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THE U.D.I. MOVE

TULF DISSOCIATES

"No one can arrogate to himself the right to take any action fraught with serious consequences to the Tamil people in Ceylon", so declared the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in a strongly worded statement made in connection with the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of Tamil Eelam move by the London based Tamil Co-ordinating Committee (TCC).

Following a unanimous decision of the Working Committee of the TULF to dissociate itself from the UDI move, Mr. M. Sivasithamparam, MP, President of the TULF and Mr. A. Amirthalingam, MP, Leader of the Opposition and Secretary General of the TULF issued a joint statement, the excerpts of which are as follows:

"We are fully convinced that this is ill-advised and will not advance the Tamil cause one wee bit.

"We informed them that the fate of the Tamil nation had to be decided by the people themselves, and that no one can arrogate to himself the right to take any action fraught with serious consequences to the Tamil people in Ceylon.

"Again when this matter was raised at a

conference of overseas Tamils in January 1981 at Madurai in India, we categorically rejected any such adventurist action and requested them to drop this move.

"When the Secretary General of the TULF met the members of the TCC in London in June, 1981, they were informed that the TULF dissociated itself from the proposed action on the principle that a decision to declare independence had to be taken by the people through their accredited representatives with a full

realisation of the consequences of such action and not by a group living thousands of miles away insulated from the effects of their action and responsible to no one for what they did.

"If, in spite of those repeated warnings and advice, anyone takes it upon himself to indulge in an action, for which he has no authority from the people concerned, the TULF has to make public its dissociation from such a declaration on behalf of the Tamil Nation, who gave the TULF their mandate to win their freedom, which objective the TULF is pursuing with a full sense of its responsibility."

A MERE JOKE SAY YOUTH

"Considering in its totality, this declaration (the UDI move) does not contain an effective programme either for the establishment of a complete sovereign state or for the advancement of our national liberation struggle. On the contrary it serves to mislead the masses in a manner which will undermine our struggle.

"We are not opposed in principle to the proposal for the formation of a provisional government of Tamil Eelam in exile. But the most important question is as to by whom, in what circumstances and with what aims such a government is

formed. Without the unanimous support of the people on matters of fundamental importance which might affect the political future of the Tamil nation and in the absence of favourable objective conditions, the attempt by some selfish individuals to form a Tamil Eelam government in a foreign country is to reduce our independence struggle to a mere joke", so declares a statement issued by a section of the Tamil Youth Movement which is generally considered to be the group that believes in the strategy of armed political struggle. This statement was received at the Tamil Times desk by post.

The Statement adds, "In a resolution passed by the Tamil Co-ordinating Committee on August 31, 1980, it was announced that an Independent Tamil Eelam would be born on Pongal Day 1982. But there was no information or explanation as to how this Himalayan task was going to be achieved. However, the announcement made in London created confusion in the Tamil political arena. The London announcement was blindly welcomed by those who did not possess a deep understanding of world political history; by those who did not comprehend the

(Contd on page 9)

TCC POSTPONES

The projected Unilateral Declaration of Tamil Eelam on January 14, 1982 by Mr. K. Vaikunthavasan, Convenor of the Tamil Co-ordinating Committee, a London based organisation comprising a few groups of Ceylon Tamils, was postponed indefinitely.

Mr. Vaikunthavasan made an announcement on November 14, 1981 that "we do hereby decide to make all necessary arrangements for Tamil Eelam Independence Declaration on Pongal Day 1982" (14.1.1982).

The proposal received wide publicity in the Sri Lankan press and the government

made use of the opportunity to further intensify and tighten security measures in the North and East of the country.

It is reliably learnt that Mr. Vaikunthavasan was subjected to severe criticism by his colleagues in the TCC and pressure was applied on him to abandon his move before the 'D' day. They are reported to have told him that the move should be abandoned due to the rejection of it by the TULF, the lack of support from the Tamil masses in Sri Lanka and the unenthusiastic response from expatriate Tamils in London and from other parts of the world.

A LETTER FROM MADRAS**RIPPLES ACROSS THE PALK STRAITS**

Recent events in Sri Lanka in which a large number of Tamils were killed, displaced or put to other indignities, including the burning of the Jaffna library, had naturally angered the people of Tamil Nadu to an extent that their elected representatives in the Houses of Legislature went out of their way to voice and put on record their concern for their fellow Tamils in the neighbouring country, an act which the Island power thought was an extra territorial activity. It was not the first time that the people of Tamil Nadu and their leaders expressed their emotional involvement whenever the Ceylon Tamils were persecuted by the Sinhalese power. During the days of Annadurai who led the unified Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (D.M.K.), public demonstrations and even protest fasts were held whenever the Tamils in Ceylon were attacked by the Sinhalese in communal disturbances. After Annadurai, under the leadership of Karunanithi, the party continued to voice their concern at every turn of events that affected their brothers in Ceylon. Today the D.M.K. party is bifurcated and we find two separate and powerful leaders both proclaiming sympathy and concern for the Ceylon Tamils and their cause. But are they proclaiming in the same voice?

This is the vital question posed by the general public of Tamil Nadu. As many within and outside India would know the D.M.K. built its power on the base of Tamil language, relying on its ancientness and rich literature, as well as on the individuality of the Tamil race. For them the Tamils outside India, particularly in Sri Lanka, are a potential strength. They came closer to them specially after the rule of late Solomon Dias Bandaranaike (former Prime Minister) when their tribulations really started. No one can doubt the genuine feelings of the D.M.K. party and its leaders for the Tamils in Ceylon and naturally the latter in turn had to lean heavily on the sympathy and encouraging utterances of the former on occasions when they were oppressed by the Sinhalese rulers and the communal hordes. This patronage today has, however, become a competitive commodity and both D.M.K. and All India Anna D.M.K. are vying with each other as to who should raise the protective voice first and loudest. The recent reactions in Tamil Nadu - the unprecedented resolution passed in the Tamil Nadu Assembly by the ruling A.I.A.D.M.K. and the rival demonstration before the office of the Sri Lanka Deputy High Commission which resulted in the arrest of the D.M.K. leader and the self-immolation of his two devout party

men - have created some doubt in the minds of independent thinkers as to the genuineness of the support proclaimed by these two political parties.

During the World Tamil Conference held in Madurai last January, the unfortunate utterances by the Chief Minister of Madras, Mr. M.G. Ramachandran, against the Ceylon Tamil delegates - taking them all to be associated with the Tamil United Liberation Front and naturally supporters of his rival D.M.K. - were widely used by the United National Party (U.N.P.) government in Sri Lanka to proclaim to the world that the Tamil Nadu people are not sympathetic towards the demands of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Now we find it is the very same Chief Minister who has taken the role of chief mourner, a strategy, well understood by the people, taken to beat his rival D.M.K. in the race. The rival in turn scored a bigger point ultimately.

No one can doubt the genuineness and the spontaneous feeling of the Tamils in India for their neighbours in the Island. Two decades back the elder statesman of India, Rajaji, had given a handwritten statement of encouragement to a deputation of Tamils from Sri Lanka who came to ask for his blessings and wise support. It was at the official residence of a Tamil Nadu Minister (Congress) on the banks of the Adyar river that the late Father

Thaninayagam established a clearing house for the dissemination of news of Ceylon during a state of emergency and distribution of world press opinions when there was strict censorship in the Island. The Kamaraj administration covertly gave its support and the Tamil Nadu Press lent a helping hand. This spontaneity in expressing sympathy for the neighbour still exists in the people of Tamil Nadu at large, but there is certainly some concern among the thinking people that the present rivalry between the two chief political parties might distort the true picture in the country which in turn will be used by Sinhalese to their advantage. The people of Tamil Nadu are, though not politically, emotionally involved in the welfare and aspirations of the Tamils in Ceylon. The Tamil Nadu Press which has a vital sales interest in Ceylon, is always ready to voice the feelings of the Tamils and give adequate support for their just cause. Therefore, there is no question of genuine interest in and sympathy for the Ceylon Tamil cause among the general public of Tamil Nadu. But, outside the two political parties, there is no organised movement which could voice in unison the aspirations of the two and a half millions of their neighbours. This needs serious thinking not only on the part of those on both sides of the Palk Straits but also on the part of those well placed Tamils living overseas.

-TAMILNADAN.

MP. FORCED TO RESIGN

The debate in the Sri Lanka Parliament on a motion to expel Dr. Neville Fernando, MP for Panadura, was cut short when the MP tendered his resignation voluntarily.

