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# AMIR SPEAKS

A  
TULF  
PUBLICATION

### **Editor's Note**

*The articles "stop talking to Amir" J. R. "tells, India today" — a coment made by the "Cinta Journal" (June ■ July 1984) and the press interview given to "The Island" newspaper dated 5th August 1984 are compiled in this leaflet entitled — "Amir Speaks" — Also the statements made by Amir to the APC are included,*

*We are sure that the questions raised by Mr. D. B. S. Jeyarajah of "The Island" and the answers given by Mr. A. Amirthalingum, Secretary General of the T.U.L.F. will go a long way in clearing up a number of genuine doubts and sincere questions raised in the different parts of the world about the Tamil National Liberation struggle. The publication we trust will keep the doors open for a healthy political dialogue with all our compatriots living far and near our beloved Homeland — "Tamil Eelam".*

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## **"STOP TALKING TO AMIR"**

**JR TELLS 'INDIA TODAY'**

**THE SHOCK INTERVIEW**

**Question: WHAT SHOULD INDIA DO TO ALLAY THE FEARS OF INVASION ?**

**Answer: "THEY SHOULD STOP TALKING TO AMIR"**

This was the ninth of 24 questions and answers at an interview which is said to have taken place at the Janadhipathī Mandiriya on 7th April, 1984, between Senior Editor of "India Today," S. Venkatnarayan, and President J. R. Jayawardene, as published by **The Island** in its issue of Sunday, 15th April, 1984.

The Sinhala-Tamil New Year April week, which fell between the dates of the interview and its publication in the **Sri Lankan Newspaper**, was one of the most tragic in Jaffna.

News of the contents of the interview could not have failed to send shock waves in many quarters, particularly among the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

### **Amir's hopes in 1977**

Mr. Amirthalingum, as T.U.L.F. leader, had re-entered Parliament in 1977, full of hope that Prime Minister J. R. Jayawardene's U.N.P. Government would take meaningful steps to keep the

pledges contained in the U.N.P. Manifesto which not only showed an understanding of why the Tamils demanded a separate State, but also promised to summon an All-Party Conference to deal with the grievances of the Tamils.

When Mr. J. R. Jayawardene became Prime Minister and Mr. Appapillai Amirthalingum, Leader of the Opposition, soon after the General Elections of 21st July, 1977, there was great expectation of communal amity and hopes, especially among the Tamils, that something would be done to deal with their long unremedied grievances.

The shattering events of August, 1977, made a solution even more urgent. Mr. Amirthalingum persisted in his belief that Mr. Jayawardene would do something, though as time passed the hopes of many Tamils began to fade.

#### **Amir's six year faith in J. R.**

That Mr. Amirthalingum continued in that belief for the next six years without any sign of an All-Party Conference, perhaps explains the T.U.L.F. failure to take even one non-violent step in the direction of "liberation" the way to achieve which they had proclaimed so loudly in their Election Manifesto of 1977.

Though Tamil was made a National but not Official Language in the New Constitution of 1978, Tamils realised that it made little difference to them, for it was not, in fact, being implemented. Mr. Amirthalingum, however, was for the greater part of these six years, in constant touch with President Jayawardene, clinging to the belief that Mr. Jayawardene was sympathetic. According to Amir, the trouble was from pressure groups within his own party and outside and from obscurantist bureaucrats who would not implement even promises made by Mr. J. R. Jayawardene.

#### **The damage to Amir's standing**

U.N.P. Government members and even President Jayawardene do not seem to have realised the extent of the damage that

was being done to Mr. Amirthalingum in his standing with the Tamil people by his relying entirely on the dialogue with Mr. Jayawardene to find a solution, Completely abandoning, in fact, all that he Amir, had undertaken to do during the election campaign to "liberate" the Tamil community. This was particularly disappointing to Tamil youths.

Youths everywhere take seriously and earnestly causes they are asked to espouse and promises that are made. Tamil youths prior to 1977, already hurt by mediawise standardisation and other discriminatory policies, had been treated to the rhetoric of Mr. Amirthalingum, the eloquence of Mr. Sivasithamparam and the more earthly fulminations of Mr. Yogeswaran on Tamil grievances and the need for a separate State as a solution to their miseries.

Both Mr. Amirthalingum and Mr. J. R. Jayawardena should have realised what was likely to happen. Instead of doing something meaningful to keep their election promises, each of them let matters drift. Tamils had to face repeated racist attacks all over the country on a scale and intensity that had never been witnessed in Sri Lanka's entire history before. This could not fail to anger and embitter Tamil youths.

Further, under the umbrella of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. operations against "terrorists" in the North and East involved not only killings of a number of youths but the arrest and detention of many whose treatment had led to numerous Habeas Corpus applications with allegations of torture being made in our courts of law.

