sure of their original enthusiastic claims about Chandrika being the greatest boon ever to the Tamils in the north east).

The government is making attempts to pre-empt any possible move by the disgruntled Tamil groups to persuade Karunanidhi to intercede on their behalf in resolving the ethnic conflict

in the north and east. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) is also disenchanted. The Party held talks with the President and Professor G L Pieris on 7 June. The discussions lasted for almost three hours. TULF MP, Joseph Pararajasingham took up the matter of the 60 youths who had been arrested in Jaffna after the conclusion of Operation Riviresa Two and who were brought to Colombo for interrogation and detention. (In addition to these, according to some unconfirmed reports, more than three hundred youths had been rounded up and brought to Colombo to be detained at rehabilitation centres and Police stations near the city).

The TULF delegation, however, was as usual, asked to persuade the UNP to agree on the merger and the repeal of Articles 2 and 76 from the Constitution. Even the pro-Chandrika lobby in the TULF is not reluctant to accept today that this oft heard suggestion of the government that the Tamil parties should first persuade the UNP, which has become an extremely slippery customer now, is clearly aimed at sending them (the Tamil parties) on a silly wild goose chase and helping the PA in not taking the blame for it at the end of the day.

The general mood of despair and chagrin among the mainstream Tamil and political parties was reflected in the editorial of the Tamil daily "Virakesari" (the only independent Tamil daily in Sri Lanka) of 10 June 96. Commenting on the complaint that there is partiality in the human rights field along ethnic lines, it said "That racism has entered places where it should not have entered has been confirmed by reports that there is racial discrimination even in (the task of) safeguarding human rights. The protection of human rights is meaningless when it is practised on the basis of race..... Racism is deep rooted in all social and political affairs of this country. Everything is being done in politics taking only the Sinhala people into consideration. A situation has arisen where only the Sinhalese are being considered the people of this country. It is the Tamil minority which is affected by this situation. There is discrimination against the Tamils in everything including education employment, and promotions. The threat to their security has also increased..."

The editorial referred to a case taken up in Parliament by a Tamil MP. The same day it was reported that a super-

intendent of the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) who was reported missing on 3 June, two days after the conclusion of the CEB engineer's strike which sunk the country into total darkness and helplessness for three days, had been found dead on the Wellawatte beach. The CEB superintendent was identified as Nithyanandavel Kirupananthamoorthy aged 37. It appears that he was actively involved in the CEB strike and had spoken in support of the CEB union. His relatives had expressed strong doubts about his disappearance and death (he had died of suffocation in water).

The death of Nithyanandavel has to be examined in the context of the government's strong armed tactics to crush trade union action and the much castigated failure of its intelligence agencies to report the strike in advance, said a Tamil political source. The intelligence agencies which were caught napping when the CEB engineers struck work, seem to have made an attempt to imply the involvement of the LTTE in the strike. There were reports in sections of the press of a possible Tiger connection. No-one, however, took this seriously because it was a well known fact that the CEB

union was controlled by the LSSP which has been opposing the Chandrika regime's anti-democratic actions in the south by refusing to extend its support to the extension of the emergency. In fact the government sent Police in mufti to arrest a key activist of the Ceylon Bank Employees Union in order to pre-empt a possible strike in the crucial banking sector. The LSSP keeps accusing the government of having recourse to acts of intimidation which it claims are more high handed than what were unleashed on the union worker movement by the hooligans of the UNP in the past. So the question being asked in trade union circles is whether Nithyanandavel is merely a scapegoat or is his disappearance and death a dire warning to trade unions and left parties as to what is in store for them if they do not toe the regime's line.

But the stark truth of the incident is that politically unprotected Tamils who decide to exercise their democratic right to actively participate in legitimate trade union or other action can be accused of being LTTE moles bent on sabotaging the government. Meanwhile 23 upcountry Tamil youths who have been held at the

Kalutara prison for a long time have announced that they will begin a fast unto death on 23 June. They chose to announce their intention, by design or by accident, during the week which marked the fortieth anniversary of the Tamil movement for language rights in Sri Lanka. The prolongation of their detention is due to the reason that there is apparently no-one to translate their statements which are in Tamil!

The TULF organised a meeting on 5 June to mark the day on which the struggle for language rights began in earnest forty years ago on the Galle face green. It was chaired by Mr Charles Abeyasekera, who is chairman of the Language Commission - an appointment made specially by Chandrika. CWC leader Thondaman, LSSP leader Bernard Soysa and SLMC leader Ashraff (all Ministers in the PA cabinet) were among the speakers. The meeting revived bitter memories of the nasty incidents on Galle Face Green in 1956 and the role played by the then Prime Minister, SWRD Bandaranayake (President's father) in the rise of Sinhala hatred against the Tamils. TULF MP Neelan Thiruchelvam who organised the meeting at the Saraswathi Hall at Bambalapitiya was



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While President Chandrika has opted to present the legal draft of her political package soon after the Jaffna victory, presumably in order to get the support of the euphoric and applauding Sinhala majority, the capture and continued occupation of Jaffna with its agonizing consequences for half a million Tamils have hardened the minds and hearts of the Tamils against Chandrika's approach to solving the Tamil problem and establishing peace in the country. An objective reading of events leading to the military occupation of Jaffna will illustrate the folly and futility of her two-pronged approach-namely, waging a war against the Tamils and their de facto leadership and at the same time trying to push unilaterally a political solution pleasing only the majority Sinhalese but by-passing the Tamils and their leadership.

The take-over of the ghost town of Jaffna by the armed forces of Sri Lanka and its Armed Forces and interpreted as a successful completion of the first

Peace After the Military Occupation of Jaffna

Rev Dr S J Emmanuel,
Vicar General of the Catholic Church, Jaffna

phase towards a peaceful solution. It has also been celebrated by the Sinhala extremists as a significant victory for the Sinhalese and a severe defeat, if not a death-blow, to the Tigers and to the Tamil claims for self-determination and autonomy.

But to many Tamils the capture of Jaffna and the hoisting of a Lion Imperialistic intention of the majority race to subjugate and rule the Tamils of this country. It was hidden behind the pious proclamation of "Peace through War" or "War for Peace" by the present Government and its supporters and has become sharply articulated in the mili-

tary occupation of Jaffna, hoisting of the Lion Flag, the ceremonial Proclamation and the celebrations in the South.

Some form of an imperialistic wish, to be the sole proprietors and rulers of this country with the Tamils as the "dependent tenants" or "the subordinate minority, to be ruled by the Sinhalese, has been previously given expressions, not only by chauvinistic politicians and narrow minded monks of the South but also by the former President Wijetunga when he said in the crudity of village language that the Tamils of this country have to survive by their dependence on the Sinhala race "like the creepers on a huge tree".

With the defeat of the UNP at the last elections, the Tamils hopefully thought that such extremist and imperialistic intentions among the Sinhalese were on the decline if not altogether dead. They entertained hopes that the Paris educated President Chandrika will follow a non-imperialistic and non-militaristic approach to peace. But these hopes have been dashed to the ground.

Many well meaning Sinhalese and Tamils even today speak nostalgically of a return to peaceful coexistence. But if it implies merely a "social agreement" for a subtle subordination or an enslavement of Tamils, then the Tamils will reject it. The Tamils demand and fight not for the peace between the master and the servant, but for a just and honourable peace between equal citizens of a country. The fact that the Sinhalese and Tamils have lived peacefully in the past does not mean that there was a just peace.

The chasing away of half a million citizens from their homes in the Jaffna region by continuous artillery shelling and aerial bombing from 17 October onwards, and then the hoisting of an unloved, if not despised, Lion Flag over their empty town as a victory over the Tigers, the Tamils and their demands - these have humiliated not only the direct victims and those still surviving in the North but almost all Tamils in Sri Lanka. The untold suff-

(Continued from page 12)

evidently pleased by the vivid manner in which some speakers described the wrongs which had been perpetrated on the Tamils by the President's father. Interestingly the only person present there who had participated in the Satyagraha of 5 June 1956 was Musoor Moulana - a Federal Party firebrand of yesteryear. He had come there as a member of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and was seated among the audience. But most Tamils who attended the meeting were aware that 5 June is also commemorated by the LTTE as the Black Tigers' Day and is the day on which Sivakumaran committed suicide to escape arrest by taking cyanide in 1972.

It is quite apparent from such gatherings held in the city that the mood among the Tamils in Colombo is quite hostile to the PA regime. The comments and questions which emanate from a wide spectrum of the audience is a clear manifestation of this mood. At another meeting organised last month by an organisation called the Tamil Progressive Front which apparently enjoys some kind of support from the EPRLF, the audience burst into applause whenever a speaker criticised the government for watering down the package. This somewhat alarmed the few pro-Chandrika Tamil intellectuals who were among the

speakers. But there was nothing to be done because the sharpest attacks came from speakers like Dr Rohan Edirisinghe and Dr Pakiasothy Saravanamuthu. An important observation made there by Dr Edirisinghe who is a respected and politically honest young academic, is now frequently heard in Tamil political circles to dismiss the argument that the Tamil problem will be solved soon because racism has declined substantially among the Sinhalese under Chandrika's leadership. If it is the case, ask some sceptical Tamil leaders, that Sinhala chauvinism is in severe decline, and with it the traditional resistance to giving an honourable solution to the Tamils, then why did the PA leadership make precisely those changes and additions to its August 1995 proposal which the Sinhala nationalists had agitated for? As EPRLF leader Surash Premachandren rightly pointed out, the government did not consult the Tamil parties when it prepared the legal draft; and none of the suggestions made by the Tamils were included. Instead the legal draft of accommodated changes suggested by chauvinists in the bureaucracy, clergy, Sinhala pressure groups etc. The relationship Chandrika cultivated with the Tamils is on the rocks. She characteristically does not see it and most probably will not, until it is too late. ●

erings the displaced are still going through as a result of the military action and the tightening of relief services to them and restricting the services of the international NGO's - these have understandably pushed the Tamils to greater anger against the Government and have hardened their stance for any immediate reconciliation with the Government.

Everyone agrees that security restrictions and checks are necessary for the safety of Colombo and its citizens, especially when feelings run high and emotions can end up in an outbreak of disorder and destruction. But the way these restrictions are implemented by the armed forces, with the assistance of the "patriotic Sinhala citizens" who appoint themselves as "security personnel" and connected corrupt practices make out all Tamils, not only those travelling from the North to the South and have to be in Colombo temporarily but also those permanently living in Colombo, as scape-goats for any disaster in the City and as perennial security-threats for the City.

The house to house search, the suspicion cast on them by their long-time Sinhala neighbours and friends, the unlimited detention of Tamils in police stations, and a number of anti-Tamil checks done on the person, their property, money etc., including special police passes which over-ruled even the national identity cards - all these were shameful and humiliating acts confirming much of the rears the Tamils have about a peaceful co-existence under a centralised Sinhala Government.

The right to know the truth of what is happening in the country is a basic human right of all the citizens of this country. For purposes of military strategy and national security, the Government has a right to enforce the strictest censorship at certain times. But the PA Government has gone beyond limits not only with regard to restrictions and checks but also kept a whole population in the South in the dark about events in the North. The thinking in the South and the moves of the Government are very much determined by the truth of what is really happening beyond Vavuniya.

It has prohibited local and foreign journalists for many months from going to the North. All war-reports in the Colombo media were tailored and supplied by the military and anything contrary was censored. This approach of avoiding the truth and deciding

things on hearsay or from aerial views has been a major cause of the Government's failure. Allowing independent journalists and foreign diplomats into the North will help emerge the truth and favour a realistic approach.

Similarly the tightening of restrictions on most of the essential supplies to the North during the last five years has not helped the Government nor disabled the LTTE. Only the people are made victims and their lives inhumanly throttled. And of late all the international NGO's who are to help thousands of displaced people in the Vanni district have been refused permission to have even their instruments of communication.

The truth about keeping almost half a million people in a displaced situation of immense suffering and continuing to increase restrictions on the agencies that could relieve them and the consequent slow-death caused to the population is not well known in the South nor in the world. Displacements from a series of operations, restrictions and sufferings have increased over the last few months that the accumulative suffering of all these has reached a breaking point of national disaster.

Ever since President Chandrika came to power on the promise of "peace and no war" the country has at times entertained growing hopes for an approaching peace as well as at other times suffered heavy disappointments at escalating war. Compared to previous Governments, the present one seems to have made the strongest moves for peace as well as the greatest efforts for war. This double-pronged approach of making war against the Tigers and at the same time offering political proposals to non-Tigers to solve the Tamil problem is clearly based on a wrong analysis and understanding of the Tamil problem.