Readers will recall that it was Dr. Fernando who moved the unprecedented motion of no confidence on the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. A. Amirthalingam in July, 1981, in the course of which Dr. Fernando suggested that the Leader of the Opposition should be meted out with physical punishment as was done during the days of the ancient Sinhala kings.

What was interesting about this debate was that, while MPs of his own party, United National Party, were calling for his expulsion, Mr. A. Amirthalingam and other opposition MPs opposed the motion.

S-S PACT LAPSES

The Shastri - Sirimavo Pact which was entered into between India and Sri Lanka in the 1960s concerning the Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka has been allowed to lapse and India is not likely to

enter into any fresh pact on similar lines.

These indications were given by the Prime Minister of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi when an all-party delegation from Tamil Nadu state met her recently.

The pact that lapsed on 31 October 1981, provided for the repatriation of a proportion of people of Indian origin from Sri Lanka.

The delegation that met the Prime Minister stressed that India should not agree to the repatriation of those who did not wish to return. It is understood that Mrs. Gandhi assured the delegation that the Government of India had always been sympathetic to the cause of the Sri Lanka Tamils.

The delegation told Mrs. Gandhi that the problem was not one of language but of the rights of a national minority. It wanted the Government of India to take up with Sri Lanka, the question of the protection of the Tamils. Mrs. Gandhi agreed that there was no difference of view between her and the delegation that the Tamils of Sri Lanka should live with a sense of security.

**POINT OF
VIEW****A NON-EVENT WITH SERIOUS
IMPLICATIONS**

The Northern Province of Sri Lanka, and specially the Jaffna Peninsula presents an appearance of a recently occupied territory, army personnel and vehicle movements being evident everywhere during day and night. Almost the entirety of the armed forces of the state has been deployed with all the modern military hardware at its disposal. It is said that even trenches have been dug to enable the army to engage in potential pitched battles.

The ostensible reason for the government to engage in these warlike preparations is the non-event of 14th January, 1982, the move by certain individuals living in London to declare the formation of an Interim Provisional Government in exile of Tamil Eelam. Mr. K. Vaikunthavasani living in London made an announcement of the formation of such a government on January 14, 1982. Those who live in London and those who are aware of the true situation only know too well the complete lack of support for this adventurist move.

Mr. Vaikunthavasani had no claim of support from any section of the Tamil people of Ceylon. None of the Tamil groups in UK worthy of mention or in any other country was prepared to go along with Mr. Vaikunthavasani on this adventurist course. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) which can to some extent justifiably claim leadership of the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka openly dissociated itself from this move. Those sections of the Tamil youth who are reputed to have been engaged in "armed struggle" on behalf of the Tamils had also condemned this move as adventurist and dangerous. Despite this, Mr. Vaikunthavasani, until the last moment was declaring that he was going ahead with his plans. Only on January 13, 1982, barely a few hours before the so-called deadline, did he indicate that he was 'postponing' the projected declaration of UDI.

If Mr. Vaikunthavasani did not have any support for his move, why should anyone take note of him and his actions, one may ask. The answer is simple. The Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka have gone through enormous hardships during the last three decades. They have been deprived of their fundamental rights and subjected to severe discrimination and oppression. They have been the frequent victims of brutal violence, rape and arson. The restoration of their legitimate rights and their inalienable right of self-determination are too serious questions to be made the subject of adventurist stupidity

by individuals whose paranoid obsession with self-publicity has been a well known characteristic of their past record. Pompous proclamations of UDI or pronouncements of formation of provisional governments may probably satisfy their vanity and their insatiable appetite for publicity. But they do not help to solve the problem of the people one iota. On the

By R. Ganeshan

contrary, they serve to play into the hands of hostile forces which are determined to continue with the denial of the rights of the Tamil people. They afford the opportunity for those sections of the government which are dedicated to the cause of converting the Tamil people into a subject nation. They provide the required excuse for the government to continue and intensify the use of the security forces of the state to contain and suppress those political movements which are dedicated to the restoration of the rights of the people.

Only political novices will underestimate the complexities and seriousness of the question of the demand for a separate state within an already existing state. The question is not only one of legitimacy or justification of the demand itself. In the context of Sri Lanka, ranged against such

a demand are forces commanding enormous political, economic and political power and vastly superior numerical strength. On the other hand, only those who suffer from infantile disorders and afflicted with political hallucinations would carry that demand to the extent of proclaiming a provisional government in exile when the political leadership both in and outside parliament, of the people in whose name such a government is claimed to be formed, are opposed to such a move.

In the context of the enormous power that is at the disposal of a modern state, the question of unilaterally exercising the right of self-determination by a numerical minority, even with almost total unity in its ranks, is a formidable task with almost insurmountable difficulties. The Eretrian Liberation armed struggle, which incidentally receives substantial foreign military and financial support, and which has continued over the last thirty years without any sign of a successful conclusion in sight, should serve as an example to enlighten those who sit in their well enclosed positions in western capitals and prescribe timetables and deadlines for freedom struggles. Only absolute political ignoramuses will even attempt to equate the struggle of the Tamils of Sri Lanka with those anti-colonial struggles against foreign imperialist domination in Vietnam, Zimbabwe et al.

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Life after Liptons

By Paul Caspersz

The Oft dreamt-of book, when it finally comes to be written, will have four initial chapters:-

- Chapter One : The Darkest Age, c.1820-c.1860**
Chapter Two : The Dark Age, c. 1860-1948
Chapter Three : The Age of Statelessness, 1948-1964
Chapter Four : The Age of the Great Uprooting, 1964- ?

The story opens with the coffee plantations begun by the British on land sold for a song to any British army man or archdeacon. Indigenous Sinhalese labour was not forthcoming. But no matter. From impoverished South India, which Britain also ruled, imports of cheap labour could be dragooned into the island.

Wages were very low and in their payment there were gross irregularities which continued into the 1920s and persist - in attenuated forms - to the present day. Housing was atrocious. Disease was rampant. Mortality was high.

The darkness began to grow a little less fearsome when in the 1860s coffee, succumbing to the coffee blight, steadily yielded place to tea. Tea is labour-intensive. On estates in Sri Lanka, the famous 'two-leaves and a bud' have to be plucked all through the year. There was therefore the growing imperative of a resident labour force. Barrack-type rectangular sheds which came to be called 'coolie lines' were constructed. Largely migratory in the coffee phase, South Indian labour began to permanently settle on the estates. This marked the beginning of the 'Indo-Ceylon Problem'.

Sri Lanka attempted to solve it unilaterally in 1948. In that year Sri Lanka, after four and half centuries of foreign rule, felt the first winds of a new freedom. But, tragically, it did not touch all her people. In the population - then about 7 million - some 800,000 were classified as Indian Tamils only because they were the last of several waves of immigrants from India into the island. By the Citizenship Act of 1948 these, almost to a man, were declared non-citizens and by the 1949 Franchise Act were deprived of the vote.

The Age of Statelessness had begun. So long as Nehru lived, India had held firmly to the position that the 19th century immigrants were the responsibility of Sri Lanka. However, only a few months after his death in 1964, the two Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and India signed the first of the Repatriation Agreements. The second followed in 1974. Estimating that in 1964 there were at least 975,000 stateless persons in Sri Lanka, the Prime Ministers agreed that India would give citizenship to, and take away, 600,000 while Sri Lanka would give citizenship to, and keep, 375,000. The Great Uprooting was the consequence of a game of numbers played in high places.

For most of the workers, it was not to be repatriation, but expatriation, and in some

Rarely have so many provided so much for so little as the Indian Tamils who work Sri Lanka's tea estates. Yet now the plantations have been nationalised, Brooke Bond and Liptons have been sent packing, and government managers have replaced the company superintendents. Is life for the Tamil estate workers any better? A report by Paul Caspersz

cases deportation. Even in a world where there has been so much else to hit the headlines, it is surprising that the Agreements, which heralded the largest organized worker migration of the 20th century, have gone so largely unnoticed.

Why, it may legitimately be asked, have the estate Tamils been subjected to so much hardship, humiliation and discrimination? To them, more than to any other single section of the country's inhabitants, Sri Lanka owes a debt for having given the country so much for so little. Every year tea is the largest single earner of foreign exchange which the country so direly needs. Taxes on tea account for a large percentage of government revenue: 8, 13 and 28 per cent in 1976, 1977 and 1978 respectively. By means of these taxes there can be no doubt that the estate workers help to finance the whole range of welfare services in the country. These include free education even for the children of the ruling economic and political elites in Sri Lanka's most prestigious schools (recall the hullabaloo of the Old Boys when it was suggested a few years ago that 'Royal College was a disgraceful howler in Republican Sri Lanka') and in the Universities. It would also do us all good to remember that the imported luxury goods - currently abundant in the country because our Government has bowed low to the World Bank's dictates of an open door economy - are goods paid for in part by the foreign exchange earned by the forgotten tea worker.