#### **Tamil hostility to J. R. - Amir Dialogue**

All this only produced more resentment against Mr. Amirthalingum and the T.U.L.F. for having done very little else than placing faith in Mr. J. R. Jayawardene's Government.

That Tamil youths were becoming increasingly hostile to Tamil parliamentarians was reflected in the violence that they ultimately unleashed on some of the T.U.L.F. leaders including Mr. Amirthalingum. They hijacked Mr. Amirthalingum's car

leaving it damaged in a cemetery. They also had injured one of his Parliamentary lieutenants, the then M.P. for Kopay, Mr. Alalasunderam. Prior to hijacking Mr. Amirthalingum's car, a youth had asked him what he had done all these years. Mr. Amirthalingum might have passed that question on to Mr. Jayewardene on whom he had relied so much.

### U.N.P hostility to Amir

There seems to have been little understanding of the role Mr. Amirthalingum was playing or the sacrifice he was making by relying almost entirely on his continuing dialogue with the Government. Whenever he strayed a little away from close association with the government U.N.P. party and contacted S.L.F.P. leaders, especially Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, he was branded as a trouble maker and a promoter of terrorism.

The U.N.P. Government even went to the extent of an unprecedented Vote of No Confidence on the Leader of the Opposition, not realising that Mr. Amirthalingum was the best friend they had if Tamil problems were going to be solved peacefully.

As if to complete the picture, President J. R. Jayewardene reacted to the horrible July killings of Tamils and widespread destruction of their property by practically outlawing from Parliament Amirthalingum and the T.U.L.F. members who had lawfully come into the Legislature as members of a recognised party campaigning on the demand for a separate Tamil State.

Driven out of the Legislature by the Sixth Amendment, and forced out of the country by danger to his very life, Mr. Amirthalingum was told that when the All-Party Conference was finally summoned, he could participate only if he took the oath renouncing the demand on which he had been elected and which had been treated as lawful for more than seven years.

### Cold-shouldering Amir

It was, therefore, a sad state of affairs for Sri Lanka when, having consented to have the good offices of an eminent Indian

Envoy, Mr. G. Parthasarathy, to help in solving the ethnic problem, President Jayewardene goes to Delhi and meets him and the Indian Premier, Mrs. Indra Gandhi, but does not meet his erstwhile Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Amirthalingum, who was able to speak to the Indian leaders on Sri Lanka Tamil problems just as Mr. J. R. Jayewardene had done.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi herself has expressed her appreciation of Mr. Amirthalingum's restraint in spite of what she terms "his anguish at what had happened to his people".

Unfortunately, all the 'national' dailies in English and Sinhalese and more than half in Tamil are in control of either the Government or Sinhalese Buddhist groups. Mr. Amirthalingum's image as a leader of the Tamils has been deliberately and systematically tarnished by the media.

### Amir never sought Indian military intervention

Few seem to be aware of what Indian Government leaders themselves have said that at no time did Mr. Amirthalingum or his T.U.L.F. supporters ask for India's military intervention in Sri Lanka to help the Tamils here out of their problems.

President Jayewardene has, in fact, asked exactly what the 'terrorist' youths had in substance demanded of the Indian Premier: "Stop talking to Mr. Amirthalingum". The youths claimed that Mr. Amirthalingum no longer represented the Tamils.

Having helped to immobilise Mr. Amirthalingum and other T.U.L.F. leaders as representatives of the Tamil people President Jayewardene apparently does not know to whom to turn to negotiate a proper settlement. Hence the recent move to call in and rely on religious leaders of the various communities to find a political solution!

Here are excerpts of the Interview :

## Amir speaks on militants and the fast

By D.B.S. JEYARAJ

Appapillai Amirthalingum is a man who is now removed from the seat of power. The 6th Amendment to the Constitution has resulted in the loss of the Leader of Opposition post which he held before July last year as well as a practice at the bar because of a decision to refrain from taking the anti separatist oath.

His party which once held all Parliamentary seats in the North and controlled all D.D.C.'S. and local authorities is now labelled a spent force. The T.U.L.F. Secretary General himself is accused of complicating matters by his pronouncements in Madras. When the party staged a fast it was disrupted by Tamil youths.

Despite all this he still remains a controversial figure who is very much a part of the contemporary political scene.

"The Island" interviewed him at his Colombo hotel room which is no longer provided with police protection.

Mr. Amirthalingum spoke for two hours about what really happened at the fast, the future of the TULF, the Gandhian struggle, training camp in Tamilnadu and about Khalistan and Eelam.

Q: Government leaders have stated that your staying in Madras and making statements has not been helpful towards a negotiated settlement of the Tamil problem. On the other hand sections of opinion in Jaffna too seems to be resenting your stay in Madras. In this context do you feel that your prolonged stay in Madras and operating from there had been a mistake ?

A: We have never operated from Madras. It is wrong to say that all of us were in Madras during the past year. The Government is trying to create the impression that we were operating from Madras.