Failing to arrive at a settlement with the militant but de facto Tamil leadership, the Sri Lankan Government attempts to handle the Tamil problem primarily as terrorism and only secondarily as a political problem. In fact for the last President Wijetunga, there was no Tamil problem but only a terrorist problem. Though President Chandrika has openly acknowledged that Tamil militancy set in because of the intransigence and political expediency of the Sinhala Government is not solving the Tamil problem, her double-pronged approach of attempting a political solution with the help

of a Colombo-based pseudo Tamil leadership and at the same time continuing, if not escalating the humiliation and restrictions against the Tamils and war against their de facto leadership, the Tigers, is bound to fail.

The PA Government is making the best use of its Oxford educated Foreign Minister with a Tamil name for an international campaign against the LTTE, for curtailing its activities among the Tamil expatriates and for rallying international support for the war. But it rejects vehemently every offer for a third-party mediation for peace. Who is for war and who is for peace?

Unless a breakthrough is made in changing this two-pronged approach, into an all out political approach with the help of a third party, the spiral of war and violence is bound to stay. And such a breakthrough is possible only when the Government courageously and without the fear of losing face, can pull back its forces from positions that humiliate, restrict, suspect and subjugate the Tamil people. It is futile to throttle the Tamil neck with one hand and shake the Tamil hand with the other.

Another breakthrough is needed with regard to the political package itself. What was started as a radical political solution to the North east ethnic crisis has ended up with a political package of constitutional changes for the whole country and for Buddhism. That a permanent solution to the ethnic problem be found is the dire need of the country and the wish of the majority, especially the Tamils who have suffered and lost valuable lives for many decades.

But the PA government is trying to offer a broad-based package of solution to the whole country (without appearing to be over-concerned about the Tamil problem) and to Buddhism (by enshrining a special status for Buddhism and winning their support) has met with a heap of opposition and run into unnecessary problems. The majority in the South seem to be asking, why a medicine for the whole country when the problem is only with regard to the Tamils? A breakthrough is needed in reducing the present package to a "Northeast package", selling it to the LTTE as a response to the Tamil demands and implementing it for a limited period of few years before considering it for the rest of the country. ●

WHAT REMAINS.....

[A long-time resident of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka, who wishes to remain anonymous, sets out his views about the aridity of life under the LTTE which reflect the diversity of views among people and reveal the dangers of ascribing an ideological homogeneity to the Tamil people as a whole]

"War is the means by which nations escape from time." J G Ballard, *The Kindness of Women*.

I steal the title, **What Remains**, from a slender German novel written by Christa Wolf, perhaps the most sensitive of the writers who lived and were able to publish in the German Democratic Republic - *Was bleibt*. Written during the decade preceding and published just after the fall of the Communist government of "East Germany", the novel presents the situation of a writer who is suspected of subversive activities or ideas. Gradually she realises that she is being watched everywhere she goes, as well as at home. Even her telephone calls are monitored. She refers to the spies of the secret police as "the watchers". She is so familiar with their presence in her life, their cars parked in front of her home, that she thinks of offering them tea, but then she thinks better of it.

Wolf, like her heroine, had some faith in a socialist future for her people, certainly enough to allow her to stay in her country while expressing her personal disappointments through her fiction. Yet from her very first novel, one can sense the obvious disillusion with a party system that brooks no opposition; with the first election in the GDR we see her heroine realising, with a sinking feeling, that this system is going to be much like the totalitarian system of the Third Reich. Still, she has high hopes for its different purposes. It is in this connection that the protagonist of *Was bleibt* finds her "watchers" Indicrous - they're *wasting their time* by destroying the future for which *they are not working*.

This loss of faith leads her to the

conviction that the totalitarian communist system of the GDR is intent solely on preserving *itself*. And thus she is driven into a state of depression about her own work, her country, and her society, the latter may be most depressing, for whom can she trust? The hope of the society turns out to be a type of young person that the police try to turn away from a "public" reading, to which only party officials and system-trusted colleagues were invited. An interesting irony at the conclusion of this reading from her works is a gift put in her hands by a man dressed as a member of the proletariat but who is actually a clergyman, one of the professionals most dishonoured in the GDR, the most honoured, of course, being the worker. The reader senses that this portion of the novel reflects the rapidly moving events just before the Wall fell in 1989.

The question, however, or the statement (there is no question mark), the novelist wishes to leave with the reader is the title - What Remains, period (full stop), or question mark, that nuance being left to the individual reader. It is certainly meant both ways. What does remain of the ideals sincere people put into the development of an avowedly socialist state? Or behold! Here is what remains. It is this double possibility expressed in these two simple words that I would like to apply to the situation of the Tamil population of Sri Lanka. After the experiences of the year AD 1995, the observer of the Tamil situation is faced with the same need for reflection. And it is not just the Tamil situation, of course, that needs reflection, but the situation of the entire island, its Sinhalese majority and its other Muslim minority, largely Tamil speaking.

One novel written by a Sinhalese Sri Lankan, Romesh Gunasekera, takes a few stabs at describing the present, against the background of memories from an earlier period. At one point in his novel, *Reef*, he writes:

"But there were no death squads then, no thugs so callous in their killing that they felt no pleasure

until they saw someone twitch against a succession of bullets. In my childhood no one dreamed of leaving a body to rot where it had been butchered, as people have had to learn to do more recently."¹

Twenty-five pages later, he reflects on the bombardments the people of Jaffna and other Tamil towns have been subjected to during the last ten years.

His observations can be coupled with a remark occurring forty pages later that takes a stab at Sri Lankan politicians:

"The rest of the country, sliding into unparalleled debt, girded itself for a change of a completely different order: a savage brutalising whereby our *chandiya*s - our braggarts - would become thugs, our dissolutes turn into mercenaries and our leaders excel as small time megalomaniacs."²

The question or statement, as I see it, is not only **What Remains**, but **What Has Become of Sri Lankan Society**. The brutalisation of the Sinhalese population has brought about the reaction of a determined segment of Tamil youth. And this segment, in its determination, has felt it necessary to become something like the government under which Christa Wolf spent her adult life, until recently. Solidarity was one of the proclaimed goals in her country. But Herbert Lehnert, in his essay on Mrs Wolf's novel. "Fiktionalität und autobiographische Motive."³ describes the "alienation", and I translate from the German, "of every individual in a system of power that in truth *prevents* the promised and propagated solidarity through its system of control". And again: "There is therefore solidarity only on the other side of the power of the socialist state as it actually exists".

We have seen the solidarity of the LTTE (and other similar organisations) to create a separate Tamil state undermined in recent years by a similar development - solidarity prevented by a total system of control that brooks no opposition. And particularly in the last six months this system has led to alienation as significant segments of the public have understood the primary purpose of those fighting for this

separate state to be the preservation of their organisation. Lehnert puts it, in terms of Christa Wolf's novel, thus:

"What will remain is not the totalitarian power that is self-preserving but the young people who have not allowed themselves to be driven away by the police (from her "public" reading)".⁴

This is really a very positive result, if it is what Mrs Wolf really meant. Translated into Jaffna terms, I would have to substitute the middle-aged and the elderly for the young people (or the most of them), somewhat less positive or hopeful, because of the age factor. For here it is those who have refused to be driven away from their homes who have "voted with their feet". In either society the action, or the inaction, taken has not been without risk. And in Jaffna it has occurred despite the incidents of terror bombing perpetrated by the government forces that became immediate propaganda assets for the LTTE in recruiting new members.

The Italian Jewish author Primo Levi, who so well described his days in the Auschwitz death camp, succinctly describes the situation that also obtains in Jaffna, in his book *The Drowned and the Saved*. The pressure that a modern totalitarian state can exercise over the individual is frightful. Its weapons are substantially three: (1) direct propaganda or propaganda camouflaged as upbringing, instruction, and popular culture; (2) the barrier erected against pluralism of information; (3) and terror.⁵

All three types of repression described by Levi have been practised by the LTTE, particularly in the Northern province, where their rule has been absolute since 1990. Street drama, theatre, and popular music have all been used to inculcate separatist principles; educational and social service organisations have been used to promote the image of the organisation as well as the public welfare. Information has been completely infiltrated or eliminated; no outside newspapers are sold (although recently a few copies of Sunday papers published in Colombo could be bought in Jaffna). And the mail embargo has eliminated other outside sources like magazine subscriptions. The Tiger radio competed with Sri Lankan radio in one-sided news reporting.

Terror has been a major policy in

securing the pacification of the public and in coercing its co-operation. Leading political figures, of course, but also leaders in education, schools and university, leaders in business and government, all have been gunned down if seen as a threat to LTTE hegemony. (I speak here of terror among the Tamils themselves, not of assassinations of national leaders in Sri Lanka or India). And then the organisation has imposed onerous taxes on the citizenry in order to support its work. Just before the Army began its last siege of Jaffna, the LTTE had demanded a half month's salary in both September and October from all employees of the state, like teachers, etc. And it made often excessive assessments on others. Prices have also been very high, from double the Colombo price to as much as one-hundred times the normal with scarce items like petrol, for example. Much pressure has been put on school principals to encourage children to join. Video tapes of recent disasters, such as the Naval bombing, where about 120 were killed immediately, were shown everywhere to such captive audiences, followed by one-two-hour exhortations. Just before the Army got to Jaffna and before the population was told to evacuate, even many university students were recruited at the last minute. Instances of resistance to the exhortations have been reported, and it was not easy for the LTTE to recruit recently until the Naval bombing took place and until it appeared that the Army would move into Jaffna.

Since fear has played such a big part in gaining the co-operation of the public, it is very difficult to estimate the support for the LTTE or to estimate the anti-LTTE sentiment. The fear, on the other hand, of the armed forces is also still strong, which accounts to a large measure for the public's obeying the orders to leave Jaffna (as well as the area west of town). Yet it has been surprising to find how many people simply withdrew behind closed doors and windows to await the arrival of the Army, although the excuse given the Tigers was that people had seen the plight of the refugees in Chavakachcheri and other points east, even if they hadn't gone there and actually seen it, and then came back to this area to avoid that crush and to avoid the bombing and shelling in the area between Palaly and Jaffna town.

While the situation in Jaffna has re-

sembled to a certain extent the situation presented by Christa Wolf in her novel, it could be said that the situation in the Eastern Province more closely resembles that of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. It was not simply a war of religion, although for many this was crucial; it was also aware of the balance of power between principalities subject to the Emperor as well as a balance of religious practice. It was also a war of the balance of power between principalities subject to the Emperor as well as a balance of religious practice. It was also a war of suppressed nationalities, like the Czech or the Dutch, and concurrent language conflicts. Some towns were razed more than once, as Jaffna has been, But the Empire itself was very much gerrymandered in its loyalties and its religious adherence, as is the Eastern Province. While the invasion of the IPKF was first seen as one of salvation, as Protestants saw the Swedish King Gustav's sweep through Germany, it turned into an occupation not unlike Spain's in Germany, with its Inquisition. Ricarda Huch, in her account of that terribly destructive war, describes a scene that much resembles our own recent experiences of panic in Jaffna.⁶ She tells of two small boatloads of very young nuns fleeing from the Swedish forces down the River Rhine from the convent at Dadenberg. The nuns are crying and wailing that they are lost: some want to throw themselves into the river. But the Abbess commands the girls to be quiet, calling over to them from her boat to remember their promises to be God's women, his spiritual wives, and not to wail like peasant girls. If God has sent them such a severe trial, they must pray to time and put their souls in His hands. And the words of their mother superior seems to calm them and they begin sing until it grows dark. At this they look back towards the convent and see the glow of the fire set there by the Swedes. Nevertheless, they continue with fortitude on their way, soothed at least by the fact that they have rescued the most important and valuable documents and relics. One girl raises up a bone to show the Abbess, who recognises it as the jawbone of St Adrian which they will then be able to present to the Jesuits of Cologne when they arrive there and praises the girl. They are then all jubilant at this discovery.

In the situation in Jaffna I would sa-

that where there has been encouragement to stay in one's place, rather than run (and the experiences of panic and of running in July helped to prepare this change of heart), provided by a few religious and social leaders, there has developed a sense of community and mutual helpfulness that one had not noticed previously. It has been inspiring to see this come to pass. Yet the organisation is still among us, even though we west of Jaffna have been completely cut off from both the LTTE state as well as the Army occupation. The boys and the girls of the LTTE staying behind are as determined as ever to fight for their separate Tamil Eelam and have frequently accused those staying behind as traitors.

Justice Chatterji, a character in Vikram Seth's delightful epic-size novel of Indian society and politics and education in 1951-52, *A Suitable Boy*, reflects, while perusing the *All India Reporter: Calcutta 1947 and 1948*:

"In microcosm those two pages reflected the passage of an empire and the birth of two countries from the idea - tragic and ignorant - that people of different religions could not live peaceably together in one."

In Jaffna, we are still left with the opening question, or statement - What Remains. And it may as well be a question rather than a statement. For we don't know what remains, yet. And we ask ourselves now what indeed does remain of the aspirations of the Tamil people, to live with their own language, without harassment, military, economic or otherwise, with their own Tamil Hindu culture (or their Tamil Christian culture), with their own hopes and ambitions for their children and their homeland? This is the question that remains unanswered.

