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Hot Spring

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A Journal of Commitment

"Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka: Your moment has yet to arrive", says TIME magazine.

(see Inside)

- ❑ Should be the UK govt. be aiding the Sri Lankan war?
- ❑ U.S. State Dept. Country Report on Sri Lanka
- ❑ The Chinese could be a model for the Tamil Diaspora
- ❑ East Timor moves rapidly away from Indonesia
- ❑ The role of the Tamil Expatriates *Editorial Comment*
- ❑ PLOTE: The metamorphosis
- ❑ Supportive "White Tiger" & unsupportive Tamils
- ❑ Robert Evans, British M.E.P on Sri Lanka's media blackout

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More of the Matrimonial Service

Tamil Tigress
(Courtesy: Independent on Sunday)

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Hot Spring
A Journal of commitment

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Editor
S.Sivanayagam

HOT SPRING
P.O.Box 14258
London
SW16 6ZU
UK

Fax: + 44 (0) 181 696 7761

e-mail: editor@hotspring.org
website: www.hotspring.org

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Editorial Comment

The Role of the Tamil Expatriates

A child of the new millennium asks: "Grandpa, where were you when the Tamil people were fighting for freedom in Sri Lanka ? ".

"Well, I was minding my own business, darling, and making pots of money, here in England".

"What was grandma doing then, grandpa ?

"Why,she was doing the same thing, minding her own business, honey, and helping me to spend that money".

That was an imagined futuristic dialogue. How about the present?

There are an estimated half a million Eelam Tamils, scattered across the five continents, and spread over at least 30 countries of the world. living in the most unlikely places from Poland to Papua New Guinea to Bangkok to Botswana; a good majority of them minding their own business.

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The third generation

They constitute two generations, sometimes three, as in Britain, with the third which could be considered a write-off. That generation may not even qualify to be a part of the Tamil diaspora. In their own time, they might be groping with the problem of self-identity, and may even harbour a grievance with their second generation Tamil parents.

Let us present here, for our readers, a montage of three aspects of expatriate life - all three real life happenings. It should serve as a mirror to look at ourselves as we should be seeing us.

Scene One: Three Tamils press the bell at the home of a Tamil somewhere in London. A little boy comes to the door. "Is your father home?", asks the visitors in Tamil. The boy blinks for a while, and shouts from the spot: "Dad, someone at the door speaking your language". Speaking YOUR language! Between two generations, the mother tongue itself had changed !

Scene Two: Two gentlemen in a car stop at the traffic lights somewhere on a London road. Another car comes and stops alongside A white-skinned man in the second car, appears to be in high spirits, lowers his window and shouts at the occupants of the first car: "P-AA-K-I-I !". Occupant of the first car, shouts back: NO, NO, SRI LANKA"! The answer from the other car : ooo- HEY. SRI LANKAN PAKI"! ("Paki" is a racist term used against all Asians in Britain).

Scene Three: This is from Canada. A marriage proposal is being discussed. Bride's party offers a certain sum of Canadian dollars A house in Jaffna is also thrown in. But bridegroom's party has an important point to be clarified. It must be a house that has not been shelled by the Sri Lankan army!

The Western rat race

Each of the above has a moral to offer. It is also time for introspection, by drawing the right conclusions from the above. Where have the expatriates positioned themselves in the context of the life and death struggle in which our kith and kin back home are involved.? Do they think they have a role to play at all? Many of the early professionals who settled down in the U.K. have joined the rat race, managed to beat the English natives in their own game and also managed in the process to acquire heart diseases and hypertension quicker than the white natives.All of that is commendable, but as to what percentage of those Tamil achievers have the Tamil interests at heart , or wish to preserve the Tamil identity for their future generations is a matter for speculation.

Contd. on Page 3

What They Say

"We need women in Parliament who would represent causes, instead of being elected merely because they are widows".

- Ms.Jezima Ismail, a prominent educationist quoted in Inter Press Service report, Feb.4.

* * * * *

"Democracy in our country is faci ng its gravest danger. We are fighting an unwinnable war in the North. The cost of living has gone through the roof. The economy is on the decline, and all election pledges lie broken. To cap it all, the government has unleashed carnage on its opponents, further dividing an already divided co untry" .

- Anura Bandaranaike interviewed in THE SUNDAY TIMES, Feb. 14.

* * * * *

"The LTTE representatives who met us in Mallawi had not mentioned anything about Eelam or separation. They only spoke about maintaining their socio-political identity and equality with other races in the country".

- Bishop Malcolm Ranjith, Bishop of Ratnapura, a member of the inter-religious delegation that visited Tiger-controlled area,speaking to SUNDAY OBSERVER, Feb. 14.

* * * * *

"I was one of the persons who totally opposed and said that the TULF should not contest in local council elections. I was given an assurance by our party president that we would not contest the election (in Jaffna). I left for New Delhi on December 12, 1997 to participate at a conference there. After my return only I understood that the TULF had filed nominations. Jaffna is very symbolic to the Tamil people. Whatever said and done this area was captured by a military force and the government itself announced that it had taken over Jaffna. At a time like that it is not proper for any Tamil to contest in an election which was purposely projected by the government to show to the international community that everything is perfectly alright in Jaffna."

- Batticaloa district Parliamentarian of the TULF, Mr.Joseph Pararajasingam, interviewed by the WEEKEND EXPRESS, Feb.13-14.

* * * * *

"(A homeland) is a place where an individual feels at home.... during the crisis periods of the past, the governments recognised the need to send the Tamils back to where they would feel secure and even chartered ships to do this. The Tamils feel the need to protect their traditional terrain and not let their way of life pass into history".

- Father Alfred Alexander, Regional Superior of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation, when asked to elaborate on the word "homeland" in an interview with SUNDAY LEADER, Feb.28.

* * * * *

International

"We do not want to be burdened by the problem of East Timor as of Jan.1, 2000".

- Indonesian President B.J.Habibie, after releasing East Timor Resistance leader Xanana Gusmao from jail and placing him under mere house arrest.

* * * * *

"Bill Clinton is a cold bastard who might have been killed if he had not been Governor of Arkansas".

- Mrs.Juanita Broaddrick (56), claiming that Clinton raped her in a hotel bedroom in 1978. when he was Governor.

* * * * *

"We will not give up Kosovo, even if we are bombed".

- Yugoslavia's Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, defying NATO threat.

* * * * *

"Men need marriage more than women do. A man without a wife is fragile: prisons are full of men who never married and unmarried men are more likely to die violently".

- Australian feminist and writer Germaine Greer, in her new book THE WHOLE WOMAN, quoted in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, London, Feb.22

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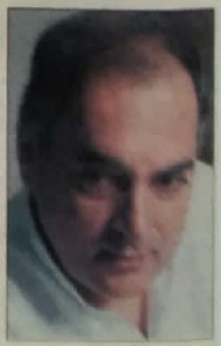

"Rajiv was baptised into Christianity and named Rajiv Roberto at a Turin church in Italy before he married Sonia".

- Vishwa Hindu Parishad Vice-President Acharya Giriraj Kishore

* * * * *

The Tamil expatriates are in miniature what the Jewish diaspora was, before they went and created their own homeland in disputed terrain. The Tamils are more fortunate. Their homeland is already there. It is only a question of preserving it from external colonisation and subjugation, and securing it for the future generations, so that they at least do not have to become runaways and asylum seekers in foreign countries. Some part of the tenacity that makes them survive successfully in alien surroundings is all what is required to preserve what after all is their own soil that bred them and sustained them and moulded them before they abandoned it physically. A sheer sense of gratitude alone dictates that.

Jewish diaspora

One does not have to live in one's own homeland to see the necessity to build up a nation state. The Jews are a classic example of a people, the majority of whom have always lived OUTSIDE the land they call their own. They continue to do so even today. There are more Jews living in the United States of America than in Israel, which probably accounts for the entrenched pro-Israel thrust of U.S. foreign policy at all times. It is to preserve one's own identity as a people and to hold one's head high in the outside world that one needs one's own nation state.

The LTTE Factor

There have been 55 million Tamils living in Tamil Nadu in India, but they could not create for themselves a defined ethnic recognition - either within the country or outside - despite living in a state that had its very name as Tamil Nadu. In New Delhi and in the North, they continued to be designated as "Madrasis" in the public eye, in a disparaging way, while in the world outside they were simply Indians - like all other Indians. It is the emergence of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and the cult figure of Prabhakaran, and their relentless fight against State terrorism that has today brought Tamils all over the world - including the non-Brahmin thinking sections of Tamils in Tamil Nadu - a new sense of pride and dignity that was never there before.

The backbone

The very fact that the Sri Lankan government recognises the Tamil expatriate community in the West as a potent supportive force to the liberation struggle back home, and the

very fact that Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar has been going round the world capitals pleading and cajoling world leaders to ban the LTTE in those countries, should awaken the eyes of the Tamil communities in the West to their own strength:this despite the sad fact that hardly 20 percent of Tamil expats are involved in some way or other in backing the struggle for Tamil rights. The rest of course are busy minding their own business. But yet, the Tamil diaspora is one of three main targets of the Sri Lankan war strategy, the other two being of course the LTTE, and the third - one section of the Tamils in the country , **not** the ones living in Jaffna and the East, **not** the growing number of Tamils living in Colombo and its suburbs , but those Tamils living in physical and emotional attachment to the Tigers in the Vanni mainland, and who, the government is convinced are the ones who are going to provide the backbone to the emerging Tamil Eelam. This is the reason why they,and they particularly, are being systematically deprived of food, medicine and nutrition for the young, thereby hoping to starve them and weaken them out of existence.

Talking of his own people, the American Negroes, Martin Luther King once said:

"Like all people, they (the blacks) have differing personalities, diverse financial interests, and varied aspirations. There are Negroes who will never fight for freedom. There are Negroes who will seek profit for themselves alone from the struggle. There even are some Negroes who will co-operate with the oppressors. These facts should distress no one. Every minority, and every people has its share of opportunists, profiteers, freeloaders and escapists .... No one can pretend that because a people may be oppressed, every individual member is virtuous and worthy. The real issue is whether in the great mass the dominant characterestics are decency, honour and courage".

Tamil expatriates can recognise themselves among the categories that Martin Luther King mentioned, or not mentioned. But ultimately, if Tamil expatriates feel they indeed have a role to play in the building of a nation state in their homeland, they, like the Jews of old, have to write that role for themselves, and believe like them that they are a special people with passion and unanimity.

S.Sivanayagam

An eyewash drama staged at Chemmani mass graves

The government must stop cheating us, say Jaffna's mothers and wives "What is the point in bringing a planeload of newspapermen here, without bringing Corporal Rajapakse who alone could have identified the area where our sons and husbands and brothers were buried ?", asked the aggrieved Tamil women when the government flew in a police investigative team along with 55 media personnel to the Cemmani mass graves site in Jaffna on Friday March 5

"The government must stop cheating us. This is only an eyewash drama, said some.

There were about 70 affected persons who had gathered at the scene, most of them women, despite tight security.

In Colombo, the government announced that their forensic experts had collected soil samples in that vast desolate muddy field to aheck whether there were human organism in the soil and also to decide whether the soil itself had been disturbed. While the Jaffna magistrate Mr.Ehanathan refused to be a party to the investigation despite government coercion, an additional magistrate named Mr.N.Arulsagaram was brought from Colombo to witness the proceedings, despite his stating that there was no point in his going to the site if only soil samples were to be taken.

Mrs.Satkunam, Secretary of the Mothers' Front said: "My son Nirmalan was taken away for inquiry by army personnel on July 9, 1997, and has disappeared since. There was a day curfew on that day, so on the following day we went to the army camp and inquired about his whereabouts. The army army men flatly denied that they had taken him, and they kept on saying it every day of the week. We complained to the Defence Ministry, the Human Rights Commission and to the President herself about many other disappearances as well, but with no result. Then we the parents and relatives got together and formed an association in order to carry on a joint protest campaign. Several months have gone since, while today in Jaffna, more persons continue to disappear, she said.

The wife of a teacher at Skantha Varodaya College, Jaffna, Mrs.Sriskaran says: "one night, army men came to our house and asked for one Sritharan. My husband said his name was not Sritharan, but Sriskaran. They said that he was the man they wanted and tried to take him away. He protested and brought his identity card to prove that his name was not Sritharan. But they were adamant. Our 3-year old son clung to his father's legs and cried, but they pushed him away and took my husband. Our son keeps on crying for his father to this day, she said.

There were more such tragic tales, but the government has been putting off excavat-ion of the site under some pretext or other Amnesty International have themselves commented that the government has been stalling the excavation.

■ ■ ■

Should the UK govt. be aiding the Sri Lankan war?

The CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE, London, recently put out a document titled: "The Supply of UK military equipment to Sri Lanka." Western readers not familiar with the background to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka will find in it a handy reference tool. The document's sober, reasoned advocacy against the UK government's military assistance to the Sri Lankan government's war against the Tamils will, we are sure, appeal to the generality of our readers. We reproduce here the document in toto.

- Editor, HS.

Introduction

For many years now there has been armed conflict in Sri Lanka between the government in Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who seek to establish a separate state for the Tamil-speaking areas in the north and east of the island. **Between 1983 and 1997 over 20,000 people were killed in action - and several hundreds died on both sides in a battle in September 1998. In addition at least 60,000 Tamil civilians have lost their lives, 450,000 have sought refugee status in Europe and elsewhere, and 900,000 (30 per cent of the Tamil population) have been displaced within the island.** On the other side, bomb blasts attributed to the Tigers have shattered parts of Colombo and other cities, and the hitherto admirable pace of social and economic development has been seriously slowed.

CAAT does not take a position on this conflict, apart from wishing that it would stop. It is very concerned, however, that in recent years the UK government has effectively given its backing to one of the parties to the dispute, in particular by assistance with military training and by licensing the sale of military equipment to the government forces.

Background

From time immemorial two peoples, with very distinct languages and cultures, have inhabited the island of Sri Lanka. The majority speak Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan language distantly related to those of northern India; about 18 per cent, however, concentrated in the north and east, speak Tamil, which is a member of the Dravidian family and the principal language of south India. (There has also been a more recent influx of Indian Tamils as plantation workers in the centre of the island.) The linguistic communities are, in addition, separated by religion, the Sinhalese being predominantly Buddhist, while the Tamils are Hindu, with a sizeable minority of Muslims; there are Christians in both communities. Until it became part of the British Empire, Sri Lanka was not politically united, and one of the three main kingdoms was Tamil-speaking.

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The island was, however, governed by the British as a unity and became independent in 1948 as a unitary state. Ethnic tensions began to emerge almost immediately, as the Sinhalese used their majority to improve their position at the expense of the Tamils. In the colonial period the Tamils had taken more advantage of Western education than the Sinhalese and so had a disproportionate share of the bureaucracy.

The measures taken to redress the balance were arbitrary and discriminatory. **The million Tamil-speaking plantation workers were immediately disfranchised (as being not "real" Sri Lankans.) Groups of Sinhalese were settled in the East in order to disintegrate the Tamil homeland. Measures were taken to disadvantage Tamils in education and employment. The Sinhala Only Act was passed in 1956, removing the Tamil language from government, and Buddhism was declared to be the religion of the state.** (There is a fairly close parallel in the old Ulster slogan: "A Protestant State for a Protestant People", which similarly declared a cultural minority to be second-class citizens.) In addition the government was suspected of sponsoring a pogrom in which Sinhalese mobs murdered more than 150 Tamils.

Later on, the Sinhala Only policy was modified, but Buddhist and militant Sinhalese pressure groups made real reform impossible, and Tamil resentment culminated in the formation in 1972 of the Tamil New Tigers, the nucleus of the LTTE, under the leadership of Mr Vellupillai Prabakaran. In 1977 Tamils voted overwhelmingly for the formation of a free Tamil nation ("Tamil Eelam"). The sequel was another massive pogrom in which more than 300 Tamils died and 120,000 were displaced. **In 1983 there were even worse riots, with massive killings, rapes and burnings. 3,000 Tamils died from this government-sponsored Sinhala Buddhist fanaticism. This was the signal for the beginning of open war, which has lasted with occasional intermissions to the present day.**

The Government of India viewed the conflict in its close neighbour with growing disquiet, not least because of its own large Tamil population, and in 1987 the Indo-Lanka Accord enabled it

to send a peacekeeping force. Its aim was to separate the combatants and broker a negotiated settlement. But when it tried to disarm the Tigers it met with fierce resistance and decided to withdraw in 1989, after 6,000 Tamil civilians had lost their lives.

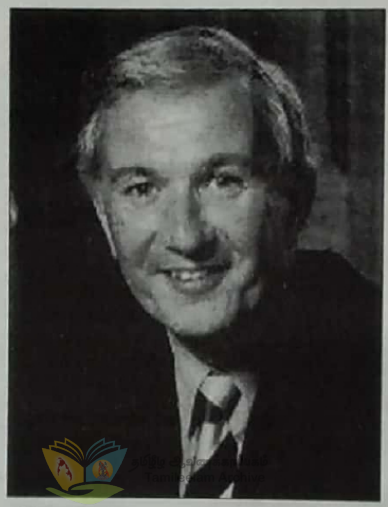
In 1994 Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga won an election on a peace platform, and hostilities briefly ceased. She was unable to offer more than a truce, however, or to lift the economic embargo which had been imposed on the Tamil North since 1991. Peace talks broke down, and since 1995 there has been no sign of compromise on either side. Between October 1996 and March 1997 the government forces captured the Jaffna peninsula, which contains the principal Tamil city, and in October 1997 the Sri Lankan commander was confident of finishing the war in the next two or three years (*Jane's Defence Weekly, 15.10.97*) **So far, however, he has been unable to open the road to Jaffna from the south or to break the resistance of the Tigers in the east.**

Sri Lanka and its Military

The cost of the conflict continues to rise. In constant prices military expenditure increased from $311m in 1985 to $663m in 1995 and $867m in 1996. **The last figure represented $47 per head (the highest ratio in central and south Asia) and 6.5 per cent of GDP (a ratio exceeded only by Myanmar and Tajikistan).** (Source: The Military Balance,1997/8). (The IMF urges a maximum of 2 per cent for developing countries.) The defence budget declined slightly in 1997, when an early victory was expected, but rose again in 1998, when it was allotted 13.7 per cent of total expenditure. The effect on Sri Lanka's social development, which formerly won high praise, has been dramatic. Health expenditure declined from 6.4 per cent of the budget in 1979 to 0.94 per cent in 1994, and the share of education has been cut by more than half.

