



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGEE

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SPECIAL ISSUE — SRI LANKA

"When in doubt and the leaders confuse you by divided counsel, go out into the street and see what the people are doing."

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg

In January of 1985, I visited the north of Sri Lanka and was ejected from Jaffna by the army before I could extensively survey the scene. I did have the opportunity to interview many Tamils and army personnel, in the north, however. The articles are pre-printed here.

The response to those articles was overwhelming: 159 phone calls, numerous personal visits by both Tamils and Sinhalese at my home and office, and a large number of letters, some of which we have re-printed.

This issue focuses on Sri Lanka. In addition to my *Star* articles, letters and my analysis of the response of callers, we have also included a more in-depth article on Sri Lanka. An article by David

Matas on the plight of refugee claimants is particularly applicable given the increasing numbers of Tamils claiming refugee status in Canada.

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Sri Lanka's Agony

by

Howard Adelman

JAFFNA, SRI LANKA

JAFFNA, Sri Lanka – This is not an easy city to get to.

It took me two days to come here from Colombo, the capital, just 400 kilometres (246 miles) away. And when I finally arrived, I was turned away by soldiers. The main problem in travelling is that Sinhalese drivers are afraid to enter the northern province, where the majority of the population is Tamil. They fear Tamil terrorists will attack and kill them. And here in the north, the Tamils fear the fury of the Sinhalese-dominated army, which on several occasions has wreaked a bloody revenge for Tamil killings. On both sides, the fear is very real. And its causes were clearly demonstrated on my journey by bus to this city of 850,000. Our Tamil bus conductor was beaten up by an army officer who punched him repeatedly on each side of the head, then kicked him in the shins with his heavy army boots. The apparent reason for the beating was that the bus was overcrowded, although in fact it was the least crowded bus I travelled on in Sri Lanka. A diplomat in Colombo later suggested the real reason was that the conductor had allowed me, a foreigner, on the bus to Jaffna. We had stopped on the outskirts of Jaffna for a security check. Only the women, a Tamil Jesuit priest and myself were allowed to stay on board. The other men were lined up along the road, searched and interrogated. I felt outraged as the conductor was beaten, but didn't interfere, and everyone else seemed to accept the beating as a routine event. The stories people have been telling me

may explain the passiveness of the Tamil passengers. I was told of innocent bus passengers being shot by soldiers, of 1,000 young men arbitrarily arrested and held as suspected terrorists in a detention camp near Galle on the south shore, of a priest shot by soldiers near Mannar on Jan. 6, of a Methodist minister shot the week before, of 100 youths who have disappeared and are not known to have fled across the narrow strait to India.

The government enforces tight restrictions on the use of cars or bicycles. Escape routes across the Palk Strait are patrolled by the Sri Lanka navy, which also blocked the path of infiltrators from terrorist training camps in India. While I was in the north, one boy was killed and two others wounded when they were intercepted while fleeing by boat to India.

The homes of civilians suspected of assisting terrorists in any way are dynamited. I counted four houses blown up on the main road into Jaffna. One Tamil opposed to separatism, the only northerner I spoke to who still believes in the unity of Sri Lanka, told me of a brand-new house in Jaffna which was dynamited. The occupants had fled when a mine went off under the road four houses away and the soldiers took this as evidence they were in association with the terrorists, and blasted their home. It's not just disgruntled Tamils who make such charges. Former prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, now leader of the Sri Lanka opposition and no friend of



Tamil separatism, publicly echoed the charges a few days later.

While northern Tamils live in daily fear of the overwhelmingly Sinhalese security forces, they also fear one another. A guerrilla group known as the Tamil Tigers, I was told, had executed a Tamil girl because her brother was suspected to be an informer. The Tigers themselves are divided into at least 11 groups. The main ones are the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam led by Velupillai Prabhakaran and the People's Organization of Tamil Eelam led by Uma Maheshwaran. Tamil youths from the Karaiyar Hindu sect have used violence and the indiscriminate response of the Sinhalese army to discredit the older, non-violent leaders of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which embraces mainly Vellala Hinduism. TULF, a legal political party, was represented in parliament until 1983 when the government put through a constitutional amendment which required a pledge of loyalty to a unified Sri Lanka. TULF legislators wouldn't sign the pledge. They were not allowed to take their seats in parliament and the northern Tamils were effectively disenfranchised.

The largely Sinhalese population in the south of the island have little sympathy for the idea of special status for the Tamils, let alone statehood. Every Sinhalese I spoke to said he or she would support the individual rights of Tamils but not their rights as a community because that could lead to a permanent division of the island. However, these ordinary Sinhalese are afraid to travel into, let alone settle in, the mainly-Tamil north because of the dangers. A recent massacre in a Sinhalese settlement in the heart of Tamil territory was uniformly cited by Sinhalese civilians as the reason for avoiding Tamil areas. So there is in fact a partition of the island into Sinhalese and Tamil areas anyway. In the south there is another large minority, the Moors or Moslems. They speak Tamil and sympathize with Tamil demands for collective rights in language and culture, but not with the call for an independent Tamil state. Moors told

me they were afraid of Sinhalese attempts to purify the culture of the island. They said Sinhalese moves to strengthen the position of the Sinhalese language and the Buddhist monks would weaken the Moors' linguistic and religious rights.

When I first sought to go to Jaffna, tourist guides and government officials told me it was impossible, too dangerous, but they were very polite about it. After all, they said, Colombo airport was built with Canadian aid and Sri Lanka is Canada's largest single foreign aid recipient. Eventually, I found a former prison guard who said he would take me to Jaffna by car. But long before we reached the Tamil area, as we approached the ancient capital of Anuradhapura the next morning, the man told me he would go no further. He had no fear, he said, since fear was linked with desire and he had risen above desire by following the eight-fold Buddhist path. However, his wife had not even reached the first level and she was still capable of fear. She had told him not to go on.

An hour later I was in a Sinhalese-driven minibus on the way to Vavuniya, the crossing point into Tamil territory. An army officer there said I was free to go north by road, but there was no bus or car heading that way. I had to return to Colombo. I discovered a train ran to Jaffna and I was on it when it left Colombo at dawn the next day. In seven hours it took me within 40 kilometres of Jaffna but it could get no closer because the line ahead had been blown up. The train shared the same fate four days later and 33 soldiers and civilians died in the explosion. I transferred to a bus, which took me to the outlying districts of Jaffna. It was there that the army officer savagely beat the bus conductor. The women, the priest and I sat in the bus for almost an hour and during all that time the conductor, only a few feet away, was being beaten up, off and on, by the same soldier. He moaned as the punches thudded into his head and the boots bashed his legs. There would be a question, an answer,

another pummeling. Then I was ordered off the bus by other soldiers who, in contrast, were extremely polite to me, even apologetic.

What are you doing here? I told him I had come to see someone, a lawyer. He didn't insist on the name, didn't even ask for my passport. When I said I was from Canada he became very friendly. He talked repeatedly on a walkie-talkie. Finally, he said: "I'm sorry. You cannot stay here. Foreigners are not allowed to come to Jaffna." Later, I found out that I could have walked to the lawyer's home in five minutes. Finally, the soldiers reached a decision. They stopped a passing truck and ordered the driver to take me to Elephant Pass army base, 50 kilometres away, to be questioned by their superiors. There was no way a foreign professor was going to be allowed into the major army operations area of Sri Lanka's bloodiest combat zone.

ELEPHANT PASS, SRI LANKA

ELEPHANT PASS, Sri Lanka - In northern Sri Lanka an ethnic crisis that turned to terrorism has developed into a civil war.

The south, mainly Sinhalese, still debates the national question - whether Sri Lanka should be a unitary state or one country with a degree of autonomy for the northern and eastern Tamil districts. The debate and aborted negotiations have not resulted in even a little progress. Meanwhile, a virtually 100 percent Sinhalese army occupies the northern Tamil districts of Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya. It is in daily battle with the major Eelam terrorist independence movement, the Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the People's Organization of Tamil Eelam.

What appears to have happened is that the battle is no longer between a handful of terrorists attacking police posts and engaging in shootouts with army patrols.

The civil war label definition applies because actions of the armed forces, the inaction of the Sinhalese political leaders and the impotence of the older Tamil ones, have led the bulk of the northern Tamils to empathize with and even support the Eelam terrorists. The Sinhalese may long for a simple unified state. But the military situation, politics, religion, culture and even geography will only allow the aspirations for a unitary state to be realized at great political and human costs -- if it is feasible at all. Power sharing on a large scale now appears Utopian. In fact, the political winds have been blowing in the opposite direction.

The Tamils of the north were effectively disenfranchised when their non-violent separatist representatives were prevented from taking their seats in parliament in 1983. On Dec. 22, 1982, an unprecedented national referendum was used to extend the life of the large majority government for another six years, so they had no opportunity to express a political voice until 1988. Where they do have a vote, in municipal elections, less than 15 percent of the Tamils in Jaffna opted to exercise their franchise, presumably as a form of protest. Since jobs in the government and positions in the military are related to patronage, the effective political disenfranchisement of the Tamils compound their economic woes.

Originally, the prime issues were cultural -- language and education. Tamil was designated a "national language" (the Moor minority also speak Tamil at home), and the Tamil language in principle was given a role similar to that of French in Ontario. In practice it has meant very little since the government evidently does not even have typewriters with Tamil script. In the 1950s Sinhalese was made the only official language of Sri Lanka. The link language, English, did not even remain as a required school subject. Educational grievances compound the problem.

Even though the Tamil proportion of the university population, according to the official statistics, is double that of their ratio of the population (25 percent versus 12½ percent) in the professional faculties, Tamils are no longer accepted into programs on the basis of merit alone since Sri Lanka has an affirmative action program for the Sinhalese majority. This has significantly reduced Tamil opportunities for higher education.

There is a danger that the conflict may be internationalized. The Tamil situation is the major source of conflict between India and Sri Lanka. Many Western observers think an Indian invasion is plausible, perhaps even probable. Many Sri Lankans see superpower involvement stemming from Soviet and American rivalry for the facilities of Trincomalee once a great British naval base. One Moslem even assured me that World War III will start after India invades Sri Lanka, when Washington backs Sri Lanka and Moscow supports India. This unlikely scenario does not seem farfetched for those in Sri Lanka who cannot accept that unresolved internal tensions have turned their island into a battleground.

There are no favorable signs for an internal peaceful settlement. The situation might change if the Sinhalese majority were to make a genuine proposal for devolution of political power so that the demands of the Tamil north for linguistic, cultural and economic self-expression might be met. But the government has not made such an offer, seeming unwilling to accept the idea of a federal system. Sirima Bandaranaike, former prime minister of Sri Lanka, the opposition Sinhalese leader, has in recent days at least acknowledged the reality and depth of the crisis and the inadequacy of the present reliance on military solutions and the lack of discipline shown by the security forces. Bandaranaike caused a furor this month when she accused security forces of killing innocent Tamils.

There has been a partition of the island -- in fact if not in law -- for years because of the concentration of Tamils in the north and east of the country and because the Sinhalese are afraid to go into these areas. The government policy of encouraging Sinhalese to settle on land in Tamil areas to improve the ethnic mix is highly unlikely to work in the north given Sinhalese fears. But it may work in mixed areas in the east such as Trincomalee where the Tamil plurality is already threatened. When National Security Minister Lalith Athulathnudali speaks of the government policy of resettlement on the basis of ethnic population ratios in order to settle "people favorable to us in areas plagued by terrorism and to put the unfavorable people among us," it seems at least to this Western outsider to be divorced from reality.

The separation of the island re-enacts ancient history in which the conflict is rooted. Sri Lanka has been subject to waves and waves of conquest which repeatedly forced the capital of successive Buddhist kingdoms further south. The Sinhalese have always felt that their language, culture and religion were under constant threat from northern invaders. Since the Sinhalese are also at the bottom of the heap economically, their own current grievances build upon the historic fears. The Sinhalese laboured for British plantation owners, worked for Indian import / export firms, were clerks in Muslim and Tamil businesses, compete for jobs with better educated and trained Tamils and Moors, and have had no role in executive banking levels.