NOTES:

- 1 p.42 (Granta Books, Viting: London, 1994)
 - 2 p.118 (Ibid)
 - 3 In *Weimarer Beitrage*, Heft 3/ 1991, p.437
 - 4 Ibid p.438.
 - 5 p.29 (Summit Books, New York: 1988)
 - 6 *Der Dreissigjahrige Krieg*, Vol.II 591ff.(Frankfurt/Main, 1947; first published 1914)
 - 7p.469. (Viking/Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 1993)
- (Courtesy of "Pravada", April 1996.

"Jaffna Peninsula : An Inescapable Death Trap for the Aggressor"

Says LTTE Journal

[The following is a translation of the main article by Aathiriyan that appeared in "Erimalai" (May 1996) published from Paris which is regarded as expressing the official position of the LTTE]

The Sri Lankan government undertook a military offensive code-named Riviresa 2. The aim of this offensive was more to bring back to Valigamam the people who moved out from there into Thenmaratchi and Vadamaratchi during Riviresa I than to recapture regions under the control of the LTTE. Having taken more number of days than previously planned for its Riviresa 1 exercise, though the government captured Valigamam by mobilising a large military force, it was seen as an operation that ended in failure. Although Defence Minister Anurudha Ratwatte went in with tight military protection to the Jaffna fort area to hoist Sri Lanka's national flag and made sweet statements about providing a variety of facilities, the displaced people were unwilling to trust his words and return to Valigamam. The opposition parties began to criticise the use of a large military force and the spending of large sums of money in order to capture, secure and defend a virtually deserted area. At the same time, it is also well known that international human rights organisations condemned the government's refusal to let in journalists and international newsmen into the occupied region.

Though the people were unwilling to return to the areas under military control, the government believed that, by somehow resettling the people in those areas, it could turn international opinion in its favour and also silence the voices of Sinhala communalist forces and those parties which were criticising it. Besides, the fact that the government tried and failed to bring under its total control the Jaffna peninsula which for over a decade had been under the control of the LTTE had become a question of honour for the government. Further, it believed that, by bringing the whole of the Jaffna peninsula under its control, it could annihilate the LTTE or push it to a very weak position. The Chan-

drika government had attempted several times to weaken the LTTE. Operations like Leap Forward 1, 2 and 3, Handshake, Thunderbolt, Riviresa 1 and 2 bear witness to these actions. We should bear in mind what retired army commander General Gerry de Silva said which is that preparations for these military operations were made during the time of the UNP regime of President D B Wije tunge and had the blessing of the leader of the opposition, Ranil Wick- remasinghe. On this basis we can see that the invasion of the north was planned for a vary long time.

When the army tried to advance under its operation Leap Forward, the LTTE's fighting forces, though less in number through its ingenious counter attack caused severe damage to the enemy and forced its retreat. It cannot be doubted that the government forces, although they had to retreat in defeat during the LTTE's "Tiger Jump" operation, had the chance of acquiring battle-experience through that operation. Because it was on the basis of this experience that the government piled up its military might in the north. It withdrew its forces from several parts of the east to move them to the north and also brought in huge quantities of military equipment to reinforce its military might. The statement by the army to the effect that the government had during the one year since April 1995 procured ten times more weapons than during the ten years preceding is worth noting here.

When the enemy launched Operation Riviresa 1 backed up by massive military strength, the displaced people in their hundreds of thousands left for Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi.

The liberation Tigers had, for more than a month, requested those people living in areas of Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi to move to the Vanni area fo. At the same time they also explained to the people the necessity of becoming direct participants in the struggle and undergo training. When the enemy attacked with powerful military strength and a large army, it was considered that confronting the enemy with less number of fighters in a direct conventional battle was not a

practical option. The intention of the government too was to draw the liberation Tigers into a major conventional battle and thereby weaken their strength and decimate its military strength.

It may be said that it was under these conditions that the LTTE resorted to its strategic withdrawal. As a result of this withdrawal, the entire peninsula can come under the control of the army. But to keep a large territory under its control in this way will be impractical as far as the economic situation of the Sri Lankan government is concerned. Even when the peninsula was under the control of the LTTE, there was a need to deploy a sizeable number of fighters to prevent the army setting out from its camps. Until the Jaffna peninsula remained the base-region of the fighters, they had to be in a defensive posture to defend it and to run a civilian administration. But now, the army by capturing these areas has been pushed into a position in which it has to defend these areas from infiltration by the LTTE. The LTTE who were in a defensive posture have now been provided with the opportunity to infiltrate into army controlled areas and to conduct a guerilla war. For example, even when the military claimed that Valigamam was under its total control, the government kept on announcing that its soldiers were being killed by sporadic guerilla attacks by the LTTE. Now, instead of 45,000 soldiers being deployed in Valigamam, when it has to spread the same number over the entire Jaffna peninsula, the concentration of the forces is reduced thus enabling the LTTE to infiltrate and carry out attacks with ease.

The Indian Army which came to Sri Lanka in 1987 under the Indo-Ceylon accord was scattered over the North-East. The fact that even the Indian army which, with a hundred thousand troops were spread all over, struggled unable to keep the North-East under their total control is history. Now, it can be said with certainty that the Sri Lankan Army stationed with its 45,000 soldiers cannot bring these regions under its total control.

By bringing Vadamaratchi and Thenmaratchi under their control, the army has adopted a self-defensive posture in order to defend those areas. When the LTTE continues its guerilla war against these troops, the entire forces deployed in the north will be in a situation caught in a trap from which they cannot escape. ●

THE ARMY TAKES JAFFNA

by Amit Baruha in Jaffna & Colombo

Almost without a shot being fired in the final phase, the Sri Lankan security forces occupied the entire Jaffna peninsula on 16 May, by taking the remaining south eastern portion of Vadamarachchi. Operation Riviresa III (Sunshine III), launched a day earlier, not only succeeded in taking the Vadamarachchi region but also ensured the return of

moved into Vadamarachchi.

If the capture of territory is a victory for the Government, the voluntary return of the people to their homes in the Valikamam area is an even greater success.

Although it was a day-long conducted tour in the presence of senior military personnel, journalists were able to observe the situation first hand



the small port of Point Pedro to the Government forces.

After nearly a decade, the Sri Lankan Government has established its writ over the entire peninsula, smashing the headquarters of the de facto state of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

When the ambitiously-named Operation Leap Forward came a cropper in the peninsula in July last year, not many gave the military much of a chance. But in Riviresa I they took western Valikamam, the action culminating in the capture of Jaffna town in December 1995; in Riviresa II they took northeastern Thenmarachchi in April; and finally on 16 May they

and also talk to the people. A group of 40 journalists were flown in an HS-748 aircraft, which did some interesting manoeuvres before landing. Given the record of the Tigers using surface-to-air missiles against Air Force aircraft, an unusual descent was attempted. To avoid any missiles the LTTE may still have in its armoury, the Avro flew 15 feet above water for about 10 minutes before it came in to land. A couple of Air Force helicopters hovered around to keep the area clear of boats. Finally, the pilot made a near-perfect landing at the Palali airfield.

Leaving Palali after a brief introduction ("no questions please") to the new

Overall Operations Commander (OOC), Major-General Srilal Weerasooriya, the media persons were bundled into a bus. The destination was Kilali, the crossing point taken from the Tigers during Riviresa II.

Though much time was spent in the Tata bus, we could see that thousands of people were making the long journey back home, and the rundown truck, the hand-tractor and trailer, the dilapidated car and the ubiquitous bicycle - all were being put to good use by people going back after nearly six months away from home.

Away from the gaze of the security personnel accompanying us, the people whom this correspondent spoke to were obviously relieved at being able to return to their homes with the promise of leading a more normal life than the LTTE had permitted.

There is a shortage of essential items. Rice was selling for up to Rs 65 a kg, and a litre of kerosene cost Rs 135. "I can't dream of using my motorcycle. Buying kerosene is simply out of my reach," a Jaffna University employee told this correspondent in Chavakachcheri.

Free rations are being distributed by the security forces but the effort appears inadequate from the point of view of the people. At Urelu, on the Palali-Jaffna road, people had waited almost the whole day for their rations, and many of the hundreds standing in queue left disappointed.

The Jaffna Government Agent (the equivalent of a District Collector in India), C Pathmanathan, said some 200,000 people had returned to their homes in Valikamam by 8 May. The number of people living in Thenmarachchi was about 80,000. Pathmanathan's job was to ensure that the people were able to settle down again. He said that 80 per cent of all homes in Jaffna city were damaged and that there was an urgent need for building material to repair them.

The Government is still coming to terms with the large numbers of people involved and their varied requirements. Some bank branches have been opened, but there are no telecommunication facilities.

Pathmanathan said that 40 per cent

of the nearly 6,000 government teachers had reported back to work. He expected most of the schools to reopen soon. (Since then, a handful of schools have resumed, according to information available in Colombo).

The civil administration does not appear to have the resources to deal with such a large number of people. Its distribution network seems weak, with the Army continuing to interact with the people in different areas. But these are tasks the Army is not keen on continuing with, as it has to get back to the more serious job of taking on the Tigers militarily.

A massive rehabilitation and reconstruction effort is needed in the peninsula. President Chandrika Kumaratunga has had a meeting with foreign envoys to seek assistance, but

The reconstruction of Jaffna is crucial for the Government in its effort to demonstrate the difference between its administration and that of a militant organisation.

The Government must provide a range of facilities that were not available to the people during the period of LTTE rule. If, for example, the people want television and newspapers that are not LTTE publications, it is the task of the Government to provide these to them.

On the political front, many people believe that a dialogue between the Tigers and the Government is the only hope for a viable solution. When the results of the last peace initiative (blasted away, so to speak, by the Tigers on 19 April 1995 at Trincomalee harbour) are pointed out, they remain

persistent in that opinion.

A middle-aged man on his way to Jaffna town said: "No force has been used by the Sri Lankan security forces. Our return has been voluntary. Who wouldn't want to return home?"

Do people resent the LTTE asking the people to quit their homes at short notice? "Nobody liked the idea of moving away," he replied.

Such reactions are not surprising - leaving something unsaid, or resorting to understatement, appears to come naturally to people in Jaffna, who have seen different forces in control, and who know what to say and what not to say. For all that, people in the peninsula do feel that they have a bit more freedom today. They are also guarded in their approach towards the "new masters", the Sri Lankan security forces.

One university employee was categorical that the people were unhappy about living under the gun, whether it was in the hands of the security forces or the LTTE. Asked if he had heard about or read the political package of reforms proposed by Kumaratunga to resolve the crisis, he said people had seen bits and pieces. "I have not seen the whole document," he said, withholding further comment.

A government official in Urelu was categorical that Kumaratunga had di-



thus far her Government has not presented concrete proposals regarding international assistance.

Electricity, water, roads, telecommunication, the distribution network and other components of the economic infrastructure have to be put back in place. The Jaffna Teaching Hospital is in a mess. Many doctors have returned, but there is no surgeon and there appears to be a shortage of drugs. The place, of course, is a shambles. Some 150-odd patients are being treated in the hospital, which once had over 1,000 beds. The stand-by generator, even beds, appear to have been taken away to Point Pedro by the Tigers, a hospital employee said.

The Government says that some distribution outlets have been set up and that a fresh shipment of essential food items has been handed over to the Government Agent for distribution among the people.

luted the proposals between August 1995 and January 1996, buckling under pressure from the Sinhala -Buddhist lobby. He was curious to know what role India would play in the dispute. "If some mad person went and killed (Rajiv) Gandhi, you cannot blame the entire (Sri Lankan Tamil) community for the incident." he said. When told that India had lost some 1,300 soldiers during the stay of its peace-keeping force between 1987 and 1990 and any such intervention was a near-impossibility, the official maintained that India had taken a "wrong track" last time around.

The bottom line is that people may be happy to see the back of the LTTE, but they are not overtly enthused by the presence of the security forces. However, they are more than willing to give the military a long rope, waiting to see what kind of approach the troops will take when under pressure.

For the moment, the people want to rebuild their lives, send their children to school and university and not be scared for their lives.

Some are worried about the presence of LTTE agents amidst them. A nagging suspicion remains about the plans and capabilities of the Tigers. Clearly, the LTTE will resort to individual attacks in the peninsula, but its cadres may not be able to pull off a major operation against the security forces.

While the people examine the situation with care, military strategists are already looking at the next phase of the operation, which will probably be the opening of the land route between Elephant Pass and Vavuniya. The Government knows it cannot remain totally dependent on sea and air links between Jaffna and the rest of the country; it will have to open the land route as promised by President Kumaratunga last year.

Faced with the fall of Jaffna town in December last year, the LTTE struck with a vengeance in Colombo, killing nearly 90 persons and injuring 1,300.