The Government does not like my issuing statements concerning events here because it contradicts the statements made by Government Ministers. I have to make them in Madras because I won't be allowed to make them here. It is not correct to say that Tamil opinion resent our temporary stay in Madras.

Q: But were not remarks like "TULF tourists" and accusations that you were living in the "lap of luxury" in Madras made by Tamil youth during your fast ?

A: There were no remarks like "TULF tourists" made at the fast. Some youths said that we were living in Madras while they were suffering here, TULF President Mr. M. Sivasithamparam explained that he and most TULF members have been living here.

Q: Do you feel that you have stayed too long in Madras and that your stay has given an impression of "living in luxury ?"

A: If you take the past year I have never been living continuously in Madras. I have been constantly in and out of this country. After the violence I went to India first on August 26th last year. After meeting Indian leaders I went to the USA, Britain and European countries to explain the position. I have been shuttling between India, Sri Lanka and other foreign countries. We have been engaged in discussions with Mr. G. Parthasarathy. At no stage have I been staying in Madras continuously even for a

month. The impression of living in luxury is absolutely false.

Q : But the impression is that the TULF leadership has been operating from Madras ?

A : That is wrong. Look at the TULF leadership. Of the ex-MPs Soosaithasan was always in Mannar, Ganeshalingam was in Paddiruppu. Thurairatnam, Tharmalingam, Rajalingam, Alalanderam were all here (Ceylon). Mr. Ratnam returned to Kayts after two months. The President Mr. M. Sivasithamparam apart from participating in discussions in India has been always here. So what is the leadership that is supposed to be living in Madras.

Q : What about the Politbureau?. Four of the seven members are there in Madras. You have meetings there. So is the Politbureau operating from there ?

A : Again my contention is that to say we are operating from Madras is wrong. We consulted the Polibureau only during the discussions we had in new Delhi during the Commonwealth Heads meeting. The General Council has been meeting in Jaffna.

Q : But why are the TULF members staying in Madras ?

A : For reasons of security. The ex-MP for Jaffna Mr. V. Yogeswaran had his house burnt while he and his wife escaped death miraculously. The ex-MP for Vavuniya saw his farm manager being killed in his own presence.

Q : Regarding your fast at the Veeramakaliamman Kovil did you receive prior information that militant elements were going to disrupt it ?

A : Yes. We got some information on the day before the fast that an attempt to create trouble was going to be made.

Q : Then why did you go on with it ?

A : We did not unduly worry about it, because as Satyagrahis we were prepared to take any attack from any quarter. From the

Government side or our own people. There were three bomb blasts at 5.30 a.m. Despite that we proceeded to sit down at the appointed hour in the building outside the temple.

Q : That is because your original venue was muddied to prevent your sitting down ?

A : No. No. It was the temple authorities who washed the place to clear the debris strewn by the explosions.

Q : The fact that only 12 were present at the inception of the fast suggests that you have lost ground in Jaffna. Do you think so ?

A : I dont think so. Only selected volunteers were to participate at the fast. Some of them had to come from places 20 miles away. There were transport problems. So those who were there sat down first. Others followed later. Over 200 volunteers including 20 ladies participated. A full crowd was there.

Q : Why did you call off the fast ?

A : We did not call off the fast. We only wound it up early. You see we had originally intended to make speeches at 4 p.m. Since there was a barrage of questions by the youths I told them we will answer questions at 3 p.m. When we made our speeches Mr. Sivasithamparam, Mr. Sambandan and I spoke at 3 p.m. I spoke for 15 minutes. Therefore we wound up at 3.30. That is what happened.

Q : So you did not abandon the fast because of pressure?

A : No. We wound it up. In fact at the end of the fast the youngsters who had come there cordoned off the crowd to enable me to proceed to the shrine and participate in the pooja. They also participated in the pooja. They later escorted me to my car, opened the door and saw me off.

Q : None of the observers of the fast were manhandled, jostled or force-fed ?

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A : No such incident occurred. The State-controlled media has been going out of its way to belittle us. Four or five youths had been planted amidst us by earlier arrangement. So at 11 a m. when food parcels were distributed these persons started eating. Then they began to put parcels on the laps of the satyagrahis. When they put it on the lap of an old lady she threw it away vehemently. That was the only incident.

Q : There was no heckling by the youths ?

A : I dont know whether there was any heckling at the fringe of the crowd. But we were only questioned. The general nature of the questioning was to whether any purpose was served by staging fasts. We said that we will answer questions later and then sat in silence. We could have reacted forcibly if we wanted to do so but we chose not to avail force as we were satyagrahis in thought, word and deed.

Q : You asked for a postponement of the Round Table Conference on July 23 in view of the fact that the situation was tense security-wise. But then your staging a fast was also likely to increase the tension. How do you reconcile this position ?