Yet what does the tea worker get in return? The highest illiteracy rate of all sectors in the island, the highest maternal and infant mortality rates, the highest rates of malnutrition, poor water supply, sanitation, housing. Of this last (at least in order to offer some evidence that all the rest can similarly be supported by figures) let us cite the 1980 UNICEF finding that the proportion of housing under 250 sq. ft to total housing was 64 per cent in the estate sector, 28 in the villages and 27 in the towns and cities. It is not rare for us to meet, in the estate line-rooms, families of five or six members living, cooking, eating, sleeping, bearing and rearing children in one room 10 by 12 ft, with maybe a front or back verandah 3 by 12 ft.

Why?

Basically, the answer lies in the secular economic, political and cultural isolation of the Tamil tea workers from everyone else in the country.

The British began the isolationist process; how deliberately and with what forethought of its disastrous consequences, it is difficult to say. Throughout the 19th and well into the 20th century not only was the estate isolated

from the village but, through a series of vicious laws, regulations and customs, each estate was carefully sealed off from every other.

These isolationist processes gathered momentum when Sri Lanka, at the turn of this century, began to move forward to eventual constitutional independence. In fact, to isolation was added the factor of hostility, more or less overt.

Isolation and hostility could have been mitigated or even completely eliminated, indeed imaginatively transformed into open acceptance and creative integration, by four sets of forces.

The first was formed by the Sri Lanka Tamils (about 11 per cent of the population) who constitute a group as ancient in the island as the majority Sinhalese. These are the Tamils of the North and East, called for short the Jaffna Tamils (Jaffna being the capital of the Northern homelands of the Sri Lanka Tamils). In the 20th century movement towards constitutional independence, it was an elite group of Sri Lanka Tamils who assumed roles on the political stage in order to defend the Jaffna cause. They were either ignorant of, or did not think that at that time there was any need to press, the cause of the estate workers. Only in very recent years or months have the Jaffna Tamils begun to be aware that the estate Tamils and the other Tamils of 19th century Indian origin (about 9 per cent of the population) have their own problems and that these problems are very different from those of the Sri Lanka Tamils.

The second was the Trade Union Movement. In the late 1920s there was some hope that the newly emerging estate labour (Tamil) movement would link in fruitful symbiosis with the older urban (Sinhalese) unions. However, for a number of reasons these hopes did not materialize. Up to this day the estate labour movement has developed largely in unfortunate solitariness.

The third force was the Marxists. In the late 1930s the Trotskyite unions had significant success, in certain areas, in organizing the estate workers for the defence of their rights. But when war broke out in Europe, many Marxist leaders in Sri Lanka were forced to flee the country or go underground. When they returned they found that the estate workers had increasingly opted for the (Tamil) Ceylon Indian Congress. Then came the Citizenship and the Franchise Acts which made the estate workers politically and electorally expendable. Ever since, the betrayal of the estate workers by the Marxists has been the greatest and the costliest blunder of the Marxist movement in Sri Lanka.

The fourth is nationalization. This calls for fuller comment.

The Land Reform Laws of 1972 and 1975 – passed during the tenure of the Bandaranaike Government – took over the units of tea land which were over 50 acres in extent, owned either by private individuals or by companies. There was a French Revolution air about the event. Even Cuba, it was said, had not dared to be so radical in land expropriation.

More than 60 per cent of all tea lands and all the larger estates have been taken over by the State. More than 50 per cent of the tea lands taken over are managed by two large public sector corporations: the Janatha (People's) Estates Development Board and the Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation. Gone forever, some thought, were the days of Brooke Bond, James Finlay, Lipton et al. Surplus value would no longer be drained out overseas. Democracy would replace the Superintendent's despotic rule. There would be a much better deal for the workers. In the event, a lot of this has proved to be but wishful thinking.

On the criterion of economic productivity, nationalization has been disastrous. In the ten years preceding the first nationalization law, production exceeded 215,000 tonnes per year except in two years when it exceeded 210,000 tonnes: in the nine years after 1972, production has never exceeded 215,000 tonnes per year, in six years was below 210,000 tonnes and in three years did not even reach 200,000 tonnes. In 1980 production at 191,000 tonnes reached the lowest level recorded since 1959.

The preventable reasons for the fall in production are inefficient management and political interference in management (both being the bane of state-managed enterprises in Sri Lanka), corruption and sheer robbery, repatriation of skilled Tamil labour (under the Repatriation Agreement), demoralisation of Tamil workers and poor labour relations. The forces over which Sri Lanka has no control are increase in the cost of all imported inputs, chiefly fertilizer, the continuing stranglehold exercised by the affluent countries upon the international tea market and decreasing real prices of tea.

But what of the expected social benefits of nationalization and the social revolution which the idealists expected? The patterns of management are still basically the same, though a very few Sri Lankan planters' wives may now occasionally descend from their little-England mansions on the top of the hill to the UNICEF-sponsored estate creche and gingerly carry for a few moments an estate worker's baby. In the English language the former Superintendent is now called 'Manager', but in Tamil and to the workers he is still the Periya Dorai (the Big Master) and his Assistant is the Sinna Dorai (the Small Master). Both dorais still live in 'bungalows', the middle grades such as the clerks and the medical assistants live in 'quarters', the workers (who are over 97 per cent of the estate populations) live in 'line-rooms'. There is no more worker participation in management than there was at the end of the British period.

Moreover, there have been three ugly episodes of anti-Tamil communalism on the estates in the post-nationalization period of only nine years. The first took place in 1972 soon after the first Land Reform Law. The Sinhalese are by nature one of the friendliest people in the world but their lumpen elements can be easily but diabolically misled by Sinhalese racials, who stop at nothing and are stopped by nothing – not even by the compassion, the kindness and the non-violence of Buddhism – in order to whip hatred against the Tamils up to a frenzy. 'The estates are now ours', they shrieked. 'Get out!' And the Tamil workers on many estates close to the Sinhalese villages left the estates where some of them had lived for generations – defenceless, friendless, their hearts in the dust, like a teabush uprooted – to roam the streets of the cities and live off garbage bins. The British, if they ruthlessly exploited the workers, at least protected them from outside attack!

The second was in August 1977 in the climate of unredressed Sri Lanka Tamil grievances and the consequent ultimate demand of the Sri Lanka Tamils for a separate state of Eelam. The estate Tamils had nothing at all to do with the politics of the Sri Lanka Tamils. To the estate Tamils the cry of the Sri Lanka Tamils for a separate state was and is irrelevant and incomprehensible. Yet in August 1977 perhaps 10,000 estate families lost everything or nearly everything they had – clothes, pots and pans, precious savings converted into jewellery – during the senseless violence.

The third was as recent as August this year and seems to have been the backlash of racial clashes in the far away Eastern Province. This time the target seems to have been the estates in the Sabaragamuwa Province (one of the country's nine Provinces) – chosen

perhaps because in this Province the estate often abuts the Sinhalese village. The hard core of the attackers seems to have been formed of goon squads organized by politically powerful anti-Tamil racials, hoping to be shielded by state power. Round the racist goons gathered the looters.

1972, 1977, 1981... When will there be the next orgy of arson, loot, assault, sometimes murder and rape? The first understandable reaction of the poor workers is flight: to India, to the frontiers of the Northern Province, to the wastelands of the Eastern Province. At the moment of writing, especially after the President's inexplicably belated but absolutely forthright condemnation of the violence on 4 September (see box), the emotions of first fear seem to be subsiding and a certain calm seems to have returned to the plantation areas.

The present Government claims that it has appreciably increased estate worker wages since it came to power in 1977. Really, there has been little, if any, increase in real wages and no increase in money wages since September 1979, though a wage rise is expected soon. Wages now stand – all extra allowances, but not overtime and overpoundage (i.e. tea leaf in excess of a minimum poundage plucked for the day), included – at Rs 14 or 38p per day for a male, and Rs 11.69 or 33p per day for a female. Not only are these wages lower than the wages paid to urban industrial workers but they, though paid once a month, are calculated on the basis of 'no work today, no pay today'. On most estates, according to the present writer's admittedly incomplete findings, the average number of workdays per month for the first eight months of this year has never exceeded 23, has sometimes barely reached 20, and men have had marginally less work-

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HARIJANS AND THEIR CONVERSION TO ISLAM

"Socially they are lepers, economically they are worse, religiously they are denied access to places we miscall houses of God." - Mahatma Gandhi wrote in the "Harijan."