In September 1998 the government was forced to ask Parliament for an additional $184m, resulting in an increase of 28 per cent in the military budget for the year.

The size of the Army has been multiplied more than ten times, from 10,500 in 1980 to 135,000 in 1997 and the total strength of the armed forces stands at nearly 160,000 (*Weekend Express, 25-26 April 1998*). The politicians in fact have created a monster which is now itself a major political force and, in the opinion of many observers, a threat to Sri Lanka's democracy. Even if the government were ready to compromise with the LTTE, the Army would probably not allow them to do so.



The UK government's wish is for a lasting and just peace, says Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett!

The Army has been equipped from a variety of sources. It has some old Soviet tanks, purchased from the Czech Republic in 1996, a miscellany of lighter armoured vehicles, (including some of British manufacture) and artillery pieces. The Air Force possesses elderly US fighters and a few more modern Israeli Kfirs, as well as US and Russian attack helicopters. The Navy consists of two Chinese medium landing ships, and about 40 patrol vessels, some Chinese, others built locally under licence from Israel.

The Tigers are equipped almost entirely with light weapons, including shoulder-held missiles which have destroyed a number of government aircraft. Some of this armament has been captured from government forces. The source of the rest is not known, but such weapons are not difficult to acquire in the marketplace by those who have the money; and the Tamil diaspora is reputed to contribute something like £1.25m a month to the cause (*Times, 23.10.97*).

UK Policy and Practice

In the early years of the conflict the West, including the UK, was cool towards the Sri Lankan government, which was supposed to be left-leaning as well as being guilty of serious human rights abuses. As a result it turned elsewhere for its military supplies, mostly to China and Pakistan. Opinion began to shift after the failure of the Indian intervention, especially as the regime was becoming more capital-friendly.

As late as 1991, however, the government expelled the UK High Commissioner for making unfavourable comments about its behaviour, and the UK responded with a total arms embargo, among other measures. But the row was quickly patched up and the embargo was lifted in October 1992. Aid programmes were also resumed, and have been running at around £8m a year. In a BBC discussion in May 1993 the Minister for Arms Procurement, Jonathan Aitken, denied that the UK either sold or licensed the sale of arms to Sri Lanka or had done so within recent memory. But by 1995, after the breakdown of peace negotiations in Sri Lanka, government statements reported that, since the government's human rights performance had improved, it had been possible to approve more export licenses for the sale of military equipment to Sri Lanka.

Foreign Office policy was expounded by the Minister of State, Jeremy Hanley: "We examine each case on its merits, paying particular attention to the Sri Lankan Government's human rights record". So far, this was a routine formula, but the next words were very revealing: ". . . bearing in mind their right to defend themselves against military attack" (Hansard,

24.11.95, col. 389). In other words, the Tamils were perceived, not as citizens engaged in a civil war, but as foreign enemies.

They have thus found themselves confronting an inveterate Foreign Office dogma, namely that the paramount principle is not self-determination but the right of recognised states to preserve themselves intact. It could follow that the provision of arms to the Sri Lanka government would be perceived as justifiable and even righteous, however bloody the consequences.

The position has not been materially altered by the change of government. In September 1997 the Foreign Office told a delegation of Tamil lawyers that it did not ban arms sales to the Sri Lankan government (Tamil Guardian, 6.9.97). More recently, it replied to an enquiry from CAAT by saying that licences were considered *"case by case with reference to our national criteria and the EU Code of Conduct, paying particular attention to the Sri Lankan Government's human rights record, and bearing in mind their legitimate defence and domestic security interests"*. (Derek Fatchett to Ann Feltham, 7.9.98). **These, it appears, include the determination to crush Tamil resistance by force.**

In the first year of the present government 67 licences were granted for the sale of military equipment to Sri Lanka (House of Commons, written answer to a question by Mr Menzies Campbell, 26.3.98). Arithmetically this places the country in fourth place among the recipients of UK arms, behind India, Turkey and Pakistan. This ranking clearly does not reflect the actual value or volume of supplies, which it is impossible to discover under the present system of reporting. Two licences, for example, were placed in the category ML10, which covers combat aircraft and crash helmets! 20 were for "electronic equipment, specially designed for military use". 17 were in ML1 (small arms) and 4 in ML2 (large calibre weapons, probably mortars). Since this is essentially an infantry war, these supplies could have been of the greatest significance.

Oxfam has recently drawn attention to the scandal of the UK's secretive and virtually unreported role in the world's small arms trade. It found that "at least 120 UK firms were involved in the manufadure and supply of small arms and ammunition", which were "exported to over 100 countries throughout the world", including at least 42 which were requiring Oxfam's help. 50 per cent of UK exports went to countries suffering political violence or high intensity or low-intensity conflict (*Oxfam, Small Arms, Wrong Hands, 1998*). Sri Lanka certainly comes into the high-intensity category.

Early in 1998 the Sri Lankan Navy took delivery of a medium-lift hovercraft designed ABS Hovercraft of Romsey and built by Vosper Thorneycroft (*Jane's International Defence Review, no.1, 1998; Hot Spring, July 1998*). This is one of the first such vessels to be specifically designed for military use. It is armed with a 20mm cannon and could be fitted with missiles. It has a range of 600 km and can carry 56 troops, or 20 troops with two Landrovers or any similar combination. The role of such a vessel in providing the government forces with the mobility they need in a small-scale but widespread conflict is transparent.

"It is clear that the government was not in full control of its security services"

In the autumn of 1997 the government was said to be "in the final stages" of buying 3 RAF C-130 Hercules transport planes for £3m apiece, with crew training provided, in order to provide on air bridge for the beleaguered garrison of Jaffna (JDW, 22.10.97). In the following summer, this was still only a "plan" (JIDR, 5, 1998). Funds are allocated for it in the latest budget (JDW, 30.9.98), but it is not clear whether the sales have yet been authorised.

Export of military personnel can be as significant as the export of arms. In late 1997 two UK lieutenant-colonels visited Sri Lanka to advise on the setting up of an Army Staff College and since the beginning of this year a Colonel has been seconded as an instructor at the college, at a cost to the UK of £116,991 per annum. In addition, £27,744 was spent in 1997/8 on the training of Sri Lankan officers at Sandhurst and the Royal College of Defence Studies (*Hansard, 22.7.98, col 543; 23.7.98, col 609; 29.7.98, col 319*).

Conclusions

There are obvious reasons why the UK government should not be permitting the export of military equipment to Sri Lanka. **One is that the state to which it is lending assistance has a very poor human rights record.** In an episode quite unconnected with Tamil separatism, a left-wing insurgency among young Sinhalese in the south of the island was suppressed with exceptional brutality. By 1991 the "disappearances" and extra-judicial executions of Tamils had reached "tragic proportions", resulting in an investigation by a UN Working Group. Although the government made some attempt to implement its recommendations, with the setting up of a Human Rights Task Force, Amnesty international is still far from satisfied. "The fact remains", it reports, "that disappearances have continued to occur at a high rate". It is also very concerned about the operation of Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which allows for up to 18 months' detention on administrative order. (*AI Index: ASA 37/04/ 98*).

In 1996, Amnesty, while welcoming "a marked improvement in comparison with the widespread pattern of gross and systematic violations in previous years", had found that these instruments fell "far short of international standards" and provided "a ready context for torture, death in custody, 'disappearances' and extrajudicial executions" (*AI Index: ASA 37/08/96*). **It is clear that the government was not in full control of its security services. Some of the worst violations**

were committed by Tamil dissidents working with the government forces.

Conversely, the LTTE is accused of murdering those it considers to be traitors, and of other "grave human rights abuses, including deliberate and arbitrary killing of Sinhalese civilians. .., torture and ill treatment of prisoners" and the forcible recruitment of children (*ASA 37/08/96*). The Tigers are extraordinarily brave and devoted, but they have not helped their cause by actions such as the suicide bombing of the Central Bank in Colombo on 31 January 1996, which resulted in the death of 90 civilians. None of this, however, balances the massive disruption of the lives of Tamil civilians caused by the continuing pressure of the Sri Lankan state forces, the bombing of schools, hospitals and churches and the ongoing record of violations by the security forces. **According to the US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997, "torture remained a serious problem and prison conditions remained poor. Arbitrary arrests - including short-term mass arrests and detentions - continued. Police and army and navy personnel committed extrajudicial killings in both Jaffna and the Eastern provinces", the exact number being impossible to ascertain because of censorship and lack of regular access to the war areas.**

Even if the Sri Lanka government's treatment of the Tamil population were impeccable, however, there would remain the simple fact that the country is in the grip of a savage civil war. The UK government, through the Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett, has declared its wish for "a lasting and just peace" and has offered its services as a mediator (*Hansard, 25.1 1.97, col 768; 10.2.98, col.145-6*). **It is hard to reconcile this stance with a partisan support for one of the contending parties, still less with arms sales which can only help to intensify the carnage.**

November 1998.

11 Goodwin St, Finsbury Park, London N4 3HQ.
Tel: 0171 281 0297 Fax: 0171 281 4369
caat@gn.apc.org

Britain backs controversial dam

Tamileelam Archive

A project to build a dam which will wipe out scores of Kurdish towns and villages and destroy a site of international archaeological interest is to be underwritten by the British government to the tune of £200 million.

Balfour Beatty, the company which was the lead contractor which was the lead contractor in the ill-starred Pergau Dam project in Malaysia, is being supported by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in its bid to build the Ilisu dam in Turkey- despite the fact it would contravene both the Foreign Office's ethical policy and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's recently announced environmental aims.

The proposed dam is on the Tigris River, 40 miles upstream of the Syrian-Iraq border, in the heart of the Kurdish populated area. It will produce hydro-electricity and will be used for irrigation . Demand for electricity is increasing by 8 per cent a year in Turkey and frequent power cuts are inhibiting economic growth.

The reservoir will flood 52 villages and 15 towns, including Hasankeyf, a Kurdish town of 5,500 people and the only town in the region of Anatolia which has survived since the Middle Ages. The town was awarded archaeological protection by the Turkish government in 1978.

Tony Juniper; of Friends of the Earth, said : "We have to stop this project before the British government is party to fermenting war in the Middle East, destroying part of the homelands of the Kurdish people and major environmental destruction."

The World Bank has refused to have anything to do with the £1 billion Ilisu dam project. The bank believes the project violates the UN convention aimed at preventing border disputes and wars between states that share water resources . . .

Balfour Beatty was at the centre of the Pergau dam battle in Malaysia. That project become mired in controversy after Britain ignored warnings that the project was unsuitable on environmental grounds and gave a large chunk of its aid budget to build the dam, because Malaysia was buying arms from British manufacturers.

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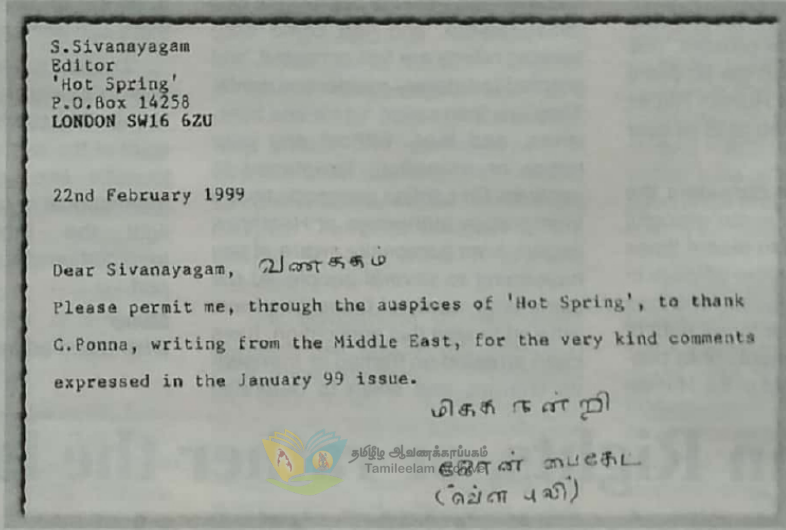
LETTERS

"Supportive 'White Tiger' And Unsupportive Tamils"

"Vella Puli" ("White Tiger") writes:-

I have often said, when speaking with Sri Lankan Tamils, "that I am part of your recent history", albeit somewhat 'accidentally'. To be remembered for the small part I was able to play would be reward enough but the "honoured place" belongs to those who have 'supported the struggle' for many a year and those who have died in the fight to secure basic human rights; an objective that has still to be realised.

On the matter of 'unsupportive Tamils', I have no useful comment to offer as I do not have the evidence or statistics to prove the point either way, but would make the following observations:



S.Sivanayagam
Editor
'Hot Spring'
P.O.Box 14258
LONDON SW16 6ZU

22nd February 1999

Dear Sivanayagam, வணக்கம்

Please permit me, through the auspices of 'Hot Spring', to thank G.Ponna, writing from the Middle East, for the very kind comments expressed in the January 99 issue.

மிக்க நன்றி

தமிழீழ ஆவணக்காப்பகம்
Tamileelam Archive

என் அன்புடன்
(வெள்ள புலி)

There are many ways of supporting the 'cause'; military service, political activity, administrative support, welfare work, fundraising, the donation of financial and other resources, speaking at meetings, writing or publishing articles' etc. All are necessary parts of the total effort. And yes, it is true that there are those who do not support the LTTE and those who play no part at all. This is the 'human factor'; it is their right and it is a quintessential part of the democratic model.

Exodus 1995

And why do I continue to try and 'do my bit'?

I experienced, for the first time in my life, the horrors of war; the incessant shelling and bombing, the severe injuries and death that resulted from those military operations, the loss of a friend due to shelling and the loss of a young member of my staff in a land-mine explosion.

At the end of 1995, when we all had to evacuate from Valikamam, during the only three days it rained in that Maha season, I saw my grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters among the mass of 'wretched humanity' that surged along roads of mud with heavy hearts and hopelessness - the only thing shining from their eyes.

During those times, many people pleaded with me to help them by taking their story to the world outside. "Why don't the UN or the Western Powers come to our aid as they have done in other parts of the World", they asked. To my shame (and to support C.Ponna's assertion) I answered by saying, **"Sri Lanka is not on Europe's or the USA's doorstep and you have no oil"**. I have often been called cynical but to paraphrase another saying, 'One man's cynicism is another man's truth'.

C.Ponna's wife was quite correct in suggesting that her husband had given my humanitarian motives a "political cast". Are the two not inextricably linked? I certainly have seen the cruelty and injustice that Tamils suffer and I am also aware of the Sinhalese who have experienced the same. There seems to be no monopoly in Sri Lanka, when it comes to cruelty and injustice: Sinhalese and Tamils kill their own as well as those from other ethnic groups. The solution can never be a military one - a political solution is the foundation on which a just and equitable humanitarian response can be built. "Revolution changes everything - except men's hearts".

In closing, I would like to comment on the reference made to "traumatised Tamil children" by Mrs.C.Ponna. I myself am suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression as a result of my experiences in Jaffna and the lack of awareness and concern about the situation in Sri Lanka. We see and read plenty on similar conflicts.

40 bodies & 400

Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Kosovo and now the Kurds - why not Sri Lanka? **Forty bodies discovered in a shallow grave in Kosovo is horrific but will anything at all be done about the 400 bodies in Chemmani?**

My mental state compares little with the thousands who suffer serious trauma and mental disorder in Sri Lanka, particularly on the Jaffna peninsula. Houses can be rebuilt; fields can be replanted; shops can be restocked but the damage caused to those caught up in the atrocities of war may never be healed but this post-war aspect of rehabilitation must be addressed as a priority.

LETTERS

Tamil Refugees and Immigration officials

Editor
HOT SPRING

Dear Sir,

We Tamils who aame to Britain as refugees and otherwise, take pride in the fact that ths country is a bastion of democracy and human freedoms. Having ruled us Tamils for 150 years, but left us at Sinhala mercy in 1948, which being the reason we are being forced to flee to this country too, we feel that Britain has at least some moral obligation to show concern. This is also the year in which the 50 years of the Proclamation of Human Rights by the UN is being celebrated all over the world.

But Sir, when one considers the procedures - or rather some wrongful procedures - adopted in recent times by the British Immigration officials in respect of Tamil refugees, one has serious doubts over the moral right of England, or its government , or its people to be in the vanguard of the Human Rights movement in the world. It is a matter of regret and shame that the Immigration authorities are indulging in activities that are in complete contravention of, and diametrically opposed to, the Declaration of Human Rights.

These unfortunate refugees who had escaped from the oppression of a racist regime, and had come here seeking refuge are first accepted, and granted temporary residential rights. They are then called for routine interviews, and then, without any prior notice or intimation, threatened to apply for Sri Lankan passports by the Immigration authorities at Heathrow airport. I am personally aware of this happening to several people. At the same time, some of those who have refused to sign this application, have been arrested on framed or trumped-up charges and taken to detention camps in remote areas, miles away from their area of abode.

Is it just or humane to coerce these people who have come fleeing from repression, torture, disappearances and killings, to apply for a passport to that very same country, and for failing to do sp, to detain them and harass them with deportation orders?

It seems to me to be a hollow gesture to celebrate the Declaration of Human Rights while acting against the spirit of the same Declaration. I wish journals like yours and Amnesty International in particular would spotlight the arbitrary actions of Immigration officials at Heathrow airport.

Mano
(Name and address supplied)

●●●

Human Rights, or rather the lack of them are an international concern

Editor
HOT SPRING

Mr.P.Varothayasingam of Carshal ton SM5 3RA, U.K. writes:

It remains to be seen whether the "Interim Deal" reached under intense American pressure will lead to a permanent solution short of full independence for Kosovo.

A vital principle of International Law, originally proclaimed at the Nuremburg Trials, is that tyrannical leaders will be held personally responsible for crimes against humanity carried out by their henchmen. The forcible occupation of "Tamil Eelam" by Sri Lanka (and the consequent imprisonment, torture, killing, starvation, and massacre of Tamils, prohibition of journalists, censorship of news) is tyranny of a larger nation (Sri Lanka) on a smaller nation (Tamil Eelam)

Those in charge of Sri Lankan government and its security forces at this point in time can therefore be brought under the above Nuremberg principle and be held personally responsible for the crimes committed against the Tamils.