These historic fears and economic circumstances are the warp and woof of a religious tapestry that provides the coherent framework for the Sinhalese position. Sinhalese sacred Buddhist texts are a reminder of the long continuity and constant struggle to protect the religious and ethnic identity of the Sinhalese and the Buddhist traditions of the island from the "infections" of Tamil Hinduism.

KILINOCHCHI, SRI LANKA

KILINOCHCHI, Sri Lanka — Shots are heard. It is 2:15 a.m. I am the only guest in a hotel that seems much too pleasant to be set amid rice paddies in a hotbed of terrorist activity. The hotel is on the outskirts of Kilinochchi just south of Elephant Pass, the entry to the Jaffna peninsula. This is the heartland of the Tamils who are seeking an independent homeland in the northern province of Sri Lanka. Yesterday a police officer was shot and killed here. Four days later the train that brought me to the north was blown up after it left Kilinochchi station. Thirty-three passengers were killed, mostly Sinhalese soldiers. Most of the Tamils decided not to board at the last minute, but the army ignored this clue to an impending tragedy.

Another shot breaks the night's stillness. I cannot tell the direction of the shooting but it does not seem very close. In spite of the bullets, I feel far safer here than in the army barracks at Elephant Pass. The army camp is strategically sited at the narrow entrance to the finger-like peninsula that points into the straits toward India, only 35 kilometres (22 miles) away.

I had been ordered off a bus by the army in the outskirts of Jaffna because the city, the biggest Tamil centre in Sri Lanka, is closed to foreigners. I was sent by truck to the army base for unstated reasons. Now, on the long narrow porch of the barracks, I sat on a cement wall talking with the Sinhalese soldiers and looking at their Tamil prisoners. I asked the two captives a question, but the soldiers told me the prisoners had been forbidden to speak. The two young men, the soldiers said, would be taken north for interrogation, then south to Galle on the south coast, where they would be put in an internment camp. One soldier told me the two boys — they seemed to be about 20 — had been captured with guns and grenades in the bush. Yet they didn't seem dirty enough for this to be accurate, for their feet and sarongs seemed unusually clean for barefooted guerrillas fighting in rice paddies and scrub. They showed no

signs of being wounded or even of having been handled roughly.

The Sinhalese soldiers are very friendly to Canadians, but they are very haphazard about their military duties. For instance, when I was riding on trains the soldiers loaded on the front and back of the trains jumped on and off to guard each station at which we stopped. Although they kept their guns pointed toward the bush, their faces and eyes were turned on the train and the passengers. They would easily have been taken by surprise in an ambush. They seemed far less disciplined and trained even than the militia-men I encountered during the summer war of 1982 in Lebanon. But how you judge discipline may depend somewhat on the eye of the beholder. A priest told me that the Sri Lankan soldiers nowadays are much more disciplined than in the past — because they no longer engage in drunken sprees in which they burn houses of Tamils and shoot their occupants. While the killing of civilians now was just as arbitrary, he said, the style was more systematic.

Ordinary Tamils I met in travelling to Jaffna claimed that more than 700 innocent civilians have been killed in the last six months, with the rate of killing rising dramatically in the last month. Few of these civilians were thought to have any connection with the Tamil terrorists.

An officer at Elephant Pass offered a bed in a bunkhouse, but I was able to decline when the security police ordered four men in a truck they had stopped to drive me on to the hotel at Kilinochchi. The 13-kilometre (8-mile) trip took about 90 minutes. Curfew had arrived and the driver took a roundabout route by back roads to avoid army patrols. I used the opportunity of the ride and dinner later to question my Tamil companions. One who spoke broken English had once owned three shops — small tobacco and grocery stores and a larger franchise operation — in Galle. All three had been looted in early 1983 and two of the shops were severely damaged; his house had also been looted during the Galle

riots. Unlike the riots in Colombo months later on July 23, 1983, the shops and homes were not torched. In the Colombo riots, sparked by an attack of the Eelam Tigers — Tamil terrorists — on a patrol of Sinhalese soldiers that left 13 dead in Jaffna, 387 Tamils were killed according to official counts, and up to 2,000 according to unofficial ones.

The earlier Galle incidents suggest that although the trouble in the north may act as a catalyst for mob violence, such incidents are insufficient to explain the type of violence and its extent. Further, Galle suggests how sharing power might help prevent violence. A recurrence of the early 1983 events was evidently prevented by appointing a troika as police supervisors — a Moslem, a Tamil and a Sinhalese.

Though language and education are issues for almost all Tamils, they are not sufficient to account for the independence movement. The focus of concern is economic. For example, the ex-Galle businessman had become a mortal supporter of the Tigers after losing his shops in the riots. Unlike most Tamil businessmen, he had insured at least one of his shops. But he had been unable to collect the insurance. When I looked at the policy he pushed at me, I saw why. It had the typical clause excluding coverage from acts of violence resulting from civil disorder. His petitions to the government had not yielded a rupee in compensation for his losses. Yet, he complained, when Sinhalese property in the north is destroyed by Tamil fighters, the government pays 10 times the compensation, and does so immediately. After the riots in Galle, his family had fled in fear to his original home in the village of Karaitivi on the island northwest of Jaffna. Their refusal to return south compounded his economic difficulties as there was no opportunity now to make a living in the north.

There just are no job opportunities there now. An estimated 25,000 to 100,000 fishermen are unemployed (the official government figures are

13,041) because the Sri Lankan navy has banned their boats from setting out from shore for security reasons. With all the Tiger bank robberies only one bank remains open to serve almost a million people. Nor do the banks risk loans to Tamils in such situations. The former businessman from Galle could not even get a loan to re-establish his business in the south even though he had 20 years of demonstrated business success. One of his nephews, the younger one, he told me, had joined the rebels. His sister now worried all the time. But he thought it was just as dangerous for young people if they did not join. The driver of the truck agreed. Now 26, he had been managing director of a small Tamil business that was destroyed in 1983. He had fled north for safety. Though unemployed most of the time, he would earn the equivalent of about \$9 for this three-day trip from Jaffna to Colombo and back. Three days earlier, he had been arrested, held for six hours, interrogated and then released. He had not been beaten or mistreated. "But my brother was shot in December," the man from Galle said. "He was a rice farmer. He was never political. He was just in the fields, and the army shot him."

Caught between Tamil terrorism and army repressive measures, the north has been economically devastated. Tourism is dead. Business investment is nil. There is limited transport. The fishing industry has been halted. The natural link across the 22-mile-wide Palk Straits to India has been severed. Shops are closing for lack of business. Professionals have many fewer paying clients. It is even difficult to get to the doctor or a hospital.

CONFERENCE

The Standing Conference of Canadian Organizations Concerned for Refugees

SPRING CONSULTATION

DATE: May 30, 31 and June 1, 1985

LOCATION: Scarborough Foreign Mission Centre 2685 Kingston Road Scarborough, Ontario

Letters to the Editor

We have, in the past, been fortunate to have a very enthusiastic spokesman on behalf of our Vietnamese Boat Refugees, Mr. Lloyd Jones of Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, of whom you have probably heard either directly or indirectly. It is due to his efforts that a keen interest has been awakened among churches and other organizations in Canada to sponsor refugees from Hong Kong. We, in turn, have offered to provide limited funds for the care and maintenance during the first year of resettlement of the refugees. I am sure you all realize how difficult it is to find donors to keep this fund

going. We have, therefore, reached the conclusion that in order to save time and money and to simplify matters we should, from now on, be in direct contact with sponsors. If there are any questions that you would like answered, please do not hesitate to write directly to us as Mr. Lloyd Jones is no longer representing Hong Kong Christian Service as Resettlement Field Coordinator in Canada.

For your information we attach our "Conditions and Procedures Governing Sponsorship Funding".

L. Stumpf, Officer-in-Charge

HONG KONG CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Migration Services Department

Conditions and Procedures

Governing Sponsorship Fund Transaction

1. Hong Kong Christian Service, Migration Services Department, Kowloon, Hong Kong, guarantees to make financial contributions, according to the following sliding scale to bonafide organizations in Canada who are sponsoring the resettlement of Vietnamese boat refugees from Hong Kong to Canada: -

Single person CD\$2,000.00
 2 persons (or married couple) CD\$3,000.00
 3 persons CD\$3,500.00
 4 persons CD\$4,000.00
 5 persons CD\$4,500.00
 6 persons CD\$5,000.00

2. Upon request, a separate letter of guarantee will be addressed to the sponsoring agency. The letter will state the name or names of the refugees whom the Canadian agency is sponsoring, as well as the exact amount which Hong Kong Christian Service guarantees to contribute towards the resettlement of the refugee/s.

3. Once Hong Kong Christian Service has received verified evidence that the visa or visas have been issued by the Canadian immigration authorities, the amount guaranteed by Hong Kong Christian Service will be transferred without delay.

4. Hong Kong Christian Service is not in a position to transfer money to the sponsoring agency upon the agency's filing an application for a visa. Generally, a period of several months will elapse between the date of application and the date the visa is issued. This would entail the resources of Hong Kong Christian Service being frozen for a considerable period of time, without any knowledge of whether a visa will finally be granted. A negative outcome would necessitate the transfer of the money back to Hong Kong, causing an interest and exchange loss.



Dear Editor

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your article "Sri Lanka's Agony" (Jan. 26). You must have had extreme courage to attempt to go to Jaffna. However, we would like to correct some of the misinterpretations.

You have labelled the Tamil rebels as "terrorists", even though you knew that they are fighting against the state-sponsored terrorism. I wonder why the media does not label the Afghan rebels as terrorists. The Tamils were pushed to the wall to take up arms. Even though we or most of the Tamils do not condone or encourage any kind of terrorism or violence, a majority of the Tamils now feel that the Tamil rebels are the only hope to protect the Tamils from the blood thirsty, Sinhala Security forces.

As you mentioned the Tamil rebels are not from the Karayar sect. In fact, the leader of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Ealam (PLOTE), Mr. Uma Maheswaran, is from the Vellala sect. Even though the leader of the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Ealam (LTTE), Mr. V. Prabhakaran, is from Karayar sect (means one who usually does fishing as his main job), most of their fighters are from the Vellala sect. LTTE has claimed many youths, who had been killed in the battle with security forces, as their martyrs, and most of them are from the Vellala sect.

Once again we thank you for your article and beg you to do more on this subject.

C. Dharmalogan, Secretary, Eelam Association of Windsor.

Dear Editor

Reference "Agony of Sri Lanka," published on 19th and 20th January compiled by Howard Adelman, who is supposed to be an expert on refugees. Adelman's article can be classified as another publicity stunt in favour of Tamil terrorists movement based outside the shores of Sri Lanka.

Credibility of this author is highly

questionable. If he is one of the foremost experts on refugees, he should have been in the Sinhalese refugee camps set up to accommodate innocent Sinhalese fleeing from the campaign of killings and terror carried out by the Tamil armed bandits in the north. Or else, he should have been writing about the infamous refugee camps in Thailand, Lebanon, Nicaragua, El Salvador or Pakistan. He has attempted in his story to make very obvious events sensational.

A lot of interest has been taken to dramatize the beating of a bus conductor by the soldiers in a combat zone in Sri Lanka. My question is what prompted an academic specializing in refugee activities to go into an area infested with terrorists? The bus conductor violated the internal security arrangements by accompanying a westerner who did not have any business other than visiting an anonymous Tamil lawyer residing in Jaffna. It seems, Adelman professes that any street punk brandishing the Canadian identity has the right to enter the security zone in Sri Lanka and write some adventure stories for the mere sake of getting a cheap thrill, or else to write a twisted story which damages the integrity of the people of Sri Lanka. Given the most unbiased news coverage about the events in Sri Lanka, I do not blame the soldiers for beating the bus conductor accompanying a thrill seeker who should not have been in the combat zone at all. Besides, the friendliest relationship that has been established between the Canadians and the Sri Lankans were built on mutual respect for democratic traditions and the two fundamental social and economic values that the people of these two countries believe in, not on the crocodile tears shed by handful of publicity seekers.