In his fight against the practice of 'untouchability' he said, "Caste does not connote superiority or inferiority. It simply recognizes different outlooks and corresponding modes of life - Its value from the economic point of view was very great. It ensured hereditary skill. It limited competition. It was a remedy against pauperism - Caste as at present is a distortion."

This does not seem to matter to most Hindus. Harijans in post-independence India are still social lepers. They work in mines, in fields, in forests and in factories. A large number are scavengers and flayers. Economically they are not very different from any other backward class in India. It is their 'untouchability', the 'hydra-headed monster' as Gandhi termed the practice, that gives them the nomenclature of 'Scheduled Castes.'

In Tamil Nadu, where Harijans have in masses changed their religion to Islam, 1633 reported cases under the 1955 Untouchability (Offences) Act, for the period 1955 to 1973 were recorded. Lately Mr. Yogendra Makwana, the Minister of State for Home affairs reported in Parliament that 13,745 crimes were committed against scheduled castes in 1980.

GANDHI'S OBJECTIVE FAILED

The objective that Gandhi failed to achieve through his fasting and campaigning and which defeated the saints of old, the Harijans seem to be reaching on their own in 1981. They are holding the conversion threat as a trump card in their blackmailing game with the government. This is obvious from a move by the Harijans of a village in Pondicherry not to embrace Islam when the government assured them that immediate steps would be taken to solve their problems.

They have jolted the government into hurrying its pace in implementing Harijan welfare programmes. "The Kooriyur irrigation tank work has been undertaken at a cost of Rs. 50,000 to provide jobs for Harijans. Similarly irrigation tank works were taken up at Malluvagal, Nochivayal, Pathanuval, Sangoorni, Yedal, and Pottaga Urani. Repairs were made to the Kooriyur road. Repairs to big tanks at a cost of Rs. 1.50

lakhs were also completed -- The Panchayat Union Commissioner was also considering recruitment of educated Harijan youth." - The Hindu, a national newspaper reported in its August 11 issue.

Since the first conversions of February 19, 1981, thirty four years of national indifference to the plight of Harijans has turned into calls for abolition of the segregated Harijan colonies that recall the homelands for black South Africans, victims of apartheid, and for inter-caste marriages.

By Naazreen Bhura

There is no doubt that the Harijans are a force to be reckoned with. Almost every sixth Indian belongs to the Scheduled Castes or, to put it another way, they constitute 15.05 per cent of India's population.

That they have finally realised their power and are using a weapon 'Islam' which owes its potency to both history and present politics is the most startling aspect of this story.

The peculiarity of these mass conversions is their concentration in one southern state of India, Tamil Nadu, although there have been a few reported cases in other parts of the country. Why is Tamil Nadu the chosen one of the children of God?

Harijans constitute 17.81 per cent of the State's population. But the highest

percentage of Scheduled Castes is in Punjab where they are 24.71 per cent of the state's population. Tamil Nadu ranks only sixth in the concentration of Harijan population.

CONVERSION DUE TO CASTE DISPUTE

The reported mass conversions in Meenakshipuram, a village in this state, were a response to a dispute between the caste Hindu landowners and the landless Harijan labourers.

Although the Tamil Nadu government has undertaken schemes for loans and waste land distribution to the Harijans, the poverty ridden picture of these depressed people seems to have changed little. Recently the State Government was defeated in a move to accelerate land distribution to Harijans. It felt that the Central Government Act, the LAA or Land Aquisition Act, did not help in providing land for house building, pathways, burial grounds etc., for Harijans quickly enough. However its initiative to introduce a state government Act was declared ultra-vires by the High Court.

The Indian Express a national newspaper in its July 17 issue quoted a scheduled caste youth from a village in the state, as saying, "We are not getting all that is due to us as members of

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| State | Scheduled Caste population in percentages | Literacy percentage | |
|---------------------|---|---------------------|-------|
| | | Rural | Urban |
| 1. Punjab | 24.76 | 15.06 | 22.25 |
| 2. Himachal Pradesh | 23.35 | 17.58 | 38.35 |
| 3. Uttar Pradesh | 21.62 | 09.11 | 23.43 |
| 4. W. Bengal | 20.08 | 16.86 | 28.21 |
| 5. Haryana | 18.89 | 11.73 | 20.10 |
| 6. Tamil Nadu | 17.81 | 19.24 | 34.17 |

Scheduled Castes and Tribes. So we might as well change our religion."

The ramshackle huts of these villagers had no electricity. Their street lights did not burn. The village had no fair price shop or market. But these problems are common to most other Indian states. Why should the Harijans of Tamil Nadu alone turn brilliant chessplayers and threaten to checkmate the government?

LEAD GIVEN BY EDUCATED YOUTH

A study group of the Parliamentary Committee presented to the Lok Sabha a report on the recent conversions. It said that educated scheduled caste youths were the leaders of this mass movement for conversions. One of the youths was a doctor, another an engineer and a third was a local auditor. These educated young men were giving the conversions an intellectual base and reasoning, the study group said.

Could this be the answer? Does Tamil Nadu have more educated Harijans than any other state in India?

Although Tamil Nadu ranks sixth in its concentration of Scheduled Castes it has the highest rural literacy level and second highest urban literacy level among its Harijans. Bearing in mind that the reported conversions have taken place in rural areas of the state, these comparative figures could perhaps partly contribute an answer.

According to the Ministry for Home Affairs, 18 per cent of the seats in higher education, in Tamil Nadu, are reserved for scheduled castes and tribes. All the Universities of all the states reserve 20 per cent of their seats for these otherwise 'negatively discriminated against' people. Harijan children are given free education in all Indian states. At the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi, reservation of seats for the Harijans in proportion to their population, in state assemblies and the Lok Sabha, was accepted and provided for in the constitution. Articles 16 and 335 of the constitution provide for reservations in services for scheduled castes and tribes.

Although seats must be reserved in government services for the Harijans, Jagjivan Ram one of the few Harijans to reach India's political heights writes in

his book 'Caste Challenges In India', "These reservation orders whether at the recruitment stage or at the promotional stage have been tardy and halting - These reservation orders whether implemented or not have generated animosity among the caste Hindu employees against the Scheduled Castes and Tribes."

At another point in the book he says of the employed Harijans, "They have to bear with rebukes from unsympathetic superiors, unco-operative behaviour from colleagues and put up with the insulting conduct of subordinates."

STIGMA OF INFERIORITY

If educated and economically uplifted harijans have still to bear with the stigma of untouchability and social inferiority, it is not surprising that they have turned away from their religion.

Current, a national weekly in India, reported, "Well known Hindi poet Yad Karan Yadav of Delhi embraced Islam along with his large family - 'I was pained and aghast that the intellectuals whom I had the privilege to meet suddenly turned cold once they found

that I was a Harijan', Yad said in a press statement," Yad Karan Yadav was educated and economically sound yet he confronted the 'hydra-headed monster'".

The idea of Harijan conversion is not new to India. In previous years several Harijans have changed their religion to Christianity and Buddhism. But this change has carried with it the caste hallmark of the Harijans. Today there are untouchable Christians in this country. Only Islam appears to tear away this degrading label.

Justice demands that if a muslim Harijan is eligible for the category of economically backward class then he must be classified as such and given the due privileges. This would be to the Harijan convert's gain as according to the Department of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, 50 per cent of the seats in Tamil Nadu Universities are reserved for backward classes as against 18 per cent of for scheduled castes and tribes.

PANIC-STRICKEN RESPONSE

Perhaps the fear of such demands and the threat of a death blow to the country's family planning programme by the Muslim philosophy are partly responsible for the panic-stricken response of the government.

It is to be hoped that these conversions have taught India a lesson in social equality. If they have, then the attempts

(Contd. on page 13)

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TULF REJECTS U.D.I. MOVE

By MR. A. AMIRTHALINGAM, M.P., Leader of the Opposition and Secretary General of the Tamil United Liberation Front. In this article specially written for TAMIL TIMES, he explains the current position of the negotiations with the Government of Sri Lanka and states that "The demand of the Tamil nation for their independent state is too serious for anybody to play the fool with it."

The purpose of this article is to explain the events of the last six months in Ceylon with particular reference to the Tamil United Liberation Front (T.U.L.F.) and the problems of the Tamil people. The events of May-June 1981 following the Police rampage in the North of the country resulting in the burning down of several business establishments, the press and office of the only Tamil daily printed in Jaffna, the headquarters of the T.U.L.F., the house of the M.P. for Jaffna and most important of all the Jaffna Public Library with 97,000 volumes of valuable books, have left an indelible scar in the minds of the Tamil people. The Members of Parliament of the T.U.L.F. put forward five demands in the wake of these atrocities and boycotted the sittings of Parliament. An attempt is being made to give the impression that they ended the boycott of Parliament without achieving any of these demands.