A : We felt that the week in question was one which had sorrowful memories for our community. Every Tamil would have felt bitter grief when he thought of the sufferings he underwent last year. With such horrible memories we felt that it was not the proper time to parley with Government and other Sinhalese leaders. That is why we wanted a postponement. The observing of the fast was not meant to increase the tension. It was an act of self-purification. Mahatma Gandhi observed a fast in Calcutta at the height of Hindu-Muslim rioting. He used it as an instrument for bringing sense to the clashing Hindus and Muslims. We dont have a situation similar to Naakali. But we wanted to show the votaries of violence the human aspects of the whole problem. By fasting we are only imposing suffering on ourself to touch the hearts of the oppressors. There may be occasions when violence breaks out but that does not mean that we should desist from using non-violence. When Mahatma Gandhi declared the "Quit India" movement in 1942 large-scale violence broke out after the

leaders were arrested. But failure to call for a non-violent struggle because violence may lead to more and more violence breaking out.

Q : In that case why did the TULF not have non-violent agitations in the recent past. There was nothing since the 1977 elections. Did this not contribute to the rise of violence in Tamil areas ?

A : We did not agitate, yes ! But why did we not agitate? Because we kept on negotiating with the Government during this period. So we did not agitate. But ultimately we have been let down by the Government.

Q : In retrospect do you feel that it would have been better to have aligned with the militants and restricted yourselves to the hartal alone ?

A : The irony of this is that the hartal is also a form of non-violent protest. Mahatma Gandhi staged a hartal against the Rowlatt Act in 1919. Fasts, civil disobedience campaigns, hartals and boycotts are all methods of a non-violent struggle. The militants object to a fast as it is a form of non-violent protest. But then they themselves are calling for a hartal which is also non-violent.

Q : Has the one-day fast eroded or enhanced the TULF prestige ?

A : It has aroused the dormant sympathy that was always in the hearts of the community for the TULF. The people have been touched. Hundreds of people have been coming to me and saying that we must have fasts in all the electorates on a much bigger scale. We intend going ahead with it.....

Q : Despite opposition ?

A : Yes. We will observe the next fast in the Kankasanturai electorate.



Q : I thought it was going to be Trincomalee ?

A : Yes. But then we changed it to Kankasanturai because we don't want anyone to say we were chased out of the North. Thereafter we will go to the East.

Q : Your non-violent struggle will continue ?

A : Yes. We will continue with our non-violent programme of action even if people oppose us.

Q : In the light of the earlier non-violent campaigns by Tamil political parties in the periods 1956-1961 and 1972-76 what is the use of adhering to this form of struggle when Governments remain intransigent ?

A : I think the essential principle is to oppose what we consider is evil. The only way to do that is the "Ahimsa" way. The non-violent way. The necessity is to oppose evil. If the masses accept this and rally round then no Government can continue to rule over us.

Q : What is your response to Cabinet spokesman Mr. Anandatissa de Alwis remarking "End of the Road for TULF?"

A : He is not the first to say things like that. President Jayewardene told "Telegraph" that the TULF does not represent anybody, and that were being propped up by the Government of India.

This "End of the Road" view is being given wide publicity in the Government controlled media. This is being done to enable the Government to get out of its commitments to a negotiated settlement. There was a commitment to the TULF and the Government of India to implement certain proposals. Later President Jayewardene tells "India Today" that he could not do that as he was a 'captive of circumstances' and that he could not do what he promised to do. Now the line seems to be TULF does not represent anybody. We have no one left to negotiate

with. The emphasis seems to be for a military solution. But if the TULF has reached the end of the road it is because as "The Island" editorial pointed out we had negotiated with the Government. There is nothing for the Government to gloat about. Having failed to persuade their party people of a negotiated settlement they are now trying to scuttle it through other means. They are trying to show that a military solution is the only alternative. All propaganda is directed towards that end.

Q : How can you prove that the TULF is not a spent force ?

A : Let the Government remove the letter of the 6th amendment and hold elections in Tamil areas. Then the world can see whether we represent the Tamil people or not ?

Q : Judging from past experience during the 1983 local authority elections with the militants allow you to contest elections ?

A : That is a different situation. We will not contest election under the 6th amendment because it would be contrary to the mandate we got in 1977. What happened in the local authority elections was a different thing. Don't forget that we got more votes than 1979 in Vavuniya, Batticaloa and Trincomalee. In Jaffna it was the violence. But a few cases of bomb throwing does not mean the people are against us. What we want is a free and fair elections where the Tamil people have the full right to exercise their right of self-determination.

Q : Is it correct that there is an agreement between the TULF and the youth organisations to contest elections to the 16 seats on a fifty-fifty basis.

A : No. It is an absolutely false rumour.

Q : All democratic institutions of the North and to a certain extent in the East are practically defunct. As a party committed to democracy what is the position of the TULF on this ?