Adelman claims that TULF is not allowed to take part in the parliamentary process in Sri Lanka. This is an outrageous statement; in fact, it was TULF members who refused allegiance to the constitution of Sri Lanka and accept the sovereignty and unitary status of the country. It was A. Amirthalingam, leader of TULF, who burnt the constitution of Sri Lanka in 1972 in Jaffna.

Let us not forget the fact that the Tiger Movement originated from the youth wing of the TULF and A. Amirthalingam's son was a leader in this infamous terrorist gang. Will Adelman support a similar situation in Canada where the Liberal Party or the New Democratic Party advocates the partition of this country on the basis of colour, race or different languages?

It is a callous statement to say that the military occupies the northern city of Jaffna. As the protectors and guardians of the independence and sovereignty of Sri Lanka, these brave sons of Sri Lanka have the right to be mobilized and stationed in any part of that country. Adelman has attempted to misinterpret the term "occupying forces". Would anyone having a right mind say that Canadian Forces in Newfoundland, Labrador or Quebec are occupying these provinces.

The same writer talks about lack of language facilities for the Tamils. I would like to ask does Canada provide equal status for the French language in every part of this land. On the contrary, Sri Lanka has enshrined Tamil as an official language in the constitution, and it has implemented the rights of Tamil-speaking people without any reservations.

Adelman has said Sinhalese work as estate Labourers. This statement simply blew his chances of enjoying some respect among the academicians familiar with the colonial rule in Sri Lanka. It was the British colonial rulers who brought the Tamil slaves from southern India to work in the coffee and tea plantation industry. The native Sinhalese did not want to work in the plantation industry as their economy was based on agriculture and not on cash crops like tea and coffee. Even today, contrary to the executive image Adelman has tried to build for Tamils, a majority of their clansmen are gainfully employed in the Sanitary Departments of Municipalities, local governments and other public and private institutions. In fact, the English word "coolie" was borrowed from the Tamil language.

Finally, I wish to remind Adelman

that journalism is a profession whose priority, if not the only concern, is the reporting of facts. When the facts are distorted and twisted for the benefit of interested parties, journalism loses its image to the extent that news media would cease to be trusted. Therefore, I earnestly request Adelman to refrain from making adventure stories out of a very volatile political situation where millions of innocent people will be affected.

*J.T. Wickramasinghe —
Former President of Sri Lanka United
National Association Toronto.*

Dear Editor

I take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of me and the Tamil community, for publishing your independent report stating the truth without any bias. The amount of suffering our community in Sri Lanka is undergoing is similar to the suffering of the Jewish community underwent during Hitler's time. Our community has to be grateful to you for the risk you have taken and the amount of hardship you would have faced during your truth-finding mission in Sri Lanka.

I am a Tamil refugee. I came to Canada after the July '83 riots. Our house in Colombo was looted and burnt down by Sinhalese thugs. (It was government-organized violence to erase the Tamils from Colombo and its suburbs as an initial step. The Tamils will run to north and east, where the Sinhalese Army will do the rest, so that the outside world will not know about it, except for great people like you only will be able to tell the world.

Because I was born a Tamil, I was made a refugee in my own country overnight. I came to Canada to escape from horrible death, although our stay in Canada is not yet being officially recognized the Canadian people have accepted us in their heart. Although our community is an unfortunate people, we were able to survive because of good people like you existing in this world, who made the outside world know how much

suffering the Sri Lankan Tamils are undergoing. How many innocent people continue to be killed, and how the Sri Lankan Army is terrorizing our younger generation. Mr. J.R. Jeyawardene is the rebirth of Hitler of Germany.

I wish to thank you again sir, our community will be always grateful to you.

R. Shanmugaretnam

Dear Editor

I have taken the liberty to write you having read the two articles on Sri Lanka over the weekend. It was obviously a difficult assignment to be objective without great biases. And you have, in our estimation pulled through with flying colours for your honesty. There are areas where one could nitpick, but 'heck', its not very often that one has the luxury to read reports with that degree of honesty.

*Asoka Weerasinghe —
Chairperson, Project Peace for a United
Sri Lanka.*

Dear Editor

Professor Adelman's articles misrepresent facts. On the use of Tamil as an official language, he writes "... the government evidently does not even have typewriters with Tamil script." Since the late 1950s the Department of Official Languages has been engaged in the translation of thousands of bureaucratic forms, manuals of procedure, from English into Sinhalese and Tamil. It has been compiling glossaries with English-Sinhalese and English-Tamil terminology for use in government business. It also provided facilities for Sinhalese public servants to study Tamil and the Tamils to study Sinhalese. Most government departments and corporations have a pool of typists to work in Sinhalese and in Tamil. Even commercial banks use forms printed in all three languages.

The professor also says that "the Sinhalese laboured for British plantation owners." The fact is they did not. That explains the presence of 825,000 Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka. A

few years back the numbers were even larger until Mrs. Bandaranayake, a former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka negotiated a pact with the then Prime Minister of India to repatriate, in stages, some of this Indian labour. World market prices for tea and rubber had plummeted and such an army of unproductive labour was a drain on Sri Lanka's economy. Under the British, those south Indian workers were stateless and this treaty provided for the grant of Sri Lankan citizenship to those who qualified. The presence of these Indian Tamils compounds the difficulties in resolving the crisis in Sri Lanka.

The professor goes on to say that "there has been a partition of the island - in fact if not in law - for years because of the concentration of Tamils in the north and east of the country and because the Sinhalese are afraid to go into these areas." The Tamil separatists who claim that the Sinhalese occupy their "traditional" land should take note of the professor's conclusion seriously to end their terrorist activities.

On his comments relating to the excesses of the Sri Lankan security forces, Prof. Adelman says that the homes of civilians suspected of assisting terrorists in any way are dynamited. He has counted four houses blown up on the main road to Jaffna and presumably concludes that they are the work of the security forces. The professor forgot that there is sufficient evidence to prove that Tamil terrorists are equally capable of blowing up people and property. He uses logical reasoning to determine the accuracy or otherwise of statements made by Sinhalese soldiers. Yet, he swallows, hook, line and sinker, whatever the Tamils told him.

The present situation in Sri Lanka is hurting everyone. It is impossible to reach a settlement until terrorism stops and the security forces are withdrawn from the northern areas of the island. There is not much hope for an end to terrorism so long as India provides bases for the terrorists and expatriate Tamils provide them with funds for weapons.

Beatrice Goonasekera

Dear Editor

I write in appreciation of the two articles you published in the *Toronto Star*, on the grave situation that exists in Sri Lanka. I do hope your efforts to ascertain the truth and publish it will open the eyes of the world, to the desperate situation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka on whom, it seems nothing short of genocide is being perpetuated. The government is using its army to terrorize civilians as though every Tamil in the north and east are terrorists. Even the so-called Tamil terrorists were believed to have been begat by the injustice and racial discrimination suffered by Tamils. For over 30 years, they kept on asking for their legitimate rights, openly and sincerely professing and practising non-violent means to achieve their demands. But the reaction this non-violent movement brought was only racial violence against the Tamils; only ever increasing in severity and true to "Tyrants beget rebels"; the Tigers emerged. Even then; the powers that be did not deal with the Tigers, nor did they negotiate honestly, to bring about a just settlement, but went on harassing innocent Tamils, which only added numbers to the rebels who believe they are freedom fighters and only history will prove who they are. Even now – although the government has still not granted any of the legitimate rights asked for in practice – the majority of Tamils do not condone violence, nor do they advocate unlawful means for obtaining their rights. But the government under the guise of army excess seems to be treating all Tamils as though, they are all terrorists without exception. Does the government want to force them all to become terrorists? Is there no international body, or right-thinking nation that can intervene and bring about a just settlement? It is only dauntless persons like you, genuinely interested in the welfare of humanity without bias or prejudice, who can help to make the world aware of our plight. So please do all in your power to bring back peace and dignity to the persecuted Tamils of Sri Lanka.

I thank you again and I'm sure every Tamil will join me and be grateful for

the trouble you took and risks you faced to find out facts. How I wish you could have gone to the city of Jaffna. My mother, sisters, brother and their families live there in mortal fear and I am helpless. May God Bless you.

Mrs. Eucharista Thambipillai

Dear Editor

I read with interest the report of Prof. Howard Adelman.

The professor has apparently visited Sri Lanka in the early part of January 1985 at a time when the Tamil separatist terrorists had announced their intention to establish an independent state in the north by force of arms by January 15, 1985. The Jaffna Peninsula had been declared a security zone with special measures restricting the movement of persons (both local and foreign) to and from that area in order to enable the security forces to effectively control the threatened attacks by the terrorists. Prof. Adelman had not been denied permission to travel to Jaffna, but only warned of dangers entailed in such a journey by the government officials. Only some soldiers at a check point on the outskirts of Jaffna decided to have his travels cleared by their superiors stationed at the Elephant Pass army base. The army officers did not stop him or order him back to Colombo but arranged for a passing motorist to take him to a hotel where he would be more comfortable. On reading of his experiences in travelling to the security zone without the required permit and devoid of relevant background information pertaining to the security situation, it would appear that travel restrictions are enforced against foreigners. The Minister of National Security had informed the foreign journalists in Colombo that they were free to travel to Jaffna at their own risk, but that special security arrangements could not be made for their safety, as the 11,000-strong Sri Lankan security forces had their hands full battling the terrorist forces and maintaining order, without having the additional task of safeguarding journalists from harm or from being taken hostage by the terrorists, as in the case of the Allens from

Ohio.

Prof. Adelman has mainly spoken to members of Sri Lanka's Tamil community and published whatever had been said to him without checking others affected, which is contrary to journalistic ethics. He speaks of a priest having been shot by soldiers near Mannar on January 6, 1985. He fails to mention that the priest had been harbouring terrorists and provided storage for arms and ammunition. Further, the body of the priest said to have been shot has so far not been found by the authorities. In a BBC news report, it has been said that the supposedly dead priest had escaped with other terrorists and gone by boat to Tamilnadu in India. The shooting of a Methodist minister mentioned by him has not been reported earlier and may be incorrect. There is no attempt on the part of Buddhist Sri Lanka to eradicate Christianity by shooting Christian priests. This impression would be given the reader unless the background information relating to the terrorist involvement is not given. It is also a well-known fact that certain Catholic priests were arrested for hiding the money robbed from banks by the terrorists in Jaffna, and that the Archbishop of the Catholic church has openly said that the priests concerned should face the full impact of the law.

I do not doubt the army excesses that he speaks of. Even the Sri Lanka government has admitted to such incidents and have taken steps to halt such acts. There could, however, be exaggerations in the tales retold by Prof. Adelman, as it is known that the Tamil terrorists have carried out their murderous missions in Padaviya, Chavakachcheri, etc., dressed in army uniforms. These terrorists are also known to have killed several Tamil persons who held opposing political views, yet others on suspicion of their being informers or belonging to a rival terrorist gang. The Sri Lanka government had admitted to some civilians dying in the crossfire in shootouts with the terrorists. The 250 terrorists who attacked the Chavakachcheri police station suddenly emerged from the marketplace opposite the police station and melted away amongst the

civilians at the marketplace after the attack. Pursuit of the terrorists can therefore cost innocent civilian lives, as well.

Prof. Adelman speaks of the Tamil United Liberation Front, which is a legal political party, as non-violent separatist representatives of the Tamil people. I would question this assumption, because if he had read the "Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry Relating to Ethnic Violence in Sri Lanka" headed by Mr. Justice M.C. Sansoni, Q.C., former Chief Justice of Sri Lanka, he could have realized that the TULF whilst pretending to be a political party wedded to the democratic process, was pushing its demand for a separate state called "EELAM" by organizing a prolonged civil disobedience campaign with its youth movements encompassing all forms of violence involving murders, acts of arson, attempted murders, bombings, acts of mischief against public property, etc, encouraging and instigating the youth to commit terrorist acts, which was totally alien to the Gandhian principles of non-violence. The TULF may attempt to dissociate the party from the Tamil terrorist groups, but the Sansoni Commission found it to be otherwise. The Tamils are therefore the victims of their own extremist separatist policies and terrorist violence.