Now that the whole peninsula is gone, will the LTTE go for Colombo again? Prior to the launch of Operation Riviresa II on 19 April, the Tigers launched an unsuccessful attack on the Colombo port.

As far as the administration of the peninsula is concerned, the Government may have its share of problems. For the moment it appears that a group of officials will administer Jaffna and

INDIAN INTELLIGENTSIA AND TWO ARTISTIC PRIME MINISTERS

by G.Ramesh

Members of the Delhi-based intelligentsia take pride in saying that Lutyen's New Delhi and its colonial architecture constitute the ninth Delhi in history. According to them, there have been eight previous Delhis all founded by Muslim rulers, starting from the one founded on the scorching plains of the Yamuna by Mohammed Ghori of the slave dynasty in the 12th Century. These eight Delhis have fallen by the wayside, but the ninth Delhi still has the eight Muslim ones as geological and sociological undercurrents. Yet, the Delhi-based intelligentsia are at a loss to explain why this ninth Delhi is avowedly behind Hindutva, plumping for the violent Bharatiya Janata Party these days.

The majority of the citizens of Delhi and other metropolitan cities of north and western India celebrated Atal Bihari Vajpayee's assumption of office at North Block last month. Non-resident Indians from Vancouver to Auckland, too, felt happy at this development. However, a lot of people living in metropolitan eastern and southern India felt relieved when he

demitted office fifteen days later, as did a vast majority in semi-urban and rural India who have experienced the traumatic and dark days of the Babri Masjid demolition.

demitted office fifteen days later, as did a vast majority in semi-urban and rural India who have experienced the traumatic and dark days of the Babri Masjid demolition.

Thus, the Indian intelligentsia seems to be vertically divided over the question of BJP. The very mention of this word evokes instant empathy from a lot of bureaucrats, academics, retired army generals, chartered accountants, Bharata Natyam dancers, computer professionals, and definitely, the majority of non-resident Indians. At the same time, the BJP-RSS combine evokes total revulsion from eclectic humanists, artists, left-wing activists, federalists and voluntary outfits. This division was reflected in the nine-hour long parliament debate before Vajpayee returned to his poetic self and demitted office as Prime Minister on 28 May. The questions during the debate were: What type of society India is and what type of the BJP-backing intelligentsia is trying to give a dangerous twist to them. Correctly put forth by DMK ideologue Murasoli Maran, the BJP is an anachronism, standing for a dangerous monoculture in a land of multilingual, multiethnic and multi religious diversity. Maran's remark drew a characteristic response from Vajpayee who quoted Tamil poet Subramania Bharati's verse Engal Thaaai to drive home his point that the "Bharata Mata has only one face and speaks in only one tongue."

its "liberated" people. President Kumaratunga reportedly does not favour the return of gun-toting militant groups opposed to the LTTE. She told Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) leader Douglas Devananda that the people in Jaffna did not want them back. The moderate Tamil United Liberation Front, on the other hand, does not appear keen to resume political activity in the peninsula at the moment.

Colombo has won a major political victory by taking the whole of the Jaffna peninsula and ensuring that people return to their homes. This round has gone to Kumaratunga and her Government. ●

(Courtesy of 'Frontline', 14.6.96)

What is her speech all about? To whom does she speak? To the West, or to herself? Is her speech that of a victor, or vanquished? And what language would she use when she talks to the current-day child labourers of Sivakasi? Or the Adivasis of Bastar? Or Muslims of the lanes of Bombay city? Vajpayee may be a poet, but he has no answer to these questions. However, Bharati, the archangel of Tamil modernism, who started out as

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a follower of the romanticist Shelly and rewrites Nammalvar in his Kannan Pattu, has the answers in his poetry, which meanders through a variety of landscapes and mindscapes of compassion, sensitivity, exile and bravery. No political outfit, least of all the DMK and the BJP, can claim a legacy to this unique tradition of Tamil modernism which is the new culture heralded by Bharati.

However, it is interesting to note that none of the 40 Tamil-speaking members of Parliament could oppose Vajpayee's hijacking of Bharati. There can be no answer from Maran who continues to edit a poor, film-orientated and commercial Tamil weekly glossy Kungumam and has fathered the Sun TV private channel, which unabashedly copies the crude Western programmes and telecasts Adults Only Tamil film songs after midnight. He and the 39 other MPs from Tamil Nadu, resorted to simple clapping, to appreciate the 13-day long Prime Minister's keenness to speak in Tamil, something which Vajpayee has never done in his 38-year long stint as an MP. That was all they could do! And Vajpayee emerged victorious in defeat.

Vajpayee's effort and the Tamil MPs typical response underline the poor situation in which the Indian intelligentsia has placed itself: culture for them has become just an ordinary symbol, waiting to be hijacked, in the course of power play. Hijacking of culture is the only phrase to describe the means adopted by the BJP to come to power. The BJP intelligentsia has had no qualms about destroying the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata in the Doordarshan to change the terms of the public spheres of north and western India. And the DMK non-culture's answer to the Doordarshan is the Sun TV, which has a mix of populist Tamil film-based stuff and quickie imitations of the West. All this sells well, and hence, the Tamil-dubbed Mahabharata television aerial is being telecast on the Sun TV for more than a year now. Quite logically, the Sun TV has ended up promoting the BJP's values!

India may be seen to be having strong institutions of modernity, but it does not seem to have got much in the shape of modernism. And whatever existed as modern creative space has been swallowed up by the farcical public sphere from which creativity is

being drained out. There is not much of an indigenous tradition of creative modernism in India, despite the efforts of such giants like Tagore and Bharati.

Perhaps, this is as much a reason why the modern Indian landscape has produced only a solid intelligentsia and not many modern artists and intellectuals. This was certainly not the case during the Independence Struggle when intellectual activity was sought to be differentiated from the tasks of the intelligentsia. While members of the intelligentsia erected professional edifices of modern India or became activists in the Independence Struggle, the intellectuals took on the more difficult task of redefinition of the cosmos and culture to fight against the worse side of the West and integrate its better side. India had its own intellectuals and Bharati is certainly an artist and an intellectual, given his contacts with towering personalities like Sister Nivedita and Sri Aurobindo. His role as a journalist or an activist was far less significant than his attempt to redefine cosmos and culture in modernist terms. He is Tamil's first quintessential modernist mystic. And there were not to be many of his calibre.

In today's India, the intellectual space is fast becoming vacuous; instead, a fierce struggle is on for the coveted position of the intelligentsia: firstly, among members of the dominant upper castes themselves; next, between the upper castes and the rising strata of the intermediate castes and Dalits, thirdly, among the intermediate castes themselves, and lastly, between the intermediate castes and Dalits.

This struggle is exemplified by the current Parliament's spectrum of the following women members; Malini Bhattacharya, the CPI(M)'s Calcutta Professor of English Literature; Sushma Swraj, the BJP's Delhi-based Brahmin ideologue spokesperson-turned Information Minister (with an Alsatian dog in tow) who wants cultural censorship on Western satellite channels, Maneka Gandhi, the widow of Sanjay Gandhi, winning on the basis of her Sikh community votes from a pocket of Uttar Pradesh on a Janata Dal ticket; Uma Bharati, the bald fire-spitting Sanyasini of Madhya Pradesh representing the BJP; Phoolan Davi, the Behmai bandit queen of Mulayam Singh Yadav's

Samajwadi Party; and that actress from West Godavari District, Jaya-prada, who has managed to get in on a Telugu Desam ticket after overcoming personal traumas and long dancing stints in Tamil. Telugu and Hindi films (Satyajit Ray once called her the most eloquent face in Indian filmdom after Waheeda Rahman, incidentally a Tamil Muslim). Interestingly, all of them have something to assert about culture, without letting us recognise that they are themselves victims in the chaotic ethos of struggle for the posts of intelligentsia.

V P Singh, whose interest in modernist painting and poetry is well known, was among the first to recognise this irresolvable struggle for the position of the intelligentsia and make full use of it for the purposes of political mobilisation. The leftists, as usual, missed that future which he was able to perceive. So, when he announced the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations way back in 1990, he had already drawn up the political agenda of the closing decade of the century: the emerging intermediate castes were demanding their place in the bureaucracy and elsewhere.

However, V P Singh's plans were being upset by members of the original intelligentsia. Once close to the Congress, they were getting themselves fitted into jetset, corporate age. The majority of them later plumped for the BJP which straddles a desj (non)-identity and non-resident professionalism. And the BJP which had most of the rich non-resident Indians already in its ranks was crudely targeting the poor Muslims to mobilise its Hindu constituency.

V P Singh's announcement effectively brought home the reality of this struggle. Thus, it needed an artist's mind to grasp the struggle and work through it. And V P Singh was ready to renounce power in 1990 and not take it again in 1996 when it was offered to him on a platter. Of all the politicians, this princely Rajput from Manda thus became the new Channakya, the quintessential Brahmin priest arguing for the backward classes, the wily Sukracharya of the Asuras, the Viswamitra egging Trishankus on to ascend to the new heaven.

The Indian Express, which has become the mouthpiece of the BJP in the current scenario, wrongly wrote an

United Front Takes Over As BJP Beats Hasty Retreat

by T.N.Gopalan

The euphoria is burst. The saffron camp has been forced to beat a hasty retreat.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, the BJP leader, has handed in his resignation and Mr Deve Gowda, the newly elected leader of the united front, a gallimaufry of small and big regional and national parties, has been sworn in as the 12th Prime Minister of India.

What all this portends for the integrity of the country, for the stability of the polity, remains to be seen. However, the fact remains that India is set to go through some agonising times, its future dependent solely on how the present crop of its leaders conduct themselves.

The events of May, after the eleventh Lok Sabha was constituted, have indeed been breathtaking.

For a moment it appeared as though India was remorselessly sliding into the hands of the Hindu fundamentalists, represented in the Parliament by the Bharatiya Janata Party. The latter's tally of 160-odd seats in a 532-member house was nothing much to rave about, but it was the best performance put up by the party since Independence. With support from its electoral allies like the Janata Party in

(Continued from page 21)

editorial that he was once again trying to become the Prime Minister. V P Singh is more than just a Prime Minister. He is now both an insider and outsider of Indian politics, and arguably, the sharpest of the existing band of Indian intellectuals. He, and all other artists and intellectuals, need to differentiate themselves from the original as well as the emerging intelligentsia, as their powers of changing the world have been drained. All of them need solitude and introspection. It is to be hoped that V P Singh doesn't enter politics in 1999 after the end of his sanyas. His artistic self, as much as all of India's creative persons, needs to rediscover themselves. And it would be interesting to find out the direction of his future painting and poetry. ●

Bihar and Haryana and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, it had the support of 187 members. With Congress having hit an all-time low of 136 seats and no other party anywhere near a three-digit figure, it looked like the BJP would be able to win over the various regional parties with all kinds of promises and form the Government.

Sensing the danger in a communal party's ascent to power in a country peopled by variegated castes and communities, the professedly secular parties including the Janata Dal, CPI, the CPM and such regional parties as the Talugu Desam, the Tamil Maaniala Congress and the DMK and the Asom Gana Parishad did come together - with the support of the Congress led by Mr Narasimha Rao, this new front could command a majority on the floor of the House.

But then this front took a long time coming - endlessly debating on such issues as whether it would be sensible or reasonable to form a Government with the help of the Congress, especially with the Machiavellian Rao still at its helm or ask the party to join the Government itself, who should be the leader of the new front and finally whether it might not be prudent to allow the BJP to form the Government and then fall under the weight of the inner contradictions of its coalition. The Front could then hope for better luck in the next round of elections.

Even as the non-Congress and the non-BJP leaders were frittering away their precious time in innumerable rounds of fruitless discussions, the BJP itself was more systematic in its approach. While it did not contact any individual MP, it did scout around for support, among the regional parties especially.

Time was of the essence in this numbers game, it was felt, since whoever got the first strike would be able to lure more and more supporters as days went by, offering ministerial berths and the like.

The BJP did try to influence the DMK and the TMC through noted satirist Cho S Ramaswamy - who had helped bring the two parties together and roped in actor, Rajnikanth for the

campaign too - the AGP and the TDP through some other intermediaries, but no success was forthcoming. But when the Akali Dal which had won eight seats came forward to support it, the BJP got a shot in its arm. On the ground that it was the single largest party in the Parliament and it stood on a relatively more solid ground, President Shankar Dayal Sharma invited the BJP to form the Government.

According to reports Mr Vajpayee was hesitant to take up the offer. When no other party apart from the Akali Dal had promised support, it would not be prudent to go through the agonising exercise of horse-trading, besides attracting the odium inevitable in such efforts, Vajpayee had felt.

It was Mr Pramod Mahajan, the general secretary of the BJP and said to be virtually a factotum of the notorious Bombay-based Reliance Group and Mr Bhaironsingh Shekhawat, the Rajasthan Chief Minister, known for his manipulative skills, who had promised to go all out and achieve a majority for the party and pushed Vajpayee into accepting the invitation.