A : The democratic process has come to an end. Agitation on constitutional lines is not possible. Who brought democracy to an end in Tamil areas? It is the Government. Today

the Tamil people are virtually dis-enfranchised. The democratic path is closed.

Q : But the Tamil people are affected by this situation ?

A : They are affected. They are suffering. The Government is insensitive to this.

Q : If you say that the democratic path is closed are you implying that the TULF will resort to violence if the situation continues ?

A : No. We will never abandon non-violence. What I am saying is that we will adopt non-violent struggle.

Q : But there is no one left in Parliament to articulate the Tamil point of view ?

A : So the only way is to go to the forum of world opinion and arouse the conscience of the Sinhalese people through a non-violent campaign.

Q : What about large-scale arrest of youths ? Earlier there were some lawyers who filed writs of Habeas Corpus etc. Today there is no one. Will the TULF form a group of Human Rights oriented lawyers to watch the interests of these arrested youths ?

A : No one is safe nowadays. In Vavuniya and Batticaloa arrests are wide-spread. But today even lawyers who appear on behalf of these youths may be arrested.

Q : How about the law and order situation in the North ? Things have deteriorated so much that even simple laws like wearing helmets etc. are not observed. What do you say to this ?

A : Whose mistake is this ? It is the fault of the government again. I agree that Law and Order has broken down to a great extent in Jaffna. But it must be remembered that the law and order situation started deteriorating a long time ago. It all started when the guardians of law and order themselves started acting against the law. They broke the law and were not punished under the law.

## SLFP pull-out made govt jittery :

Q : Jaffna was once known for its conservative youths. Today the situation seems different. Why is this ?

A : Youth becoming radicalised is a universal phenomenon. Youth all over the world are revolting. In the case of Jaffna the problem is compounded by oppression and deprivation of education and employment opportunities. So the youths of Jaffna are protesting against this state of humiliation.

Q : Do you subscribe to the youth view point that an armed struggle is the only solution to achieve liberation ?

A : Different situations call for different strategies. There are no hard and fast rules. The Tamil People are a minority in this Island. Placed as we are in the situation we fear that the unarmed Tamil people can only struggle in a non-violent way and win our legitimate rights. Ours is a non-violent struggle. If the youth feel otherwise we have no quarrel with them. We cannot follow them. While Mahatma Gandhi espoused non-violence Subash Chandrabose was forming an Army and fighting. Only historians can say whether it was the non-violent struggle or violence or whether a combination of both factors which won Independence for India.

Q : But what is the TULF's attitude to violence itself ?

A : We condemn it.

Q : There is an impression in the South that while TULF leaders are quick to condemn excesses committed by the Army or

Police or when Tamils are killed in ethnic violence they do not condemn violence committed by militant groups in the same manner.

A : I think that is a wrong impression. We have condemned violence regardless of whatever source it emanated from.

Q : There is a feeling that the qualitative content of your condemning differs, you condemn Tamils being killed by non-civilians or in ethnic violence vociferously. You are lukewarm when condemning militant killings of services and police personnel, politicians, suspected informants, so called anti-social elements etc., What do you say to that ?

A : We do not condone violence by the militants. We condemn it. But look at the situation in July last year. 13 soldiers were killed by militants on July 23rd. 51 civilians were killed by the soldiers in Jaffna the following day. In my estimate close upon 2000 Tamils were killed in the violence that ensued. In terms of proportion does the killing of 13 soldiers warrant mass killings of innocent civilians. How can you expect our condemning of these two types of killings to be the same. Our condemning must be in proportion. Innocent Tamils were killed in Chunnakam and Jaffna on March 28th and April 9th, 10th and 11th by members of law-enforcement agencies. Are we not entitled to condemn these acts because we form part of the public who pay these people, particularly when the guardians of law and order are killing us. Can you equate the killings by the militants and the killings by indisciplined sections of the Armed forces or police ?

On the other hand, has the government or major Sinhala political parties been vociferous in condemning the acts of the guardians of law and order. How much of sympathy has been expressed over the victims of last year's violence. Government leaders went on air without condemning the killings of innocent Tamils. No word of sympathy was expressed.

Q : At the recent Tamil conference in New York, Mr. Satchi Ponnambalam mooted a proposal to set up a Government in exile

Mr. Vaikuntavasan wanted the North and East to be annexed to India. Both proposals were turned down at the Conference. What do you feel about the proposals ?

A : I am against annexation to India because I am against parts of this country being annexed to any other country. As for a government in exile it is ill-advised and premature.

Q : Do you think that the initial enthusiasm and interests displayed by India in seeking a negotiated settlement to the Tamil problem is now waning ?

A : I don't think so. Mrs. Gandhi's interview to "La Figaro" seems to suggest that Indian good offices will definitely continue as long as there are 40,000 refugees in India and the statelessness problem is not solved and while Tamilnadu remains concerned over violence being perpetrated against Tamils here.

