

**REPORT OF MEETING OF DAVE NELLIST MP WITH MR CHANDRA MONERAWELA, SRI LANKAN HIGH COMMISSIONER, AND MR BRADMAN WEERAKOON, ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA, ON THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 1989.**

Dave Nellist MP, delivered the enclosed letter to R Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka, which Mr Weerakoon promised to deliver personally by hand.

Dave Nellist explained his concern, and that of other MPs and labour movement activists, over the deterioration of the situation in Sri Lanka and the numerous reports of human rights abuses. In particular he requested an investigation into allegations of the involvement of government personnel in "disappearances", arrests and detentions without charge and murder, including that of trade union activist, H C Fernando. Recent press reports in the Independent (19/9/89) showed that the government have ordered an investigation into the weapons of bodyguards and 45 members of the armed forces have been arrested - it is no longer just a question of allegations but the Sri Lankan government themselves are taking up the matter.

Dave Nellist stated that reports of 1,000 deaths a month were severely worrying many people. He requested an immediate investigation, particularly into allegations of government personnel involvement. He presented a leaked letter (enclosed) from the Sri Lankan Minister of Agriculture's department requesting that one of his drivers be immune from prosecution for driving a vehicle without number plates whilst engaged in "security matters". **It is just such unmarked vehicles which are at the centre of numerous accounts of people being abducted without trace or even murdered like H C Fernando.**

Dave Nellist suggested that if the Sri Lankan government denied the validity of these allegations then he requested an independent labour movement visit, including himself, who had previously been denied at the last moment a proposed visit in 1985 to investigate. He also pointed out that Amnesty International were keen to send a delegation to Sri Lanka, but had so far been refused permission.

Mr Bradman Weerakoon, Advisor to President Premadasa, assured Dave Nellist that he appreciated his interest in the situation but could not agree with him. He insisted that the government were merely trying to deal with the situation of terrorism inside the country. He stated that the killing of servicemen and their families by the JVP explained the intensity of the soldiers' feelings about going after the JVP. When Dave Nellist pointed out that he himself had always opposed terrorism, whether in Northern Ireland, the Middle East or Sri Lanka, but that provocation, no matter how severe, could not justify the kind of reprisals as the killing of 150 people in Kandy, Bradman Weerakoon denied that he was saying reprisals were justified or even that they existed. He only wished to explain the state of mind of the troops!

Mr Weerakoon stated that once the Indians left Sri Lanka the government would be able to "sort things out for themselves". Why then were they forced to call in the Indian army in the first place? He believed that the departure of the IPKF would "take the wind out of the JVP's sails".

The Presidential Advisor outlined the free availability of weapons in Sri Lanka - handed out to MPs, councillors, government officials etc for use in their own defence but which might be used in private vendettas. Likewise army uniforms are "very easily available" and therefore people in uniforms are not necessarily the

security forces.

Having graphically outlined this anarchic situation existing inside his country, Mr Weerakoon then stated that a visit by Dave Nellist or others such as Amnesty International, might not be suitable at the present time because the civil service "now feel on top of the situation"! It would be better, he said, not to demoralise government personnel with an investigation but wait till they get the terrorist situation under control. After the event inquiries could be made and wrongdoers dealt with.

This is clearly not satisfactory to those internationally who are concerned at developments in Sri Lanka, nor for that matter to those whose family or friends have disappeared, are under arrest without charge, or have been murdered or have threats of murder hanging over them. The government have not been able to solve the question of Tamil terrorist organisations over decades and has itself escalated the violence through actions such as the Indo/lanka Accord which led to the present upsurge in the JVP. The new agreement for withdrawal of the IPKF holds out no guarantee of peace whatsoever. It will solve neither the Tamils' desire for self-determination no the wishes of the Sinhalese community for decent wages, living conditions and democratic rights. An inquiry into allegations of serious misdemeanour - including mass murder - by the Sri Lankan security forces cannot wait until the government "solves the terrorist situation" - that might be never!

The President's Adviser and the High Commissioner, however, agreed to present Dave Nellist's letter to President Premadasa and would investigate in particular the matter of the death of H C Fernando and the document revealing government use of unmarked vehicles. Dave Nellist looks forward to hearing the President's answers and reiterates his willingness to visit Sri Lanka and find out the real situation for himself.

Dave Nellist 22/9/89