The Sri Lanka government has a separate ministry for matters relating to the Tamil Language and Hindu Religion headed by a Tamil cabinet minister. I am not in agreement with some of the statistics given by Prof. Adelman nor his assessment of the rights enjoyed by the Tamils. The Tamils enjoy more rights and language services than the French in Ontario or English Canada, which are also constitutionally guaranteed although they number approximately 12.5 percent of the total population and are not a founding nation as the French are recognized in Canada and where the French account for over 25 percent. His statements that the government does not possess any typewriters with Tamil script and unsubstantiated statements that affected Sinhalese have been paid ten times the value of property damage whilst Tamils have been made to wait

or refused are damaging to the Government of Sri Lanka to say the least. In fact, even Tamils who did not have any insurance have already been compensated out of a special fund.

In the final part of his report, he mentions some important background information which have a very important base for understanding the views of the majority Sinhalese community. The Sinhalese are a proud people with a rich heritage and a 2,500-year civilization. The history of Sri Lanka is the great story of the Sinhalese people as recorded in the *Mahavamsa* which is not a sacred Buddhist text as referred to by the professor but a record of Sri Lankan history maintained by the venerable monks of the Buddhist clergy, who were the guardians of the ancient centres of learning. The Sinhalese built magnificent cities in Anuradhapura over 2,000 years ago and are the architects of a massive network of irrigation systems that helped Sri Lanka to become known as the Granary of the East. The beautiful dagobas, stone carving, and paintings are ample testimony to the creative genius of great people.

In the professor's own words, "the Sinhalese are at the bottom of the heap economically, their own current grievances build upon the historic fears." That is the lot that the great Sinhalese people who founded the nation of Sri Lanka faced when she gained independence in 1948 after nearly 450 years of foreign domination. The professor is right in the situation of the Sinhalese except that they did not labour for British plantation owners. The lands belonging to the Sinhalese in the Kandyan and other hill country regions were expropriated by the colonial rulers under the infamous Waste Lands Act and some given to British companies at a value of 50 Ceylon cents per acre, which was the cost of surveying the properties. The displaced peasants were not even hired as labourers on the newly established plantations, but replaced by South Indian Tamil labour being implanted by the British colonial regime. In post-independent Sri Lanka, the governments have had to operate more or less an affirmative action program in reverse to assist

the long neglected majority to enjoy at least a semblance of the educational / other facilities enjoyed by a privileged Tamil minority who had been favoured by a colonial ruler following a divide and rule policy. In most other western countries you hear of affirmative action programs to assist deprived minorities. The Tamil minority of 12 percent holding nearly 80 percent of the civil service positions and other economic plums in 1948 have had to concede ground with the introduction of free education and resultant competition from the Sinhalese. The Tamils have today slipped from their dominant place to around a 35 percent share in an expanded economy in 1984. In the process of striking a balance, the Tamil minority community no doubt may have been hurt, but there has not been any problem that was beyond redress, which subsequent governments have resolved in a satisfactory manner.

It is the minority Tamils who have of their own choice left the mainstream of the national decision-making process and banded together in a purely racial group under the leadership of the TULF for the sole purpose of establishing a separate state called Eelam in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, where approximately 1.3 million Tamils reside making up almost nine percent of the total population. The Tamil residents in these parts outnumber the Sinhalese and Moors numbering about 0.3 million. A majority of the people of the eastern province oppose the move to secede. The land area sought for the independent state of Eelam is almost 25 percent of the total land area of this heavily populated land-hungry island nation. Nothing further need to be said to explain why such a demand would be opposed even without going into historical or other factors.

There is no demand for district or regional councils in the rest of the country. The TULF has not abandoned their demand for a separate state nor have they taken the oath of allegiance to a unified Sri Lanka. Therefore it is not possible to negotiate any devolution of power to the Tamils in the north with the TULF, as

it would only amount to another step on the road to separation. The main objective of the TULF still remains the achievement of Eelam which the Tamil separatist terrorists also seek militarily overnight. Unlike Canada, the USA, India, and Australia which have federal systems of government, Sri Lanka is a tiny island nation of 25,000 sq miles, which is approx. 1/20th the size of Ontario, and does not warrant such a system. Furthermore, it is a developing country which could ill afford a third level of government thereby adding to its non-productive bureaucracy and resultant waste of resources and skills which should be available to the nation as a whole instead of a miniscule district or province within the island. Furthermore, Sri Lanka has been a unitary state and would only weaken in such devolution, whilst Canada was made up of separate British colonies that came together to win independence and gain by federation. You cannot therefore look at it through Canada's experience and advocate devolution of power merely to concede to separatist demands, which are clouded with other dangers such as the creation of hostile borders and opening our northern shores to infiltration by Tamilnadu which will only give rise to our historical problem of northern invasion and consequent eradication of the language, culture and only homeland of the Sinhalese people. The Sinhalese have no other choice in the face of Tamil separatist terrorism but to resettle Sinhalese and others in the north and all other regions of Sri Lanka on the basis of ethnic population ratios. The government does not intend to expropriate land belonging to the Tamils but establish the new settlements on newly developed crown lands coming under national development schemes such as the Mahaweli River Diversion Scheme which are being paid for by the entire nation. Sri Lanka is a unitary state which belongs to all her citizens of whatever ethnic background, and there is no region in the country to which any ethnic group could claim exclusive rights. As in Canada, Sri Lanka citizens have the freedom of mobility within the island and for set-

ting wherever they may choose, as in the case of 1.3 million Tamils who have settled amidst the majority Sinhalese community. Ultimate defeat of the Tamil Separatist terrorists and the emergence of stability and peace is seen in this direction.

Irresponsible reporting of this nature by so-called experts who visit a country for a few hours or days and make assumptions on mere hearsay can do irreparable damage to the image and reputation of the Government of Sri Lanka and the Sinhalese people. It is quite clear that the professor's background knowledge of Sri Lanka is scrappy and his conclusions are misleading to say the least. Sri Lanka is a small developing country and one of the few surviving democracies in the far east which has been drawn into a guerilla war by Marxist-oriented Tamil Separatist Terrorists supported by 50 million Tamils in South India and the international terrorist movement. Whilst Sri Lanka is battling to defeat the terrorists with her limited resources, she also has to contend with baseless criticism from instant experts in the western media which could only hurt this pro-western democracy and help in being dragged under the communist boot.

I trust you would publish my letter in full by giving the necessary space as you did in carrying Professor Adelman's report.

Mahinda Gunasekera

Dear Editor

I wish to thank you most sincerely for the articles you gave to the *Toronto Star*, after your return from Sri Lanka. You are a brave man indeed, to have travelled to the Northern region of the island at this time, when the Sinhala Buddhist government has lost all sense of decency, and has ordered the "guardians of the law" to kill innocent Tamil people and burn up villages of poor hard-working folks.

I am an elderly woman - a Christian Tamil whose home is in Colombo. My parents' homes were in Jaffna. We moved to Colombo in search of jobs about 40 years ago. I have wit-

nessed six communal attacks from 1956 to 1983. Whenever our representatives in parliament pointed out injustices in the admission system to Universities; appointment of jobs, government funded colonization of only Sinhala thugs in the predominantly Tamil areas and passing hills to make Sinhala only, as the official language of the island almost overnight, the Sinhalese thugs attacked the Tamils mercilessly, possibly with the blessings of the ministerial thugs in the government! no apologies or compensations were given to the Tamils. For over 30 years we were patient and hoped and prayed for a political solution. In the meantime, the youth were getting frustrated and impatient with the politicians. A few hundred, who should have been scholars and research students and brought credit to any university or country because of their A grades, in all the subjects at A.L. exams but failed to enter the universities, and others who had qualified professionally, but could not get jobs, just because they were Tamils have become "Tigers" or "Liberation Fighters". They are fighting to have their own territory to develop and sink or swim, without the feeling of being ruled by the so-called Righteous Sinhala Buddhist government, who want a unified Sri Lanka! Do they actually mean it?

The 1983 holocaust was island-wide and well organized. With voters' lists in hand groups of men, women and even children went about hacking Tamils and burning houses and all business establishments, belonging to Tamils, while the rulers and the guardians of the law watched, for a week without taking any action! It was at this time that some of my loved ones lost everything they owned and came to Canada, and sought refuge here.

My niece and young family are living here. They suffered much, without decent jobs and ill health, etc. She had a new baby recently and could not afford to pay a babysitter. That is why I came here as a visitor, to help her out in her time of need.

After my arrival here, there seems to be more trouble in Sri Lanka. Colombo is "safe" they say - chiefly

because of the foreigners there, and our rulers want to "save face" or preserve the "good image" of our country, by keeping violence out of Colombo. But I have heard of many of my kith and kin losing their lives and limbs or hiding in fear — leaving their homes to be mobbed by the army. Those who are arrested are not charged in court. They disappear!

I am glad, sir, that your life was spared. Ours was a paradise island when we had a common language — English — and when merit was the criteria for appointments to jobs. Now it is a godless land, where man has become a beast. I am sorry to say.

I am worried about my own son who lives in fear. One never knows when your nearest neighbour will become your enemy and attack you, just because you belong to the minority community!

I shall soon get back to Sri Lanka. But I am afraid now — after hearing of all the shootings of innocent people. I wish to God, that this lovely Christian country will stretch out her arms of love and take in more Tamil young people and their dependants. They will work hard and add to the prosperity of this country, I can assure

you. The Tamils are a race of hard-working people.

Could you use your influence with the immigration authorities and help more of our young men and women here? Else they will perish, by the ruthless behaviour of the army there.

I decided to write and congratulate you for the article and for your courage; but I'm afraid I have rambled too much. Please forgive me for taking your time.

Thank you once again. May God bless you.

Name withheld

Dear Editor

I am writing to you to express my great appreciation and gratitude for writing about "Sri Lanka's Agony". I am a Sri Lankan Tamil who lives in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Only yesterday I had a chance to read the article, which my friend in Toronto sent me. So far the Sri Lanka Government is successful in not letting out any news of the army's atrocities against Tamils. I greatly appreciate your courage and I wish some journalist could do the same. I don't think the

journalists lack courage, but they may not think about who wants to know about what is happening in Sri Lanka. There are hundreds of innocent people who are massacred every week, yet the TV or other media have never focused on Sri Lanka after August 1983. That is exactly what the Sri Lankan government wanted to achieve, and they are succeeding in that. If the same thing happened in Poland, Nicaragua or Lebanon will the media have the same attitude?

It was too bad and unfortunate for the Tamils that you weren't allowed to enter Jaffna. Otherwise, the world, at least Canada, would have had the chance to know what is happening to the Tamils in Jaffna. In my estimate, there are at least 50 innocent Tamils dying every day since December, 1984. There are four Tamil families who now live in Fort McMurray. All of them lost at least one relative during the past 12 months. I lost my uncle and aunt on December 23, 1984. He was a doctor. Both were stabbed to death by Sinhalese. Another family in Fort McMurray lost their cousin. He, a university lecturer, age 33, was killed after five months of marriage. He was stabbed and taken to the hospital. One Sinhalese orderly poured acid on his head and he died there.

Now, my wife's family fled to India in fear of their safety. There is no food supply. No banks open. There is one bank which is in the Army Camp. No one wants to go there. The Sri Lanka government is systematically killing Tamils. Their solution to the problem is Genocide. "If there are no Tamils, there is no problem for them." Yet the world turns a blind eye and that encourages the Sri Lankan government to do more.

I am truly glad that you went to Sri Lanka and published your article. It gave us and so many Tamils, a great satisfaction reading your writing. I am relieved to find out there are still people who care to find out what is happening in a remote island like Sri Lanka. I thank you for the great work and Tamils will always be grateful to you. I wish to see more people like you. Best wishes to you and your work.