Another Nuremberg doctrine - that some crimes are so terrible that countries have the right to intrude on the sovereignty of others in order to bring perpetrators to justice - has been advanced significantly in recent times. The ad hoc courts set up at The Hague to try Bosnian war criminals can now be universalised. The important point is that the world has changed, and changed profoundly. Human Rights, or rather the lack of them, are an international concern being dealt with at international level in a way that has revolutionised the concept of sovereignty and the place of international law.

The joint Sinhala-Tamil sovereignty over the island was broken in 1972 when the Soulbury Constitution (under which British granted independence in 1948) was abolished and another put in place overiding the wishes of the elected representatives of the Tamils. The democratic wish of the Tamils was demonstrated at the 1977 General Elections, the last legitimate elections. Being directly elected on a Tamil Eelam mandate was a superior mandate compared to any indirect election

Tamils always elected Tamil candidates belonging to Tamil parties No Sinhala political party ever had any significant support in Tamil areas. So Tamil Eelam was never morally a constituent part of Sinhala Sri Lanka.

LETTERS

Notorious "Nepocracy" & a spineless electorate

Mr. Sachi Sri Kantha, of
5-16-305 Tsukimicho,
Fukuroi City,
Shizuoka 437-0126, Japan. writes:-

S.Sivanayagam
Editor
HOT SPRING

Feb.18, 1999.

The tug of war reported in the *Hot Spring* of Jan. 1999 between Chandrika Kumaratunga and her mother Sirimavo Bandaranaike regarding the displacement ot' Mrs.B's secretary prompted me to write this note. Sri Lanka is curren}y ruled by a triumvirate: Chandrika, Sirimavo (mother of Chandrika) and Anuruddha Ratwatte (uncle of Chandrika). it appears that not much has changed sinee the *Time* magazine published its now-famous 'ruling clan-family tree' of Sirimavo Bandaranaike in its Dec. 15, 1975 issue.

This particular issue was then banned in Sri Lanka. At that time, Sirimavo was at helm as the prime minister, with an uncle William Gopallawa as the president and the nephew Felix Dias Bandaranaike as the master pitchman. Even the then unsmarried Chandrika Bandaranaike (aged 30) was placed prominently in that family tree published by the *Time* magazine, as the Director of the I.and Reform Commission.

This suggests that the post-independent Sri Lankan version of democracy should be more aptly called a nepocracy (a cross between nepotism and democracy). The word nepotism is derived from the ancient practice on the part of Popes and other eclesiastics of showing special favor to nephews (since Popes have to be celibate) or other relatives in conferring offices. In the Sri .Lankan version of democracy, the predominant role of uncles and nephews (and nieces) in politics is notoriously noticeable.

It is not for joke that the acronym UNP was popularly identified as the Uncle Nephew Party in the 1950s, based on the links of Senanayakes and Kotelawala. Even after Dudley Senanayake's (a bachelor) death in 1973, his nephew (who else) Rukman Senanayake represented the Dedigama electorate till 1977. Then J.R.Jayewardene becarne the strong-man of UNP and he threw out Rukman Senanayake. The current leader of UNP is also a nephew of J.R.Jayewardene. Not to be outdone, the party of Bandaranaikes also had a nephew? Felix Dias Bandaranaike, who played the conductor role in Sirimavo's two Cabinets (1961-65 and 1970-77). Since 1994, Sirimavo's daughter Chandrika has been leaning heavily on her uncle Anuruddha Ratwatte.

Por comparison of democratic practice, just look at the politics in USA. Even the wealth of Kennedys and Rockefellers could not buy much political clout with the Democratic and Republican parties respectively. Furthermore, John F.Kennedy and S.W.R D Bandaranaike shared a common fate. Due to assassin's bullets, they could not complete their elected terms what happened after their untimely deaths? **Jacqueline Kennedy was not chosen as the leader of the Democratic Party, just because she was the spouse of the departed leader But in Sri Lanka, Sirimavo (unskilled and inexperienced!) catapulted to power in 1960 as a sobbing widow after her husband's assassination in 1959. Her only qualification was that she was the wife of the :murdered prime minister.** Her current position as the prime minister is a joke. She is ailing and hardly has an appetite or energy to work. But she is clinging to power, and her daughter (however uncomfortable) is retaining her mother at public expense, just to give the old madam an aura of dignified presence and probably to provide a dignified state funeral in the not so near future. In other democratic countries with a mature electorate, such an abuse of public trust and money would have been unthinkable But in Sri Lanka with such a spineless electorate, nepocracy rules.

Nepocracy has also spread its tentacles from the political arena into judiciary, armed forces and mass media. Since 1948, the real power has been concentrated in the hands of six or seven feudal families with the names such as Attygalles, Wijewardenes, Senanayakes, Bandaranaikes, Ratwattes and Jayewardenes. It is high time now, that someone has to prepare an up-date of the 1975 *Time* magazine's 'ruling clan-family tree'.

Finally, I wish to add that the crux of this communication was sent previously first to the *Lanka Guardian* and then to the *Tamil Times* (in 1995), but for understandable reasons, it had gone unpublished. So, I forward this to *Hot Spring* now so that it sees the light.

Are those statues there?

Editor
HOT SPRING

I lived in Colombo for nearly 30 years before coming to live in Britain in late 1977. At the time I lived in Colombo, I have a distinct impression that the statues of the Ponnambalam brothers - Sir P.Arunachalam and Sir P.Ramanathan adorned the frontage of the then Parliament building at Galle Face. My nephew who returned after a short visit there says he doesnt think the statues are there. I am not sure whether he is mistaken. Will any of your readers be in a position to satisfy my curiosity about this?

T.P
Croydon
(Name and address supplied)

DEMOCRACY - AN OBITUARY!

There has been so much mourning over the fate of Democracy in Sri Lanka after the North-western provincial elections in Wyamba concluded recently that it is worth recalling a previous occasion when Democracy died under tragic circumstances! President Chandrika's recent achievement at Wayamba palls in comparison with what her mother Mrs.Bandaranaike pulled off when she was in power 25 years ago.

O'CRAZY: THE DEATH OCCURRED UNDER TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCES OF D.E.M.O.CRAZY, BELOVED HUSBAND OF TRUTH, LOVING FATHER OF L.I.BERTY, BROTHER OF FAITH, HOPE AND JUSTICE. INTERRED ON SATURDAY 24 TH.

On April 20, 1974, the Government of Sri Lanka banned all opposition meetings and demonstrations which had been scheduled for the next day, in protest against the soaring cost of living. It also shut down the only independent newspaper group which voiced such opposition and clamped a 24-hour stay indoor curfew on the people. Two days later, to the consternation of the Government, the State-controlled CEYLON DAILY NEWS carried the above Obituary notice:

(Reproduced from READERS DIGEST, September 1974, under the heading "Sad to report)

Democracy - A definition

"Democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people"

- Oscar Wilde

(said long before the Wayamba election)

Ashraff on Democracy

"Everybody knows how the Jaffna District Development Council (DDC) elections were held during the UNP regime. Tamil people were not given chances to elect their prefential candidates. Goondas were sent by train from Kurunegala to Jaffna, and due to that, those DDCs ended in failure"

- Minister M.H.M.Ashraff speaking at a Rotary Club meeting at the Colombo Hilton.

* * * * *

"Because the Tamil people lost faith in democracy, a Prabhakaran emerged and if the south also loses faith, there will be another armed struggle".

- quoted by Suranimala in SUNDAY LEADER.

* * * * *

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EXCERPTS

U.S. State Dept. Country Report on Sri Lanka for 1998

❋ Sri Lanka is a longstanding democratic republic with an active multiparty system. Constitutional power is shared between the popularly elected President and the 225-member Parliament. President Chandrika Kumaratunga leads the governing People's Alliance (PA), a coalition of parties. Both the Parliament and the President were elected in free and fair elections in 1994. The Government respects constitutional provisions for an independent judiciary.

For the past 15 years the Government has fought the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an insurgent organization fighting for a separate state for the country's Tamil minority. The conflict has claimed over 55,000 lives. In May 1997 the fighting intensified, with the Government launching a major offensive aimed at opening a land route to the Jaffna peninsula through LTTE-controlled territory in the north. The offensive, which concluded in December, has resulted in approximately 5,000 combatants killed on both sides and has displaced tens of thousands of persons from their homes.

❋ The Government controls all security forces. The 50,000-member police force is responsible for internal security in most areas of the country and also has been used in military operations against the LTTE. The 118,000-member army (which includes the Army Volunteer Force), the 15,000-member navy and 17,000-member air force bear principal responsibility for conducting operations against the LTTE insurgents. The Police Paramilitary Special Task Force (STF) also battles the LTTE. The more than 15,000-member Home Guards, an armed force drawn from local communities and responsible to the police, provides security for Muslim and Sinhalese village communities in or near the war zone. **The Government also arms and directs various Tamil militias opposed to the LTTE, although at times these groups act independently of government authority. During the year, some members of the security forces committed serious human rights abuses.**

❋ Sri Lanka is a low-income country with a market economy that is based on the export of textiles, tea, rubber, coconuts, and gems and on earnings from tourism and repatriated earnings of citizens employed abroad. The gross domestic product per capita is approximately $850. The economy's growth rate was 6.8 percent in 1997 and growth for 1998 was expected to be 5.0 percent due to continued strong garment and tea exports. In 1997 the Government made significant steps toward economic reform and liberalization, including privatizing some government enterprises and promoting foreign investment and trade. These steps continued in 1998.

❋ The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens in areas not affected by the insurgency; **however, the ongoing war with the LTTE continued to be accompanied by serious human rights abuses by the security forces. Security forces committed at least 33 extrajudicial killings, and apparently killed prisoners captured on the battlefield. In addition, up to 11 individuals disappeared from security force custody in Vavuniya and in the east. At least 25 other persons reportedly disappeared or were killed after last being seen near the army's forward defense lines in the north, areas that civilians are ordered by the military to avoid. The circumstances of such disappearances and killings were unclear. Torture remained a serious problem, and prison conditions remained poor. Arbitrary arrests—including short-term mass arrests and detentions— continued, often accompanied by failure of the security forces to comply with some of the protective provisions of the Emergency Regulations (ER). Impunity for those responsible for human rights abuses remained as a serious problem. No arrests were made in connection with the disappearance and presumed killing of at least 350 LTTE suspects in Jaffna in 1996 and 1997. Progress was made in a few longstanding high profile cases of extrajudicial killing and disappearance. However, in most cases, no progress was made, or there was no investigation or prosecution at all, giving the appearance of impunity for those responsible for human rights violations. The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights and at times restricted freedom of the press. The Government engaged in direct censorship of domestic newspaper reporting and foreign television broadcasts on military and some security operations from June through the end of the year. On occasion security forces harassed journalists. There were some restrictions on freedom of movement. Discrimination and violence against women, child prostitution, and child labor continued to be problems.**

❋ In positive developments, the Government took steps to control the abuses. The national Human Rights Commission (HRC) continued its oper-

ations at 10 offices around the nation; however, **human rights observers believed that the HRC was not pursuing aggressively its mandate due to poor leadership.** The Government also established a cabinet-level committee to inquire into undue arrest and harassment, initially known as the Anti-Harassment Committee, to investigate complaints and take remedial action as necessary to alleviate problems associated with alleged harassment and arrests and other security force actions. In the Krishanthi Kumaraswamy murder and rape case, in which a young woman and three other individuals were killed in September 1996 in Jaffna, the Government concluded an expedited trial for the eight persons accused, the ninth having died of natural causes. The trial, which began in September 1997, ended on July 3. Six of the accused were found guilty and sentenced to death; the two other accused persons were acquitted. One of the soldiers convicted claimed to have knowledge of a mass grave at Chemmani in Jaffna where the bodies of up to 400 Tamils killed by security forces were buried. **The Government has been slow to investigate this claim.** There was no attempt, as in the past, to use the ER to cover up security force misdeeds. Through its rulings, the judiciary continued to exhibit its independence and uphold individual civil rights. Government security forces continued to take effective measures to limit civilian casualties during military operations. The Government also continued to provide relief to those displaced by the conflict even though many were still in areas under LTTE control such as the Vanni area. **However, government restrictions on medical supplies and a significant reduction in food rations contributed to poor health conditions for civilians in the Vanni.** Three regional commissions established to investigate disappearances over the period from 1988 to 1994 completed their investigations in 1997 and their reports finally were made public in February. The reports concluded that more than 16,000 persons had disappeared after having been forcibly removed by security forces (including paramilitary organizations) and antigovernment elements, primarily the leftist Janetha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Following their publication, the Government began submitting cases of alleged human rights abuses to the Attorney General's office for review and possible prosecution of those involved. The Attorney General had referred over 100 indictments to the courts and action reportedly had been filed against 28 security force personnel by year's end. A fourth commission was established in May to investigate

those cases of disappearance that the first three commissions could not investigate before their mandates expired.

*** There are several former Tamil insurgent organizations that now are aligned with the Government. These progovernment Tamil militants sometimes committed extrajudicial killings and were responsible for disappearances, torture, detentions, extortion and forced conscription in Vavuniya and the east. The military wing of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) committed many such abuses. The Government took no clear action to stop such abuses.**

* The LTTE attacked civilians during the course of the year. The LTTE regularly committed extrajudicial killings, including killing prisoners taken on the battlefields, and also was responsible for disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and extortion. The LTTE killed 13 worshipers, including several children, in a truck bombing of the "Temple of the Tooth" on January 25. The temple is the holiest Buddhist shrine in the country. On March 5, a vehicle bomb in downtown Colombo killed 36 persons, including the LTTE suicide bomber. More than 250 persons were injured in the attack. The LTTE also killed the newly elected mayor of Jaffna on May 17 and killed a Tamil Member of Parliament, his 3-year-old son, and three others on July 15. On September 11, a powerful LTTE bomb in a municipal building in Jaffna killed 12 persons, including the succeeding mayor of Jaffna, 4 other civilians, and 7 security force personnel. On December 29, the LTTE killed another senior Tamil politician in Jaffna. Several LTTE "lamp post" killings occurred in which those found guilty of offenses by the LTTE's self-described courts were executed and their bodies tied to lamp posts or otherwise left for public display. Through a campaign of killing and intimidation, the LTTE undermined the work of local government bodies in Jaffna whose members had been elected in free and fair elections on January 29. LTTE attacks on international shipping continued, with the LTTE hijacking an Omani-flagged cargo vessel on August 14.

* The LTTE continued to control large sections of the north and east of the country through authoritarian military rule. It denied the people under its authority the right to change their government, infringed on their privacy rights, routinely violated their civil liberties, operated an unfair court system, restricted freedom of movement, and severely discriminated against ethnic and religious minorities.

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

* Police, home guards, and army personnel committed extrajudicial killings in the eastern province, and army personnel also were responsible for killing a number of persons in the Vavuniya area in Jaffna in the north. At least 33 such killings occurred, many

of them associated with operations against the LTTE insurgents or with the interrogation of suspected terrorists. In at least 18 other cases, persons were killed near the army's forward defense lines near Vavuniya, Mannar, and Kilinochchi where civilians are warned not to proceed. Security force bombs and artillery fire also killed civilians (see Section 1.g.). **The exact number of extrajudicial killings was impossible to ascertain due to censorship of news relating to military or police operations, and to lack of regular access to the north and east where the war was being waged.**

❋ In some cases these extrajudicial killings were reprisals against civilians for LTTE attacks in which members of the security forces or civilians were killed or injured. In most cases, the security forces claimed that the victims were members of the LTTE, but human rights monitors believe otherwise. In Thampalakamam in the Trincomalee district on February 1, police and home guards allegedly massacred eight Tamil civilians, including three children, possibly in reprisal for the LTTE bombing of the "Temple of the Tooth" 1 week earlier. Some 31 police officers and 10 home guards were arrested in connection with the case. In September 21 of these individuals were charged, 4 with murder and 17 with unlawful assembly. The other 20 were released after the Attorney General determined that there was insufficient evidence against them. The cases were scheduled to be heard in early 1999. The case was continuing at year's end. The perpetrators of most extrajudicial killings had not been arrested by year's end.

❋ **Impunity remains a serious problem. Since April 1995 at least 740 persons have been killed extrajudicially by the security forces or have disappeared after being taken into security force custody and are presumed dead. With the exception of the six security force personnel convicted in the 1996 killing of Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, no member of the security forces has been convicted for any of these crimes.** In the vast majority of cases where military personnel may have committed human rights violations, the Government has not identified those responsible and brought them to justice. The military leadership has failed also in this regard. Almost all senior military officers now serving were midlevel officers during the Janetha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) uprising in 1988-91, when security forces were given great leeway in dealing with that threat to the nation's security. Attitudes

தமிழ் ஆவணக்காப்பகம்
Tamileelam Archive

and practices have been slow to change.

❋ **On December 12, 1997, three Tamil prisoners were hacked to death in prison by Sinhalese prisoners at Kalutara prison. Prison staff and army personnel at the prison allegedly failed to take measures to protect the detainees even as the attack occurred.**

❋ **In October 1995, 22 members of the STF were arrested and detained under the ER on suspicion of murdering 23 Tamil youths whose bodies were found floating in Bolgoda Lake and other waterways near Colombo earlier that year. The suspects were released on bail and resumed their police functions in February 1996. In November 1997, three of the STF members were indicted on charges of abduction and illegal detention. The case is to be heard in March 1999.**

❋ The People's Alliance (PA) Government came to power in 1994 and promised to bring to justice the perpetrators of extrajudicial killings from previous years. In 1994 it began prosecutions of suspects in several extrajudicial murders allegedly perpetrated by members of the security forces. The trial of 21 soldiers accused of massacring 35 Tamil civilians in 1992 in the village of Mailanthani in Batticaloa district was transferred to the Colombo High Court in 1996. The trial was continuing at year's end.

❋ **Former insurgent Tamil militant groups now aligned with the Government committed extrajudicial killings in the eastern province and in the Vavuniya area in the north. The military wing of PLOTE and the Raseek Group were responsible for killing a number of persons. The security forces arm and use these militias and a number of other Tamil militant organizations to provide information,** help identify LTTE insurgents, and, in some cases, to fight in military operations against the insurgents. The exact size of these militias is impossible to ascertain but they probably total less than 2,000 persons. Although the army in some instances took steps to convert Tamil militia groups into regular army units, military oversight of these groups is generally inadequate. **These groups frequently operated beyond government control.** Complaints about their activities continued, especially in transit camps for internally displaced persons (IDP's) in Vavuniya. The militias gain access to these camps through a variety of means, including bribery and threats. It was impossible to determine the number of victims because of the secrecy with which these groups operated. Those killed by these militants probably included both LTTE operatives and civilians who failed to comply with extortion demands. The Government took no clear steps to prevent human rights abuses committed by these Tamil militant organizations.