FIVE DEMANDS

The first demand was that 75% of the policemen in the Northern and Eastern Provinces should be Tamil speaking persons. Though the government accepted this demand, they have been able to send only 40% of Tamil policemen to the Jaffna District and a few to some of the other Tamil districts. This is due to the fact that there are not enough Tamil policemen to be transferred to the Tamil areas. The government has promised to recruit more Tamil police officers and post them to the Tamil areas in the near future.

The second demand related to the setting up of a system of homeguards to safeguard the lives and property of people in the Tamil speaking areas. A scheme has been prepared by a high level Committee consisting of the Defence Secretary, the Inspector General of Police and others. It is now being examined by the T.U.L.F. and once that agreed scheme is worked out, we expect homeguards to be recruited and start functioning in a short time.

The third demand related to the identification and prosecution of police officers responsible for the arson, looting and murder in Jaffna between 31st May and 8th June, 1981. Two complaints have been

filed against a Sub-Inspector of Police and certain police officers in respect of some acts of arson and some complaints for murder are awaiting the approval of the Attorney-General. Disciplinary inquiries are pending against 183 Sinhala police officers for their actions during this period.



The fourth demand related to the payment of compensation to people who suffered damage to property and lives as a result of the police action during this period. The Compensation Committee headed by Mr. Lionel Fernando, former Govt. Agent, Jaffna, has completed its inquiries and is due to submit its report in the course of this month. The government has promised to pay compensation on the basis of this report.

Though the government did not agree to our demand for an International Commission of Inquiry, through the efforts of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam the International Commission of Jurists sent Professor Virginia Leary to investigate into the events connected with the ethnic conflict and violence in Sri Lanka. The International Commission of Jurists has sent to the government of Sri Lanka a comprehensive and fairly impartial report for the government's observations.

Thus it will be seen that it was after meaningful steps had been taken towards the fulfilment of the five demands that the

T.U.L.F. Members of Parliament decided to go back to Parliament. There appears to be a complete misconception with regard to the purpose and scope of the dialogue that is taking place between the government of Sri Lanka and the T.U.L.F. It should be clearly understood that these negotiations do not relate to the fundamental demand of the T.U.L.F. for which the Tamil people gave it a mandate in the 1977 elections, viz. the setting up of an independent sovereign socialist state of Tamil Eelam. The T.U.L.F. has repeatedly asserted in Parliament and outside its continued adherence to this fundamental objective. The negotiations going on now were started in the context of widespread violence against the Tamil people all over the country and the necessity to restore peace and harmony and thereby safeguard the lives, limbs and property of innocent Tamil people. Anyone with a sense of responsibility will realise that it is incumbent on a nation's leadership to avoid unnecessary suffering and loss to innocent people.

INSTRUMENT OF DECENTRALISATION

The T.U.L.F. had also accepted the District Development Councils as an instrument of decentralisation which also ensured the definition of the boundaries of the Tamil speaking districts and gave an opportunity to the people to develop these areas thereby enabling the Tamil people to earn their livelihood in their own territories without having to migrate to South Ceylon or abroad. It is expected that through the exercise of the powers of land use and settlement, which is one of the 15 subjects falling within the purview of the District Development Councils, the danger of the Tamil speaking people being reduced to a minority in their own traditional homelands by means of state aided colonisation can be obviated. The District Development Councils being new institutions, the details with regard to the sharing of powers between these bodies and the Ministries have to be worked out. One of the purposes of the negotiations that are going on is to work out these details and to make the Development Councils function effectively. It will be seen that these talks do not in any way detract from the fundamental demand of the Tamil nation for the recognition of the right of self-determination and the establishment of their sovereignty.

The move of Mr. K. Vaikunthavasan purporting to act on behalf of the Tamil Co-ordinating Committee to declare unilaterally the formation of an indepen-

dent state of Tamil Eelam has given rise to widespread agitation. In anticipation of possible repercussions of this move, the Sri Lanka government has extended the Emergency and deployed the armed forces in fairly large numbers in the Tamil speaking areas. Mr. Vaikunthavasan in a letter to President Jayewardene dated 23rd November 1981 claims that the Tamil Co-ordinating Committee are "the accredited representatives of the Tamil United Liberation Front working outside the island". It should be clearly understood that this statement is absolutely untrue.

During one of my visits to U.K. in 1978, I found that there were 16 or 17 groups with various shades of opinion engaged in political work among the Tamils in U.K. After a patient discussion with most of these groups, I found that some of them were prepared to accept the leadership of the T.U.L.F., while the others were not. In order to bring about a certain degree of unity among those groups willing to accept the leadership of the T.U.L.F., I summoned a meeting of the representatives of these groups and assisted in the formation of a Co-ordinating Committee in November 1978. The only function of this Co-ordinating Committee was to co-ordinate the activities of the various groups so as to avoid conflict and duplication. Mr. Vaikunthavasan, being a neutral person not belonging to any of the groups, was appointed as convener. Now I understand that some of the groups which were in the original Co-ordinating Committee have dropped out and Mr. Vaikunthavasan has brought in certain other individuals. Whatever that may be, this Co-ordinating Committee was never accepted as the accredited representative of the T.U.L.F.

TULF REJECTED U.D.I.MOVE

Towards the end of 1980 Mr. Vaikunthavasan piloted through the T.C.C. a resolution calling for unilateral declaration of independence of Tamil Eelam on 14th January 1982. Mr. Vaikunthavasan was promptly informed of the T.U.L.F.'s dissociation from such a move. At a conference held in Madurai, South India, where representatives of Tamils from U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Brunei and India along with a number of people from Ceylon were present, after various views were expressed on this matter, on behalf of the T.U.L.F. I categorically told them that this move should be dropped. Again when I was in U.K. in June 1981, I met the members of the T.C.C. in Mr. Vaikunthavasan's house and appealed to them that they should give up this idea without compelling the T.U.L.F. to openly dissociate itself with this move and thereby show the Sri Lanka government and the world that there was a division in our

SINGAPORE'S NEW PRESIDENT

For the first time in recent history, nearly 50 organisations representing the Indian community gathered together in Singapore recently to host a dinner in honour of Singapore's new President, Mr. C.V. Devan Nair.

Welcoming the appointment of Mr. Nair as the Head of State, a past President of Singapore's Indian Chamber of Commerce, Mr. G. Ramachandran, said the appointment was "especially significant and reassuring to those of us from the minority communities" that "we do not have to be disadvantaged or ashamed because of our communal or cultural heritage."

ranks. Most of the members present appeared to agree. I explained matters to the Tamils in the United States as well. Mr. V.N. Navaratnam, M.P., also met these various groups and explained to them our position. The parallel of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose declaring independence in Singapore with the support of Japan and other Axis countries which were at war with Britain or of other similar declarations do not apply to the present move nor does the parallel of the Irish declaration in 1916 which was done in Dublin in the middle of the war apply to Mr. Vaikunthavasan's move. The demand of the Tamil nation for their independent state is too serious for anybody to play the fool with it.

On behalf of the T.U.L.F., I want to make it clear that our dissociation from this ill-advised move in no way means a departure by the T.U.L.F. from its accepted goal. We have always appreciated and given credit to the overseas Tamil brethren for the great part they have played and continue to play in placing before the world the case of the Tamil nation. Various groups functioning in U.K. and U.S.A. have made no mean contribution to the advancement of the cause. But a serious step like the declaration of independence has to be taken with the full participation of the people and with the full realisation of the consequences that will flow from such a step, having made adequate arrangements to meet and overcome such situations. There is no short cut to freedom. There is no magic formula by which freedom can be achieved overnight. Unity, hardwork, sacrifice and unswerving dedication are called for. I would appeal to all sections of our Tamil brethren living in any part of the world not to indulge in any action which will destroy this unity and cut us away from the masses of the Tamil people. on whom alone freedom rests.

"The remarkable success of Indians in the commercial, industrial, professional and other sectors must be seen as one of the strengths of the Singapore society in substance and style.

"We the minority communities have reason to be thankful for the unique opportunity given to us to make our contribution to and play a useful role in the forward march of Singapore." Mr. Ramachandran said.

Mr. Nair said in his speech that a multiracial republic expected a national President, not a minority one. "I pray that I may be able to fulfil this role. In Singapore there are neither majorities nor minorities. All are Singaporeans.

"It is this spirit of a common nationhood which should rightly inform and inspire all our private and public lives and endeavours."