R. Braman

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The War Of Words Sinhalese And Tamils In Canada

by Howard Adelman

"Caught between Tamil terrorism and army repressive measures, the north has been economically devastated. The battle is no longer between a handful of terrorists attacking police posts and engaging in shootouts with army patrols. The civil war definition applies because actions of the armed forces, the inaction of the Sinhalese political leaders and the impotence of the older Tamil ones, have led the bulk of the northern Tamils to emphathize with and even support the Eelam terrorists."

The Toronto Star, January 22, 1985

In conflict situations around the world, cross words can lead to wars. In Canada, those wars produce heated words from expatriate communities. Fortunately, if one listens carefully, the fiery rhetoric provides a source of light as well as bilious smoke.

An avalanche of calls flooded my home and office in response to my articles on Sri Lanka that appeared in the Saturday and Sunday *Star* three days after my return from two months abroad. Of the 159 calls, most were favourable, although only three of these were Sinhalese. One was a Moor. All the other favourable calls began with, "I am a Sri Lankan Tamil..." Sometimes the congratulations for bringing the information into the open are followed by stories of the suffering of their relatives and family. These stories corroborate and add to the picture I witnessed and heard in Sri Lanka. However, I found the calls and the visit of a delegation of five Sinhalese, who were critical of my pieces, much more revealing.

Only one clear error in the articles was pointed out. (I had found two others, but no one seemed to notice them). Though a side issue to the major thrust of the articles depicting the situation in the north, the error clearly touched a highly sensitive nerve – the language policy of the government and the language rights of Tamils. The erroneous reference was to the evident lack of Tamil support typewriters in government offices. This gave a misleading impression about the extent of the

use of the Tamil language on coins, stamps, government documents and in education in Sri Lanka.

The critical callers, all Sinhalese, who frequently began with opening hyperbolic assertions, "There is not one word of truth ...", "They are totally biased ...", "Everything is wrong ...", were with one exception exceedingly polite, quite reasonable and unfanatical in discussion after the opening. Exaggerations were set aside. Only one Sinhalese female caller took an extreme position in suggesting that all Tamils be killed or expelled from Sri Lanka. Like the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, the callers defended equal rights for Tamils, but were very opposed to granting Tamils collective rights which entailed any degree of political autonomy or self-government. This would lead to separation, then the influx by more Tamils from India and eventually the elimination of the Sinhalese community.

Given this underlying, but powerful and, I believe, authentic fear of possible loss of their Sinhalese identity – a fear which exists in a much clearer and pristine way in the Toronto community than anything I found from my interviews in Sri Lanka – these Sinhalese had a different perspective on a number of the issues discussed in my articles: current educational policy; the past labour history on plantations; the position of Tamils in Sri Lanka society; the credibility of witnesses I had interviewed in the north; and the assessment of responsibility for the current crisis.

I had reported that the Tamils occu-

pled 25 percent of the positions in the professional faculties though constituting only 12.5 percent of the population. The Tamils felt discriminated against and their opportunities significantly reduced from their previous, much higher domination, of the professions because of the affirmative action programs which benefited the Sinhalese majority. Though a few thought the Tamil percentage of the university professional faculties was even higher than the average of government statistics I had used, the Sinhalese pointed out that the affirmative action program was aimed at all disadvantaged groups, though they admitted the overwhelming number of beneficiaries were Sinhalese.

What bothered them most was that I had not provided an explanation for the affirmative action programs. Tamils used to dominate the professions much more than they do now. According to my visitors, the Tamils had gained this advantage because Tamil markers gave higher marks to Tamil students. I did not engage in a debate on how this could be possible in mathematics exams or, even if it were true, why a new marking system would not be a solution to the problem rather than affirmative action. For what came out in the discussion is that the Sinhalese were hurt by any implication (even if unintended) that they were intellectually inferior, or more accurately, could not achieve the same level of excellence as Tamils.

This sense of ethnic or community pride emerged also in my historical



reference to the past economic disadvantages of the Sinhalese and, in particular, the reference that Sinhalese laboured for British plantation owners. This, of course, is not inconsistent with the fact that Tamils from India had been brought to work on plantations because there were not enough Sinhalese willing to do such work. But the Sinhalese were hurt by this historical description, as if it implied that they were in any way inferior to Tamils.

Essentially, as the Sinhalese saw it, they were an easy-going, compliant, unassertive group, and Tamils took advantage of this situation to advance themselves at the expense of the Sinhalese. Since independence, the Sinhalese have bent over backwards to grant concessions to the Tamils and to ensure they were treated equally, but the demands and actions have only grown more extreme. Tamils continue to occupy high positions (one of the sections cut in the articles because of lack of space referred to the Chief Justice and Chief of Police who were both Tamils) and had every right to do so, but no more concessions should be given to the Tamil political demands. My giving credence to the Tamils I interviewed only helped the separatists and the terrorists.

One Sinhalese, who was a Catholic rather than a Buddhist, told me that any priest who talked about politics was a separatist supporter and was not to be trusted. The Catholic priest who was alleged to have been killed by the army was a supporter of the terrorists hiding guns in the church, he claimed. Anyway, he was not killed; he had escaped and was hiding in India.

I explained that credibility comes in part by putting together a number of factors: direct observation, the character of reports from a cross section of individuals chosen at random, the verification of the accounts by normally respected individuals, (an academic Jesuit, a respected Tamil lawyer in Jaffna openly opposed to separation), and a double check of my impressions with foreign political experts resident in Colombo. I had deliberately avoided seeing government leaders or leaders of the politi-

cal parties or terrorist movements.

The terrorists attacked and destroyed a police station, killing 80 soldiers and police in one action, torched the magistrates building the week before I arrived, and blew up bridges and causeways cutting off Point Pedro the day before I arrived in Jaffna. The road on which I had driven had been blown up and refilled in five different places. My visitors felt I had insufficiently stressed the terrorist actions.

It is true I had commented on what I believed to be imprudent government attitudes towards compromise and indiscriminate army behaviour in the legitimate response to terrorist activity. The Tamil community in the north had been drastically affected pushing more and more towards separatism and even support for terrorist methods. The Sinhalese in Toronto felt that the responsibility must be placed on the terrorists. Though totally opposed to terrorism, I strongly suggested that when a government acts to deprive separatist parliamentarians of their seats, the action feeds the extremists who see no hope through debate and dialogue. Indiscriminate army actions in which the innocent are victims reinforce the alienation.

While a few were willing to concede parliamentary advocacy of autonomy was alright in principle, in the context of Sri Lanka a delegation of Sinhalese visitors believed it could not be allowed in practice. "Over my last drop of blood," an older gentleman asserted, "will Sri Lanka be divided." The point of my articles was that it already is divided - by fear, by terror, by alienation between and among communities - though not by law. And the cost in Tamil and Sinhalese blood has been very high and likely to grow much higher.

In the process there have been indiscriminate government killing of innocents to combat terrorism and a lack of sensitivity at the very least and possibly complicity in Tamil suffering by the Sri Lankan government. But whatever the faults and shortcomings of the army and the government, they are not Nazis. And

what is occurring is not a holocaust. The Tamils are not being taken on forced marches to kill them as happened to the Armenians. Nor are they being shoved into ovens. There is no suggestion that I can detect that the Sri Lankan government is out to deprive Tamils of all their positions in universities, of all their assets and even of their lives. Tamils who use such terms may satisfy their anger, but the language does little to clarify and highlight the real problem.

PROJECT PEACE

A group of Canadians and Sri Lankans concerned about the recent ethnic problems in Sri Lanka have formed a committee, "Project Peace: for a united Sri Lanka", which has charged itself with the following objectives:

1. To work towards a peaceful and united multi-ethnic Sri Lanka, by collaborating with Sri Lankans in Canada of all ethnic origins and religious persuasions.
 2. To strive towards upholding and perpetuating the participatory democratic process in the island nation.
 3. To present a fair and unbiased picture of Sri Lanka, supported by empirical data, of the relations between the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka to Canadians.
 4. To provide the Canadian public with historical and contemporary data on Sri Lanka, especially as they relate to situations such as the recent ethnic problems.
 5. To research into the causes of contemporary problems faced by Sri Lanka from a Sri Lankan-Canadian perspective, and to make recommendations to policy makers in Sri Lanka for workable solutions.
 6. To ensure that policy makers deciding on development assistance to Sri Lanka are given an accurate picture of reasons for and consequences of Canadian aid.
- We, as a group, wish to stress the ideals of moderation, accommodation, understanding, goodwill, and cooperation in the achievement of our objectives.
-

Sri Lanka: Ethnic Conflict and Disintegration of a Third World Democracy

Robert Oberst,
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The continued violence between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities in Sri Lanka is threatening the existence of political stability and democracy in that country. As the violence has intensified since the election of the United National Party government in 1977, both sides to the dispute have solidified their demands and appear increasingly less likely to compromise with the other side. The crisis in Sri Lanka has resulted in a general breakdown in communication and peaceful interaction between the two communities. As a result, a peaceful solution to the dispute is highly unlikely. Certain conditions have appeared which have escalated the conflict beyond its original constraints. These conditions include a hardening of the attitudes of both sides to the conflict, a split in the leadership of the minority community, the rise of the influence of radicals among the minority community, and a decline in the influence of the moderates.

Arend Lijphart has argued that stability in multiethnic states is dependent upon several prerequisites: (1) an ability to recognize the dangers inherent in a fragmented system; (2) a commitment to system maintenance; (3) an ability to transcend sub-cultural cleavage at the elite level; and (4) an ability to forge appropriate solutions for the demands of the sub-cultures. He believes that elite perceptions of the communal conflict are the crucial element in communal harmony.

Some of these conditions in Sri Lanka are not being met. Both sides agree that there is a danger in the conflict between them. Further, both groups are committed to maintaining the system. Both sides also appear to have been able, in the past, to communicate and interact in order to break down the subcultural differences. The fourth condition has not been met. The two sides have not

been able to forge appropriate solutions to the demands of the Tamil subculture. Since independence, there have been a series of policies passed by the national government which have established the majority ethnic community in a position of dominance. The failure to meet this condition has led to a deterioration in meeting the other prerequisites for stability.

The result has been a hardening of attitudes by both sides in the conflict with a consequent lower commitment towards system maintenance. A split in the minority group leadership has allowed more radical elements to gain control of the minority group leadership. These more radical groups are less committed to the maintenance of the system. In addition, an increased level of violence has resulted as the two major ethnic groups fail to see the dangers inherent in a non-negotiated solution to the conflict. It would appear that both sides see violence as a better means to solving the conflict than negotiation.

There is a great deal of ethnic diversity in Sri Lanka (Box I). However, the communal conflict on the island is centred on two of the many ethnic communities – the Sinhalese and Tamils. The political system is dominated by the Sinhalese community.

The Sinhalese speak an Indo-aryan language, Sinhala, and consider themselves the original civilized inhabitants of the island. They are mostly Buddhist and feel threatened by the large Dravidian Hindu culture to the north of the island in India. The Tamils on the island are divided between the Indian and Ceylon Tamils. The Ceylon Tamils trace their ancestry to invaders from South India who arrived on the island around the same time as the Sinhalese. They comprise 12.6 per cent of the island's population and

are concentrated in the northern and eastern sections of the island. Most Tamils practice Hinduism and speak a Dravidian language.

The Indian Tamils are descended from estate workers brought from South India to Sri Lanka in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to care for the tea and coffee estates. They were stripped of their citizenship shortly after independence. Many Indian Tamils either have been sent back to India or given Sri Lankan citizenship. However, around 200,000 remain stateless or await return to India. In addition to these groups, there are several other ethnic groups on the island. Of these only the Moors are of importance to this study. The Moors are found predominately on the eastern coast and in major trading towns along the western coast and in the hill country. Most speak Tamil and therefore the Ceylon Tamils have sought, apparently unsuccessfully, to enlist their support in their conflict with the Sinhalese.

The conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese dates back to precolonial times. However, the independence era has been marked by several sharp conflicts between the two groups. After independence tension developed over the status of the Indian Tamils. In the 1947 elections, six Indian Tamils were elected to Parliament under their own party label, the Ceylon Indian Congress. In 1948, the Indian Tamils were stripped of their citizenship and denied the right to vote in future elections. This was justified by the argument that the Indian Tamils did not owe their allegiance to Sri Lanka but rather to India and therefore should not be allowed to have influence in Sri Lankan politics. The election of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's Mahajana Eksath Peramuna in 1956 led to a heightening of tension as the new leadership began to make Sinhala the language of government. In May 1958, serious

communal rioting swept the country. The 1960s and early 1970s were marked by further negotiations between the leaders of the two communities over the role and influence of the Sri Lanka Tamil community. In the 1970s, the Tamil leadership sharpened their demands. This was followed by a series of communal riots starting after the elections of 1977, and followed in August 1981 and July 1983.

These outbreaks of violence were largely ignored by the outside world until the riots of July 1983. The government has listed the death toll in this violence at 387 killed (Government of Sri Lanka, n.d.). Unofficial estimates of the numbers killed run considerably higher. Again in 1984, the conflict reached the western news media. In April, government forces went on a rampage against Tamils in the north after a bomb was thrown at an army truck. Estimates of the dead range up to 234 killed. In April, a United States AID worker and his wife were kidnapped by a group of Tamil youths. Both were set free and unharmed but the incident received a great deal of press coverage in the United States media.

This violence is set in the context of a nation of approximately 15 million people. From 1948 to 1978, the island was governed by a Westminster-style government. It established itself as one of the most competitive and open democracies in the world with successive governments losing their bids for reelection in 1956, March 1960, July 1960, 1965, 1970, and 1977. In 1978, the government of Prime Minister J.R. Jayawardene and his United National Party changed the Westminster parliamentary system to a system based on the French model of government. Jayawardene was named the first executive President and given powers which exceeded those held by the former Prime Ministers. Since 1977, the communal situation has deteriorated.

The Hardening of the Demands of the Tamil Leadership

The Tamil leadership's position towards the government and the

Sinhalese parties is based on a long-standing refusal to accept the constitutional structure of Sri Lanka and to search for greater autonomy and home rule. They refused to participate in the deliberations over the constitutions of 1972 and 1978, based on a desire to gain a certain degree of autonomy over the regions of the island in which they predominate or traditionally have predominated. Under the present constitutional arrangement, the Tamils can never hope to have an important part in decision making. Thus, they seek a situation where a certain amount of power will always be guaranteed to them in a federation similar to what they regard the situation at the time of the coming of the British. They have refused to accept the sovereignty of the Sinhalese and consider themselves part of the federated states of Ceylon.

The search for autonomy has been fueled by several concerns. The first has been the language issue. As long as the British ruled Ceylon, an alien language, English, was imposed upon them as the language of government. No serious problems arose as long as the British ruled the country. As soon as the British left the country, the issue emerged as an important point of confrontation. The official Language Act of 1956 named Sinhala as the one official language of Sri Lanka. This began a series of compromises and negotiations between the two communities. The Constitution of 1978 gave the Tamil language special status in some government dealing but maintained the superiority of Sinhala in the society. The naming of Tamil as a "National Language" while Sinhala remains the one "Official Language" did not satisfy the Tamil leadership and the problem remains a point of confrontation.

The second concern has been the employment and education issue. In both of these areas, youths have been the main people affected by the government policies. The Tamils have claimed that they are not receiving a fair share of government jobs. The government sector is the main source of high status jobs in the society. As Sinhala has become more important as the language of govern-

ment, the Tamils have become more concerned with their access to government employment. Admissions to universities have also raised similar questions. Prior to 1970, admissions were based on final examination results at grade XII. In 1970, the United Front government of Sirimavo Bandaranaike became concerned with the better performance of Tamil students in the examinations. This was especially the case in the natural science exams. This concern led to a series of attempts to provide affirmative action for the Sinhalese students. A system of standardization was initially tried. Ultimately quotas were established for each community and university entrance exams became an issue of dispute. Despite changes by the Jayawardene government, the issue remained a point of confrontation.

A third concern has been the Sinhalese colonization of traditional Tamil areas. In Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Batticaloa districts, recently irrigated lands have been opened for settlement. In many areas, especially in Trincomalee, the lands have been given to Sinhalese settlers. This has had the effect of reducing the Tamil percentage of the population in these areas. The problem has been amplified by the Mahaweli Development Project which is now opening up new lands at a very rapid rate. In Trincomalee alone, the number of Sinhalese has increased sharply enough that Tamil plurality in the district is threatened.

A fourth concern has been regional autonomy or control over three significant policy areas directly affecting the Tamils.

The first issue is the number and level of development projects in Tamil areas. The Tamils feel that they have not received a fair share of the projects available. Thus, they are losing out on the income and jobs generated by such projects. Major development efforts such as the Mahaveli river diversion plan and the Free Trade Zone at Katunayake are both located in predominantly Sinhalese areas and largely benefit Sinhalese citizens.

The second issue has been the maintenance of law and order. For

many years the majority of the police and armed forces in the Tamil areas were Sinhalese. Recent changes have led to a reduction of Sinhalese police and an increase in the number of Tamil police. This has not satisfied the Tamils, and many of the guerilla attacks have been directed at the Sinhalese police and soldiers.

Accompanying this problem has been the lack of control that the officer corps of the armed services exert over their subordinates. On several occasions since 1977, the armed forces in the Tamil areas have gone on rampages against the Tamils. In these incidents, innocent civilians have been attacked. There have been widespread reports that during the riots of 1983, police and army units attacked Tamils or refused to defend them when they were attacked by rioters. In the spring and summer of 1984, the number of these incidents increased sharply with widespread attacks in the Tamil areas. In April and August several hundred people appear to have been killed as the police and soldiers randomly retaliated against Tamils for actions taken against them by the Tigers.

A third issue has been the devolution of power to the Tamil areas. Early calls for a federal system in Sri Lanka acknowledged the Tamil's desire for limited autonomy. Although the government has supported the concept of decentralization in principle, recent attempts at decentralization such as the decentralized budget and the District Development Councils have failed to meet the demands for autonomy or to transfer very much power to the Tamil areas.

These four concerns have led the Tamil leadership to make their demands for an independent state of Tamil Eelam. These demands for Eelam reversed a policy that originated in the early 1950s calling for a federal system. On May 14, 1976 the Tamil leadership held a convention in Vaddukoddai, on the Jaffna peninsula. At this meeting, attended by most factions of the Tamil community, the leadership announced their intention to seek a separate, free and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam in the northern and eastern portions of the

country.

The issue of Eelam I addressed in a series of interviews conducted in 1979 and after. Although the evidence is highly impressionistic, it would appear that most TULF leaders were using Eelam as a bargaining tool. Their goal was to use it to achieve some form of a federal system in Sri Lanka. With the exception of a few former TULF Members of Parliament, this appeared to be true. When questioned about the viability of an independent state of Eelam several even indicated that the Tamil country could not survive. Others when pressed, indicated that a federal solution might still work in Sri Lanka. Thus, it appeared that the demands for an independent state were little more than part of a bargaining plan.

Since 1979, the violence has intensified and reached levels which had been considered unheard of before. It would appear that the TULF leadership's attitudes toward the creation of Eelam have stiffened. Several of the former Tamil MPs have now expressed the belief that the Tamil people can never live in the same political state as the Sinhalese in the future. However, it would appear that a solution guaranteeing the safety of the Tamils and providing for economic development in the Tamil areas would be acceptable to the TULF leadership. However, the more radical Tiger organizations might not find such a solution acceptable. With the increased levels of violence have also come a radicalization among the Tamil youths. The TULF has increasingly failed to respond to their demands. In early 1984, the TULF agreed to join in the All Party Conference sponsored by the government. Significant elements of the Tamil youths opposed this action.

The continuing provocations by both sides have made a compromise very difficult. Each new hostility has widened the gap between the communities. Since the riots of August 1983, it would appear that there is some sentiment among the Tamil leadership that no compromise can come as long as President Jayawardene remains in power. He and his

government appear to have lost credibility in their dealings with the Tamils. Jayawardene's behaviour during the riots of 1983 has alienated many Tamils. He is accused of not taking action quickly enough. In the early stages of the rioting (which was directed at Tamils) he remained silent. When he finally did respond with a televised address, many Tamils felt that he was not forceful enough in condemning the violence against the Tamils. These actions coupled with the activities of his government and the people in it have increased the Tamil doubts. There is ample evidence that the Minister of Industry and Scientific Affairs at that time, Cyril Mathew, was implicated in some of the mob attacks against the Tamils. In addition, the excesses or lack of assistance from the army, police and prison guards when Tamils were attacked during the riots has added to Tamil fears. Many policemen were accused of standing by and watching the rioters attack Tamils. Police and army abuses in the past have been treated very leniently by government authorities.

At the same time as the Tamils were losing faith in Jayawardene's sincerity in dealing with the crisis, the TULF was losing its position as the spokesmen of the Tamils. The TULF has steadfastly supported a non-violent approach to the conflict. As the position of the Tamils has eroded since 1977, the government has taken a harder line toward the Tamils and increased certain activities which the Tamils have opposed. These activities include, the police and army abuses mentioned earlier, increased surveillance and searches in the north and the policies of colonization mentioned earlier. The most important blow to the TULF has been the stripping of their parliamentary seats in October 1983. This removed them from their one position of power in the political system. They lost their forum to challenge the government and their legitimacy as the leaders of the Tamils. Tamil youths have found it increasingly harder to accept a peaceful approach towards the Sinhalese when they are denied access to the government through their legitimate elected representatives.

The Decline of the Tamil Moderates and Rise of the Radicals

There appears to be a major division within the leadership of the Tamil community. The division is not between organized political parties, but between the politically dominant Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and several guerilla organizations commonly referred to as the Tigers. These two groups differ in several important respects. In the case of the TULF, we find a legal political party which, until its members refused to take a loyalty oath after the riots of 1983, was represented in parliament. At the present time, the party is the only viable political party in the areas of the country dominated by the Sri Lanka Tamils.

The Tigers include several outlawed guerilla organizations consisting primarily of young people who have grown increasingly dissatisfied with their position in Sri Lankan life and society. They have resorted to violent means to make their case known. There have been several estimates of the number of Tiger organizations ranging from a low of five to a high of 11. Many of them are ad hoc groups centred around one individual. No matter how many groups there may be, only a few of the groups have extensive influence. The two most influential groups include the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) which is led by Uma Maheshwaran, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) led by Velupillai Prabhakaran. Both of these organizations have a significant membership, ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 armed followers.

There appears to be a generation and caste gap between the TULF and the Tiger groups. The TULF leadership is dominated by older men who are members of the high status Vellala (cultivator) caste. For the most part, the TULF leadership has been involved in politics since the 1950s and 1960s. They are part of a generation who tried the politics of accommodation in the years shortly after independence. It was in these years that Tamil rights were slowly eroded with the disenfranchisement of

Indian Tamil citizenship, and the government language policy of the 1950s.

The Tigers, on the other hand, are made up of much younger people, and some groups of them are dominated by castes other than the Vellala, such as the Karaiyar (fisher) caste. They are part of the post-war generation which is suffering from the same economic conditions as the Sinhalese youths of this generation. High unemployment coupled with high levels of educational attainment have led to deep-seated dissatisfaction with the political system. In 1972, a violent youth-led insurrection took place that consisted largely of Sinhalese youths with only limited Tamil involvement. In some ways, the Tiger movement may be viewed as a delayed reaction to the same conditions which led to the 1972 insurrection.

In the late 1970s, there appeared to be close ties between some of the TULF leaders and the Tigers. Increasingly, the link between the TULF and the Tigers appears to have weakened, although some communication still exists between Prabakaran's LTTE and the TULF. The youths have become more frustrated with the failure of their methods, and the inability of the TULF leadership to work out an acceptable compromise. Thus, the Tigers appear to have taken a more independent path in their recent actions and are no longer as closely linked to the TULF.