President Sharma gave him a fortnight's time to prove his majority. The United Front, the motley crowd, essentially led by the CPM, was frightened that its constituents could drop out one by one. Disturbing visions of splits in the Janata Dal and even in the Congress were raised.

There were also apprehensions that the discredited, but still wily Narasimha Rao, might enter into a deal with Vajpayee and allow the Government to survive or stake the claim of his own party, as the second largest in the Lok Sabha, if and when Vajpayee was voted out. But mercifully nothing of the sort happened. All the constituents of the United Front stood together and Rao too unequivocally promised to support a UF Government from the outside.

The election of the leader of UF did seem to pose some insuperable problems. Former Prime Minister, V P Singh, still the moving spirit behind the left-of-centre non-Congress forces, of the Janata Dal especially, though he had been keeping away from active politics, refused the offer. Then the UF leaders turned to the ageing patriarch from West Bengal, Mr Jyoti Basu, leader of the Communist Party (Marxist). Being a pragmatic communist and with a clean image, he was expected to provide both stability and respectability to the Front.

But the CPM was adamant. It would

not spare Basu. Not only that it would not even be part of any Government in which it would not have any decisive role. In West Bengal and Kerala it was heading coalitions because it was the dominant partner. Becoming part of Governments in which it would be a little more than a bit-player, with little ability to influence the Government's actions would damage its credibility, it said.

Confabulations resumed yet again with the different constituents pulling in different directions and the various Janata Dal leaders staking their claims.

At one stage even Mr G Karuppiah Moopanar was thought of, but this swarthy leader from Tamil Nadu, who has been assiduously keeping away from any political office all these years, preferred to opt out. Otherwise Tamil Nadu would have had the honour of seeing one of its own sons making it to the all-important post for the first time. Anyway it was not to be and the choice finally fell on the 63-year old Deve Gowda from another southern state, Karnataka.

Deve Gowda is not a man of any great stature. Nor was he much of a charisma either. Only he is adept in the cut-throat world of politics where scruples do not matter too much and wherein compromises even with sworn-enemies could carry a person far on the road of success. He had put together the Janata Dal left in a shambles by Mr Ramakrishna Hegde and S R Bommaiah and managed to form a Janata Dal Government in Karnataka after some interregnum. Today Karnataka is one state where the Janata Dal is in a very strong position and perhaps this earned him the top job.

Besides leaders like Moopanar, Karunanidhi and Chandra-babu Naidu would not trust the more suave and experienced Hegde - the latter is suspected to be very close to Rao. Meantime the BJP stepped up its offensive on various fronts. It tried to inveigle parties with all kinds of promises and vowed not to keep aside for the nonce such sensitive issues as uniform civil code, abolition of Art. 370 (providing for a special status to Kashmir), rebuilding the temple at Ayodhya and so on. The presidential address to the new Lok Sabha studiously kept away from such controversial issues. Some of its leaders and that insufferable fanatic from Bombay, Bal Thackeray, even started dropping hints of large-scale violence if the

"pseud-secularists" sought to "sabotage the people's mandate" and prevent the BJP from ruling the country.

The BJP was prepared to do anything, whether rolling on the ground in sack cloth and ashes or slitting somebody's throat in order to stay on in power. But nothing worked. No party, major or minor, would prefer to be associated with the BJP at a time when it was becoming progressively more and more aggressive, generating social tensions across the spectrum, whatever moderate face Vajpayee himself sought to project. And so even before the confidence motion was put to the vote, Vajpayee bowed out gracefully.

A 21-member cabinet of Deve Gowda was subsequently sworn in without much ado. It is expected to win the confidence vote in mid-June after which the ministry would be expanded and the governing process would start in earnest.

The first signs have been very positive. The working out of the common minimum programme of the Front is a wonderful balancing act between the pro-economic reform and anti-reform

lobbies. While vowing to continue with the reform measures, the document also speaks of protecting the native industry and promoting the more efficient public sector undertakings.

Thus it became clear that though Mr P Chidambaram, one of the pillars of the new economic regime under Rao, is the finance minister, the multinational corporations are not going to be allowed to play havoc with the Indian economy or that the worker interests are going to be sacrificed at the altar of the mammon. A considerable part of the credit for this turn-around in the Front's economic programme should go to the CPM.

All the same the future is bristling with several complications. How long will Rao allow the Gowda regime to wait before pulling the carpet from under the feet of Gowda? What is the kind of price the Congress will seek to extract and how much will the Front be prepared to concede? When will the ego clashes explode and destroy the Government? Were the recent elections only a semi-final and in the final will the saffron power assert itself? No one can venture any answer now. ●

Karunanidhi Cautious Beginnings

T N Gopalan

On 3 June this year, Kalaingar Karunanidhi turned 73. The occasion was marked by some low-key celebrations. He himself received visitors at his residence and the almost unending stream of his party cadres at the Anna Arivalayam, the DMK headquarters.

Around 5,000 saplings were planted all over the state by government officials and senior DMK leaders. Leave alone the disgusting pyrotechnics a la Jayalalitha, even by Karunanidhi's own standards, the birthday celebrations were a relatively simple affair.

Clearly the hoopla of the previous years was missing. He did not even ceremonially cut a cake before a huge gathering as he had done in the past. And as it happened even the mandatory public meeting on such occasions in which the leader is drowned out in showers of limitless and unabashed

encomiums had to be cancelled in view of the state mourning for former president Neelam Sanjiva Reddy who had passed away only a couple of days earlier.

The local media and the inveterate letter-writers especially were overwhelmed by the restraint shown by Karunanidhi and his followers. These days one can find articles and letters full of praise for his maturity and sobriety, in striking contrast to the revolting brashness and the sickening sycophancy of the Jaya birthdays.

The writers also make it a point to enter a caveat - it is good he is starting on the right note, making it appear that he has learnt the lessons, but he should not forget the lessons along the way, otherwise history will repeat itself, etc.

But right from the day the election results started coming out and he re-

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acted with commendable poise and equanimity without dancing on the rooftop, Karunanidhi has been acquitting himself well, behaving responsibly, with little room for complaint.

Even in the constitution of his 25-member ministry he took care to see that he did not invite any adverse public opinion - he did not include, much to the surprise of the observers, his son Stalin, leader of the youth wing and widely touted as his successor, or any of Stalin's lieutenants. That Stalin remains a powerful personality behind the screen is a different story. In fact Karunanidhi himself observed in an interview that his son had been kept out of the ministry only to avoid undue speculations, though he certainly merited a place. And it is his nephew, Murasoli Maran, his most trusted counsellor, who has bagged the prestigious industries portfolio in the union cabinet. Maran's hand is seen in most of the decisions of the DMK.

It may be recalled that Mr V Gopalsamy (Vai Go), now heading the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), had been peeved when he was denied a place in the V P Singh ministry in 1989, though he was then the DMK's star in the Rajya Sabha and popular next only to Karunanidhi among the cadres. Maran has always mattered most to Kalignar and what this tie-up will mean to him in the future remains to be seen. Clearly though he would not relish any younger leader becoming too popular in the party. Like in the case of Mr Parithi Ilam Vazhudhi who had made a name for himself for single-handedly fighting the Jaya regime within the stultifying confines of the legislature under Sedapatti R Muthiah, with a right mix of humour, wheeling, compromise and aggression, Vazhudhi had been able to make a great impact and he hails from the scheduled castes.

Everyone expected him to be made a minister, but instead he has been elected Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. Kalignar has been giving lame excuses for his decision, but his motives are clear. The point is even while conducting himself admirably in public, he also ensures that his personal agenda is never derailed.

So also he tread wearily when it came to Ministry-making in the Centre. He did respond positively when the BJP approached him for support, at Maran's instance, again it is said. He is reported to have sent a seven-page fax message containing his mini-

num demands - well, he did stipulate that Tamil Nadu be granted special status like Kashmir under Art 370 hoping either way he would win. If granted the status he could become a hero in the eyes of the Tamils, but if not, he could save his secular credentials intact.

Anyway the BJP could not bring it itself to do so - after all how could it when it was opposed to Art 370 in the case of Kashmir itself? However some other bits were offered, it is said. Karunanidhi would not bite them, he realised the risks involved in rubbing shoulders with a party like the BJP in Tamil Nadu.

He did drive a hard bargain with Mr Gowda to get two cabinet berths for the DMK, apart from Mr Maran, Mr Venkatraman, an MP from Tindivanam, a relative lightweight, has made it. That part Karunanidhi did not seek to push Gowda too far on issues like autonomy or Cauvery.

Cauvery would indeed be an acid test for the United Front itself, for the coalition politics. Mr Deve Gowda, who as the Chief Minister of Karnataka, had refused to honour the interim award of the Tribunal, is now the PM and how he is going to rise above narrow regional considerations and how far Karunanidhi would be willing to compromise remain to be seen.

So also the 50 per cent reservations for the backward castes in jobs and educational institutions and which formula has been shot down by the Supreme Court is another thorny issue before Karunanidhi. In the past he used to taunt Jayalalitha by daring her to defy the court and defend the BC interests. The shoe is on his leg now. He evidently feels uncomfortable, but so far refrained from joining issue with the courts.

Nowhere Karunanidhi's abundant sense of caution is seen as clearly as in the case of the Lankan ethnic tangle. Despite his repeated assertions that he is deeply concerned with the situation in the island and pleas from all the Tamil militant groups including the LTTE, there is no sign as yet that he is inclined to stick his neck out yet again.

Sources close to Karunanidhi reveal that he has been nursing a strong grievance against the Tigers - the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi had cooked his goose five years ago, and anyway they had acted in bad faith. Never again would he like to get embroiled in the Lankan issue whatever

his personal commitments might be - certainly he would not like to attract the charge of encouraging or promoting the case of the assassins of Rajiv Gandhi.

At his very first press conference, after he assumed charge, he did declare that he had always been concerned with the sufferings of the Lankan Tamils, that he wanted army atrocities on the civilians put to an end and that he would take up the issue anew with the Centre before long. He made the statement on 13 May, but nearly one month down the line, he is yet to come out with anything concrete on the issue.

Meantime the EPDP, the TELO, the EPRLF and the EROS have jointly written to him seeking an appointment with him not only to greet him but also to discuss the issue and press him to take some initiative at the earliest.

There was also an editorial in the Viduthalai Puligal, official organ of the LTTE, calling upon the UF Government in New Delhi to "shed the anti-Tiger stance of the Congress regime and become an ally in the struggle of the people of Tamil Eelam".

In the same issue, in another edit, the LTTE expressed its happiness over Karunanidhi's victory and recalled with pride his boycott of the reception to the IPKF in 1990. However, the paper also expressed its concern over the "anti-Tiger position taken by Karunanidhi" and told him that such a stand would only help the Sinhala Government. He must change his position and become supportive of the Tigers, it counselled.

Some private channels too have been opened. But nothing seems to have worked. He is yet to respond to any of the overtures.

EPDP leader Douglas Devananda in a newspaper interview has however said he would be talking to Maran shortly. In a related development the arrival of 17 persons, seven of them women, all in the 25-30 age group and hailing from Jaffna, at Nagore, in the last week of May, has kicked off another controversy. They are all unarmed and arrived on the Indian shores by a fibre-glass boat. There is no clinching evidence that any of them belong to the Tigers. But interested parties are circulating rumours to that effect and dropping hints that something sinister is afoot. Even a respectable daily like the Hindu has gone to town with such claims.

How could anyone from Jaffna think
(Continued on page 29)

A BLAST AND A KUMBABHISHEKHAM - TAMIL NADU'S TEMPLES TODAY

by G.Ramesh

On the night of 18 May, some miscreants exploded a crude country-made bomb in the outer prakaram of the famous Meenakshi Amman temple at Madurai. No one was injured as it took place in a lonely place, and only the flooring was damaged. A Muslim fundamentalist group was first blamed for this strange minor blast, but later Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, sick and tired of the manipulative deeds of the state police, transferred the probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation.

That the temple, one of the finest artistic treasures of Tamils down the ages, was in a state of decay and neglect was clear to me during a visit in late April. It is unfortunate that the temple, which draws Tamils from across the world over, presents a shabby look, even as the tourist inflow is getting higher. Apart from lack of security, the devotees have to face up to the terror of bats. The Thousand Pillar Mandapam which has thousands of icons, art pieces, photographs and modern paintings with reference to iconography, architecture and folk legends, is not being maintained properly. The Mandapam could at best be the backdrop of a mujra dance number involving Manisha Kiorala and Arvind Swamy in Mani Ratnam's hit film, Bombay.

Despite the best efforts of Mr A V Jayachandran, who as Museum Administrator had illustrated the forms of temple worship among the Tamils, the Museum also seems to have been neglected. As a boy, I remember having seen illustrations of the Nava Thalam, or time measures employed by Tamils down the ages, in the Museum. Now they are either missing or damaged. Of the 22 images of the 63 Saivite saints depicted in the temple, only nine can be seen, as do images of the yantras, folk and village gods and zoolatry.