He said Indian organisations had an important role to play in ensuring that the cultural distinctiveness of Indian Singaporeans contributed to the variegated colours of Singapore.

This should be done not for any chauvinistic reasons. There was strength and suppleness in the Asian traditions for tolerance and assimilation in matters spiritual and cultural, Mr. Nair said.

Nearly 900 people representing Indian cultural, religious, social and business organisations attended the reception. They included Tamils, Malayalis, Telugus, Bengalis, Gujaratis, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and Parsis.

Earlier the Chinese Chamber of Commerce had hosted a dinner in Mr. Nair's honour.

(Contd. from page 1)

complex issues involved in a national liberation struggle, and by shortsighted romanticists. Without analysing the direction, content, aims and the potential political conflicts, they shortsightedly expressed their support to the announcement. Possibly the frustration resulting from the inability of the TULF leadership to put forward any militant programme of action for the advancement of the liberation struggle of the Tamils might well have made them to dream about at least an imported Tamil Eelam from abroad.

"Our masses must realise that liberation cannot be achieved without shedding blood and making enormous sacrifices. When the objective conditions remain as they are, magic formulas are being presented by some individuals. The London declaration contains dangerous proposals which would mislead the people and are inimical to the advancement of our national liberation struggle.

Historical TAMILS IN SOUTH EAST

SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

In the spread of Buddhism into Southeast Asia and China the Tamils also played a part. Tamil Nadu continued to have a number of strong centres of Buddhist learning long after the spread of Saivism and Vaishnavism. Throughout this period traders of Buddhist persuasion and Buddhist monks sailed from Coromandel ports to Southeast Asia. Scholars from the Buddhist centre of Kanchipuram and Nagapatnam went abroad to found schools of learning in Indo-China, Thailand and Sri Vijaya. The links with Chinese Buddhism had been established early.

The spread of Islam across the Indian Ocean tended to extend and strengthen Indian overseas contacts and relationships and Tamil Nadu played a prominent role in this extension. Arab settlements were founded on the Malayalam and Madura coasts of south India and local seafaring communities were Islamized. Ports of southern India received a further boost in their trade as transmitting points for the east-west trade and Tamil Hindu and Muslim merchants participated vigorously in this trade. The eastwards segment of this trade was largely in their hands. In Southeast Asia in the 14th century, there is the rise of a powerful trading kingdom, the Sultanate of Malacca, dominating the trade of the region in much the same way that the Sri Vijayans had done in the preceding centuries. Malacca grew into a great entrepot of world trade and Tamil traders flocked there in large numbers sailing from Coromandel and Malabar ports.

CHETTIYAR MERCHANTS AND TAMIL MUSLIMS

The great corporations that dominated foreign trade in the earlier period seemed to be declining and their place was taken by Hindu Chettiyar merchants of the Tamil and Telegu clans and by Tamil Muslims generally called Chulia Muslims. Some of these merchants were trading as individuals powerful enough to own fleets of ships leaving their agents in Southeast Asian ports to do the buying and selling for them. Others, and these were by far the larger number, consisted of small scale peddling traders getting together in one voyage, sailing with their goods, carrying on their own business, and returning with the change of monsoon. Tamil Muslim merchants also became the agents for the spread of Islam in the port-states with which they traded. The

Dr. S. ARASARATNAM, a former Senior Lecturer at the University of Ceylon and regarded as eminent historian, is now Professor of History in the University of New England, Australia.

Part I of this article appeared in our December 1981 issue.

spread of Islam in these states in the 15th and 16th centuries gave them an edge over others in their trade with these parts.

Hindu and Muslim Tamil traders frequented the port-city of Malacca and established settlements there. Tamil Muslims secured considerable influence in the administration of the state. They married into the families of the Sultan and the upper ranks of the nobility. Some of them rose to high positions of Bendahara or controller of the exchequer and Shahbandar or port administrator. They carried on trade with south India, not only for themselves, but also on behalf of the Sultan. Both the Muslim and Hindu traders used Malacca as a base from which to trade with Sumatran and Javanese ports and further eastwards into the Spice Islands.

SETTLEMENT IN MALACCA

Both Hindu and Muslim Tamils tended to settle permanently in Malacca and thus are the pioneers of the contemporary Tamil migrations and settlement in

Southeast Asia. Their part of the city, where they tended to concentrate, together with other Indians, was known as Kampong Kling. Here they built their own mosques and their own temples. Here were settled not only merchants but also artisans and craftsmen and adventurers who had left their homelands in search of a fortune. From Malacca, these Tamils tended to shift in the course of the 16th century towards other trading centres. Some moved to Aceh as it grew into a prominent port. Others went to the north Javanese ports and especially the port of Bantam as it element that tended to settle down, as it grew into an important port. In all these places, there was an element that tended to settle down, win the confidence of the rulers and these were appointed to administrative positions in the port.

With the Portuguese conquest of Malacca this Indian settlement was disturbed, particularly the Muslims to whom the Portuguese were initially hostile. Chetty traders, however, seem to



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ASIA AND FAR EAST

PART II

have soon made their peace with the Portuguese and continued to operate as before and in fact increased their trade. From the Coromandel ports of Nagapatnam, San Thome, Porto Novo, Paleacatte, Maslipatnam and others, these traders sailed the Bay of Bengal with Portuguese passes and under Portuguese security. South Indian presence in Malacca increased during this period. Tamil Muslims also returned to Malacca after a time but they tended to settle in neighbouring ports outside Portuguese control such as Aceh, Johore and Perak. A Chetty merchant was made head of the Malaccan Indian community.

CUT OFF FROM HOMELANDS

In time this Tamil community of Malacca became completely cut off from its homelands. Under the Dutch, its trading activity was seriously curtailed and it was restricted to some petty retail trade in the city, all kinds of handicrafts and some agriculture. Consequently the community declined from its once high position of wealth and prestige and gradually sank to impoverishment. A good deal of intermarriage took place with Malay women of the neighbourhood. It continued to practice the Hindu faith, as is seen from the grant of land by the Dutch to the Chettiyars in the 18th century for the construction of a Hindu temple. Gradually, however, their proficiency in their mother tongue declined and they increasingly used the Malay language.

The Tamil Muslims or Chulias continued to prosper. They moved away from Malacca to places outside European control and expanded their trading activities and their influence. They were welcomed by local Sultans who relied on them for the development of trade in their states. Thus the Tamil Muslims spread to the Sultanates of Johore, Perak, Kedah and Aceh in the 17th and 18th centuries. Some of them were appointed 'court merchants' in these states and managed the affairs of Sultans and nobles. They married into these families. These Muslims retained their connection with their places of origin in Coromandel: Nagapatnam, Nagore, Cuddalore, Karaikal, Kayalpatnam. Their trade extended to all religions on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal: Pegu, Arakkan, Tenasserim, Thailand and the Malay peninsula.

They were particularly well entrenched in the Sultanate of Kedah which rose in the 18th century as a trading state. Tamil

Muslims were settled in large numbers in the Kuala Kedah area and held high offices in the administration. Some of them managed the trade of the Sultan and the nobles. From Kedah, they sailed up and down the Malay coast and to Burma and Coromandel, beating the Dutch blockade and helping to trade in goods of the region in which the Dutch had declared a monopoly. The Sultan used leading Tamil Muslim merchants as intermediaries in his dealing with European powers, especially the English. Some of them took part in the negotiations with the English which led to the cession of the island of Penang to the East India Company.

When the English founded the settlement of Penang in 1786, it grew into a thriving centre of commerce and agriculture and attracted settlers from the neighbouring coasts. Among those who chose to settle there were Tamil Muslims who then, along with the Chettiyars of Malacca became the earliest of the modern Indian migrants and settlers in the Malay peninsula. In time they spread across the island to Province Wellesley and engaged in a multitude of activities such as coastal trade, peddling, farming and labouring in the docks. With the founding of the Colony of Singapore in 1819 and its rapid growth, some of these Tamil Muslims moved over to Singapore. The development of trade and enterprise in the Straits Settlements in the first half of the 19th century brought further

migrants from Tamil Nadu, both Hindus and Muslims.

MIGRANT LABOUR TO MALAYA

The growth of plantation enterprise in the Malay peninsula created a demand for labour which was filled by the import of labour from south India. Migrant labour was brought in under indenture contracts to work for fixed periods of time from the various districts of the province of Madras. With the boom of the plantation industry from the 1880s, this trickle of labour migration grew into a flood. Most of the recruitment was done through a kangany, sent by his European employer into the Indian village to induce others to migrate to Malaya to work in his employer's plantation. The Colonial Government also recruited labour to work in its services both in the Settlement colonies and in the Malay states. As a result by 1901, there were 120,000 Indians in Malaya, over 80% of whom were Tamils. Tamil migration increased further in the 20th century. While the plantations and the growing state services took in the bulk of this migration, from the 1920's, commercial, professional and other educated groups also began to come in. By 1957, there were 944,000 Indians in peninsular Malaya and Singapore, of whom about 80% were Tamils and in 1970 there were 1,081,400 Indians with a similar proportion of Tamils.