❋ The LTTE also attacked government installations. Attacks on police stations and military bases in the north and east killed or wounded more than a hundred civilians. The LTTE also

sometimes kills its own injured troops to avoid their capture.

❋ In July 1997, the Attorney General determined that there was insufficient evidence to charge anyone in the October 1994 suicide bombing that killed the United National Party's presidential candidate, Gamini Dissanayake, and 58 other persons, although the LTTE generally is believed to be responsible. No further investigations were continuing.

b. Disappearance

❋ In November 1996, the Ministry of Defense established a board of investigation to look into disappearances in the north and east and review security force procedures. According to press reports, the board received more than 2,500 complaints of disappearances. After eliminating duplicate names, the board found that 730 persons were alleged to have disappeared. It was able to trace 182, who were located at home or in custody. **The balance of 548 cases was unresolved. The board completed its activities and disbanded at the end of 1997. By year's end, its findings had not been made public, nor had the Government publicly identified or charged those responsible for disappearances, although government officials have indicated that those responsible would be held accountable.** The Jaffna office of the HRC also conducted inquiries into hundreds of those cases.

❋ Progovernment Tamil militias also were responsible for disappearances. These militias detain persons at various locations that serve, in effect, as undeclared detention centers. **Human rights observers believe that the PLOTE was a major offender in the case of disappearances.** The HRC has no mandate or authority to enforce respect for human rights among these militia groups. It was impossible to determine the exact number of victims because of the secrecy with which these groups operated. The Government has taken no clear steps to stop these militants' actions.

❋ Progovernment Tamil militants in the east and north, acting independently of government authority, were responsible for disappearances. As in the case of extrajudicial killings, it was impossible to determine the exact number of victims because of the secrecy with which these groups operated. The Government has taken no clear public steps to stop the militants' actions.

❋ The LTTE was responsible for an undetermined number of civilian disappearances in the north and east of the island during the year. Most of the 400 to 600 police officers captured by the LTTE in 1990 are believed to be dead, as well as over 200 security force personnel captured at a battle in Pooneryn in 1993. Although the LTTE denies taking any prisoners following major battles such as Mullaittivu in

1996 and at Kilinochchi in September, it is suspected of holding some. The LTTE has not notified the ICRC of any new security forces prisoners since 1994.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

❋ Despite legal prohibitions, the security forces continue to torture and to mistreat persons. In 1994 the Government acceded to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Parliament subsequently enacted legislation to implement the Convention Against Torture (CAT) by making torture a punishable offense. The Convention Against Torture Act of November 25, 1994 strengthened the legal mandate of prosecuting authorities to investigate and prosecute cases of torture. Torture is defined as a specific crime, and the High Court has jurisdiction over violations of the act. The Government, however, has not yet developed effective regulations under the new legislation to prosecute and to punish military and police personnel responsible for torture, though it has ceased paying fines incurred by security force personnel guilty of the offense. Security forces personnel have been fined under civil law for engaging in torture, but have not been prosecuted under criminal law. **Members of the security forces continued to torture and mistreat detainees and other prisoners, both male and female, particularly during interrogation. Most torture victims were Tamils suspected of being LTTE insurgents or collaborators.** Humanitarian organizations reported that while torture and abuse by the security forces remained widespread, its use had diminished, especially on the Jaffna peninsula.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

❋ On August 31, Pararajassan Kugathasan escaped from a secret detention center in Rambaikulam, Vavuniya, run by the PLOTE. He showed signs of torture all over his body when he reached a nearby church. Timely intervention by police kept him from being returned to the detention center by PLOTE members. Detention of Tamils continued as a result of the continuing hostilities with the LTTE. The Government continued to hold more than 1,500 detainees under the ER, the same approximate number as in 1996 and 1997. Many of these detainees were arrested during operations against the LTTE. The Government continued to detain up to

Continued in Page 24

BANKRUPTCY OF THE THAMIL "MODERATE" POLITICIANS

Latchu S.Rajah reports:-

The Centre for Policy Alternatives, run by Dr.Pakiyasothy Saravana muttu, organised a conference under the heading "Peace Efforts and Minority Thamil Political Parties" on 06th March 1999 at Jayasinghe Hall, Dehiwala. Names of the representatives from most of the Thamil and Muslim parties were included in the list of speakers, but Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, Up-country Peoples' Front and the PLOTE did not send their representatives.

The speakers at the conference were, P.P.Devaraj MP of CWC, S.Sivathasan MP of EPDP, Maavai Senathirajah of TULF, Kumar Ponnambalam of ACTC, S.Sri Kantha of TELO, Mano Ganesan of DWC and Bala Nadaraj of EPRLF. None of the speakers spoke under the topic which was given to them and they tried to make use of the stage for their campaign.

Anyway the Common Tamil Man is now well educated about the "moderate" Thamil politicians and he could not be cheated by them any more. Interruption came from the audience after the second speaker concluded. Prof. Sivasegaram heatedly pointed out the ignominy of the speakers and asked them either to speak to the point or to leave from the conference. Even though the speakers were alarmed by the alertness of the audience, they concentrated only on justifying their party views and conducts. Virtually they did not mention anything about the sufferings of the people or about their contribution to bring peace with justice.

The audience patiently waited till all of them concluded with their views. As the Chairman informed that it is time for the audience to clarify anything regarding the speeches, number of people raised hands and came forward to ask questions at the same time. The Chairman somehow controlled the situation and asked the audience to come one by one and to raise their questions.

Most of the questions focused on the support given to the government by the Thamil Parties (EPDP and CWC) in the voting of the extension of Emergency Regulations. P.P.Devaraj MP and S.Sivathasan MP tried to give some grotesque explanations for their continuous support to the government but the crowd seemed to be disgrunted.

When EPDP MP, S.Sivathasan, tried to justify their position, shoutings arose from the audience to stop his explanations and to get down from the stage. Some shouted "we don't want any explanation from a person who got only 9 votes".

Devaraj MP was beset by the audience to give clear explanation for the CWC's position on the Emergency Voting. One of the audience pointed out that he had seen politicians with two faces but CWC politicians are with three faces. That is, when their leader being a Minister in the ruling side, the other members are sitting in the UNP side and supporting the Governmnet. He also pointed out that Minister Thondaman frequently issues some statements extolling the Tigers and at the same time supporting the government in the emergency voting to continue with the war against the Thamils in the North East. At one point P.P.Devaraj requested the audience to let him go, as he had to attend a function at Kotahena. A youth from the up-country went forward and asked him to attend the function if he is prepared to resign his post as an MP. He also pointed out that the up-country people had elected them to the Parliament to solve their problems and therefore they should answer their questions first, instead of attending functions.

One of the audience pointed out that the slender attendance of public at this conference showed that the Thamil people are not concerned about moderate politicians and it is obvious that the moderate politicians could not contribute anything of value to bring peace.

When another pointed out that the poor attendance may be due to the Dance programme by the Indian Film Star Kushpoo on the same day, a young student sarcastically noted that the people may had thought that enjoying the dance by Kuspoo was better than that of listening to the Canards of the unscrupulous Thamil Politicians.

Yoge

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FREEDOM FIGH

From Kosovo to Kurdistan, rebels vie for independence. Here are the reasons some succeed - and some don't

says a TIME magazine feature in a recent issue of the magazine We publish it without comment.

BY JOHANNA MCGEARY

TIME

Now something good could still come out of Rambouillet. The 17-day negotiating marathon concluded in an embarrassing mess: U.S. officials pleading in the last seven minutes before the final, final, final deadline for any concession that might keep the peace process alive. Instead of signatures on a blueprint for the future of Kosovo, all they got was a promise in theory from the ethnic Albanians to subscribe to the NATO plan a couple of weeks down the road. What Belgrade got was a delicious reprieve from American dictates and the missiles that NATO had threatened to launch if Serb strongman Slobodan Milosevic failed to accept the deal. The whole business will have to be gone over again when the talks resume on March 15.

But no one should be surprised that Rambouillet came a cropper. NATO's fragile construct was designed to avoid answering the question at the heart of this Balkan war: Should Kosovo be an independent state? "The beauty of the interim accord is that no one has to give up their dreams," explains U.S. negotiator Christopher Hill. "We've created this gray thing that one side will call an elephant and the other will call a mouse." Trouble is, some members of the Albanian delegation saw through that and demanded a written guarantee of eventual independence. No way, said NATO.

"Sure, they can ask for it," Hill adds, "but getting it is another matter. Today, the international community does not support the idea of an independent Kosovo. It's not a right they have."

Well, why not? For that matter, why not independent Kurdistan? Or Chechnya or East Timor or Quebec?

Kosovo Liberation Army has been fighting for more than a year

Once you start tinkering with global cartography, everyone wants his say. The unintended consequences of malleable borders scare away all but the most arrogant of statesmen. Yet Secretary of State Madeleine Albright sounded ready to try it last week:

"Living far from the West deprives oppressed East Timor of active foreign support, but in Sri Lanka the secessionist Tamil Tigers wage their war without interference".

"Great nations who understand the importance of sovereignty at various times cede various portions of it in order to achieve some better good for their country."

History is no guide. Nations are not some natural, organic phenomenon but complex accumulations of strength, alliances and enmities. And the passion for nationhood has swung between eras of consolidation and fragmentation: the single-state world of the Roman Empire; the 500-odd nations of the 1500s Renaissance. In the post-cold war age, people impatient with the map they've inherited appear to be caught in between. A globalized economy is melting down the relevance of nationhood at the same time that the dispossessed's unrealized yearnings to be a state are gaining legitimacy.

It is an axiom of statehood that war is what dictates borders; winners get the right to draw new lines. After World War I, as the Great Powers meted out geographical punishments and rewards, Woodrow Wilson advocated two principles that have governed statemaking ever since: the right to self-determination and the right to inviolable national borders. Unfortunately, they are often in conflict.

For most of the century, the notion that borders were sacred prevailed. African and Asian decolonization in the 1960s recognized states along borders set by colonial rulers. It wasn't quite as thoughtless as critics of these "arbitrary" lines that split ethnic groups and ancient kingdoms now charge. At least some diplomats believed that multi-ethnic states—like

TERS

the U.S.—should be encouraged. Between 1945 and 1990, secession and separatism were not just discouraged but were also forcibly opposed. The sole success: Bangladesh in 1971.

The end of communism thrust the principle of self-determination back into prominence, and new states proliferated. In the thrill of cold war victory, the West let captive nations in Eastern Europe grab back their independence and happily pushed statehood for the 14 republics inside the Soviet Union that wanted out. In consequence, independence and separatist movements weaving together ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and economic self-interests have blossomed worldwide. As Robert Lansing, Wilson's Secretary of State, warned, self-determination "is bound to be the basis for impossible demands and create trouble in many lands. What a calamity that the phrase was ever uttered." Where does the noble concept of self-determination stop?

In expedience. Purists may yearn for a single principle to apply across the board. But, says Brent Scowcroft, George Bush's National Security Adviser, "consistency here doesn't work." Pragmatism is what rules the world of power politics, in which a range of less high-minded considerations determines who wins and who loses in the statehood lottery.

LUCK The bad luck of historical accident is what has left most current claimants out in the cold. To change that, you need to be in the right movement at the right time in the right place. The Kurds in northern Iraq were just another bunch of bickering agitators until the U.S. needed them to challenge Saddam Hussein. No one cared a whit for the Kosovars until Slobodan Milosevic ground them into the dirt. (It obviously helps to be the victim of a reviled dictator.) But Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka: Your moment has yet to arrive.

"But Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. Your moment has yet to arrive"

LOCATION Distance from Washington is relevant but cuts both ways. Fighting in Europe's backyard helps the Kosovars but hurts the Kurds. Living far from the West deprives oppressed East Timor of active foreign support, but in Sri Lanka the secessionist Tamil Tigers wage their war without interference.

Kudistan women rebels

TELEVISION It is not necessarily the legitimacy of a a group's claim as much as the telegenic horror of its suffering that gains the combination of sympathy and anxiety crucial to independence. Constant images of the intifadeh helped transform the Palestinians from terrorist outcasts to deserving victims. The Basques, seeking a homeland from Spain and France, can air no bloody incidents to galvanize world support.

GOOD GUYS VS. BAD GUYS You have to be seen as the good guys in your struggle. This is not a guarantee: the Ibos in Biafra were regarded as victims, yet the world refused them statehood. Still, it is because of the Chechens' reputation for thuggery that they command little support. Leaders can make or break perceptions: Abdullah Ocalan as a terrorist cast the Kurds into disrepute; captive and martyred, he may help reshape them into the cause du jour. The alchemy of time also helps, transmuting bad rebels into negotiating partners, as the years have done to Northern Ireland's Roman Catholics.

UNITY You can have too much or too little. The Kurds have long been thwarted by their internal rivalries. The Kosovars are feared because they might unite with ethnic brothers in Albania and Macedonia. Physical dispersal is an even greater obstacle: How would you separate territorially Rwanda's intermingled Hutu and Tutsi?

DEMOCRACY The victors of the cold war will judge your case, and they are disposed to anoint only noncommunist, nonauthoritarian believers in multiparty elections and the free market. That pretty much queers the prospects of religious-based Chechnya and most African separatists. The Kosovars' lack of civil institutions and political structures makes them a premature candidate.

POTENTIAL TO ROCK THE GLOBAL BOAT Stability, more than any other principle, governs statemak-

Who gets to take a shot at statehood?

The decision is usually rooted in geopolitics, not morality. **NO GO** Neither the intensity nor the legitimacy of a group's bid guarantees success. No international support, no plan to govern and no time to plead your cause mean no state. **MAYBE** Groups on the cusp have to morph from fiery rebels into credible international players. Not an easy trick.

INDEPENDENCE Managed properly, some groups can win. Ultimately, it's a bid of support from a big global player that turns dreams into a state.

NO GO — KOSOVO The Kosovo Liberation Army has been fighting for more than a year, but some still think the rebels can achieve statehood on the battlefield. The international community, however, is of no mind to grant them anything more than autonomy within the existing borders of Milosevic's repressive Yugoslavia

MAYBE — KURDISTAN Rebels like these women have cast a violent shadow on the Kurds' struggle for statehood. But the arrest of terrorist leader Ocalan gives Kurdish leaders a chance to dump that extremism and pick up international credibility

INDEPENDENCE — PALESTINE The intifadeh put Palestinians on the track to statehood, but they are still throwing stones to ensure that their nationalist dream is consummated

ers. One reason the Kurds may never get their state is that they covet pieces of four geostrategically important nations: Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Tibet is stuck as long as the world considers it folly to take on China.

■ **VICTORY** War is still the best guarantee of independence-if you win. Eritrea won in 1993, after 32 years of battle. The Kosovars and the Kurds are not ready to concede.

Quite frankly, most of today's aspirants for independence are not going to get it now, and maybe never will. The Helsinki accords of 1975 approved changes of borders only by mutual consent. Yet who besides the Czech Republic and Slovakia will politely shake hands and part ways?

That is why statesmen invented autonomy. It looks like a nice middle ground between immovable borders and the chaos of universal self-determination. "We have to work out these ways of allowing groups of people who feel they have something important in common to have a degree of autonomy within the existing borders," prescribes Samuel P. Huntington, a Harvard professor who has written on the subject. Fine theory, but how does the world accomplish that? And maybe it shouldn't. Existing arrangements of semipartition, like in Cyprus and Bosnia, are also semiprotectorates requiring long-term peacekeeping troops.

Anyhow, in Rambouillet the Kosovars balked at Washington's half-elephant, half-mouse formula precisely because it avoided deciding on independence. In the march of history, borders change, states come and go. How the West settles Kosovo is going to set precedents for how our era manages that, like 'em or not.

— WITH REPORTING BY MASSIMO CALABRESI / PRISTINA, BRUCE CRUMLEY / PARIS AND MARK THOMPSON / WASHINGTON

Why Kosovo and not Sri Lanka?

Few would argue against intervening to stop the grossest abuses of human rights. So why pick Kosovo over other conflicts in other parts of the world that haven't gotten as much attention?

"If you compare Kosovo with Kashmir or Kurdistan or the case of Tamils of Sri Lanka, in any of these places, the human rights violations are much worse," said Raju G.C. Thomas, professor of political science at Marquette University.

The Kosovo Albanians say a year of fighting has taken the lives of 2,000 people on both sides. Other analysts put the figure closer to 1,200, less than the 1,300 estimated to have been killed by Operation Desert Fox - the US and British airstrikes on Iraq before Christmas.

In contrast, 60,000 people have been killed in Sri Lanka and between 30,000 and 60,000 in Kashmir, Thomas says.

Fighting between Turks and Kurds has taken 30,000 lives, he says. Yet the U.S. and NATO turn a blind eye to Turkey's oppression of the Kurds, while still patrolling the skies over northern Iraq to keep Saddam Hussein from oppressing them.

The U.S. even helped Turkey arrest Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdish Worker's Party. A year ago, both the Kurdish Worker's Party and the Kosovo Liberation Army were considered terrorist organizations by the U.S. State Department.

"I don't believe that the international community is organized to do these interventions in a way that really could be justified by some impartial standard," said Jeremy Rabkin, a professor of international law at Cornell University.

"What's always going to happen is that (intervention) is going to be triggered by self-interested political considerations, and it will be ham-handed in one area and totally indifferent in another area where worse things are happening," Rabkin said. .

(INVESTORS BUSINESS DAILY, USA 24 FEBRUARY 1999)

The Chinese could be a model for the Tamil Diaspora !

Next century these children will be among the richest, best-educated and most successful people in the world. What makes the Chinese run?

"From being the poorest ethnic group in the 1950s, the Chinese now enjoy a higher living standard than any other group in Britain, including the whites", says researcher in a recent article in THE INDEPENDENT, London.

In sending us this feature, HOT SPRING reader Anton J.N.Selvadurai writes: "This would be interesting and informative and inspiring to the Tamil Diaspora, where you could highlight the importance of industry, pragmatism, adaptability and the developing of language skills for communication. The Muslims remain backward because their women in particular, cannot communicate, due to their inability or opposition to learning English. Tamils in Sri Lanka have to be TRILINGUAL and that is most important for them to adapt to life there and survive".