Despite the tall claims made by the AIADMK regime led by J Jayalitha, it is now clear that the temples in Tamil Nadu, which are storehouses of classical and popular art forms down the ages, are not at all being maintained. Countless temples in Tamil Nadu are languishing for proper care and maintenance. Unfortunately, for

the Tamils, temples have become just places for wish-fulfilment; the new kind of temples erected in the state are abject monstrosities; thus, temples are no longer public spheres where the creative space of the culture-in-question can blossom.

That Tamils can somehow get past all this is evident from the sudden popularity of the Kumbabhishekham festival at the famous Kapaleeswarar temple in Mylapore in the heart of south Madras on 6 June. The temple authorities had spent Rs 50 lakh to renovate the temple, and had even used sandblasting to clean up its walls.

The Kapaleeswarar temple has had

an extraordinary history, with such great figures as Sampanthar and Saint Arunagiri having sung there. Mylapore locality itself is full of tales of such tall residents as Tiruvalluvar and St Thomas. The locality figures in the accounts of legendary travellers like Huang Tsang and Marco Polo. The temple was known to have been built after an earlier one on the shores was demolished by Portuguese bigots, but it is also certain that the new temple has had Portuguese, Spanish Moor, French, British and Muslim patrons, marking the secular and cosmopolitan character of Mylapore down the ages. French soldiers had even taken refuge inside the temple during a battle in 1672. True to this tradition, Christians and Muslims have vied with each other to contribute for the Kumbabhishekham festival. Such bonds alone ultimately save the secular public sphere in India. ●

Devolution Package and the Maha Sangha

By D Amarasiri Weeraratne

It was with dismay that I read of the Maha Sangha meeting held at the BMICH on 5 March to denounce the Devolution Package offered by the Government. Very discreetly the Mahanayake Theras of the three Nikayas have kept away. The convenors of the meeting were the well-known Sinhala Only hardliners who oppose any form of devolution of powers to the minorities in areas where they predominate. These hardliners see any form of devolution as a stepping stone to separatism and the division of the country. They have gone paranoid with an Eelam phobia and they see the proposals as the writing on the wall for separatism.

It is well-known that all attempts in the past to resolve the ethnic problem by the B-C pact, Dudley-Chelvanayakam pact, and the All-Party Conference convened by President Jayewardene were scuttled by hardliners in the Maha Sangha who spearheaded the Sinhala Only chauvinists. Thus Ven Baddegama Wimalawansa led Phalanx that forced Premier S R W D Bandaranike to abrogate the B-C pact. Ven Madihe Pannasiha spearheaded the chauvinists who scuttled the D-C pact.

This fact is admitted on page 140 of the history of the Amrapura Dharmarakshita sect. The book is titled "Dam Reki Naka".

The attempts to settle the ethnic problem by the All-Party Conference convened by President Jayewardene was wrecked by Ven Palipane Chandrananda in league with the Sinhala Only hardliners. The result of all these wreckings by the Sangha led to continued agitation and protests by the democratic Tamil parties.

When all attempts to settle the problem by democratic methods failed the Tamils were driven into the arms of the terrorists who posed as the saviours of the Tamil people. They said the only method of reducing their aspirations was by military means. From the point the LTTE terrorists took over the leadership of the Tamil agitation, for autonomy in their regions. Hence, the present war which is ruining our economy and taking a heavy toll of our military forces. Now the war has come to Colombo and the whole world has seen the carnage at the Central Bank through TV coverage of the incidents.

No Ethnic Problem

The Sangha leadership who spok

at the recent BMICH meeting have stated that there is no ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is no need to ask for a solution to a non-existent problem. And also there is no need for the Government to evolve a plan to meet the aspirations of the Tamils for regional autonomy. The Sangha spokesman saw only a terrorist problem and they called for the subjugation of the LTTE by military means. Then according to them, in the absence of an ethnic problem or dispute there will be peace, law and order in the country.

But the fact remains that before the LTTE took to arms, there was agitation by the Tamil democratic parties that believed in a negotiated settlement by peaceful means. They found that the Maha Sangha spearheaded the agitation against all three agreements and wrecked them. So to deny the existence of any ethnic problem and say there is only a terrorist problem is a failure to understand the background and the cause for the resort to arms. No terrorist war will be possible unless people sympathise and support them.

The spokesmen who claimed to

voice the opinion of the Maha Sangha are inveterate chauvinists who are not prepared for any form of devolution. They are not experts in political science and their knowledge of international political problems and constitutions is poor. Their opinions on the ethnic problem and democratic ways and means of settling it cannot be taken seriously. Only a plebiscite among the Sangha can indicate what is the opinion of the Maha Sangha on this issue. This probably is the last chance we have to settle this problem by peaceful means. If the government gives into the arm-twisting tactics of the jingoist Sangha our nation will be doomed to unending war, economic ruin, and a strangulation of our efforts to rise above third world poverty status, and general ruin.

The Government has to be run by the elected Members of Parliament. There is no room in the constitution to give into pressure tactics of reactionary monks. We have to respect the Sangha only when they teach us the Dhamma in which they are experts and authorities. Their advice can be sought by the rulers only on matters concerning how to rule in accordance with the

Dhamma. Beyond this they have no right or scope. In the whole Buddhist world it is the Sinhala Sangha who says that "politics is the bhikkhu heritage". It is a heritage of apostasies coming down from the Anuradhapura period, and should be disallowed as recommended by the Buddhist Commission report which the first Bandaranike Government undertook to implement. Before it could be done the Premier was assassinated by a power-hungry Buddhist monk. And with that, Sasana reforms recommended have gone underground.

If the Sangha is properly organised and controlled by the Maha Nayake, as is done in the other Theravada countries such as Burma and Thailand they will not resort to the present corruptions and apostasies such as politics, business ventures, renting out temple rooms to laymen including LTTE agents, running garages, printing presses, tuition classes, karate classes, parking vehicles for a fee etc etc. Therefore, the first duty of the Sangha is to set their house in order instead of trying to dictate to Parliament what it should do and not do. ●

Plunging the Island Into Darkness

The government used its mailed fist to meet the challenge of an unprecedented 72 hour strike by electricity employees plunged Sri Lanka into a complete blackout. Using emergency powers, the government declared the electricity and other allied activities essential services and ordered all strikers to return to work forthwith. Failure to return to work was declared a criminal offence. However the power workers decided to defy the government's directive.

The strike was launched 29 May by employees including engineers numbering over 14,000 against the government's move to privatise Lanka Electricity Company (LECO), a subsidiary of the state controlled Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB).

The strike paralysed the country's economic and commercial activities. Patients, including serious cases, in hospitals were severely affected and most of them were sent to their homes. An official who wanted remain anony-

mous for obvious reasons said that at least one hundred patients died in Colombo due to lack of medical care.

To make matters worse, the state-controlled water board cut off water supplies in the capital because it could not operate its pumping stations without electricity. Public and private transport was also severely disrupted. Frozen food stocks in hotels, restaurants and even homes went spoilt. Factories came to a grinding halt leaving hundreds of thousands of workers without work.

The strike could not have at a worse moment for the government. The country, depending for 80 per cent of its electricity on hydro power, was facing power cuts for nearly ten hours a day adversely affecting economic activity and making peoples normal life enormously difficult. For the first time in the island's history, clocks were put forward by one hour to allow maximum use of daylight to save electricity.

Water levels of the reservoirs had been steadily deteriorating and many of them were left dry because of the expected monsoon rains not falling for months. And prayers by monks and others invoking the blessings of the God for the rains did not have much effect.

Faced with an impossible situation, the government took a tough stand against the strike characterising it as politically motivated and as a conspiracy to overthrow the government. The President went on national TV and declared, "My government cannot allow 14,000 workers in the Ceylon Electricity Board to hold a country of 18 million people ransom... This is not a legitimate demand of trade unions, but an attempt to dictate policy matters to the government. No where in the world has that been allowed or tolerated. Nowhere in the world has a trade union been permitted to dictate policy to the government, and we shall not allow it. They are trying to run the government. We know this has been planned over several weeks, because parts of generators were removed and wires cut at the same time on Wednesday. Even the General Hospital generator was broken at the same time, and on Thurs-

day, further parts were removed by persons who pretended they were there to repair it... We have taken a clear decision that, democracy or no democracy, we shall govern and give the people what they want. Short of killing people, we are going to use whatever power we can use."

As part of the "Operation Shock" launched by the government to confront the strike, over three hundred strikers were rounded up from their homes by security service personnel and taken to their work stations to commence work. On the second day of the strike, 20 leaders of the striking union were taken into custody at the time they were holding a press conference in Colombo at their headquarters, who were later released.

While the government was officially taking a tough stand, a few MPs belonging to ruling party who have formed themselves into the now well known "Mulberry Group" continued to have talks with strike leaders with a view to ending the strike. There was relief all round when the strike was called off on Friday 31 May. It is understood that the electricity workers have been given an assurance that they would be consulted if LECO is again considered for privatisation. By the weekend, the life was slowly returning to normal.

Privatisation to Continue

Sri Lanka will continue to "reform" its public sector non-profitable and badly run enterprises through privatisation schemes, Rajan Asirwatham, the head of the Public Reform Enterprise Commission (PREC), told the press on 11 June.

Denying that there has been any change in government policy following the electricity strike, Asirwatham who overseas as head of PREC all government's privatisation programmes said, "I categorically say that there is no change in government policy to reforming non-profitable and badly managed public enterprises."

Where a total or partial sell-off is not feasible, the government would end most monopolies by encouraging competition and reform others by injecting efficient management. "As stated before, reforms will proceed with emphasis on transparency and protection of worker's rights," he added.

It had been hoped by some that the government would move very slowly on its urge to privatisation following the recent damaging strike by power workers. However some others say

that the strike could have been averted had the government adopted a line of negotiations with the unions about the "reforms" to the electricity industry.

Discussions with labour unions of enterprises earmarked for privatisation or "reforms" had shown that workers were not averse to privatisation so long as their job was safe and their rights were adequately protected, Asirwatham said adding, "But the CEB was never up for privatisation, and therefore the need for talking to them did not arise." But the authorities had discussed with workers of the Lanka Electricity Company (LECO), a CEB power distribution subsidiary, which is up for privatisation.

Though concerns for job security were understandable, they were misplaced. "Even our bidding documents say that you cannot retrench labour, a point we stress at every press inter-

view and discussions with unions," Asirwatham said.

The LECO bids were cancelled as they failed to reach the minimum government valuation of two billion rupees (\$36 million) for 51 per cent, showing that the Commission was not "selling the family silver at bargain prices," added Asirwatham.

The PA's election manifesto of 1994 said that the CEB and the two state banks, Bank of Ceylon and the Peoples Bank would not be privatised and that promise would be kept.

Otherwise, the reforms would continue. Fourteen regional plantation companies now in state hands would be sold by the end of 1996. Nine have already been sold. Restructuring Airlanka and Sri Lanka Telecom will be finished by the end of 1996, Asirwatham added.

Swiss Gun Ban

A statement from Ministry of Justice in Switzerland on 4 June said that it has banned all Sri Lankans living in the country from buying or carrying guns after a series of violent incidents involving extortion of money for Tamil rebels fighting for a separate state in Sri Lanka.

A similar ban exists for the Turks mainly due to the activities of the PKK and those from former Yugoslavia.

According to the Federal Bureau of Refugees, as at the end of May this year, 23,464 Sri Lankans are living in Switzerland. A Justice Ministry spokeswoman said that there had been a sharp increase in violent clashes among Sri Lankan Tamils living there

leading to some deaths. The Tiger supporters in Switzerland had stepped up its activities to collect money from Tamils living there, she added. "There is a suspicion that in many cases the contributions are collected with extortion. The violent incursions by those who are engaged in this activity are being increasingly met with corresponding violence by those affected," she said.

The new federal ban on guns applying to Sri Lankans took effect from 4 June and applies nationwide. It takes precedence over the various gun laws of Switzerland's 26 Cantons, some of which ban the carrying of guns while others are less strict.

Australian Grant

The Australian government recently announced a contribution of 720,000 US dollars to help victims of the civil war in Sri Lanka. The money will be evenly provided through the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Medicines Sans Frontieres (MSF), both agencies having the ability to deliver humanitarian assistance in the island.

Currently \$360,000 have been allocated to the UNICEF to assist children affected by the war. The Fund will be

used to improve the infrastructure in 20 schools and to purchase essential equipment.

At the same time, a sum of \$360,000 has been allocated to the MSF. Of this amount \$150,000 will be used to provide medical assistance in the eastern Batticaloa district, especially for surgical paediatric assistance in the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital. And the rest will be used to provide surgical facilities for the Vavuniya hospital in the north of the island.