The dissatisfaction between the TULF and the youths has expressed itself in several ways. Tamil youths openly challenged the TULF call for a *satyagraha* (non-violent protest) in the north to mark the first anniversary of the July 1983 riots. Shortly after this, small bombs were thrown at the train which was to carry several TULF leaders to Colombo to participate in the Round Table Conference called to resolve the conflict. It should be noted that no violent actions have been taken directly against the TULF leadership as occurred to former Tamil Congress and UNP Tamil leaders. Jaffna Mayor Alfred Durriyappah, an independent, and former Tamil Congress MP, A. Tiagarajah were both assassinated by

the guerillas. Several other politicians have been attacked and seriously injured or killed by the youths.

Despite the division in the Tamil leadership, the TULF appears to have widespread support in the Jaffna peninsula. No other political party has been able to challenge its dominance since the early 1970s. This support has continued to persist throughout the violence and concerted attempts by the United National Party government to gain a political foothold among the Tamil people. After the Tamil leadership refused to cooperate with the development of a new constitution, the UNP embarked on a policy to gain electoral support in the region. This policy was a failure with the exception of two parliamentary defections of TULF MPs to the government. The electorate as a whole appeared to remain behind the TULF leadership.

In the presidential elections of 1982, the TULF called for a boycott of the elections while the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) ran a candidate of their own opposed to the incumbent President Junius Richard Jayawardene. In Jaffna district, the stronghold and centre of TULF support, the UNP candidate Jayawardene received the votes of only 9.1 percent of the total voters while 53.7 percent of the voters did not vote. In the 1977 parliamentary general elections, only 28.5 percent of the electorate in Jaffna district failed to vote. The ACTC candidate polled 17.7 percent of the total votes. In other districts with high concentrations of Sri Lanka Tamils, the UNP did better but their support was not impressive. Along the east coast of the island, few people boycotted the election, but many voted for the ACTC. The UNP percentage of the total vote exceeded that of all other parties but fell short of a majority. In Batticaloa district, for instance, they received only 27.9 percent of the vote. Even if the Tamils of the eastern coast did not support the TULF and its call for separation, they did not appear to offer much support to the government or the other Sinhalese political party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

Since the failure of the UNP electoral strategy in the north, the UNP has

attempted to undermine the credibility and support of the TULF. In August of 1983 the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution was passed and required that all Members of Parliament recite a loyalty oath which disavowed separatism. The TULF MPs refused to state the oath and were removed from parliament. This was followed by a government publicity campaign stressing the weakness and unrepresentativeness of the TULF. The TULF was left with no legitimate forum, such as parliament, to state their case, and as a result, their influence in the north appear to have declined while that of the Tiger appears to have increased.

Increasingly, the government has stressed that it is now dealing with the radical Tigers. These appeals have been used to influence public opinion in nations the government hopes to receive aid from, and to influence international public opinion.

The Growth of Violence and the Breakdown of Communication

The summer of 1984 marked a watershed in the communal problem. The government and the Tigers amplified their violent actions while the centre of Tamil power and influence shifted towards the Tigers. Tiger attacks during the summer of 1984 occurred almost daily. These attacks were followed by a change in government tactics. The government enlisted the aid of Israel to train and assist them in antiterrorist activities, while also hiring a British-based private commando team to help. In August of 1984, the United States Navy began to help with surveillance of the seas between India and Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan military has taken a much harder line toward the villages where attacks occur. In the past when the Tigers attacked, bystanders would claim to have seen nothing when the authorities arrived. It appears that the army is now punishing villages where resistance exists. In August, two attacks in different areas of the north led to military retaliations. On August 4, Tamil guerillas killed two sailors. In retaliation, security forces rounded

up about 680 youths in the village and took them away. The next day the village was bombarded – villagers claiming it was a naval bombardment while the government claiming it came from land-based cannons. In the other case, over 3,000 people were left homeless and a large number of shops were destroyed in the city of Mannar as soldiers once again retaliated for an attack against them.

Along with the increased violence came a breakdown in the communication between the two communities. The All Parties Conference (Round Table Conference) which had been meeting for nearly a year, presented a series of proposals in December, 1984. All of the major opposition parties including the TULF rejected the proposals. The conference ended in failure with the government vowing not to negotiate with the TULF again unless they dropped their demands for Eelam. The breakdown in communication and the escalation of the violence further limits the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The animosity of the two communities is fueled not only by the violence against each other, but also by a series of socio-economic events which have affected the country as a whole. Much of the antagonism between the two communities is the result of factors beyond the control of both parties, or part of the general accepted way of doing things politically in the country. These factors are the frustration created by the baby and education boom of the 1950s and 1960s, the patronage system, and the Sri Lankan system of distributing development projects.

In both the Sinhalese and the Tamil areas of the country there are too few jobs for the educational qualifications of the people seeking them. This is, in large part, a consequence of the baby boom of the 1950s and 1960s, and the growth of the educational system which also occurred during this time. The growth of the educational system allowed large number of young people to receive secondary and university degrees. The increased educational opportunities expanded the expectations of the young people with their careers. The economic sys-

tem could not keep pace with the expansion of the educational system by providing jobs for them commensurate with their educational attainment. Thus, many of the educated youths became underemployed or unemployed. It has been argued that this situation has led to a great deal of frustration among youths and that this was one cause of the insurrection of Sinhalese youths in 1972. The same factors affected the Tamil youths although, for the most part, they did not become involved in the 1972 uprising.

However, for the Tamil youths, several other ingredients added to the situation. The imposition of quotas for university admittance came at a poor time – in the early 1970s. This heightened the sense of frustration at a time when jobs were becoming even scarcer. In addition, the increasing requirements for Sinhala proficiency limited the number of government jobs available. Finally a more serious problem also added to their sense of frustration. Sri Lankan politics is marked by high levels of patronage – patronage in jobs and in the placement of development projects. Because the Tamils have persisted in electing representatives to parliament from their own Tamil parties and not from the Sinhalese dominated parties which have controlled the governments of Sri Lanka, they have not received the benefits of patronage. Thus, the growth of educational opportunities and the large numbers of baby boom youths entering the job market have led to increased frustration which in turn fueled Tamil dissatisfaction and violence. These frustrations have been exacerbated by the patronage system of Sri Lankan politics funnelled through representatives of the governing party.

The patronage system is not inherently biased against the Tamils but biased against any electorates which consistently returns Members of Parliament who are not members of the governing party. Unfortunately, the only areas of the island to do this are the Tamil areas.

Another of the inherent systemic biases against the Tamils is the placement of development projects. Development projects are also part of

the patronage system. Projects are more likely to be placed in electorates controlled by the government party than they are in electorates controlled by opposition party members. This is true whether the projects are set up directly by the ministries involved or through the decentralized budget.

The Future of the Tamil Crisis in Sri Lanka

The arguments spelled out in the earlier passages of this analysis present a very pessimistic view of the future of the political stability of Sri Lanka. The final section of this paper will not change this view. The Sri Lanka ethnic communities have reached a stage of crisis in which communication between the communities has broken down and where each community has lost its trust in the other side. The necessary prerequisites for consociational democracy that at one time existed have disappeared. Thus, both sides are unwilling to compromise. The government finds itself in a position of power with widespread support from the Sinhalese commu-

ity and a President who believes that he has done all that he can to reach a compromise. The Tamil leadership is split between radicals and moderates who do not trust the sincerity of the current government leadership – specifically President Jayawardene.

One can not reasonably expect the Tamil leadership to change their distrust of the Sinhalese government without major concessions. Major concessions include the establishment of some form of home rule or autonomy. Each new act of violence has reinforced the attitudes of the Tamil leadership. Not only do they fear being governed by the Sinhalese, but the present leadership of the TULF have lost much of their credibility. The emergence of the radical leadership as a spokesperson for the Tamils has further complicated the crisis. The government has effectively undermined the moderate leadership and now must deal with the radicals. This makes it much more likely that a solution will not be found until the present leadership in Colombo is changed or the Tamil

people are forcibly subdued. A new government or major shift in policy positions will allow the moderates to reassert their position of leadership among the Tamils. A further complication is the systemic bias built into the political structure. The patronage system and its favouritism towards the government-controlled areas (Sinhalese areas) will further alienate Tamil young people. The compliance and involvement of the Tamil youths in a solution is absolutely necessary. Thus, their frustration must be reduced. This will require several major changes in the way government benefits are handled in Sri Lanka. Government employment must be determined on the basis of merit rather than influence. Development projects must be placed on the basis of economic merit rather than political clout.

In the final analysis, the possibility of a peaceful settlement lies in the hands of the government. At the present time, the government does not appear to be committed to the necessary policies and attitude required for a peaceful solution.

BOX 1

ETHNIC POPULATION OF SRI LANKA

Ethnic	Number	Percent of Population
Sinhalese	10,985,666	74.0
Ceylon Tamils	1,871,535	12.6
Ceylon Moors	1,056,972	7.1
Indian Tamils	825,233	5.6
Malays	43,378	.3
Burghers	38,236	.3
Others	28,981	.1

SOURCE: Statistical Abstract of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, p. 32, 1982 (Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics, 1982).

Sri Lanka:

Reports of Recent Violations of Human Rights and Amnesty International's Opposition to Refoulement of the Tamil Community to Sri Lanka

Amnesty International

During most of 1984, Amnesty International has requested governments not to send back to Sri Lanka, members of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka seeking political asylum, or not wishing to return to their own country. Amnesty International continues to oppose the refoulement of Tamils because it believes that, if returned against their will, all members of the Tamil minority have reasonable grounds to fear:

1. that they may fall victim to arbitrary killings by members of the security forces; especially in view of reports of continuing and increasingly widespread shootings of unarmed members of the Tamil civilian population by members of the security forces apparently in reprisal for attacks on members of these forces by Tamil extremists groups;
2. that they may be subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention – particularly if they are men between 15-30 years old – and possibly be held *incommunicado*, with their relatives remaining unaware of their whereabouts for weeks and sometimes months after arrest;
3. that after arrest they may be subjected to ill-treatment and torture if the security forces believe that they have any knowledge of the activities of Tamil extremist groups.

Amnesty International has adopted this position because, although not all members of the Tamil community would necessarily be subjected to any of these human rights violations, there is a substantial possibility that they might be at risk. For general background see *Report of an Amnesty International Mission to Sri Lanka 31 January – 9 February 1982 and the Amnesty International Report, Sri Lanka: Current Human Rights Concerns and Evidence of Extrajudicial Killings by the Security Forces July 1983-April 1984*, published in June 1984 (the latter containing a summary of Amnesty International's human rights concerns up until December 1983).

Since the publication of the latter document in July 1984, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and most frequently of extrajudicial killings; reports which have increased at a time that Tamil extremists have, since mid-November 1984, stepped up their violent attacks in the north in their attempts to establish a separate state for the Tamil minority. Dozens of security forces personnel have been killed. For example, on 19 November 1984, members of Tamil extremist groups have claimed responsibility for the killing of the army commander in the northern region; on 20 November 1984 at least

27 police were killed in an attack at the Chavakachcheri police station by members of Tamil extremist groups, and on 30 November an estimated 65 men, women and children, all Sinhalese civilians, were killed by members of Tamil extremist groups at two farm settlements, Kent and Dollar Farms in the Mullaitivu district, used for the rehabilitation of convicted prisoners.

Amnesty has received extensive evidence indicating that despite denials by the government these and other attacks made by members of Tamil extremist groups have regularly been followed by reprisal killings of innocent Tamil civilians, including old men, women and children, carried out by personnel of the security forces. Particularly serious and widespread allegations of such extrajudicial killings by the security forces have been made from 1 December onwards. The allegations were accompanied by reports of large scale arrests of 'suspects' most of them members of the male Tamil population aged between 15 and 30. Amnesty International had earlier received allegations that during detention without trial under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, ill-treatment and torture continue to occur, such allegations having been made up until the time of writing.