We reproduce here some excerpts from THE INDEPENDENT feature which has great relevance to the Tamil diaspora scattered around the world - Ed.HS.

❋ "The figures (in Britain) speak for themselves: on average Chinese men earn £368 per week, compared with £331 for white men; only 9 percent are unemployed, compared with 15 percent of whites, and their participation rate in higher education is far higher than that of the white community.

❋ "The Chinese, once a byword for poverty, are now riding high. One reason is the emphasis on education, which has been the passport to success for many young Chinese; the other is more prosaic: self-employment, at the heart of which stands the traditional icon of the Chinese community the world over: the restaurant.

❋ "The Chinese population in Britain may be less than 200,000 or 0.3 percent of the population - but their rising fortunes mirror those of Chinese communities all around the world. The Chinese diaspora - the largest of them all - numbers about 50 million (including Taiwan but excluding Hong Kong) and can be found from the United States to Latin America, from Australia to the Carribean, from Africa to Europe. Their situation of course varies enormously from country to country but the striking characterstic, almost everywhere, is how well they are doing.

❋ "In California's Silicon Valley, the entrepreneurial heart of the information revolution, about one-third of the engineers are Asian-Americans, with the Chinese comprising the largest single group. Ling-Chi Wang (Professor at the University of

California at Berkeley) argues that "the migration of Chinese intellectuals to the United States since 1945 has far exceeded the Jewish migration in the 1930s, and will be seen by future historians as one of the most significant contributions to the development of American science and technology".

❋ "A similar picture of achievement is being repeated in Australia and Canada. But it is in South-east Asia that the Chinese diaspora is not only greatest in number dating back many centuries, but has almost been most succesful.

❋ **"Though comprising a minority in every country in that region, bar Singapore, everywhere the ethnic Chinese are the most prosperous single group. In Indonesia, though comprising only 3 percent of the population, they own 80 percent of the wealth: similar disparities apply in Malaysia and Thailand.**

❋ "So how can we explain the success of the overseas Chinese ? It is not easy to generalise across continents and divergent histories. Many of the characteristics displayed by the Chinese - **their belief in education, their appetite for hard work, the role of the family** - are also true of other migrant groups. However, Wang Gungwu, an eminent historian of the Chinese diaspora, now living in Singapore, argues that the history of the overseas Chinese has imbued their communities with certain traits which distinguish them from other migrant groups.

❋ "Overwhelmingly from southern China, and regarded by the old, northern dynasties as inferior, they learnt to live in China, and then in the countries where they chose to settle by relying on their own resources, never looking to the state for protection or assistance. According to Wang Gungwu: "Their survival demanded that they had to make adjustments to different cultural circumstances, different political environments and adjust accordingly in order that they could still do business and maintain their living standards, sometimes under very hostile conditions."

❋ **"Everywhere, when people speak about the Chinese communities, the same words recur: hard-working, pragmatic, adaptable, hard-headed, resilient. Always a minority in usually unfriendly conditions, the overseas Chinese have relied on their own support systems - the family and kinship networks based on their ancestral villages in southern China. Chinese communities boast a plethora of private schools, credit organisations, cultural groups and the like, not to mention those Chinatowns across the world which are the physical embodiment of that sense of difference and solidarity.....**

❋ "With the partial exception of South-east Asia, the success of the overseas Chinese is a very recent phenomenon, confined to the past two or three decades. Before then, the overseas Chinese were generaly near the bottom of the pile in many of their adopted countries. Nor was China, one of the poorest countries in the world, a source of prestige or self-esteem...

The Dalit women of Bihar fight back - with guns !

Vanita Devi, 21, training in Sasaram

"They've been murdered, raped, and mistreated for 3,000 years under India's caste system. But now the untouchable women of rural Bihar are fighting back - with bullets", says the *LONDON OBSERVER* writer Jason Burke, in a pictorial cover feature in *LIFE, the OBSERVER* magazine of 28 February 1999.

"Two scenes from rural India", says the commencing paragraph from the feature. "The first from the summer of 1996. Bhuli Devi a 30-year old peasant woman, stands naked in a field on the edge of her tiny village in Samastipur district, in the central northern state of Bihar. She has been accused of stealing four potatoes from a landowner's field and so has been stripped and forced to stand at the scene of her alleged crime for several hours. It is very hot. Her accusers, and her judge, and her jury, stand around laughing at her. They are led by the farmer on whom her family's livelihood depends. When it gets dark, they will gang-rape and kill her.

"Scene two A 15-year old girl has been abducted by a group of men hired by a local landowner to intimidate his labourers who have been demanding higher wages. They hide her in a small house....within minutes, after a brief and confused fire-fight, her abductors flee...in strides her rescuer, Indu Devi, - 35 years old, 5ft. 5in. tall, 12 stone, mother of three - the slightly unlikely-looking commander of a slightly unlikely army of several thousand armed, trained, and highly motivated peasant women .....

Was Sri Lanka trying to buy over journalists?

PASLO, South Africa questions motive behind the paid holiday

THE PEOPLE AGAINST SRI LANKAN OPPRESSION, (PASLO), an active organisation in Gauteng in South Africa, working for Tamil rights in Sri Lanka has questioned the motive behind the offer of a free trip to a South African team to visit that country.

A Press release issued by the National Co-ordinator of the organisation, Mr. Tommy Padotan states:-

In December 1998 a group of 7 Parliamentarians and in February 1999 a group of 10 South African Journalists were invited by the Sri Lankan government to visit Sri Lanka and see for themselves what the situations in Sri Lanka was like. From reports and newspaper articles in South Africa, the Parliamentary group gave a balanced view of the conflict in Sri Lanka between the Tamil Eelam forces and the Sri Lankan Armed forces. They group did say that their report would be incomplete, unless they speak directly to the LTTE.

The journalists are still to publish something of substance other then details of their fully paid holiday to Sri Lanka, and forecasting that country as a future destination for holiday makers.

"The Sri Lankan government refused to allow the delegations to meet the LTTE which represents the Tamil Nation. Instead they only allowed them to speak to their puppets who collaborate with the government in oppressing the Tamil people. These groups are in the same category as the collaborators we had here in South Africa in the House of Delegates, House of Representatives and the local Councilors. Just as we had in South Africa, these people do not represent the majority of Tamil people, and was elected into their position by only a handful of friends and family. They are there as part of the Sri Lankan governments propaganda machine, to show the world that some Tamils are in government. We in South Africa should know from our experiences how destructive these collaborators could be. In South Africa these collaborators could not be trusted, how could these collaborators be trusted or believed.

"The groups were taken to the Temple of the Tooth which was damaged in an attack by the LTTE, but was not shown or told about the number of Temples, Churches and Mosques destroyed by the Sri Lankan Army in the Tamil Provinces. They were not shown how the Sri Lankan Army bulldozed the graves of the fallen LTTE fighters in the Tamil Provinces. They were not told how the Sri Lankan army destroyed the Library in Jaffna, destroying valuable Tamil Literature that have been collected for thousands of years.

"The groups were shown the refugee camp of 15,000 Tamil Muslims (playing on the emotions of the Muslim MP of the parliamentary group) who were asked to leave Jaffna, but were not shown the refugee camps of 500,000 Tamils in the Vanni district. **They were not shown the devastation and misery that the Sri Lankan army has inflicted on the Tamil Nation. They refused to allow them to see the effects of the embargo they have placed on the Tamil Provinces. They did not show them how they use Food and Medicine as Weapons of War. They were not told of the number of mass grave of Tamils that were in the Tamil provinces.** The groups were given statistics by the government which has not been verified by any NGO in Sri Lanka stating the number of detainees, but were not allowed to speak to them and see the conditions under which they were kept. They were not told of the number of detainees who were tortured and killed in the Sri Lankan prisons.

" The parliamentary group did say that they wish to meet the LTTE to get their view on the conflict, and have a better understanding of the situation, however, the group has made no attempt thus far to make contact with the LTTE. Is there a reason for the delay?. We sincerely hope that they have not fallen victims to the Sri Lankan governments propaganda?.

"It is sad when some of our professional journalists do not rely on their investigative skills, but rather on propaganda fed to them by their hosts. From my conversations with a few of these journalists, I get the feeling that they were there on holiday and having a good time, and as the Sri Lankan government has instructed them, they are to promote tourism to Sri Lanka and convince the South African public that everything was normal there, even if they lie. One journalist mentioned that the trip was worth it, obviously, if everything is paid for, and you don't have to do anything but publish propaganda, it has to be worth it. Did any of these professional journalists question their host why they are being so generous and paying for their holiday?, and only showing them what the LTTE has done?. Did they ask about the mass graves?, detention without trial, and torture of Tamils?. Did they ask about the starving Tamils who

were made refugees in their own land?. It is really sad when some professional journalist could be bought over with a free holiday.

"We often wonder why the world and the UN are dragging their heels in trying to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka. We see the world and the UN reacting very quickly to resolve the conflicts in Europe and elsewhere in the world, why not Sri Lanka?. Did the Sri Lankan government ask the world and the UN for time to wipe out the Tamil Nation before the world and the UN could get permission from the Sri Lankan government to act ?, or has the Sri Lankan government's propaganda machine managed to make the world blind to the atrocities and human right violations it commits. It is strange how the world is fooled by the Sri Lankan propaganda machine to turn a blind eye to what it is doing, even getting some governments to fund the atrocities and human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Appeal

"We appeal to all governments to stop helping the Sri Lankan government to wipe out the Tamil Nation. As they are trying to assist the people of Kosovo in finding peace and justice, they should also assist the Tamil people to find peace and justice. If the world could use force against the Serbs, why can't the world use force against the Sri Lankans. If the Sri Lankan government believe that they can use embargo's to force the Tamil Nation into submission, why can't the world use sanctions and embargo's to force the Sri Lankan government into submission. It is about time that the world and the UN treat all nations alike and stop assisting the Sri Lankan government. It is the Sri Lankan government and not the LTTE who don't want peace. The LTTE has said that it is prepared to negotiate with third party mediations. The Sri Lankan government is refusing to negotiate. The world and the UN should force the Sri Lankan government to negotiate. ■

U.S. State Dept. . . .

Continued from page 16

300 individuals under the PTA, which permits detention without charge for up to 18 months. **In some cases, Tamils have been detained without charge under the PTA for up to 4 years. According to the Attorney General, there were almost 1,000 cases under the PTA or ER before the high courts.**

* Arrests and detentions by the police took place in violation of the legal safeguards built into the ER and other legislation, particularly regarding requirements that receipts be issued and that the HRC be notified of any arrest within 48 hours. Those arrested by the army generally were turned over to the police within 24 hours as required under the ER. The HRC has a legal mandate to visit those arrested and police officials generally respected this mandate. Due to censorship and infrequent access to the area, it was unclear what was happening to detainees in the north and east. The ICRC visits declared detention centers, but there are undeclared detention centers in the north that are not visited on a regular basis. Instead, undeclared detention centers are visited as needed when information received indicates that persons are being held there. There are reportedly fewer than 100 individuals being held in undeclared detention camps. In Jaffna, the vast majority of detainees are held in the main detention center, where conditions reportedly are quite good. On the other hand, conditions in the undeclared centers range from adequate to extremely poor.

* Security forces continued to conduct mass detentions and arrests of young Tamils, both male and female. Major sweeps and arrests occurred in Colombo, the east, and on the Jaffna peninsula. Although exact numbers of arrests were impossible to determine, they reached into the thousands. Hundreds of Tamils at a time were picked up during police actions. Most were released after identity checks lasting several hours to several days. The Government justified the arrests on security grounds, but many Tamils claimed that the arrests were a form of harassment. In addition, those arrested, most of whom were innocent of any wrongdoing, were sometimes detained in prisons together with hardened criminals. Security force actions continued to result in other problems for Tamils. For example, following an attack by an LTTE suicide bomber near the air force headquarters in Colombo in February, security forces closed three rooming hotels, leaving hundreds of Tamils temporarily without lodging. In July the President appointed a cabinet-level Anti-Harassment Committee, which was renamed as the Committee to Inquire into Undue Arrest and Harassment in September.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

*** Most court proceedings are conducted in English or Sinhala, which, due to a shortage of court-appointed interpreters, has restricted the ability of Tamil-speaking defendants to get a fair hearing. Few judges speak Tamil. There are also delays in publishing the Emergency Regulations in Tamil, and there are no law reports and few legal textbooks in Tamil.**

f. Arbitrary Interference With Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

* The Government is believed to monitor telephone conversations and correspondence on a selective basis. The security forces routinely open mail destined for the LTTE-controlled areas and seize contraband. The Government censors international television broadcasts received in the country (see Section 2.a.).

*** In February security forces closed three rooming hotels and left hundreds of Tamils temporarily without lodging.**

*** Progovernment Tamil militant groups, nominally operating under government control, use forced conscription. There are credible reports that Tamil youth in the east in particular have been forced to join these groups under threats to themselves and their families.**

PLOTE- The metamorphosis of a Tamil liberation group

(From a Special Corresponent in Colombo)

A former Tamil liberation group, the "Peoples' Liberation organisation of Tamil Eelam" hiding its real origins under the acronym PLOTE, has now metamorphosed into a murderous gang in Sri Lanka, acting as a paid tool of the country's military, killing and torturing fellow Tamils at will, both in vavuniya and Jaffna.

While this happens in the north, the group's political leader, Dharmalingam Siddharthan (carrying the Buddha's name before renunciation) moves in high political and diplomatic circles in Colombo, accepted as leader of a "democratic" party come into the "mainstream" of the country's political life representing in some way the Tamil people. Even some foreign diplomats who should know better, help to sustain this duplicity. On the other hand, Amnesty International and the U.S.State Department have both expressed deep concern over the anti-social activities of this group.

Early in February, bitter fighting took place between PLOTE and another rogue ex-militant group, the Tamil Eelam liberation Organisation (TELO), which group also works for the Sri Lankan military as paid snoopers and informers The fighting occurred in Vavuniya, gateway to the northern war zone, and which significantly enough also houses the operational headquarters of the Sri Lankan army. Several members of both groups were killed in the clashes in which automatic machine guns were freely used. The reasons for the clashes were purely mercer.ary.

One of the coup PLOTters, handcuffed and led away by Indian security men in 1988.

Both groups are in the business of extorting money from Tamil business men and lorry owners , as well as robbing Tamil civilians. It is believed by many residents of Vavuniya that the army authorities turn a blind eye to these activities, because they themselves get a "cut" from these nefarious deals.

That being the situation in Vavuniya, a more startling development took place in Jaffna recently.A group of angry villagers burnt down the PLOTE office in Nelliady, after its members were accused of killing a civilian whose headless body was found in a toilet pit adjoining the PLOTE office. The villagers also set fire to the fences around the house, and smashed the windows and doors of the house making it unfit for further habitation. Some members of the group who were there at that time managed to run away in the face of the peoples' fury.

By this time, the Army, having heard of the incident, had hurried to the scene, and while the villagers dispersed, throngs of people were however seen at Nelliady and Manthikai areas. The fact that unarmed villagers had taken the law into their hands in army-controlled Jaffna and that too against an armed group, was seen as an indication of the current mood of the people.

The youth whose truncated head had been discovered in the early hours of the 25 February morning in a drain near Jaffna town, was identified as Rajaratnam Rajeswaran (23), whose birthplace was Nallur, but who was residing at Karaveddy. The identity was established through the efforts of Mr.Srithiran, an official of the Human Rights Commission in Jaffna. →

Earlier, the wife of the victim, R.Selvalakshmi (21) had complained to the Human Rights Commission office that her husband had been kidnapped by a paramilitary group operating in Jaffna, while she was accompanying him on their way to the temple.

The PLOTE was suspected of another act of brutality previously, when a youth was kidnapped in a bank in the town , and his dead body was found near the army camp on Kannathiddy Road, with his neck throttled.

To those who know the history of PLOTE, its present character should not come as a surprise. As the richest among the Tamil militant groups at one time, with the largest number of cadres, with influential patrons like FRONTLINE editor N.Ram who was then co-editor of THE HINDU, the organisation in the hands of its leader Uma Maheswaran began to rot from inside. PLOTE killed its own theoretician Santhathiyar, and massacred in cold blood its own cadres in a great purge in 1985. Eventually Uma Maheswaran himself was killed in a Colombo street here by his own men in 1989.

TELO's murderous record has been no better. It killed its own able military commander Dhas in conspiratorial fashion right inside the Jaffna hospital, under the direction of its own leader Sri Sabaratnam, and what was worse killed two TULF M.Ps, V.Dharmalinga (the foster father of PLOTE leader Siddharthan) and Alalasundaram. for no convincing reasons. Starting life as "liberation" groups, and still carrying that very tag, they have now become the Fifth Columnists working against Tamil liberation and survival.

Even when Uma Maheswaran was alive, PLOTE had become a mercenary group Its blackest record came in November 1988, when about 200 of its cadre made a coup attempt on the Maldivian capital of Male, working for a political rival of the Maldivian king. The Maldives which had no regular army - not even a regular prison, was saved at that time when India rushed in troops and put down the attempt swiftly. Only 68 of the PLOTters survived to face trial: twelve of them were sentenced to death, while 56 were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 15 to 38 years. The Sri lanka government which first rejected the Maldivian plea to take back the convicts , later agreed, having hit on the idea of arming them in turn and sending them as mercenaries to the north-east. Arming Tamils to fight the Tamils being the policy of all Sinhalese governments, that strategy is now being tried out in Jaffna.

Amnesty International's urgent action appeal

PLOTE detainees could face torture, "disappearance"

Sivam Ashokumar (20) Arumugam Pakkiri (alias Jeya) (35) and two other men, names unknown are believed to be held prisoner by the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), an armed Tamil group fighting alongside the Sri Lankan security forces. Amnesty International believes they are at risk of torture or "disappearance", and has issued the following urgent action appeal on February 23.

"Sivam Ashokumar, a labourer from Cheddikulam Road, Sambaltotam, Vavuniya, was working by the roadside when PLOTE members came and took him away in a minibus, at around 11.30am on 24 January 1999. On 23 January, two PLOTE members had reportedly come to his home to kill him, but left when his neighbours protected him. The reasons for this attack are unknown. Shortly after he was taken away, his relatives made inquiries at the PLOTE camp in Kurumankadu, but PLOTE leaders apparently denied he was in their custody.