On the Military Front

In a statement issued on 4 June, the LTTE has vowed to intensify attacks in the northern Jaffna peninsula, which is under military control, with a view to preventing the government from setting up a civil administration. The statement published in the LTTE journal, "Viduthali Puligal", said that the LTTE would "take the war into the inner sanctum of the army-controlled Jaffna peninsula."

"The Sri Lankan government's plans to establish a military administration in the occupied Jaffna peninsula will be smashed with these intensive operations," the journal said.

Sporadic incidents of LTTE ambush attacks in the Jaffna peninsula recently recaptured by the military from the Tigers and particularly in the east of the country have witnessed a marked increase.

On 28 May two soldiers were killed in a Tiger attack on a tractor loaded with weapons near Nelliady. The attackers are reported to have got away with a large quantity of weapons and ammunition. In the crossfire one civilian was also killed.

On 27 May, the Tigers attacked and overran a military post at the remote village of Meegasodella in the Trincomalee district. Nine soldiers including an officer were killed and the military claimed that at least 25 Tigers were killed in the ensuing battle.

On 28 May four civilians were killed at Kondavil not far from the Jaffna town when their tractor ran over a Tiger landmine which had been intended for the troops who were engaged in moving relief supplies.

(Continued from page 25)

of Tamil Nadu as a possible place of refuge in the changed situation since May 1991 still remains a mystery. Some in the 17-group are reported to have told the police that the vigorous anti-LTTE drive had created a lot of insecurity in the minds of the people and hence their decision to leave the peninsula. They have since been confined to a special camp in Chengalpattu.

According to sources Karunanidhi would like to operate in an atmosphere free of any tension or suspicion, at a time when his moves would not be misinterpreted. But will such a time ever come? Will he take the bull by its horns, take some meaningful initiative and live up to the professed convictions? ●

On 2 June eight civilians were killed and one wounded when a tractor in which they were travelling hit a landmine at Puttur in the Valigamam division. In a separate incident, three children were injured when they were toying with hand grenade that had been left behind.

Nine policemen attached to the police station at Welikane in the Polonnaruwa district in the north central province were killed when in an LTTE ambush on 7 June.

Fourteen Sinhalese civilians, including women and four children were hacked to death with swords and knives and their houses set ablaze when the Tigers raided the small village of Aruwakalu close to the Vilpattu game sanctuary 16 miles off Puttalam in the north west of the island around midnight on 10 June.

Government forces have further reinforced their position in the Jaffna peninsula by securing a road link between their main base at Palaly and the base at El-

phant Pass where the peninsula joins the mainland. In an operation on 10 June, troops cleared a passage between Kilaly and Elephant Pass, a distance of 13 km. The passage allows road access to Elephant Pass for the first time since 1990 providing a land route supply line from the mainland to the peninsula.

"This implies that security forces in vehicles can move by land between Elephant Pass and Palaly enabling easier supply systems to troops at Elephant Pass and Vettalaikerni," said a military spokesman. Military sources claimed that troops overcame the LTTE resistance without much difficulty when the Tigers abandoned a large camp with strong defences, but two soldiers including an officer were killed and one wounded in the course of the encounter. However the Tigers claimed that they inflicted heavy casualties upon the troops.

Tigers blew up three navy boats anchored at the Karainagar navy base located at the Karaitivu island west of the Jaffna peninsula killing two sailors and wounding one on 11 June, according to navy sources.

Japanese Loan Package

The Japanese government decided on 15 May to grant the largest ever loan package of 363 million US dollars to Sri Lanka to mark the four-day state visit of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga to Japan, according to Japanese Embassy sources here in Colombo.

Accordingly two exchanges of notes were signed in Tokyo. The first was for a grant aid totalling 20.8 million US dollars for new buildings and equipment for the Faculty of Dental services at the University of Peradeniya.

The Second exchange was a loan package totalling 342.2 million US dollars for five projects in the country,

the sources said. Part of the loan is earmarked for the purpose of constructing a combine cycle power at the Kelani Tissa Power Station.

Meanwhile the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$24 million concessional loan to the Sri Lanka government to help rebuild two oil storage facilities damaged in a Tamil Tiger attack in October last year. The loan will cover the foreign currency cost of the project, while the local currency cost equivalent of \$17.14 million will be borne by the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC), according to ADB sources. The loan will extend over 40 years with a grace period of 10 years and a service charge of one percent per annum, the bank said.

Cyber Cafe in Colombo

In the midst all its problems, Sri Lanka is to keep abreast with the information technological revolution. The race is on along the information super-highway in the island to open the first "cyber cafe," offering customers the chance to surf the Internet as they sip their cappuccinos, according to a Reuters report.

Just days after three entrepreneurs announced the launch of the Cyber Cafe in Colombo later this month, a new joint venture said on 7 March that it would have its Internet cafe, the

"Surfboard," up and running within a week. "The Surfboard is Asia's newest, coolest Internet cafe," the venture announced in a press release. The Surfboard is a joint venture between the Galadari Hotel, ITECH Innovations and Lanka Internet Services Ltd. The cafe will also be an electronic post office, library, training centre, art gallery, corporate conference centre, virtual office and electronic shopping mall. "There's a big demand here for this kind of thing," Ratten Abdul Hussein, joint owner of the rival Cyber Cafe, told the media.

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OBITUARIES



Mr. K. Kumarasundaram, beloved son of late Mr. Kanagasabapathy and Mrs. Kanagasabapathy; loving brother of Balasundaram, Logasundaram and Rajasundaram passed away on 23.5.96 in Melbourne, Australia.

He was born in Matale, Sri Lanka, educated at Twickenham College, London and lived in New Malden, Surrey. After working as a chartered civil engineer in Indonesia and Jamaica, he immigrated to Mel-

bourne, where he was a lecturer at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He devoted much of his time to the study of ancient Hindu philosophy and Tamil culture and published several articles worldwide.

The members of his family thank all relatives and friends who sent messages of sympathy - K. Balasundaram, Melbourne, Tel: (613) 9795 3568; K. Logasundaram, London, Tel: 0181 540 1322.



Mrs. Ranjini Geetanjali Thirunavukarasu (44), beloved wife of Mr. P. Thirunavukarasu; loving mother of Poornima and Pradeep; loving daughter of Mr. S. Mahalingam (retired Vice-Principal, Jaffna Central College) and late Mrs. P. Mahalingam; daughter-in-law of late Mr. S. Ponnuthurai and Mrs. P. Ponnuthurai; sister of Mrs. Lalitha Dilkushi Karunakaran (Sydney), Premkumar (Singapore), Mohankumar (Sydney), Ranjitkumar (London), Nimalkumar (Sydney), Tilakumar (London) and Miss Priyadarshini Damayanthi (London); sister-in-law of Karunakaran, Kamalarani, Vijayalaxmi, Nirmala, Yasothara, Nalini, Kamaladevi, Sugirthadevi and Balanathan passed away in Sydney, Australia on 24.05.96 and was cremated on 27th May.

All the members of the family thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted in several ways during the period of great sorrow. Their special thanks are due to Mr. Kathir who performed the funeral rites. - M. Ranjitkumar, 173 Kempton Road, East Ham London E6 2PU. Tel: 0181 471 9311.

கண்ணீர் அஞ்சலி



திருவாட்டி

சின்னையா இலக்குமி அம்மா

அன்னையின் மடியில்: 20.03.1904

அரண் அடியில்: 29.03.1996

தாயே! எம் தயாநிதியே!

கடல் நீரில்

கருவெடுத்து உருவெடுத்த மேகம் போல உன் ஊனில்

உயிர் தந்து, உருத் தந்து

உலகில் எம்மை ஆளாக்கினாய்!

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பயிராய் எமை வளர்த்தாய்!

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அவனியில் சிறக்க வைத்தாய்!

நல்வாழ்வுக்கான நலங்கள் அத்தனையும்

நாம் பெற்றுப் பீடுறவே வாழுவைத்த

கைம்மாறு கருதாத நின் தெய்வீகத்

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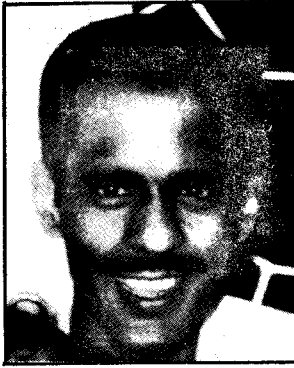
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போற்றிப் பணிந்திடுவோம்!

Mrs. Lukshmi Amma Sinniah, the General Cemetery, Kanate. The Anthiasdy ceremony beloved wife of the late Sin took place in Mutwal and the nathambiyar Arambo Sinniah of the thanksgiving prayers and lunch Karaveddy West; loving mother at the residence of Sivarajah (London), Ra- 222/14 Bandaranayake jathurai (Colombo), Balasun- Mawatha, Colombo 12. The deram (USA), Kanagasunder- 31st day rituals were also per- am (London), Mrs. Nageswary after wards at the Hindu rites Sangarapillai (Singapore), Mrs. at Rameswaram Temple, Mangaleswary Balakrishnan South India on 29th April 96. (USA) and Nadarajah (S. Arab- We pray with devotion for our bia) passed away on 29.3.96 and was cremated according to beloved mother's Athma to rest Hindu rites on 30th March at in peace.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Mr. B. Sivagananathan** on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on 22.6.91.

Remembered with love and affection by his step mother Mrs. Rajaletchumy Balasubramaniam; wife Kamala; brothers Dr. Sivaloganathan, Thirunavukkarasu, Radhaakrishnan, and Sriharan; sisters Mrs. Gowri Pathmanathan, Mrs. Bhagawathy Mohanadas, Mrs. Mangayarkkarasi Jetheendran and Mrs. Jayanthi Kumar-anayagam - 9 Upton Close, Park Street, St. Albans, Herts, UK. Tel: 01727 873537.

Third Death Anniversary

10th June 1996
In Ever Loving Memory
of

Kanagambihai
Ragunathan

May the Good Lord
Sathia Sai Baba
Bess and keep you in
His Loving Care.

Life is not measured by years,
But the love and affection you gave,
Are precious memories for us to hold,
No words can comfort us,
When those we love depart,
Days of sadness still loom over us,
But memories of you will live for ever.

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British Association of Tamil Schools needs a qualified Mirudangam and a Violin teacher with a sound knowledge of Tamil and a minimum of 10 years experience in accompanying Bharatha Natya dancers and proven ability to compose music for Bharatha Natyam. Basic salary £8000 per annum plus benefits. Closing date for written applications to: **Mr. K. Sivagurunathapillai**, Chairman B.A.T.S., 18 St. Michael Close, Bickley, Kent BR1 2DX. by 12th July 1996.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July 3 Feast of St. Thomas.
July 6 7.00pm Jaffna Hindu College O.B.A Annual General Meeting and Cultural Evening of Veena, Bharatha Natyam and Vocal recitals at Kingsbury High School Hall, Princess Ave., London NW9 9JR. For details Tel: 01462 435425/0181 952 1147/204 5366.
July 7 6.00pm London Tamil

Centre presents 'Silappathiharam Dance Drama' at Secombe Theatre, Cheam Road, Sutton, Surrey in aid of London Sivan Kovil. Tel: 01277 223981/0181 690 0401.

July 7 6.00pm Tamil Society of Queen Mary & West Field Colleges, University of London presents Cultural Night with Villu Paatu, Dance Drama & Chithralaya Music Group at Lloyds Park Theatre, Waltham-

stow, London E17. Tel: 0181 423 1885/923 1556.

July 11 Kaarthikai; Ekaathasi; Feast of St. Benedict.

July 13 Pirathosam.

July 14 6.30pm Speech Day, London Tamil Centre in Wembley School Hall, East Lane, Wembley. Chief Guest: Cllr. Lata Patel, Mayor, London Borough of Brent. All welcome.

July 15 Amavasai.

July 16 Aadi Sevvai 1.

July 19 Chathurthi.

July 20 Aadi Pooram.

July 21 Shashti.

July 23 Aadi Sevvai 2; Feast of St. Bridget.

July 25 Feast of St. James.

July 26 Ekathasi.

July 28 Pirathosam.

July 30 Full Moon; Aadi Sevvai 3.

July 31 Feast of St. Ignatius.

Arangetram in Switzerland



The Bharatha Natya Arangetram of Kumari Sherin Romini, daughter of Arunthathy and Sivasundaralingam of Basel, Switzerland and disciple of Natya Kalaimamani Krishna Bavani-Sriharan took place at Gemeindehaus St. Anton in Basel on 18.5.96.

Smt Krishna Bavani had her Bharatha Natya training at the Ramanathan Fine Arts Academy, Jaffna and underwent further training in Kathakali under the well known Vel Anandan, a versatile exponent of the Kathakali style. She is now an instructress of the Kalaniketan Nadanailaya, Basel.