Q : There is a view that the Punjab situation has exposed Indian double standards in the sense that while adopting a hard-line towards Sikh separatist it wants Sri Lanka to adopt a soft line towards Tamil separatists. What is your opinion ?

A : There is no parallel to what happened in Punjab and what is happening in Jaffna. The Sikhs there had their own autonomous State. Here the Tamils are denied even the bare minimum of autonomy. We have been agitating for over 30 years for federalism. In Punjab it was the Sikh minority which was indulging in violence against the Hindu majority. The majority was not provoked into retaliating against the minority. Here it is the minority which is subject to violence at the hands of the majority. The initial problems of the Sikhs were dealt with by the State Police which was essentially Sikh. Here it has been the other way about with a Sinhala dominated Police force operating in Tamil areas. There the Army was called in only when the situation was completely out of control. There were Sikhs among the soldiers who stormed the Golden Temple. Hence it is a Pan-Sinhala Army which is functioning like an Army of

occupation for a long period of time. And the Indian does not kill innocent civilian motivated by ethnic hatred.

Q: The Sri Lankan government says that Tamil Youths are being trained in Tamilnadu. The Tamilnadu IGP, Mr. Mohandas has admitted that Northern youths are having drill exercises. What do you say?

A: Where has Mr. Mohandas admitted this?

Q: During the course of the recent discussions in New Delhi.

A: I dont know about that. But when I was in India, I saw a statement by Mr. Mohandas denying a Reuters report about 500 militants being in Tamil Nadu.

Q: But what is your comment about Training camps in Tamilnadu?

A: To the best of my knowledge I do not think anyone is being trained by Tamilnadu government officials or Central government officials. But there are a large number of youths who have fled to Tamilnadu from here because they fear being arrested by the Security forces. They are living in various groups. They are living in various parts of the country. Beyond that I do not know anything.

Q: How do you view the Round-table Conference and the progress it has made?

A: We were invited on the basis of certain agreements reached in New Delhi. It was agreed there to include certain proposals, in the agenda of the RTC. It was not done so. Then two committees were appointed to go into the extent of devolution and employment, education etc. Even those committees are not functioning. Now we have the Second Chamber proposal. We are yet in the process of studying these proposals. But frankly

I can't see any connection between the Second Chamber and a solution to the ethnic problem. We will make our final views known on the 17th.

Q: What affected the RTC? Was it the SLFP withdrawal?

A: Yes. To a great extent. The SLFP pull-out made the government jittery. It lost its nerve after that.

Q: The former Jaffna MP, Mr. Yogeswaran is reported to have said that Sri Lanka was fast on its way to become a second Lebanon. If the talks end in failure do you think such a situation would arise?

A: What form the struggle will take is hard to say. But I do not know whether we can compare the situation to Lebanon. There both sides are equally armed. Here we have no arms. Our struggle will be non-violent. Some Tamil youths have modelled themselves on the lines of the PLO and are trying to arm themselves.

Q: President Jayewardene has said he is a captive of circumstances. Put yourself in his shoes. What can he do? What will you do if you were in his position?

A: One must have the courage of one's convictions. One must have the courage to stand by one's promises. Successive Post Independent governments have displayed a woeful lack of that courage. Mr. Bandaranaike went back on the BC Pact. Mrs. Bandaranaike did not honour her promises in 1960. Mr. Dudley Senanayake did not fulfil his pledges. The original proposals regarding Regional Councils came from President Jayewardene himself. Annexure 'C' was agreed upon in New Delhi. President Jayewardene should have known as to whether he could push these proposals through or not. He has now jettisoned what he felt just and fair then. What has he to fear? He is going to be the President for another six years.

Q: The Sinhalese people fear the granting of autonomy to the Tamils because they fear that such autonomy would either lead to division or a Pan-Dravidian link-up with Tamilnadu. On

the other hand the denial of such autonomy is driving the Tamils to extreme separatist demands as well as place great reliance on Tamilnadu. In such a tricky situation what can be done ?

A : We are in a vicious circle. You cannot argue rationally when fear prevails. There is fear on both sides. The Sinhalese have fears due to historical and geographical factors. It is a psychological fear. The Tamils are worried. It is a physical fear. Both sides must get over this fear to arrive at a solution. The best solution is a federal solution. This was what Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike wanted in 1926. We felt for a long time that a federal solution was the best. But we failed to gain federalism. Mr. S.J.V. Chelvanayagam used to say that a reasonable solution was like a 'marriage'. Both parties must be willing. But the granting of autonomy will lead neither to division nor annexation to other countries. The Italian, French and German Cantons of Switzerland have autonomy. They do not want to join Italy, France, or Germany. They want to be Swiss.