The Plight of Refugee Claimants

David Matas

to The Amnesty International Group 19
Winnipeg, November 15, 1984

Refugee claimants are among the most wretched people in Canada. They have fled countries where they have been imprisoned for their beliefs, they may have been tortured, their lives may have been threatened. They know no one or almost no one in Canada. They normally cannot speak either French or English. A refugee claim can take years to process before a final determination is reached. Until a person is recognized as a refugee, he is not recognized as a resident, even though he may be here for years. Despite his lengthy stay, he is treated as if he will be leaving in a week or two.

There are few areas of life that are not regulated by government and there are few areas of government regulation where residency does not make a difference. Whenever residency does make a difference, a refugee claimant suffers. On top of it all, there is a conscious effort not to make refugee claimants too comfortable here, for fear it will lead to abuse of the refugee claims system. Refugee claimants, by and large, come from Third World countries, that lack the standard of living and infrastructure of Canada. Allowing refugee claimants too easy access to a Canadian standard of living would, it is feared, attract frivolous refugee claimants trying to benefit from a temporary stay in Canada. The result is that the misery refugee claimants suffer is not just circumstance. It is there by design.

Complicating the problems the claimants face is the fact that there are two ways of making a refugee claim, in status and out of status. The problems a claimant faces depends on whether he makes his claim in status or out of status.

An in status claim is a claim made while the claimant is still a visitor in Canada. If a person makes a claim in status, his status is extended until the

claim is determined. The person, theoretically, retains his status as a visitor.

An out of status claimant is a person who has lost his visitor's status, or who never had visitor status. Such a person has no status in Canada. He is in Canada pending determination of his claim, and for no other reason.

The problems refugee claimants face can be seen in the work permit system, in their work search efforts, in the school permit system, in medicare, in legal aid, in welfare, in family allowance, in drivers' licences and the difficulties they face in family reunion.

1. Work Permits

One general rule is that a foreign worker has to apply from outside Canada to get a work permit. Another general rule is that the claimant must have a job offer certified by the Government of Canada as being a job for which no Canadian is available.

Out of status refugee claimants are exempt from both of the rules. An out of status refugee claimant may obtain a work permit, even though he applies from within Canada. He may obtain a work permit even though the Government of Canada is not prepared to certify that there is no Canadian available for the job. Superficially, refugee claimants are advantaged by these exemptions. However, these exemptions are the cause of a lot of their problems. There is a suspicion that refugee claimants come to Canada, not to seek protection, but in order to benefit from these exemptions. This suspicion works against claimants in a number of ways. It makes their refugee claims harder to establish. A refugee claim invariably depends on the credibility of the claimant. When a claimant benefits financially from making a

claim, his credibility is put under a cloud. The suspicion creates a countervailing tendency. There is a tendency to prevent claimants from doing too well financially.

A work permit will be given only if the claimant will be destitute without it. If he has friends or relatives in Canada willing to support him, he will be denied a work permit. To obtain a work permit, he must establish, to the satisfaction of immigration officials, that his friends and relatives in Canada are not willing or able to support him. If one member of the family is working, then other members of the family cannot work. An exception is made only where the family would be eligible for welfare, even with one family member working. In that case, a second family member will be allowed to work. If a claimant has a work permit for one job, he will not be given a work permit for another. He will not be able to hold two jobs at once. Again an exception is made only where the claimant, without the second job, would be eligible for welfare. The effect of these restrictions is to impoverish claimants. They are allowed to earn enough to keep off welfare, but no more. Government thwarts any earning initiative beyond that.

For in status claimants, the situation is even worse. An out of status claimant may not be entitled to a work permit, but at least he is eligible to be considered for one. The immigration manual the government puts out as guidelines for immigration officers says that in status claimants do not enjoy any privilege provided under the Immigration Act to an out of status claimant in respect of eligibility for employment authorization. The department has the power to refuse even to consider an application for a work permit made by a refugee claimant in status.



2. Work Search

Through the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), the Government of Canada offers an employment service, matching job offers with job applicants. It is a heavily used service, particularly for unskilled labour.

Refugee claimants cannot take advantage of this service. They are not allowed to register with CEIC. The government restricts the service to residents of Canada. Refugee claimants must find work on their own.

3. Schooling

In status claimants have to conform to the terms in which status was granted in order to retain their status. They can go to school only if they have permission to go to school, given by the Department of Immigration.

The department will give permission to go to school only to minor dependants of refugee claimants. It will not give permission to go to school to adult refugee claimants. The position of the department is that "studies are not considered necessary for subsistence while a claim is being determined." Before a minor dependant is given permission to go to school, there must be a statement from the school that any non-resident fees that are payable have been paid. Schools do not have to charge refugee claimants non-resident fees. If they do, the charges can be onerous.

Out of status claimants can go to school without authorization. There is no blanket permission in the law. There is just no provision in the law for out of status refugee claimants who wish to go to school. Because the law does not provide for the situation, immigration officials have no say in whether out of status refugee claimants go to school or not. CEIC finances training programs at community colleges, and on-the-job training to give Canadians the skills they need to find work. Refugee claimants are ineligible for these training programs. Because they are not permanent residents, they need not apply.

4. Medicare

Medicare eligibility is determined

provincially, not federally and eligibility can vary from province to province. In Manitoba, according to the Manitoba Health Services Commission, a refugee claimant is eligible for medicare once he has work permits totalling twelve months or more. A claimant need not have one work permit totalling twelve months or more. It is enough if he has several work permits that together total twelve months or more. A claimant need not have actually worked twelve months. His eligibility commences as soon as he receives a work permit that will take him to twelve months. So, for instance, if he is given a sequence of four three-month work permits, then, after nine months, after he received his fourth permit, he would be eligible for medicare. This rule imposes a deprivation on refugee claimants. Claimants do not get work as soon as they arrive in Canada. They may not get work at all.

Private health insurance may simply not be available. Manitoba Blue Cross has a visitor health care plan. The application must be received by Blue Cross within seven days of arrival in Manitoba. The terms of the policy plus all extensions cannot exceed 32 days. Persons applying for immigrant status are not eligible for coverage under the plan.

A person denied medicare is not denied medical help. Doctors and hospitals will give medical help to refugee claimants, but they will charge the claimants. These charges can discourage people from seeking medical care they need. If the charges are not paid, they may be put out to collection. Harassment by bill collectors is an additional trouble refugee claimants hardly need.

5. Legal Aid

Like medicare, legal aid is a provincial matter. Legal aid eligibility rules can vary from province to province. In Ontario, the regulations provide that each area director has the power to issue legal aid certificates to residents. Area directors cannot issue legal aid certificates to non-residents. Only the director of legal aid can do that. In practice, in Ontario, except in a rare case, refugee claimants are not issued legal aid certificates.

The Canadian refugee determination process is complex. A claimant without a lawyer can be at a serious disadvantage. There are lawyers who will volunteer their services when legal aid is not available. The unavailability of legal aid can discourage a claimant from even approaching a lawyer to act.

6. Welfare

Welfare is, theoretically, subject to national standards. The Canada Assistance Plan provides for federal cost sharing of provincial welfare. Under the plan, need is the only criterion for welfare eligibility. Residence in Canada is not relevant.

There have been, in spite of federal requirements, provincial restrictions based on residency. The B.C. welfare regulations provide that a welfare recipient must be either a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident. In one case, the B.C. welfare authorities gave welfare to a refugee claimant. The B.C. government appealed the granting of welfare to the courts. The Supreme Court of B.C. held that the B.C. welfare regulations prohibited a refugee claimant from getting welfare, since such a person was not a resident.

It is cold comfort to refugee claimants that British Columbia is in violation of the Canada Assistance Plan. The Minister of Employment and Immigration has sided with refugee claimants and against the Government of B.C. on this issue. Yet refugee claimants in B.C. are still ineligible for welfare.

7. Family Allowance

According to the Family Allowances Act, to be eligible for family allowance, a person must be a citizen, a permanent resident, a visitor, or the holder of a permit. According to the Family Allowances Regulations, if a person is eligible as a visitor or holder of a permit, he must be authorized to remain at least twelve months, and his income must be subject to income tax.

Out of status refugee claimants are neither visitors nor permit holders. They are, in principle, not eligible for family allowance.

In status refugee claimants are visitors. An in status refugee claimant

would be eligible for family allowances, provided he was authorized to remain at least twelve months, and his income was subject to income tax.

However, in status claimants are not entitled to be considered for work permits. In status claimants are denied work permits, simply because they are in status. An in status claimant will normally be unable to earn the income and pay the income tax that will allow him to receive family allowance.

8. Drivers' Licences

Provincial Highway Traffic Acts typically provide that a non-resident may drive without a licence issued by the province for three months. A non-resident can rely on any licence he may have been issued by the jurisdiction from which he came.

The acts do not say that a person has to be a resident to obtain a driver's licence. In practice, that is how they are interpreted. Refugee claimants are denied the possibility of applying for drivers' licences. If they appeal to supervisory staff, the initial decision may be reversed. However, the initial refusal may be enough to discourage claimants from going any further.

9. Family Reunion

Adding to the hardships of grappling with government bureaucracies is the fact that refugee claimants are often alone. If they came from a country with a visa requirement, a visa will not be issued to allow their families to join them. The Government of Canada will not issue a visitor's visa to a spouse or children to allow them to join refugee claimants in Canada.

Only permanent residents and citizens can sponsor their immediate family to come to Canada. Refugee claimants, whether in status or out of status, will not be allowed to sponsor their families for entry into Canada.

Because a refugee claim can take years before it is finally determined, claimants can be separated from their families for a prolonged period of time. This prolonged separation can lead to marriage breakdown and disintegration of the family unit. Spouses abroad are unaware of the complexities and delays of the refugee system. They may believe that the claimant spouses are just refusing to send for them.

Recommendations

A Conference on Refugees and Settlement held recently in Winnipeg, sponsored by the Citizenship Council of Manitoba, the Anglican Church in Winnipeg, and the Interfaith Immigration Council, dealt with the plight of refugee claimants. A Workshop came up with a number of recommendations. Some of these were:

- a) In status claimants be eligible for work permits.
- b) Work permits not be denied because of permits held by spouses.
- c) Work permits for additional jobs not be denied.
- d) Work permits not be denied because a friend or relative is willing or able to assist.
- e) Schools not charge non-resident fees to refugee claimants and their dependants.
- f) In status claimants and their dependants be given permission to attend school.
- g) Refugee claimants be covered by medicare from the date of their claim.
- h) Legal aid be available for refugee claimants.
- i) Refugee claimants not be denied welfare by virtue of their status or lack of status in Canada.
- j) Refugee claimants be entitled to family allowance on making a claim.

Conclusions

Refugee claimants should not be

discouraged from making refugee claims by making them miserable in Canada. Enforced misery is not an appropriate abuse control mechanism. It is a mechanism that, regrettably, is being used not only or even most stringently in Canada. Scandinavia, Switzerland, and West Germany have all fallen prone to the same technique.

In Switzerland, all refugee claimants are denied work permits. In West Germany, refugee claimants are put in camps. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees has reported "shocking and inhuman" conditions at these camps. The UN has said of Switzerland, Scandinavia, and West Germany that there is a negative attitude that attempts to raise in asylum seekers the desire to return to their own country and to dissuade potential new arrivals. Those governments believe that a significant number of asylum seekers are fake refugees, people simply looking for a better way of life. The governments are determined not to make life better, to make it worse than the Third World conditions from which these claimants came.

This enforced misery makes no distinction between the abusers and the genuine refugee. The genuine refugee suffers as much as someone who has come looking for a better way of life. The way to control abuse is a speedy determination of a refugee claim. A speedy determination will deny abusers a long stay in better conditions than exist at home. Would-be abusers will not incur the expenses of the trips if the stays they can engineer by abuse are invariably short. Real refugees in Canada must be treated in a humane fashion.

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