Young Romini started her performance with the usual Pushpanjali, Thodaya Mangalam and went on to Jatiswaram, Sabtham and Varnam in Nattaikurinji Ragam. After the interval, the Pathams 'Navarasayanayaki' and 'Malai Poluthinile' both in Ragamalikai were well received by the audience. She concluded her programme with Thillana in Hamsandi Raga and the 'Kurathi' folk dance.

The chief guest 'Koodaiyedi Tamil' Kumaran, a former university lecturer from Sri Lanka in his speech complimented the Guru for her services to this divine art in Switzerland. Romini was ably supported by her Guru on Nattuvangam, Smt Ambika Thamotheram (UK) - Vocal, Smt Komala

(France) - Violin, Sri Ravi Tharmaraj (France) - Mridangam and Sri A. Shanmugathas (Switzerland) - Tabla.

Over Four Decades of
Educational Service to
His Community

Mr. V. Sivasubramaniam, former Principal of Skanda Varodaya College passed away recently on 26.4.96. He was eighty seven years old. He lived in the suburban town of Chunnakam, a couple of miles away from Skanda, originally established as Kanterodai English school. Due to the indefatigable efforts of Kanthiah 'Upathiyayar', nurtured generously by Dr. S. Subramaniam and later by his liberal minded nephew, the late Mr. V. Dharmalingam, TULF Member of Parliament, the school flourished into one of the leading institutions of Jaffna contributing its share of professionals and administrators in all walks of life.

Mr. Sivasubramaniam after passing the Cambridge senior in 1926, joined the staff

of the school and continued to remain with his Alma Mater till his retirement in 1969. While in service he earned his honour degree in Geography and arts degree in Tamil, as an external student of the London University before completing his Teachers' Training Course. Dressed in impeccable white in national costume with a folded shawl round his neck, he was a familiar figure on his bicycle to and from home. Kanterodai English school was originally a grant-in-aid school. Funds were scarce for buildings, laboratories, equipment etc and its success depended on the hard work and dedicated service to the teachers who remained with the school through thick and thin without straying into greener pastures. Mr. Sivasubramaniam was one of them who remained with his Alma Mater until his retirement after a period of forty two years of educational service to his community.

The school relied heavily on his advice and intimate knowledge of all matters. He knew the trials and tribulations of the majority of students who hailed mainly from a farming community and middle class families. As a teacher he was soft spoken and always open for discussion. No class was ever neglected because of other connected important matters and his advice was sought even after his retirement and he gave it ungrudgingly. His oft repeated maxim to his students was that 'success was ninety nine percent perspiration and one percent intelligence.'

Generations of students now in all walks of life will remember with gratitude the benefits of having come under his guidance. It is an irony of fate that this peace loving and practising Hindu leading a quiet life in retirement had in his last days, due to the turmoil caused by the ethnic conflict, migrated from his permanent residence to Chavakachcheri where he breathed his last.

May his soul rest in peace.
S. Kumarakulasingam.

Ganesh Chanmugam (1939-1996)



Ganesar (Ganesh) Chanmugam's personal identification mark could well have been the broad beam of cheer across his face attended by bright inquiring eyes, upward tilted; it rarely took leave of him. In March

1996, this expansive soul moved on as a result of complications following a bone marrow transplant. The loss saddened not only friends and relatives but also the scientific community world-wide working in the field of astrophysics. Ganesh was Professor of Astrophysics at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, with an international reputation as a leading expert in the physics of collapsed stars.

Born in 1939 in Colombo, he had his early education at Royal College, Colombo, and later at the University of Ceylon in Colombo, where in 1962 he won the University Science Scholarship and proceeded to Downing College, University of Cambridge, for his Mathematic Tripos. He then earned his doctorate from Brandeis University in Boston, Massachusetts. Following a spell at the University of Liege, Belgium, he joined the Faculty of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge where he spent the rest of his professional life in the field of astronomy and physics. During his tenure there he published more than 120 papers, was made a Fellow both of the US American Physical Society and the British Astronomical Society, delivered lectures at many international conferences, and was invited to NASA besides many other major research organisations world-wide.

Like his father the late Dr. P.K. Chanmugam, Professor of Anatomy at the Colombo Medical Faculty of the University of Ceylon, and his grandfather, the late J.K. Chanmugam, Vice-Principal, Jaffna Central College, he loved teaching, and several of his colleagues and students have attested to his facility for sharing his fascination and enthusiasm for astrophysics with others. He was also a kind and caring person who won the respect and friendship of the many people who came from far and wide to attend his funeral at Baton Rouge.

His outstanding contributions to Louisiana State University are to be fittingly honoured by the establishment of the Chanmugam Memorial Fund to support future activities in physics and astronomy at the university.

Throughout his life and especially during the long dark days when he was heroically battling myeloma (cancer of the bone marrow) he was supported by his wife Prithiya (nee Kanagasunderam) and sons, Ravi and Suresh. To them, all who knew Ganesh Chanmugam extend their sympathies.

Part of what Husain Sarkar, a friend in the Philosophy Department of his university wrote was:

He knew of binary systems, collapsed stars,
Spinning galaxies, as if the jagged cosmos was
Devised for his mind, a jigsaw puzzle. . .
With official notice, 'He is gone.'
I deny all this.
I think I see him roaming among the stars.

Dr. Devi Chanmugam and
Ernest MacIntyre.

Cultural Show in Seychelles



The above is from the Cultural Show by the young artistes depicting 'Thirumurai Varalaru' on the occasion of the Fourth Annual Sangabishegam of the Seychelles Nava Sakthi Vinayagar Temple.

The finale connected with the Sangabishegam was the first ever Carnatic Music Recital held on 9th June at the International Conference Centre. The popular vocalist Dr. Seerkhazli Siva Sithamparam son of the late legendary singer Seerkhazli Govindarajan gave a well attended recital which held the audience spell bound. He gave a free recital at the temple hall on 12th June.

Vina Arangetram of Harri Vrndavan Sivanesan



At Harri Sivanesan's Vina Arangetram one was aware that here indeed we have a young master, assured, competent, at times humorous, always composed. It was a joy for my wife and myself to be present on that day - 23.3.96 - at the Lewisham Theatre. The chief guest was Sri Viram Jasani, Chairman of the Asian Music Circuit. Guests of Honour were Mr. David Moore, Dr. M. Nandakumara, Bhavan's Executive Director and this reviewer.

Harri's playing that evening was of a standard of which his Guru Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan, Bhavan's resident teacher of Karnatic music could well be proud. Proud too must have been Harri's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sivanesan, for their son showed a maturity of talent, poise and even a touch of humour that impressed and enthused one and all.

Harri's programme commenced with a Varnam in the raga Purvikalyani followed by Gamganapate in raga Hamsadhvani and a piece by Dikshitar in the raga Amritavarshini, sensitively played. Harri continued with one of Tyagaraja's Pancharatna kritis in raga Gaula. His sense of rhythm was faultlessly displayed. Before the interval Harri's climax was a piece in raga Abheri by Mysore Vasudevachar Bhajarere manasa. It was in this piece that Harri showed his real skill in Manodharma sangita, with a beautiful alapana and faultless kalpana svaras. Harri's accompanists

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were Sri M. Balachandar on Mridangam, Bangalore Sri Prakash playing Ghatam and Sri K. Sithambaranathan Mursing. Supportive of Harri throughout the evening the three percussionists were as it were challenged by Harri's brilliance to give of their very best.

After the interval and a piece in Garudadhvani, Harri again brought to bear his talent for improvisation in the main raga of the evening, Mohanam. After a wonderful and sensitive alapana he executed a delightful tanam and then played pallavi in a cycle of 9 beats, Khandajati tripata. There ensued four lighter pieces in ragas Kanada, Ragamalika, Desh and Darbarikanada. The last was Hari tum haro by Mirabai. After speeches by the chief guest and guests of honour, Harri played Tillana, the joy of which was matched by the joy on Harri's countenance. He concluded with Tiruppukal and Mangalam.

Truly Harri's is a rare talent displayed at quite a tender age and one will watch his future under the guidance of his revered Guruji Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan with confident eagerness.

J.R. Marr.

Renowned Musician Sings at London Temples.

M.R. Vijaya, the renowned carnatic vocalist from India has arranged to give recitals of devotional songs at the seven Hindu temples in London along with her accompanists. The following is a programme of her recitals.

02.08.96 Friday 6 pm: Muttumari Amman Temple, 180 Upper Tooting High Street, Tooting, London SW17 7EN. Tel: 0181 767 9881/205 1089.

06.08.96 Tuesday 7.30 pm: Sri Rajarajeswari Amman Temple, Dell Lane, Stoneleigh, Surrey KT17 2NE. Tel: 0181 393 8147.

09.08.96 Friday 7.30 pm: London Murugan Temple, 78 Church Road, Manor Park, London E12 6AF. Tel: 0181 478 8433.

11.08.96 Sunday 4 pm: Sri Ganapathy Temple, 123-133 Effra Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8PU. Tel: 0191 542 7482.

13.08.96 Tuesday 8.30 pm: Shri Kanaga Thukai Amman Temple, 5 Chapel Road, West Ealing, London W13 9AE. Tel: 0181 810 0835.

16.08.96 Friday 5.30 pm: Highgate Murugan Temple, 200a Archway Road, London N6. Tel: 0181 348 9835.

18.08.96 Sunday 10 am: London Sivan Temple, 4A Clarendon Road, Lewisham, London SE13 5ES. Tel: 0181 318 9844.

London Tamil Centre's Cultural Evening



London Tamil Centre presented an enjoyable evening at University of London, Logan Hall on April 27th. It was a treat for art lovers and commenced with speeches by the winners of a Tamil speech contest. It was encouraging to note that the Tamil language flourishes among the younger generation. The second item was orchestral music. A combination of Veenas, Violins, Flutes and Miruthangams made music that was pleasing to the ear. The students of Sivatharini Sahathevan, Muthu Sivarajah, Kirubaharan, Gnanavarathan and Kothandapani had been well trained to produce this item of melodious music. Vocal music by students of Smt Saraswathy Packiarajah brought nostalgic memories. Forgotten pieces made famous by Vasanthakokilam brought back happy memories.

The highlight of the evening was the dance drama 'Chithira Pavai', based on one aspect of the epic 'Silapathikaram'. Kalaimamani Puthaneri Subramaniam had penned this scintillating drama, the main character of which was Madhavi, the mis-

triss of Kovalan. The dance was composed by Smt Uma Chandradeva and the drama was brought to life by Uma's stimulating choreography and vigorous training amply seen in the students' portrayal of the drama characters. Every step, every movement and every expression was carefully woven into the intricate plot. Kalakshetra's training methods shone beautifully in every scene. It is amazing that 33 students were trained to participate in this gigantic effort of staging a single drama. One should not forget the vocalist Smt Thilakasakthi Aravamuthan who sang with great flair. It is felt that this drama should be presented to a wider audience including the host community at a venue like the South Bank which will attract more attention to Tamil culture and arts. It is happy to know that this drama is being presented again on the 7th July in aid of the London Sivan Temple.

Janardhanan Ratnasabapathy.

Tamil Cricket and Netball Festival 1996

The United Tamils Organisation organised a well attended Cricket and Netball Festival for 20 UK based Old Students' Associations of Sri Lankan Tamil Schools on 27th May (Bank Holiday, Monday), at Wadham Lodge Sports Centre, Wadham Road, E17. Jaffna Hindu were the Cricket champions who defeated Jaffna Central in the final match of the tournament. The picture below shows, T. Pirabakaran, captain of the Jaffna Hindu team receiving the Championship cup from the renowned cricketer Sir Garfield Sobers, who was the Chief Guest of the Festival.



Chundikuli Girls' were the Netball champions after defeating Vembadi Girls' in the final match. The following awards were also made. **Man of the Tournament:**

Vijayanathan (Jaffna Hindu), Best Bowler: Raviraj (Jaffna Central), Best Batsman: Pirabharan (Jaffna Hindu), Man of the Match: Pirabharanathan (Jaffna Hindu).

In the competition for the best presented marquee put up by the partaking schools, the Urumpirai Hindu marquee was adjudged the best by the West Indian Wicket keeper Derek Murray, who coordinated the judging of the marquees.

There was an exhibition cricket match between UK county players and International Tamil players. The following represented the UK counties:- Chris Sutton & Ian Pearce (Blackburn Rovers), Derek Randall & Derek Murray (Notts), Philip De Freitas (Derbyshire), Russ Taylor (Arsenal), Steve Dock (Glamorgan). The Tamil players were Shanthikumar (Canada), Naguleswaran (New Zealand), Jeyenthiran (USA), Dr. M. Theivendra, Roy Selvarajah, Suben Senthilvel, and Vijayakumar (all of UK).

After the draw for the new Vauxhall car, which was raffled and a fireworks display which lasted about 10 minutes the festival drew to a close at about 9.30 p.m.

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