"Arumugam Pakkiri (alias Jeya), a carpenter, came to Vavuniya from Mannar on 6 February. He was taken from the lodge where he had been staying at 9am on 7 February by members of PLOTE, who confiscated his identity card and those of two other people who had travelled with him, and then took all three men away. **Later that day PLOTE members brought Arumugam Pakkiri (alias Jeya) to the house of a relative in Rambaikulam, Vavuniya and said that he was being taken into custody on suspicion of being a member of the LTTE. When his relatives made initial inquiries at the local PLOTE camp they were told that Arumugam Pakkiri (alias Jeya) was under investigation and could not be released.**

"Since then the relatives of both men have made inquiries at PLOTE camps in the area including Malar Malagai, "Lucky House" and Kovilkulam. PLOTE members have denied that the men are in their custody.

"PLOTE is one of several armed Tamil groups fighting alongside the security forces in the north and east of Sri Lanka, against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who advocate a separate Tamil State, "Eelam," in those areas. Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed concern that members of PLOTE are holding prisoners in unauthorized places of detention.

"This has been an especially serious problem in Vavuniya. Between 27 October and 21 December 1998, Amnesty International received reports that PLOTE took seven people into custody (see UA 320/98 (ASA 37/28/98) and follow-ups, ASA 37/02/99, ASA 37/03/99 and ASA 37/04/99). To date, four of these people remain unaccounted for.

"The organization has welcomed the introduction by the government of measures to safeguard the welfare of detainees. These include making it an offence to keep a detainee in an unauthorized place; requiring that detainees be held only in official places of detention run by the security forces; and requiring that each arrest must be reported to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRC) within 48 hours.

"After several members of PLOTE and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), another armed group cooperating with the security forces, were killed in incidents in early February in the Vavuniya area, the army commander reportedly ordered members of these armed groups not to carry weapons. **However, to Amnesty International's knowledge, no action has so far been taken to fully enforce several of the safeguards, particularly against the use of unauthorized places of detention.**

"Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of the above-named people who have not been seen since they were taken into custody by members of PLOTE in the Vavuniya area. Amnesty urges the Sri Lankan government to provide immediate information about their whereabouts to their friends and relatives. Amnesty International also requests that those held in unauthorized places be promptly transferred to regular places of detention or released, and that those responsible for their "disappearances" be brought to justice.

A correction & apology

In the January issue of HOT SPRING, under NEWS IN BRIEF, we published a report from Dusseldorf, Germany, under the headline "EPRLF aacused of extortion". We now learn that the Dusseldorf report was based on wrong information. We regret the error and tender our apology

- Ed. H.S.

Canada raises 73,000 dollars for TRO work

Toronto, February 13, 99. At a ceremony organized by the staff of the Canadian Tamil Broadcasting corporation (CTBC), a sum of $73,000 was handed over to the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) towards the "Provide a blanket each" campaign .

All the popular announcers of the radio station participated in the event. The function was broadcast live by the radio station. Many editors of the popular Tamil newspapers too participated in the function and expressed their appreciation of the noble endeavors undertaken by the CTBC.

The Tamils Rehabilitation Organization, Canada has launched an ambitious campaign to collect funds to provide a blanket to each to the suffering Tamil families in the Vanni District. The campaign titled "Provide a blanket to each" was launched on the first of January 1999 following an urgent request from the TRO in Vanni. The funds are to be used to provide blankets to the displaced Tamils in Vanni who are exposed to the bitter cold, heavy rains and swamps of mosquitoes.

The TRO's campaign gained a great boost when the highly popular 24 hours Tamil radio in Canada, CTBC pitched in to help. On the 15th of January 1999, the Chief Executive of the CTBC, fondly known as Illaya Bharathi by his thousands of admirers and fans was on the air as usual conducting a talk show. A listener and a great admirer of the CTBC programs, Mr. Arumugam Somasundaram called in interrupting the program and wanted Mr. Illaya Bharathy to announce to his listeners the appalling conditions under which the Tamils in Vanni are living and about the "provide a blanket to each" campaign launched by the TRO. He emphasized that the Canadian Tamils are duty bound to help their unfortunate but heroic kith and kin back at home. Mr. Somasundaram who is retired with no employment income pledged to contribute $150 to the fund.

One after another, hundreds of Tamils called in to make their pledges jamming the many telephone lines to the radio station.. Pledges started pouring in, the amounts varying from $10 to $2500. Some kept on trying for over two hours to make their pledge but the lines were so busy they were unsuccessful. But this did not deter them. They went in person to the CTBC office and to other designated business establishments to make their contributions. The unscheduled program went on for seven and a half-hours and the total pledges exceeded $62,000.

Mr. Selvam of the CTBC worked tirelessly to ensure that every pledge was realized into hard cash and when the final tally was made it was a staggering $73,000, that was beyond all expectations.

The President of the TRO, Mr. R. Gunanathan received the cash on behalf of the TRO. In his address he said that the funds collected by the TRO world over are utilized to provide relief to the displaced Tamils. He said that the funds donated by the CTBC listeners would be sent to Vanni immediately to provide the blankets to the displaced. He said that the TRO in Tamil Eelam has undertaken massive rehabilitation programs to settle the displaced and that the implementation of the programs is possible only with the donations of the expatriate Eelam Tamils.

THE ACTION GROUP OF TAMILS (TAGOT) Tel: [94 1] 877220, 869257
Email: ssatha@pan.lk manoraj@sri.lanka.net

BI-PARTISANSHIP: THE SECOND BIG LIE

Press release
Sri Lanka
20 February 1999

Numerous human rights and conflict resolution organisations and most Tamil political parties and associations have repeatedly called for the two major Sinhalese parties, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the United National Party (UNP), to reach a consensus. The purpose of such consensus is allegedly to facilitate constitutional reform to resolve the armed conflict raging in the North-Eastern Province (NEP) between the Government and the Tamil National Movement, led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Organisations in the private sector have also pleaded for the bi-partisan approach to the armed conflict. Earlier, the British Under Secretary Mr Liam Fox, too, had encouraged the same.

The rationale cited for demanding bi-partisanship is the accusation levelled by the SLFP that it cannot put through a constitutional reform proposal because the UNP would not support it in Parliament. The famous lament by the SLFP - "all we need are sixteen votes" - to ensure the requisite two-thirds majority vote is well known. The claim is backed up with references to previous instances where a ruling party could not effect constitutional changes supposedly because of obstruction by the then opposition party.

The Action Group Of Tamils (TAGOT) is not so gullible. **We categorically state that the proclaimed need for bi-partisan support is, firstly, the SLFP's grotesque game of passing-the-buck, grotesque because people - mostly Tamils - are paying with their lives. We unhesitatingly reject the Big Lie, that a bi-partisan approach must be formulated before the SLFP can negotiate with the LTTE.**

TAGOT holds that the onus is squarely on the ruling SLFP-led Peoples Alliance (PA) Coalition Government to negotiate directly and immediately with the LTTE.

This brings us to the previous Big Lie

The SLFP asserted, and the assertion is assiduously upheld by most Tamil political parties and underwritten by human rights and conflict resolution organisations, that the Government has put forward its OFFICIAL proposal for constitutional reform. Has the Government done so?

Tamilnation.org Tamilnaam Archive

S Sathananthan

An official proposal was alleged to have been released on three occasions. In August 1995, the President announced the "President Kumaratunga's Devolution Proposals". However, within three days Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs GL Peiris glibly pigeon-holed them as her personal views, as her own "Basic Ideas", which therefore cannot constitute the official position of either the SLFP or the PA.

In January 1996, Minister Peiris released the "Draft Provisions of the Constitution Containing the Proposals of the Government of Sri Lanka Relating to Devolution of Power". **But the document was a blatant farce: the all-important provisions on devolution of power were missing. When questioned about it, he cynically dismissed the queries with a curt "later".** Moreover, most of the Ministers and SLFP members and the constituent parties of the PA knew nothing of the contents of the document before its release; and neither the SLFP nor the PA endorsed it as their official proposal for constitutional reform.

Both documents were superseded by the October 1997 "Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform". Again Minister Peiris kept most of his Cabinet colleagues, SLFP members and the member-parties of the PA in the dark regarding the nature and scope of the alleged constitutional reform. Not surprisingly, when he dumped the document on the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) in his capacity as its Chairman, the representatives of political parties in the Committee rejected the Report. They refused to sign the covering note, the PSC Statement, and so withheld their endorsement.

In short, the PSC Report has not been endorsed by either the SLFP or the PA. Indeed, powerful factions within the SLFP and PA stridently opposed it immediately after Minister Peiris brazenly tabled the unauthorised and illegitimate PSC Report in Parliament.

But in all three instances, the President, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and a few senior SLFP politicians have at different times dishonestly flaunted each document allegedly as the Government's official position on constitutional reform. The breathtaking scale of the Goebbelsian lie is starkly clear.

A strategic aim of ruling Sinhalese politicians has been to purvey the alleged reforms as political responses in order to legitimise the military campaign in the NEP and to buy time to conclude it "victoriously".

Given that the PA Government has

dodged, we repeat, has dodged putting forward an official proposal for more than four years, there is no basis for a constitutional reform process. Therefore, the emphasis placed on bi-partisanship is also a political red herring to detract from this duplicitous refusal.

The irrelevance of the bi-partisan approach is underscored by the PA Government's moves to neutralise the effectiveness of Mr Nelson Mandela as a mediator. **Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar waged a cynical campaign to paint African National Congress (ANC) as an ally of the LTTE and so undermined Mr Mandela's standing as an impartial mediator.**

In short, the SLFP has no intention whatsoever to negotiate with the LTTE.

TAGOT finds the third reason for the proclaimed need for a Sinhalese bi-partisanship to be insidious. The alleged existence or imminent birth of a SLFP-UNP consensus is a counter-revolutionary ploy. It is a charade fabricated to hoodwink the Tamil people into believing that a credible political solution is within sight because of a supposedly emerging Sinhalese political consensus. An objective of the moribund subterfuge is to bait the war-ravaged Tamil people and drive a wedge between the Tamils and the LTTE, to divide the LTTE-led Tamil National Movement, and thereby undercut the organisation's mass support among the Tamil people and emasculate the Movement..

Tamil parties and associations as well as human rights and conflict resolution organisations in Colombo that have enthusiastically acquiesced in the charade either are abysmally naive about the nature of power politics or, what is more likely, have treacherously colluded in the counter-revolutionary ploy.

At Wayamba, the SLFP shot its own feet. The unbridled State terror exposed and destroyed the counter-revolutionary ploy.

The Action Group Of Tamils (TAGOT)

Dr S Sathananthan, Secretary

Media blackout on the war is sinister - Robert Evans

Robert Evans

The total absence of television and media coverage of the war clearly suits the Sri Lankan government,but is not in the interests of those seeking a solution, says Mr.Robert Evans, the British Member of the European Parliament,in his report of a fact-finding visit to Colombo. Mr.Evans was on a short visit to Colombo between 27 and 29 January this year.

Commenting on the areas of funding to Sri Lanka from Europe, Mr.Evans says: "Any money that is being invested in the island or sent in non-specific aid could be said to be assisting the government with its battles in the north of the island. Latest figures show that nearly 30% of the country's budget or 6% of GDP is going on defence expenditure.

Referring to the very high security in the city and the checkpoints at every few hundred metres, Mr.Evans says: "Repeatedly I became aware of the increased pressure that this places on the Tamil community, particularly anyone who was born in Jaffna. When a Jaffna identity card is shown to security forces it can often lead to detention for an indeterminate period, harassment certainly and sometimes worse. The infringement of human rights by the government , in the name of security checks, is also alleged with considerable justification".

"It was not possible to visit the north of the island as permission could not be granted. The LTTE, the Tamil liberation army, control a considerable section of the north of the island, so the Jaffoa peninsula, nominally controlled by government forces, is cut off. The road and railways are closed, the aeroplane links are suspended after a plane was shot down, so the only way to Jaffna is by boat from Trincomalee. I was unable to confirm or otherwise the allegations that the army is not really answerable to the government in Colombo.

"What is beginning to be accepted by all sides is that this is a war that no one can win. The island is suffering through the huge military expense and the social cost in terms of civil resentment of authority cannot be priced. As in just about every situation of conflict around the world, peace will presumably only come when both sides are prepared to acknowledge the other and sit down to discussions.

"The UK government minister responsible, Derek Fatchett M.P. has, on more than one occasion, intimated that he is prepared to try to act as an independent broker for peace. This might clash with the suggestion from some quarters that the UK is still supplying arms to Sri Lanka.

"Equally worrying or even sinister is the almost total absence of television and media coverage of the war. This clearly suits the Sri Lankan government but is not in the interests of those seeking a solution."

Ottawa's Tamil Women celebrate International Women's Day

(From Anton Fernando, Ottawa, Canada)

"Tonight, I pledge my support to eradicate state violence against Tamil women in Sri Lanka", were the promising words of Ms. Lucya Spencer, the President of the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada. She was the keynote speaker at the International Women's Day event held at the Ottawa-Carleton regional government office here in Ottawa on March 2nd.

The regional government office is an elegant new building in the nation's capital, which proudly symbolizes people's power and liberty. Its architectural beauty and elegance provides a comforting feeling of protection; that sense of protection and security epitomizes what Canada is all about and what democracy is all about. Speeches delivered at this monumental landmark are heard across the land. The organizers of this event, the Ottawa Tamil Women Association (OTWA) under the umbrella organization of Tamil Coordinating Committee wanted to be heard across the land. Indeed, their message was loud and clear: Stop state violence against Tamil women now!

Ms. Spencer's message was clear just like her confident voice. Her speech delivered a strong message, and the echoes of her voice filled the room so much so even the walls around us seems to disappear. It was touching and it was comforting. She promised to do her best to eradicate state violence against women. The promise she made at the heart of Canadian capital was the high point of the evening.

Ms. Sonia Brereton of the National Capital Alliance on Race Relations spoke about domestic violence and she express her heartfelt concern and sympathy for the Tamil women back in Sri Lanka. She recalled her experience with abused Tamil women and expressed solidarity with them. The other two speakers were the executive members of the OTWA, Ms. Thiruthanikan and Ms. Thurairajah. Both made compassionate and emotional appeals urging the audience to create a climate of awareness.

Ms. Thiruthanikan spoke about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, and what Tamil women are going through in their daily lives. "When our husbands go to work, or when our children go to school, we worry about their return. Tamil women experience these mental agonies almost daily. At times, rape, the deadliest weapon is used against us" she says. Certainly, her speech had an element of urgency. She invited the listeners to create a climate of awareness. "The situation must be made known, and that is our goal today. We want to create awareness about what's happening to our mothers and sisters back in Sri Lanka, in the midst of strict media censorship", and very movingly she concluded "its unbearable".

Ms. Thurairajah dedicated her time to speak about one Tamil woman: the 17-year old school girl, Krishanty Kumaraswamy, who was raped and murdered by the Sri Lankan security forces. The audience held their breath while listening to this unspeakable crime. "Tamil or Sinhalaes, no woman deserved to be raped. It's a crime against humanity", she says. "Krishanthy was raped repeatedly by 6 security men, where each solider took his turn while she begged for water", and with a somber voice, Ms. Thurairajah urged the audience to act against state violence.

At the end of four speeches, the central theme seems to be rather clear: Stop state violence against Tamil women in Sri Lanka. The theme had an overall sense of urgency. The audience was reminded that the time was indeed ticking, and action is required. While the keynote speaker express concern over Tamil women's issues, others reminded the audience to create a climate of awareness. They urged the audience to act now.

Where could be a better place in Ottawa than the regional government office, to urge Canadian politicians to act against state violence in Sri Lanka. A minute of silence while lighting candles to remember the victims sent a clear message to the federal parliament next door.

East Timor moves rapidly away from Indonesia

BY FARHAN HAQ

United Nations, Feb.23: Panicky diplomatic cables, emboldened insurgencies, dispirited bureaucrats: all these are signs of a country fraying at the seams.

For three decades the regime of former President Suharto defended its vice-like grip in East Timor, adamant that it would never allow the secession of any part of what it declared to be Indonesia.

But now, amid the economic woes and political weakness of the post- Suharto era, East Timor is moving rapidly away from the Jakahta government's orbit and other regions may be inspired to follow suit.

"A new Balkanisation will occur soon in this part of the world," predicted John Ondawame, international spokesman for the free Papua Movement, which seeks the independence of the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya (also called West New Guinea).

Yugoslavia collapsed following the death of Josip Broz Tito, the World War 11 partisan leader who " forcibly united" the Balkan states, noted Mr. Ondawame. With the end of Gen. Suharto's 33 year- long dictatorship, he pointed out "not every-body accepts the nation state of Indonesia."

In addition to East Timor, which is preparing for either autonomy or independence within the year, Irian Jaya, Aceh, the Moluccan Islands and even Bali may want varying degrees of freedom from central rule, Mr Ondawame told reporters here.

That argument raised the spectre many officials within and outside Jakarta feared most: the break-up of the world's fourth most populous nation, where 200 million people live on more than 13,700 islands.

Tamileelam Archive

The first signs of official panic over Indonesia's break-up have begun over East Timor. An Australian newspaper The Age, reprinted official cables sent last week to the Australian government warning of a refugee flood of as many as 15,000 Timorese in the coming months.

The cables claimed there could be a "brain drain in the public sector, key utilities and service industries" if Indonesian rule evaporates too quickly in East Timor.

Indonesian Opposition leader Amien Rais noted last week how quickly matters had shifted.

Indonesian bureaucrats already were leaving East Timor, he said "and once they do that, independence is only a matter of weeks." Mr Rais warned that a civil war in the territory, seized by Indonesia in 1975, was "imminent" and that the release of the Timorese resistance leader Xananan Gusmao-now under house arrest-may become necessary.

"The objective situation will progress much faster than we expect," Mr Rais argued.

Even Timorese leaders newly hopeful of their region's independence are worried that events may spin out of control.

"We need a period of time to settle things in East Timor," said Mr Constancio Pinto, US representative of the National Council of Timorese Resisitance, a coalition of pro-independence forces. "We want to make East Timor as stable a state as possible."