(Contd. on page 13)

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LIFE AFTER.....

(Contd. from page 5)

days than women. As in British times, the estate workers - unlike the villagers - have few supplementary sources of possible income or none at all. It is either work for the day or hunger. As in British times, women are paid less than men for the same work.

It is sometimes stated that the estate workers - despite their poverty - are still better off than the villagers in the matter of regular work, security of employment, housing, schooling, medical facilities and mothercare. Published figures provide little evidence to establish the statement. However, in the view of the present writer, such comparisons are fatuous and dangerously divisive. Both - estate workers and poor peasants - suffer oppression from the prevailing system. To ask where the oppression is greater is much less important than to end it - both on the estate and in the village.

The oppression in the estate areas is proving more resistant than maybe some of us hoped in 1972. But then ten years is a very short time for even the best of governments to end the oppression built into the plantation system over a period of 150 years. Indeed, more improvements seem to have been effected over the past 10 years - in housing, basic amenities for households, schooling, care for children, take-home pay - than during the whole of the British period. Even so, many of us are profoundly dissatisfied with

the quantum and the rate of progress. Furthermore, in many places the improvements seem to be directed not so much to better the lot of the Tamil working population but to attract new Sinhalese worker families into the estates. The secular alienation of the Tamil estate worker is still very much with us and creeping communalism is heightening it.

The Trade Unions can do much more than they have done in the past. Voluntary organizations - with no aspirations of increasing membership like the Unions or of capturing power like the Political Parties - can also do more if they can work as allies with the Unions and the Parties. Together with the workers we have all also to discover the revolutionary potential of the four major world religions authentically and vitally present in Sri Lanka, and in Sri Lanka alone - be it noted - among all the countries of the world.

Nationalization - all told - has been a good thing. It is unthinkable that the commanding heights of a country's economy should be left in the hands of foreigners. But nationalization should be looked upon as a challenge to the nation - for greater production, better conditions of living, more worker participation, more solidarity between the Tamil workers and the Sinhalese peasants (against the machinations of politicians seeking to divide in order to rule them), a freer and juster society.

The young estate worker, Balakrishnan, who rose to speak at the conclusion in July

this year of a series of Leadership Seminars conducted for a mixed group of Tamil estate workers and Sinhalese village youths of both sexes at Satyodaya Centre, Kandy, was absolutely correct when he said: 'Before we came to these classes, we on the estates thought that the people in the village had it fine: land, happiness, freedom. Now we know that there is oppression also in the village. So the villagers must have thought that we had heaven on the estates: free houses, free schools, free dispensaries, work every day for good pay. Now we know the truth. The future lies in our going forward together.'

Yes, together, with our people and our friends - at home and abroad. ■

Paul Caspersz

Paul Caspersz is a Jesuit priest, an expert on 'the economy of tea' and a founder member of Satyodaya - the Centre of Research into Marxist-Christian Dialogue. After the land reforms in 1972 and 1975, the Satyodaya Movement was drawn into confronting the problems of life on the tea estates. When the father of one of Satyodaya's resident members was burnt to death during the racial riots of 1977, the organisation became involved in Sri Lanka's 'National Question' and the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) was set up with Father Caspersz as President. Satyodaya - now a kibbutz-style community made up of different races, religions, languages and social classes - is based in Kandy and continues its original work with the Tamils on the tea estates.

(Courtesy of "New Internationalist")

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LETTERS

High Standard

Dear Editor,

I have enclosed my subscription and a small donation to help put you on your feet. The first three issues of the Tamil Times have maintained a high standard which sets it in a different class to the rest of the Sri Lankan Newsletters. However, I would hope that the Tamil Times will in future try to present a balanced view of the political troubles in Sri Lanka, otherwise it will be no different from 'the Bulldog' which only preaches the message of 'hate'.

I am sure the Tamil Times will be a success and there is a very wide market and need for it all over the world.

SIVA.

Very Honest

Dear Editor,

We the Tamils who are living in Scotland are all unanimously enjoying your paper. You have given the most appropriate name for it. We wish you all the best and hope that your readership will multiply more and more to read the truth. The best thing we appreciate is the whole paper is very honest in exposing the reality of the situation.

DR. S. Saba
Glasgow.

CONVERSION....

(Contd. from page 7)

in Tamil Nadu to eradicate untouchability will be but a prologue to efforts against this social evil all through the country.

"We talk of culture, high moral values and democracy, sing songs to civilization and techno-economic growth, but unless the caste system is abolished, it is all meaningless."- Jagjivan Ram in Caste Challenges in India.

There must be organised voluntary effort by those who are the leaders of thought to teach the people that in Hinduism man is the measure of everything, that all men are born free and equal, that the human personality is divine and unique. The caste system is not divinely ordained but created by man.

The eradication of casteism is not only a social but also a political necessity. It has permeated political life to such an extent that the very structure of our democracy is threatened. The levers of caste are manipulated by all striving for political power for sectarian ends which weaken the composite fabric.

(Courtesy of "The Politics")

(Contd from page 11)

MIGRATION TO BURMA

Another Southeast Asian country which saw Tamil migration in substantial numbers was Burma. Here the migration began as the migration of labour on indenture contracts to work in the paddy fields and in the milling of rice. Subsequently there was migration of commercial groups, especially Chettiyars and educated elements. At the end of the migration process, Tamils, Hindus and Muslims, constituted 10% of the total Indian population of just over a million. Unlike in Malaya and Singapore, where a number of Tamils decided to settle and plant roots, many repatriated from Burma to their homeland during and after the war. These repatriates returned destitute to their country and had to be resettled by the Tamil Nadu government in special resettlement colonies.

By contrast, Tamils in Malaysia and Singapore participated enthusiastically in the political and economic growth of these countries after they achieved independence. They took citizenship there, participated in political life and rose to positions of leadership. The Tamil element in these countries was added to by the Tamils of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) who had migrated from Jaffna in

north Ceylon as professionals and clerical workers. Tamils planted their social and cultural institutions in their countries of migration. A Tamil school system was established in Malaysia, Singapore and Burma. Saivite temples and religious societies were founded and played prominent roles in the religious life of the community. Tamil dance, music and drama were fostered. A lively Tamil press as well as creative writing in Tamil were firmly implanted. Popular Tamil religious and cultural festivals were enthusiastically celebrated. In all these aspects of cultural life, these migrant Tamils retained their association with their mother country and enriched their cultural experiences by this continuing association.

Thus a continuous tradition of maritime and seafaring activity has resulted in the spread of the Tamil people over a number of scattered regions. Wherever they have gone they have carried with them their love of language and their social and cultural institutions. These institutions have been somewhat transformed in the act of being transplanted in a new environment. But the continuing attachment to these traditions has kept alive the emotional loyalty to Tamil Nadu from which they originated and made them feel part of an international community linked by the bonds of Tamil culture.

(Concluded)

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JUSTICE FOR SRI LANKA TAMILS

A memorandum was presented to the Prime Minister of India by an all party delegation from Tamil Nadu state in the early part of December 1981. It recounted the reports of violence let loose on the people of Tamil origin in Sri Lanka recently and raised doubts whether these could have happened without the active assistance or at least passive support of the authorities.

It urged the government of India to take necessary steps through its embassy and through other channels like the UN Assembly to ensure that justice was done to the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

It reaffirmed the linguistic and cultural ties that bound the Sri Lanka Tamils with the people of India in general and of Tamil Nadu in particular.

While conceding that the Sri Lankan citizens should find a solution to their problems within the constitutional framework of that country, the memorandum expressed the hope that international public opinion would exert its influence on the administration of Sri Lanka to ensure that the Tamil citizens of Sri Lanka enjoyed all citizenship benefits and were not subjected to any discrimination on grounds language or culture.

Those who live abroad in relatively comfortable circumstances can contribute enormously in giving material assistance and in publicising the true plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka through a sustained campaign of exposing discrimination, oppression and the frequent violence directed at the Tamils and on the general question of democratic and human rights which affect the whole of the population. Instead, indulging in acts of bravado totally unrelated to the realities of the situation and assuming self-proclaimed leadership-role of the Tamils will only seriously undermine and imperil the Tamil cause.