Q : Why are not Tamil people investing in Tamil areas even after the violence ?

A : Because they fear that their enterprises will be burnt down like what happened to the Jaffna Co-op Society recently.

Q : If Sinhalese leaders were to tell the Tamils "Forgive us or the past. Let us begin afresh" Would you be prepared to start anew ?

A : We are certainly prepared to start afresh. But if starting afresh means a return to the old situation, then it is no. If it is a case of the man sitting on the back of another saying forgive me let us start afresh it is no. We are not prepared to carry this burden any longer. But if starting afresh means going back to 1948 levels where there was no colonisations, no discrimination no language problem, etc. then we are certainly prepared to start afresh.

## STATEMENT BY MR. AMIRTHALINGUM ON BEHALF OF THE T.U.L.F. AT THE ALL-PARTY CONFERENCE ON 17.8.1984

Our sense of duty by our people, who overwhelmingly reposed their confidences in us in the 1977 elections, and whom we continue to represent in spite of the sixth amendment which has taken away our membership of Parliament, impels us to make this statement.

We cannot sit here as if nothing has happened, when the Tamil-speaking people in the northern and eastern provinces are being harassed, mutilated and murdered by the armed forces; their children are arrested, tortured and transported like cattle by lorries with barbed wires to unknown prisons in the South, and their property is pilfered, plundered, burnt and destroyed.

The events of the last two weeks in Valvettiturai, Jaffna, Chunnakam, Vavuniya, Mannar, Adampan and Murunkan, are nothing, but a repetition of what happened in June, July and August last year. The scene is now shifted to their own homelands. People have been driven from their homes in Valvettiturai to seek shelter in school buildings. Over a hundred shops in Mannar, Adampan and Murunkan have been burnt and destroyed by the armed forces. Several houses, boutiques, boats and business places have been burnt in Valvettiturai and Adampan. Several innocent civilians who have had no association with any militant activity have been shot down in the streets of Jaffna and Vavuniya. Under the cover of counteracting politically motivated violence the security forces are engaged in a war against the unarmed defenceless civilian population in these areas. The Government through its controlled media is seeking to trumpe

every civilian casualty as a measure of its success in the eradication of the so-called "terrorism".

The Government and the security apparatus of the State may deceive themselves, but neither the people of this country, nor the international community are deceived. These events have outraged the conscience of the international community. We have in a letter to Your Excellency today detailed some of the more glaring atrocities. I table a copy of that letter for the information of the delegates to this Conference.

We cannot in this climate of repression, when the Government is unable or unwilling to stop its indisciplined forces from committing attacks on persons and property of innocent civilians, sit around this and pretend that all is well in the Tamil-speaking areas.

Our views on the proposed second chamber will be stated later.

For the reasons that I have stated, as a taken of our protest at the atrocities by the armed forces against our people, we shall withdraw and not participate any further in today's proceedings of the All-Party Conference.

**STATEMENT MADE BY MR. A. AMIRTHALINGUM  
SECRETARY-GENERAL, T.U.L.F. AT THE  
MEETING OF LEADERS OF THE A.P.C.  
DELEGATIONS ON TUESDAY 21-8-84**

At the plenary meeting of the All-Party Conference held on 1-6-84 we "called upon the Government to make concerted and serious efforts to work out a political solution with a due sense of urgency". The problem for which a political solution has to be worked out, is the ethnic problem - the problem of the Tamil people in this country. It is for this purpose that the All-Party Conference was summoned in the wake of the large-scale violence unleashed on the Tamil people which horrified the world. Though more than one year has elapsed since those grim days, not even the slightest move has been made towards healing the wounds. On the contrary, we are witnesses to continues acts of terrorism by the armed forces against unoffending Tamils in their own areas. Even yesterday, two farmers in Kilinochchi were killed and a third wounded, while they were working their fields. As is to be expected, it is announced by the State media that terrorists fired shots at the armed forces which did not hit anybody and the army shot and killed two.

Last night two Tamil shops were burnt down in Maliban Street. It is said to have been caused by a short-circuit of electricity. How can there be a short-circuit when the main switch was off? One wonder whether mopping up operations to finish off what may have escaped last year, are taking place.

We were in Mannar yesterday, and saw and heard details of heavy destruction of property, brutal killings, and robberies of

the valuables, committed by the armed forces. The victims were Sri Lankan Tamils, Tamils of Indian origin and Muslims. It is in this background that we are discussing the Second Chamber proposals of His Excellency the President.

What the Tamil speaking people want urgently is security of life and property. This can be ensured only by the preservation of the unity and integrity of their homeland and by enabling them to exercise political power, including the powers over internal law and order, economic development, and land settlement in that area. The structural framework that will ensure these arrangements is contained in the proposals on autonomy submitted to the All Party Conference by the Ceylon Workers' Congress. Any solution which does not embody these principles will never be acceptable to the Tamil people.