To that end, pro-independence Timorese want the United Nations to send peace-keepers to the territory to maintain human rights and observe the withdrawal of more than, 100,000 Indonesian troops and security forces. In addition, Mr Pinto argued, East Timor must be under an "interim rule" monitored by the United Nations for about three years, during which time combatants on all sides can be disarmed. Other wise, warns Joao Carrascalao, president of the Union of Democratic Timorese, which favours an end to Indonesian rule, Jakarta may arm anti-independence Timorese. "What is going to happen is a massacre of the civilian population again," he contended.

The warning recalled the unrest in 1975, when Portugal abruptly ended nearly four centuries of colonial rule in East Timor, and various factions fought each other for control before Indonesians invaded. More than 200,000 Timorese _ about a third of the island state's population- died in the ensuing bloodbath.

INTER PRESS SERVICE

Two ships to be bought to transport refugees

Presidential approval has been granted for the purchasing of two passenger ships to transport people who are returning to Jaffna from Trincomalee the Chairman of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Authority of the North (RRAN), N. A. Obadage, told the Daily News. He said that a private ship is also expected to be chartered to Jaffna, once Government approval is received.

The RRAN Chairman said that the unavailability of a continuous transportation link to Jaffna has led to many being stranded in Trincomalee, unable to get to their home town.

He said that according to the Divisional Secretary of Trincomalee, there are around 6,000 people at present in Trincomalee awaiting return to Jaffna.

"The ship Lanka Muditha which is a cargo ship converted and used to carry passengers is at present the only transport facility to passengers from Trincomalee to Jaffna", Mr. Obadage said adding that it does not run to a regular schedule.

"We took 5,000 people from Trincomalee in December last year on four consecutive trips. The following trip was on February 12 where 1,500 tickets were issued but since the maximum number the ship could accommodate was only 1,250 people, 250 of the passengers had to be left behind", he said.

Commenting on the private ship that is expected to be chartered, Mr. Obadage said that ICRC escort is expected to be provided. "The ICRC has agreed to release two of its officials to accompany the ship", the RRAN Chairman said. The Government approval for the chartering of this ship is yet to be obtained but we hope to receive approval soon", he said".

The purchase of the two ships by the Government is expected to take around three months, he said.

Dead youth was tortured

Anthony Gnanasekaram, who died in the custody of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) at Gurunagar, in Jaffna had been tortured said Prof. Sinnaththamby Veluppillai, in his medical report which he submitted to the Jaffna courts. The SLA had earlier said that Gnanasekaram committed suicide.

The medical report said there were injuries on the youth's body consistent with the results of torture, including burn injuries believed to have been caused by cigarettes.

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Sri Lanka continues to use food as a war weapon!

A calamitous situation of tragic proportions is facing 702,987 Tamils languishing in makeshift refugee camps in the NorthEast province, especially in the Vanni area, says a statement issued by the **Federation of Association of Canadian Tamils (FACT).**

"The Sri Lankan government has arbitrarily imposed an across the board cut of 40% in rations issued to refugees with effect from July 01,1998. According to the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority for the North, the total number of displaced persons island-wide as at 30th April 1998 is 800,845 belonging to 195,195 families. Out of them, a total of 796, 079 persons are in 15 welfare centres in several districts while the rest, numbering 4,766 are living with friends and relatives. What this means is that one in every 22.5 persons of a total population of 18 million is a refugee!

"The breakdown of figures in welfare centres of various districts in the NorthEast according to the same source is as follows:

"Jaffna 331, 065 Kilinochchi 87, 665 Mullaitivu 128,931 Mannar 68,422 Vavunia 32,197 Trincomalee 26,542 Batticaloa 24,010 Amparai 4,155 Total 702,987

"In other words 87.78% of the refugees (living in the NorthEast) are Tamils! A staggering percentage when it is considered the Tamils in the NorthEast comprises only 12.7% of the total population. This means every third person in the NorthEast province is a refugee! According to a situation report compiled by the Government Agent, in June 27, 1998, in Kilinochchi district alone a total of 42,352 families who were displaced from Jaffna consequent to military operations Riviresa II and Sath Jaya in 1995/96 have NOT been issued with any dry rations. These people have no alternative source of income generation for their sustenance while economic survival is not available in Vanni region because of the ongoing civil war.

"The tragic situation has been further compounded by the Sri Lankan government because of the economic blockade of the North as well as restrictions placed on international relief agencies like UNCHR, CARE, ICRC, MSF, SCF, REDBARNA, OXFAM, FOURRUT from providing food to Tamil refugees.

Tamil child: *An empty plate*

"The Refugee Council, UK in a news release issued last June titled "Denying NGO freedom" states, "In March this year Human Rights NGO, Peace Brigade International (PBI) was forced to close its offices and quit Sri Lanka following difficulties with the government in renewing its agreement to operate in the island.

"In a Relief and Rehabilitation (RRN) paper titled The Coordination of humanitarian action: the case of Sri Lanka, the author Koenraad Van Brabant, says that the single most important impediment to effective humanitarian coordination is the Sri Lankan government, more particularly, the MILITARY, retaining the final authority and keeping agencies outside their mechanisms." (Refugee Council of UK dated June 05,1998).

"The Humanitarian Law Project said in a statement issued in May 1998 "at a meeting of the UNHCR, ICRC, Oxfam, CARE and MSF, there was agreement that provisions for the displaced in Sri Lanka were grossly insufficient. International pressure is not reaching the government, which in its callous disregard for the plight of these Tamils appears to be mired in a POLICY, THAT APPROACHES GENOCIDE."

"Thousands of people living in "uncleared areas" of Vanni have been protesting against the cut in rations imposed by the government since August 06 by going on hunger strike in front of Kachcheries and UNCHR /ICRC. But the Sri Lankan government remains unmoved and unconcerned to the plight of these people whom it claims as its citizens. Apparently the government is using food as a WEAPON OF WAR to force the Tamil people into submission.

"On August 20, Ranil Wickramasinghe, Leader of the Opposition moved an adjournment motion in the Parliament charging the government of starving the people of Vanni under the guise of fighting the LTTE. He highlighted the tragic plight of the ordinary civilians in the Vanni and warned the government " NOT TO USE FOOD AS A WEAPON OF WAR."

"We therefore appeal to the conscience of all Canadians to pressure the Sri Lankan government to lift the cut imposed on the issue of food to the Tamil refugees who are facing a Rwandan type starvation immediately. Sri Lankan government also must be compelled to lift the restrictions imposed on the international agencies from providing humanitarian relief, including food, to the Tamil refugees.

Chennai doctors hold Eye Surgical camp at Mannar

A 3-day Eye Surgical camp was held in Mannar from March 1-3, on the initiative of Dr.Jayalath Jayawardana, M.P. and Human Rights activist. Two professors of Opthalmology from the Sri Ramachandra Medical College & Research Institute of Madras, Dr.A.Samuel Gnanadoss and Dr Kannan who had come down on the invitation of Dr.Jayawardana conducted the camp. Dr.Srikantha Dias, Eye Surgeon at Panadura Hospital co-ordinated the sessions.

3,000 persons underwent eye examination and cataract operations were performed on 105 of them. Free spectacles were given to 1200, many of whom were poor people from areas not under the control of the army, according to Dr.Jayawardana.

Speaking at a Press Conference held later at Hotel Renuka, Dr.Jayawardana said that when he mooted the idea of the Eye Camp, several Sri Lankan doctors agreed to join, but later withdrew giving various reasons. Only Dr.Srikantha Dias kept his promise.

Dr.Jayalath Jayawardana

He thanked the Catholic Bishop of Mannar, Rt.Rev.Dr.R.Joseph and the Lions Club of Colombo North, SEDEC, and the Sri Lankan Council for the Blind for their co-operation.

Sri Lanka not ready yet to give up landmines

Sri Lanka, where landmines have left hundreds dead or maimed says it is not yet ready to sign the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. The treaty was signed by 64 aountries by March 1.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said Foreign Minister Kadirgamar made the Sri Lankan position known when visiting Austrian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Benita Waldner expressed her hope that Colombo too, would sign the treaty.

Austria is a signatory to the aonvention, while the world's only superpower, the United States has not joined so far. "I hope Sri Lanka will soon join the impressive number of nations which have already committed themselves to this landmark instrument", Ms.Waldner said in Colombo.

According to United Nations experts, at least 15 per cent of the total area of the war-torn northern Jaffna peninsula is covered by landmines. Anti-personnel mines have claimed over 1,000 lives in the north-east, the main theatre of the war.

There are over 13,000 disabled soldiers in the island and the majority of them have lost their limbs due to landmine explosions, said Mr.Asoka Dayaratne, president of the Disabled Soldiers' Association.

INDIA ABROAD NEWS SERVICE

UN expert to expedite the demining process

The United Nations said on March 9 that it would bring in an expert from its New York headquarters for talks with Sri Lankan officials after a demining programme was stalled for over a year. Peter Witham, head of the UN mission, said it was in negotiations with the Sri Lankan defence authorities in the hope of beginning demining operations in March.

"We are getting Ian Mansfield who is in New York and has expertise in all aspects relating to clearing mines", said Witham. Witham said the mine clearing operations were delayed because of initial problems in getting clearance for communication equipment for the demining squads that will involve up to four international staff. "We have resolved all outstanding problems, and the only issue at the moment is the composition of survey teams", Williams told reporters in Colombo ***(AFP)***

Ammunition dump on fire

A portion of the Sri Lankan Army camp at Thallady, in the Northwest of the island, was set on fire when the Liberation Tigers attacked it with artillery and mortar on March 17. The attack lasted for nearly 30 minutes.

According to unconfirmed reports the LTTE shells have hit the camp's ammunition dump setting that portion of the camp on fire.

3 wounded in Jaffna blast

Three Sri Lankan Army (SLA) soldiers were wounded when a bomb exploded at a sentry post at Milavu Junction, about 300 metres from the main bus terminal in the heart of the Jaffna town, around 9.30 a.m. today.

SLA sources in Jaffna said the devise had been planted on the first floor of a building, below the sentry post, which was on the second floor.

- TAMILNET

NEWS IN BRIEF

Army offers reward for information

The army authorities in Jaffna have offered a reward of Rs.25,000/- to anyone giving information in connection with the killing of Sellathurai Poochandran (24) on February 1. The youth was reported to have been kidnapped when he came to the Commercial Bank. His dead body was found with both hands and legs tied at Kannathiddy the next day.

Television set causes scare

A television set lying unclaimed at Kaddapiray on the main Jaffna-Point Pedro road on the 27th February caused a scare in the neighbourhood when soldiers suspecting it to be a bomb made a search among neighbouring h.ouses and passing vehicles. A bomb disposal squad was called and the T.V.set was blasted. IT was later realised that thieves who had robbed it from a house had dropped it on sensing the army movement.

LTTE's second phone service in Vanni

The LTTE have begun another satellite telephone service in the western part of the Vanni. A fax connection has also been installed. As in the earlier link at Puthukudlyirruppu in Mullaitivu, members of the public have been given access to the the phone link

Time bomb goes off at Narahenpita

A time bomb went off premature.ly at the Kelani line at Narahenpita station, on 14arch 2, causing damage to a train wagon and the rail track. There were no passengers at that time. It is suspected that the bomb might have been meant for the police garage nearby. Four suspects were taken into custody, including one Sinhalese.

8,000 civilians are trapped

8,000 Tamil civilians have been trapped at Poovarasankulam, following the latest military offensive by the Sri Lankan forces advancing from Chettikulam towards Iluppaikulam. The army authorities have prevented the people from moving out They have sought shelter at the village school precincts. All traffic on the MannarVavuniya road was halted meanwhile.

Deaths from malaria and brain fever

Five people were reported dead at the Kilinochchi hospital during the month of February. They were suffering from malaria and brain fever. Hundreds of such patients had sought treatment at the hospital, but poor hygiene and lack of drugs are preventing the containment of these diseases.

That Pettah bomb: No clues yet

Police investigating the bomb blast in a bus at Pettah, which claimed two lives, have not been able to make a break through so far. Eight Tamil youths who were arrested on the day of the explosion have been released after questioning.

The police, CID and army are conducting search operations in the area in a hunt for those responsible for several blasts in the Pettah area recently.

Fifteen were injured by the explosion in the bus at the Central Bus Stand in Pettah.

Bomb explodes in hospital

A bomb explosion at Bibile base hospital in the early hours of 14th March killed one female patient and injured two others.

The patient who died in the explosion has been identified as R. M. Hemamali of Wegama, Bibile, a mother of two children.

Police investigating into this incident has arrested the husband of the dead patient who is a soldier serving in the north. It had been revealed that there has been a dispute between the husband and the wife.

April 6, new date for polls

Sri Lanka has announced a fresh date for polls to five of eight provincial councils after a meeting with contesting parties.

Earlier, the Supreme Court permitted the elections commissioner to change the date from April 1 to April 6 after protests from religious leaders that various observances during that period would be affected.

Political analysts have said a win for the ruling coalition could encourage President Chandrika Kumaratunga to call presidential and general elections ahead of schedule in 2000.

Gun attack on judge's house

The attack on the residence of Vavuniya"s District Judge in a high security zone of town has sparked protest demonstrations by lawyers, court staff and the people.

An unknown gang allegedly fired 16 rounds into the residence of Judge S.Thiyagendran but he was in Colombo at that time.

Demonstrations were held to protest against the attack. Vavuniya"s Army Commander, the DIG of the area and the GA visited the scene of the protest and assured that steps would be taken to prevent such incidents.

The Judge has now moved to a new residence guarded by armed police . No arrests have been made yet and the motive for the attack is still not clear.

Sri Lankan journalist kidnapped and beaten up

Armed men abducted a reporter working for a Sinhala-language weekly - the LAKBIMA - and beat him up severely , as a suspected retaliation against his exposure of Sri Lankan military men's misdeeds. The victim, Srilal Priyantha, has been known for fearless reporting of corruption in the military.

Thr incident which happened on Sunday, 14th March, appeared to be a direct result of a front-page headline story the previous day which accused an army brigadier of alleged abduction and assault of a young couple.

The gunmen are reported to have first cut the telephone lines in the home of Srilal Priyantha, and then abducted him in a vehicle and beat him up before pushing him out in a dazed condition. The attackers had also placed two plastic bags over his dead in an apparent attempt to suffocate him. Found abandoned in a state of shock by the roadside, Mr.Priyantha was unable to speak with his colleagues when rushed to the hospital.

"I believe he was attacked because of his writings exposing corruption in the defence establishment", LAKBIMA editor Bandula Padmakumara told reporters. "The attack could be for any of his (recent) articles", he added.

The attack on Mr.Priyantha was only one of several attacks against journalists in Sri Lanka in recent times. The editor of the English-language Sunday newspaper, the SUNDAY LEADER, Mr.Lasantha Wickrema tunga, escaped death last year when unidentified gunmen fired about 40 rounds with automatic assault rifles at his home. Senior journalist Iqbal Athas who contributes a widely-read column on military matters to another Englishlanguage Sunday paper - the SUNDAY TIMES - was also targeted by gun-wielding Air Force personnel.

Tamil journalists working for the Tamil daily - the VIRAKESARI have also come in for arbitrary arrests and detentions by pro-government elements. Despite protests by international media organisations, the attackers in most cases have got away with impunity. Under no other previous government have attacks on journalists taken place with such frequency and such ferocity.

Brigadier detained

The military police took in for questioning Brigadier Bandula Ranasinghe in connection with the attack against journalist Srilal Priyantha of the Lakbima weekly newspaper, military officials said.

Priyantha's attackers had been looking for audio tapes relating to a story in which he had reported the alleged links of a junior government minister in a conspiracy to eliminate a senior minister, according to some reports.

Priyantha's lawyer Desmond Fernando said the objective of the attack appeared to be to get hold of the tapes which the gunmen had taken with them.

Fernando said he was unhappy about the security provided to Priyantha at a state hospital and was seeking more protection for him.

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Obituaries

Regina Rajanayagam

The death occurred on 10 February 1999 of Mrs.Regina Rajanayagam, wife of Mr.P.Rajana yagam, Editor, TAMIL TIMES, U.K. She was the daughter of the late Mr and Mrs. Saveri, and sister of Cecilia Lawrence, S.Ratnam, S.Jesuthasan, Anton James and Prins. Burial took place on Thursday 18 February.

K.Vinayagamoorthy

The death occurred in London of Mr.Kumarasamy Vinayaga moorthy of Chankanai, Jaffna, later resident of Thirunelvely. He leaves his wife Sarvalogeswari, sons Senthilkumaran, Thasarathakumar, Jayakumar and Sivakumar, all of London, and daughter Sriranjani of Australia. Cremation took place in London on 18 February.

Mrs.Gopalakrishnan

The death occurred in Jaffna of Mrs.Ranjithapoorani Gopalakrishna Retd. Confidential Secretary, People's Bank, Regional Head Office, Jaffna. She is survived by husband Mr.A.Gopalakrishnan son Mr.G.Gopikrishna and brothers and sisters.

51/7, Chetty Street, Nallur, Jaffna.

P.Sivalingam

Mr.Ponniah Sivalingam of Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, Colombo, passed away in Colombo on 12 February. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Ponniah of Valvettiturai, he was the husband of Krishnaveni and father of Harshini, Pamini Vaikunthan. Funeral took place on 14 February.

31B, Sea Avenue, Colombo 3.

Mrs.S.R.Kanaganayagam

Mrs.Sivagnana Sathiyamma, wife of the late Senator and Advocate S.R.Kanaganayagam died in Australia on 27 February '99. She was the mother of Mrs.Savithri Balasubramaniam (Australia), President's Counsel Kanag-Isvaran (Colombo) and Maheswaran (Engineer, Australia).

Sulochana Joseph

Mrs.Sulochana Joseph of Pandatheruppu, Jaffna, resident of Negombo, passed away on 11 February. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alphonsus and wife of Mr.Jeyananthan Joseph, and daughter-in-law of Mr and Mrs. V.M.Joseph of Jaffna. Burial took place on 15 February. 65, Grand Street, Negambo.