The success of the Tamils in their struggle for the restoration of their rights, including the right of self-determination depends on a multitude of factors - the extent of the determination, dedication and the preparedness and conscious readiness for active and direct participation of a substantial section of the Tamil masses; a dedicated leadership prepared for enormous sacrifices and conscious of the strategic and tactical complexities involved and capable of taking advantage of the political, class and other contradictions prevalent in the camp of the hostile forces; the extent of the success in mobilising the progressive and oppressed

sections in the majority community behind the cause of the Tamils; and last but not the least, the extent of the success in gathering the support of international opinion, particularly that of India.

Brahmin Convention

A call to Brahmins to forge unity among themselves, take steps for their economic amelioration and fight against injustice, was made by speakers at the first All India Brahmin Convention held at Mylapore in December 1981. It was stated that most of the Brahmins were below the poverty line and that the object of the convention was to formulate steps to ameliorate the sufferings of the Brahmin community and not to make inroads into the rights of other communities.

The convention urged the Central and State Governments to ban organisations that attacked the community by words or deeds. The meeting decided to eradicate the evil of the dowry system and encourage inter sub-sect marriages among Brahmins.

--The Hindu International Edition,

2.1.1982.

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INSTITUTE OF HINDU RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

INSTITUTE OF HINDU RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Institute of Hindu Religious Education has planned to commence a course of instruction in English on basic Hinduism by post in February 1982. The course would suit students eight years old and over and will be spread over a period of three years at the end of which diplomas will be awarded to successful candidates. The annual course fee is £5 for those in U.K. and £8 for overseas students. Further particulars and application forms are available from The Registrar, I.H.R.E., 63 Baronsmede, London W.5 4LS. A brief outline of the course appears below.

First Year Programme

1. Origin, practice and propagation of Hinduism.
2. Basic ideals of a Hindu.
3. Adaptation and practise of Hinduism in Western Countries.
4. Significance of various manifestations of God (6 modules).

Second Year Programme

5. Sacred symbols in Hindu Religion.
6. Significance and practice of all holy and religious days and events (3 modules).
7. Saints, Prophets and Sacred Scriptures (4 modules).
8. Famous Temples.

Third Year Programme

9. Saiva Sidhantam (3 modules).
10. Teachings of Neethi Nools - Thirukkural etc. (3 modules).
11. Thirumurai (2 modules).
12. Review of all major religions.

"HINDU" ON BIFURCATION OF STATE

The categorical assertion of the Prime Minister (of India) in the Lok Sabha that there was no question of bifurcating States, should serve as the last word on the issue. Disgruntled elements and dissatisfied groups led by ambitious and opportunist politicians have been promoting movements or agitations asking for the creation of new States on the specious plea that only then would better care be taken of the special interests of the people inhabiting the respective areas. Those who want dismemberment argue that some States are too large for efficient governance. Once the process of splitting up starts there is no knowing where it will end.

It was only proper and timely that Mrs. Gandhi decided to spell out her Government's policy in unambiguous terms. The quality of administration in several States does need vast improvement. But the answer to the problem is not a multiplication of States. When it comes to a question of efficiency, the performance of smaller States has not been any more encouraging than larger States. There is even a section of opinion in the country which feels that the linguistic reorganisation of States was itself a big mistake.

A composite State, Dakshina Pradesh, comprising Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala would have served the interests of the people of the whole region much better. While it is too late at this stage to reverse the process, purposeful measures should be initiated to put an effective stop to centrifugal forces that thrive on regional and linguistic differences.

Indian President To Visit Sri Lanka

The President of India, Mr. N Sanjiva Reddy will visit Sri Lanka some time in the middle of February 1982. He was earlier scheduled to make the journey in August 1981, but that visit was postponed.

LANKA MITHRA

The newest inter-nation friendship association in Madras is Lanka Mithra organised by Sri Lankans settled there. It recently sponsored the dance-drama 'Sangha Mitra' by Dhananjayan troupe. The story was of the conqueror of Kalinga, Ashoka, being converted to Buddhism by daughter Meghaveri.

Lanka Mithra's next step is expected to be the presentation in Madras of the Sri Lankan husband and wife team Vajira and Chitrasena who devised a dance-

drama combining Bharathanatyam with Kandyam dance.

African Development Fund

The lower house of the Indian Parliament, Lok Sabha, unanimously passed a bill providing for contribution by India to the African Development Fund. The Fund is supported by several countries but fifty per cent of the shares are held by African nations. Though former ruling countries are also participating they do not have more than one third of the voting rights. Thus there is no scope for exploitation. India's interest in developing economic and trade relations with the African nations is demonstrated by the establishment of a number of joint commissions and extension of technical assistance and easy credit facilities to Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and others.

Honours For M.S.

M.S. Subbulakshmi has been conferred the highest award of Viswa Bharati University. At the annual convocation of the University at Santiniketan, she was conferred the title 'Desikottama' which can roughly be translated as Doctor of Philosophy. Tributes were paid to her virtuosity as a singer and her contribution to Indian music.

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TAMIL TIMES

A WELCOME DECISION

We welcome the decision of the Tamil Co-ordinating Committee of London to postpone indefinitely their move to unilaterally declare independence and set up an interim government in exile of Tamil Eelam.

We believe that the Tamil people of Sri Lanka are entitled to their inalienable right of self-determination and this implies the creation of a separate state if they so desire. Whether and when and in what circumstances that right should be exercised is a matter for the Tamil people to decide through their accredited leadership, both inside and outside Parliament. What we are certain about, and we believe non-debatable is that any move in that direction should enjoy the support of the vast majority of the Tamil people living in Sri Lanka. No decision or formula, however well intentioned, should be superimposed on the people against their will. The expression of that will can only manifest through the political institutions they themselves have created and which are directly accountable to them.

The tasks facing the Tamil people are enormous. The forces ranged against them are powerful. The course they have to chart to win back their fundamental rights is beset with acute difficulties. In this context, we venture to suggest that, any section or group which has set before itself the task of assisting the Tamil people of Sri Lanka in their struggle, should ensure that whatever proposals they make or whatever steps they take are designed to maximise the unity among the people and to devote their efforts to avoid unnecessary conflicts or divisions. Sectional or group advantage in the short term may well have to be sacrificed for the achievement of the long term goal.

Various views have been expressed about the UDI move, some severely critical. We do believe that there are also sections of Tamils who consider that the move should have been proceeded with. However, taking into consideration the probable serious consequences that would have been inevitable if the move had been proceeded with, and taking into account the controversy that had been aroused as to the advisability and timeliness of the proposal at this juncture, we are of the view that the decision of the TCC to postpone was a wise one.

The very fact that a date for the declaration of unilateral independence was fixed and some groups did in fact take certain token steps on 14th January show alert the authorities to their responsibility to resolve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. If they do not, posterity will not forgive them for the inevitable consequences that are bound to follow by their inaction.

Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

A new weekly Journal under the name 'Saturday Review, Sri Lanka' is to be published from Jaffna, Sri Lanka as from 30th January 1982. In announcing the publication, the publishers state:-

"The SATURDAY REVIEW, which will come to you every Saturday, beginning January 30, 1982, shall undertake as its primary duty the dissemination of correct information on events and developments in Sri Lanka and outside. As a weekly, it will be in a position to analyse events and trends and interpret them against the background in which they occur.

"It will help us as far as possible to meet the challenge of establishing two-way communication between all peoples and nationalities within the country, and in the process serve as a vehicle for building healthy and civilised interaction. It will also serve as a useful link between Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankans abroad.

"The SATURDAY REVIEW will occupy a unique position of being the only English-language provincial weekly; and located as it will be in Jaffna, will naturally reflect the ethos and life around it with authenticity. It will comment authoritatively on aspects of Tamil culture, interpret them for non-Tamil readers and thereby help to overcome barriers of prejudice and emotional antipathies allowed to accumulate over the years.

"The paper will not hesitate to stand up against injustice, acts of discrimination, and violation of human rights and freedoms, but in doing so, will speak the language of logic and reason and not emotion.

"The SATURDAY REVIEW will be an independent, non-partisan journal. It will offer itself as a forum for free comment and expression of opinion and will keep its columns open to any point of view within the limits of law and reason.

"While the paper will, in essence, deal with the happenings in the world of today, it will also strive to add to your storehouse of knowledge, and offer you insights into people and events, past and present, through a variety of interesting feature material."

Those who want to order copies of this Journal should write to Kalai Nilayam Ltd., 303 K.K.S. Road, Jaffna Sri Lanka. Airmail overseas annual subscription is 50 US dollars.

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