K.Kanagasabapathy

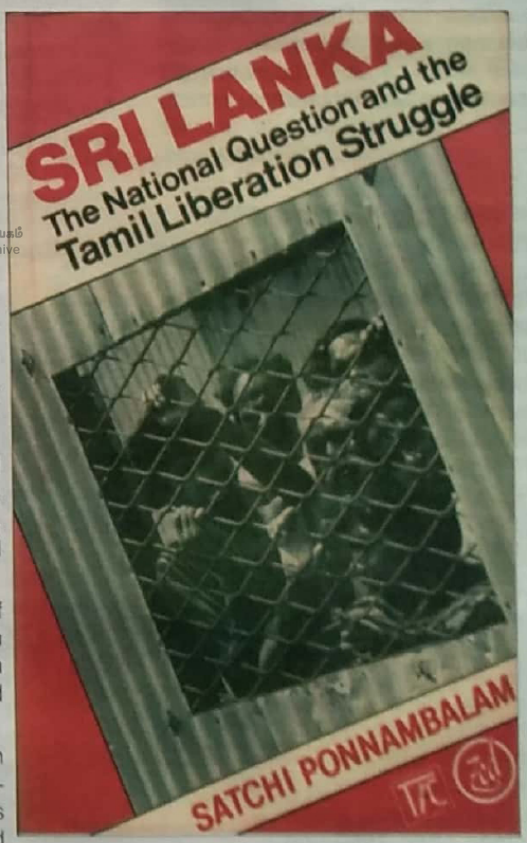
Mr.Kandasamy Kanagasabapathy, Retired Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, passed away at Chennai, India, and was cremated at the Besant Nagar, Chennai, cematorium in December 1998.

C.Nadarajah

Mr.Chelliah Nadarajah, husband of Pathmavathy, brother of Vadivambikai, father of Malathi Yogarajah (Chennai), Siva Kumar (Carshalton, UK) Vasuki Namasivayam (Croydon), passed away peacefully on his 91st birthday in Croydon. Mr. Nadarajah who was popularly known as "Broker Nadarajah" served in the Ceylon police force and later became a successful produce broker. Funeral took place on 18 February.

* * * * *

Satchi Ponnambalam



Mr.Satchi Ponnam balam, Judge of the Supreme Court of Belize in Central America from 1985-1993, passed away recently after a prolonged illness. He was 64.Mr.Ponnambalam will be best remembered as the author of the scholarly, but committed history of Sinhala-Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka - SRI LANKA: THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND THE TAMIL LIBERATION STRUGGLE, published by the Tamil Information Centre, London, in 1983, in collaboration with Zed Books Ltd., London.

He was also author of Dependent Capitalism in Crisis: The Sri Lankan Economy 1948-80 (Zed Press, 1981)

Mr.Ponnambalam had his secondary education at St.John's College, Jaffna, and entered the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya in 1955. He served as Senior State Advocate, Zambia, and later Magistrate and Chief Magistrate, Belize, before being elevated to the Supreme Court of that country.

He married Vasantha Sittampalam, and was the father of three daughters, Sumathi, Jamuna and Menaka.

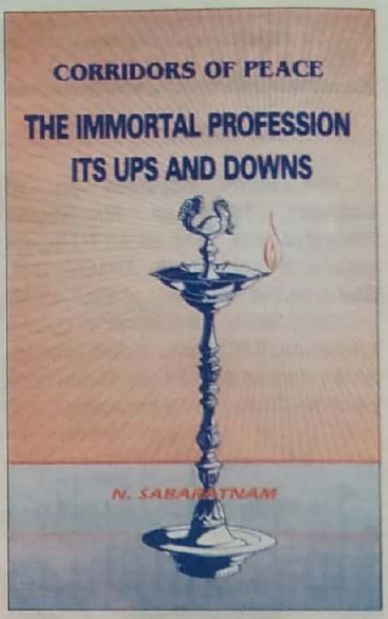
A veteran Jaffna teacher reminisces

"THE IMMORTAL PROFESSION: ITS UPS AND DOWNS" by N.Sabaratnam one-time Principal of Jaffna Hindu College

Education, it has been said, is the biggest industry of the Jaffna man. It was therefore no wonder that the late South Indian literary figure R Krishnamurthi (Kalki) recounting his experiences of his visit to Jaffna wrote with typical humour - IF anyone were to stumble and fall in Jaffna, he would almost certainly fall against a pundit or a teacher! Jaffna has the proud distinction of producing many eminent educators and teachers, many of them simple, humble men, who did a tremendous service in the cause of education but passed away without trace. Among the few who are yet remembered is N.Sabaratnam, a veteran English teacher for 45 years and Principal of Jaffna Hindu College.

THE IMMORTAL PROFESSION: ITS UPS AND DOWNS is a book that he completed writing nearly seven years ago. during his period of retirement, but had remained unpublished, until he passed away Consisting of 285 pages, the book containing reminiscences of his life as a teacher, has now been published through the efforts of Mrs Leelawathie Sabaratnam, Mr.V.Sivasubramaniam and ~ Maravanpulo K.Sachithananthan.

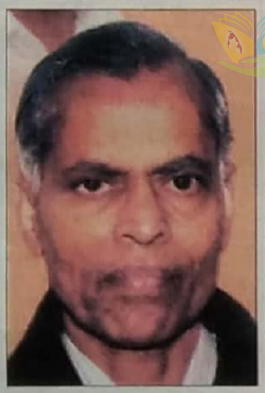
Priced at US dollars 5.00 (Sri Lanka Rs.300/-) it is available at Kanthalakam, Chennai, and at



Poobalasingam Book Depots in Jaffna and Colombo, as well as in Saraswathy Book Depot, Scarborough, Canada.

They were honoured in Canada

Mr.Suppiah Tharmalingam, former president of Senior Tamils' Centre of Canada and Tamil Eelam Society of Canada was among those honoured at a ceremony at the City Hall, Toronto, on Feruary 7.



Suppiah Tharmalingam

He was given the "Tamils' Information" award for outstanding community service in Canada and Sri Lanka for over 20 years. Mr.Tharmalingam is an old boy of St.John's College, Jaffna, where he was also a teacher for seven years. He also held highranking positions in the Sri Lanka Cadet Corps. After 1980, he served in Nigeria and in 1986 moved with the family to Canada.

Thanathevy Mithradeva

Mrs.Thanathevy Mithradeva was honoured at the same ceremony for outstanding contribution to Tamil Music. After 11 years in Singapore, she came to Canada in 1995 where she was recognised as a Super Grade classical vocalist and Radio/TV artist. She was presented with the S.K. Ambalavanar pillai memorial award.

Others who were honoured were Mr.M.K.S. Sivakumaran (Germany) for outstanding contribution to Tamil Literature, Mr.R. Rajadurai (Portello) for Business Entrepreneur ship, Mr.Fred Balasingam for outstanding contribution to Seniors, and Mr.Adolfo Puricelli & Mrs.Betty Puricelli for outstanding service to the Refugee Community.

Arangetram in Germany

Selvi Mini Thekkedathu, who had her Bharata Natya training in London under Shrimathi Ragini Rajagopal had her Arangetram in Germany on 20 February '99.

From Bharata Natyam to Mohini Attam

The art of Bharata Natyam today has gained a universal language and has crossed so many boundaries that it is no longer the preserve of the original practitioners of the art in South India. Once an exclusive domain of a hereditary caste of women called "devadasis", and known as "Sathir Attam" in the temples of India, it took a rebellious Brahmin woman in Rukmani Devi Arundale to lift the art from its caste-ridden and debauched state into the public stage in Madras, and endow it with a new middle-class respectability.

Once that happened, it soon outgrew Tamil and Indian boundaries, and cultural conformism and spread to the West and attracted both artistes and audiences. Ethnic prejudice notwithstanding, the art has spread to Sinhala society in Sri Lanka as well, popularised by early students of Kalakshetra in Madras such as Padmini Dahanayake and Kamala Gunatileke. This international reaching out of Bharata Natyam has also brought with it a certain mental weariness and boredom among audiences, particularly among Tamil audiences, because they are the ones most exposed to performances of Bharata Natyam, with every Tamil mummah wanting her chick to ascend the stage.

Refreshing therefore was the experience that the audience had at a Croydon Hall in London recently, watching KARTHIYAYINI SRINIVAS go through a complete repertoire of MOHINI ATTAM with such swanlike grace and softness of movement. Refreshing not just because Mohini Attam was a change for Bharata Natya audiences, nor because Karthiyayini was a new face to London connoisseurs, but because she gave the art of Mohini Attam the stamp of classicism that this lesser known dance form needed.

Mohini Attam comes from Kerala in India, and so is Karthiyayini Overshadowed by the Kathakali dance drama image that Kerala always projected,and outshone by the reputation gained not only by Bharata Natyam, but even by the North Indian Kathak, the Odissi and Kuchipudi, Mohini Attam had remained in popular parlance as a folk dance like Manipuri. Even among reputed Eelam Tamil dance artistes, with the exception of Vijayambigai Indrakumar (nee Ramasamy) and Kuchipudi danseuse Renga Vivekanandan, who both brought it to the Colombo stage as a single item as part of a repertoire, hardly anyone took the trouble to study this dance form.

Vijayambigai Indrakumar honouring the artiste, on the right is Dr. Indrakumar, and on left Mr. Srinivas

Karthiyayini herself is a Bharata Natya dancer, but it is the service she is rendering to Mohini Attam through her excellence in this dance form, and its introduction to wider audiences that gives her a special niche in the dance world. Even when she depicts the Dance of Shiva in the composition by that great patron of the arts - the Maharajah of Travancore, Swathi Thirunal - the dance acquires a surprising and pleasing sinuosity of form that is so distinct from the dynamic straightness of line that Bharata Natyam demands. The traditional white and gold costume associated with Mohini Attam itself gives the dance an aura of freshness.

S.S.

MATRIMONIAL

Respondents are invited to write to THE MEETING POINT, c/o HOT SPRING, P.O.Box 14258, London SW16 6ZU, U.K.

Please ensure that you quote the appropriate Ref.No. given at the end of the proposal in which you are interested.

All letters will be forwarded in strict confidence to THE MEETING POINT. (See details below).

Niece, Doctor, 32, practicing in a London based hospital, UK citizen, Hindu, fair, slim and attractive, Mars in the 12th house, seeks professional Hindu partner. Please send horoscope and details in confidence. *Ref: MPG212 Hot Spring*

Daughter, Tamil Doctor, 29, British born practicing in UK, non practicing Christian, seeks easy going sociable partner, religion immaterial, professional with education and upbringing in UK suitable. Please forward details. *Ref: MPG206 Hot Spring*

Sister, B.Com (Hon), 42, Teacher in Colombo, Jaffna Hindu, seeks partner preferably in UK, horoscope immaterial but will provide if necessary. *Ref: MPG214 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu Daughter, 40, resident in London, divorcee, no children, seeks Hindu partner, understanding divorcee acceptable with no children. Please send details. *Ref: MPG 205 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu Son, 30, settled in USA, vegetarian, in computer software engineering profession, seeks suitable partner, preferably degree holder and willing to settle in the US. Send horoscope and details in confidence. *Ref: MPB102 Hot Spring*

Daughter, London Degree Holder, 28, in the UK Civil Service, slim 5 ft tall, vegetarian, Mars in the 8th house, seeks suitable professional Hindu partner 29-32, with UK background, not necessarily a vegetarian, flexible on horoscope if both parties agree. *Ref: MPG213 Hot Spring*

Daughter, Doctor 32, completed MRCP, Specialist Registrar in a London hospital, Hindu, British citizen, UK educated, 5ft 1in tall, medium complexion, seeks smart compatible partner, doctor or similar profession, religion immaterial. *Ref: MPG211 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Christian son, 26, UK citizen, professionally qualified and employed in London,seeks Christian partner 21 - 25 with degree or professional qualification. Please send details. *Ref: MPB 105 Hot Spring*

Daughter, Doctor, 27, training to be a GP, currently working at a hospital near London, Christian, 5ft 4in tall, seeks pleasant friendly Christian professional, 27- 33 years, resident in UK, above 5ft 8in tall. *Ref: MPG 207 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu Boy, Doctor 39, Vegetarian, now practicing in the US seeks vegetarian Tamil Hindu partner. Please forward details with horoscope. *Ref: MPB 103 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu daughter, 28, London Graduate, British citizen, Sai Baba devotee, completed Bharatha Natya Arangetram, seeks suitable partner willing to settle in UK. Forward horoscope. *Ref: MPG209 Hot Spring*

Tamil Doctor Boy 33, UK citizen, vegetarian, practicing in London, Mars dosha, seeks vegetarian Hindu partner under 30, preferably UK educated. Send horoscope and details. *Ref: MPB 106 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu Son, 26, MSc, Computer Consultant in London, seeks suitable Hindu partner 20 - 24, university education and UK residence preferred. Send horoscope and details. *Ref: MPB 107 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu Daughter, 31, British Born and employed seeks partner, preferably UK born, intelligent, sporty, in secure career. Forward details. *Ref: MPG 203 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu Daughter, 28, British born, graduate and in good employment, seeks Hindu partner with long UK background and education to suit, not over 33 years. Please send horoscope and details. *Ref: MPG202 Hot Spring*

The Meeting Point

Tel: 0181 767 1230 Fax: 0181 672 6433

The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora has in recent years spread to many different countries in the World - to the UK and other European Countries, to America, to Canada and Australia. As a result contacts between those who were previously friends and neighbours back in Sri Lanka have become almost non-existent. The hardships and pressures in trying to establish ourselves in the new country of residence have made matters even more difficult.

Many young men and women of marriageable age are therefore faced with difficulties in finding suitable partners in their own community.

The Meeting Point was inaugurated in London on 17th May 98, at a meeting attended by a large number of Tamil parents. The Meeting Point will operate as a voluntary organisation manned by a few respectable retired persons who are keen to serve the community by helping parents find suitable marriage partners for their sons/daughters. These volunteers understand the nature of this exercise and will ensure utmost care and discretion in divulging information of individuals.

The Meeting Point also organises events such as parties and forums where young people will have opportunities to meet and get to know each other in a leisurely atmosphere. Suggestions, help and contributions are most welcome.

Parents/guardians/friends, desiring to seek a partner for a girl/boy, are welcome to make an application to The Meeting Point. Applicants are also welcome to visit the office of The Meeting Point by prior appointment.

Independence or Death

Gusmao sees only solution for East Timor

East Timorese resistance leader Jose Alexandre (Xanana) Gusmao (centre).

Q (Newsweek): "Can an independent East Timor eventually stand alone economically without becoming an international burden?

Gusmao: "We will start from zero and will depend on international aid at first, but not for ever. We know we have to stand on our own feet as soon as possible, and we will. We are a small population of some 800,000, and our development programme will not be aimed at high technology or megaprojects. We simply want to give our people the opportunity to get out from the poverty and misery they are facing now. We have natural resources, the best coffee, and perhaps even offshore oil....

M.O.T

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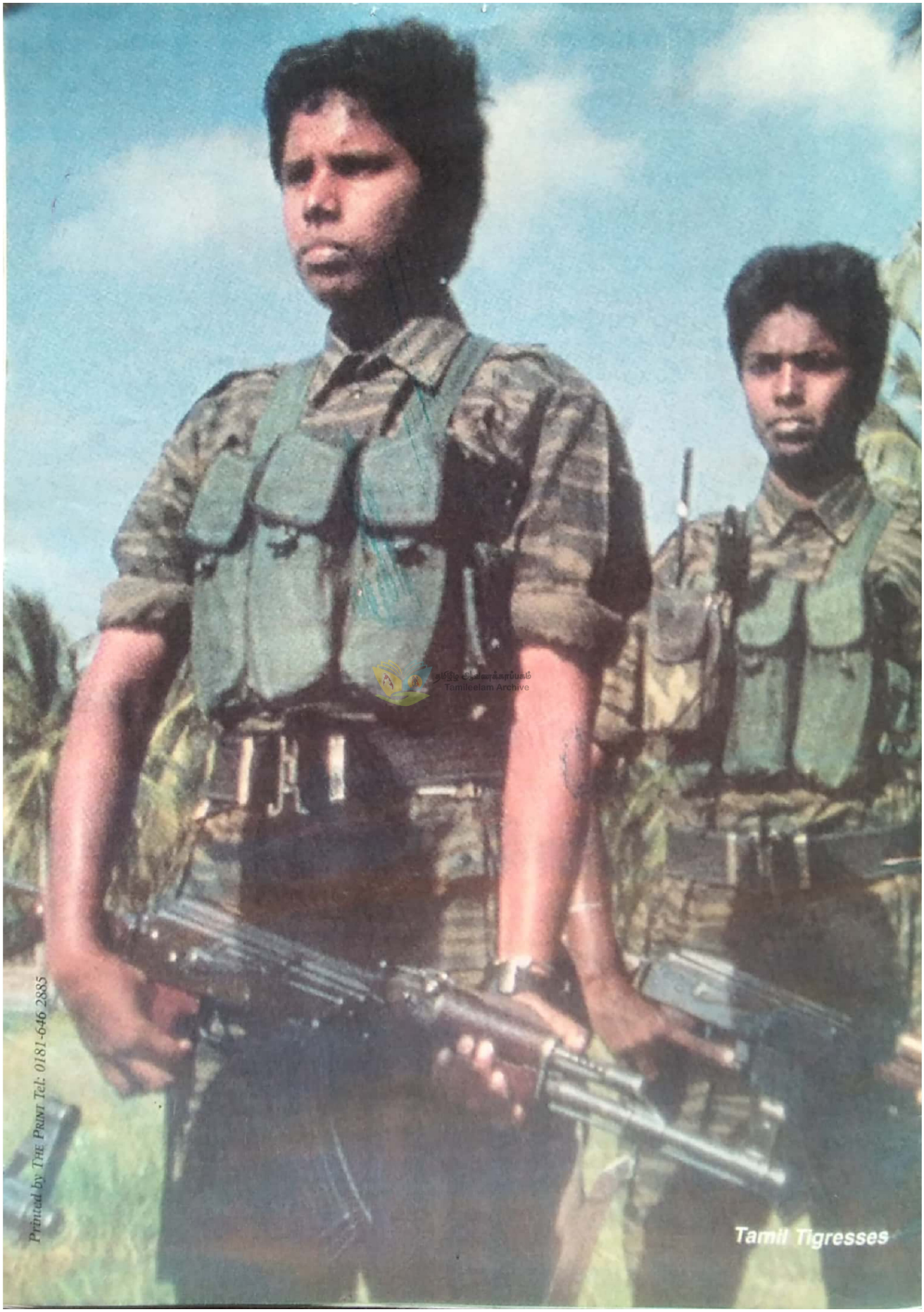

தமிழீழ ஆவணக்காப்பகம்
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