We wish to make our observations on the memorandum presented to the All Party Conference by His Excellency the President in the light of these basic principles.

There are several assumptions on which this memorandum is based which are incorrect :

- (a) The Regional Councils proposal is not that of the TULF. The TULF's basic demand is that of a separate state. However, we have stated that we are willing to recommend a viable alternative to our people. As a result of complex and delicate process of negotiations between His Excellency the President and the special emissary of the Prime Minister of India, proposals emerged which envisaged a solution based on a scheme regional autonomy involving the establishment of Regional Councils. The memorandum submitted by the Ceylon Workers' Congress endeavoured to further develop and spell out this proposal.
- (b) We cannot accept the premise that the second chamber proposal is one which is intended to bridge the District Councils proposal on the one hand, and the

Regional Councils proposal on the other. We do not see how the second chamber proposal is in any way linked with the issues of devolution and of autonomy. On the contrary, the second chamber proposal would tend to consolidate and reinforce the processes of centralised authority and control, and in their present form could be viewed as another step which will facilitate the gravitation of power to the Executive President.

- (c) We cannot accept the assumption in the memorandum that the District Councils should be the basic national unit on a structural level or the statement that the demand for Provincial or Regional basis of operation cannot be justified.

We believe that these are emotional and intransigent positions based on prejudice and obstinate denial of the legitimate grievances of the Tamil-speaking people. They cannot be justified on any conceptual or rational grounds and serve as a barrier to serious efforts to reach a negotiable settlement.

- (d) Even with regard to the Inter-District Co-ordination, it is provided that such co-ordination would be subject to Central control. The proposals do not provide for an executive at the inter-district level, or legislative body to which such an executive should be accountable.
- (e) The only aspect which perhaps calls for additional comment is the provision in the proposal which provides for the nomination of Provincial Ministers from the second chamber. Here again, proposals provide no clarification as to what the powers and functions of the Provincial Ministers would be, nor are the Provincial Ministers accountable to a legislative entity at the provincial level. They merely become answerable to the Executive President who appoints them. In this regard, we fear that the proposals for a second chamber may even seek to dilute and

weaken the scheme of devolution by ensuring that the provincial executive would be drawn from the second chamber thereby eroding this executive of any effective accountability to a devolved unit.

- (f) We, therefore, wish to point out that we do not see any merit in the proposals for a second chamber in its present form. The Tamil speaking people and other minorities could only play a subordinate and secondary role in such an institution. The powers and functions of the second chamber have not been clarified and in any event appear to be of a secondary and subordinate nature. We do not accept that there is consensus those proposals as far as the parties and organisations representing the Tamil people are concerned.
- (g) We wish to reiterate that the only viable basis for a negotiated settlement is that based on the proposals in the C.W.C. memorandum, on the establishment of Regional Councils.

Ever since the All-Party Conference was summoned, we have made a sincere effort to meet more than once all the parties and organizations represented at the Conference, as well as those not in it, with a view to explaining our position. We are convinced that there are no legal impediment to giving effect to these proposals. What is required is the will to do justice to this long suffering people and to solve this vexed question without considerations of petty political advantage to be gained by individuals or parties.

As far as we are concerned, if a viable alternative which we are satisfied and which meets the aspirations of our people is offered, we shall place it before our people. No reasonable person will find our attitude to be intransigent. If such an alternative is not evolved, we shall no option but to struggle by all non-violent means to liberate our people from this oppression.

**PRESS STATEMENT BY  
MR. AMIRTHALINGUM,  
SECRETARY GENERAL T.U.L.F ON 27-8-84**

The Tamil People of Sri Lanka are passing through the most critical phase in their history. The Genocidal attack launched against them in June, July and August last year was stopped by the deep concern shown by the Government and the people of India. The negotiation for a peaceful solution of the ethnic problem brought about through the good offices of India have failed to produce any results due to the intransigence of the Government of Sri Lanka and the obstruction by the Chauvinist elements led by the Buddhist Clergy. The Government of Sri Lanka has started another massive attack against the lives and property of Tamil people in the Tamil areas themselves using the armed forces as instruments of Killing, arson and plunder under cover of dealing with so-called terrorism.

In March and April and in July and August the armed forces have killed over two hundred innocent Tamil people including women and children; injured several hundreds; and damaged property worth about five crores rupees.

In the midst of this devastation the only beacon-light of hope is the support of the people of India to the hard-pressed Tamil people. We are deeply grateful to the Prime Minister of India and to all the political parties for the great concern shown to our plight in the course of the debate in the Lok Sabha on Saturday. The Tamil people are threatened with total destruction by the Sinhala Armed forces with the assistance of the Israeli Mossad Group, the British S.A.S., using the sophisticated weapons from Britain, U.S.A., China, South Korea, and South Africa. We were



releaved to find the great awareness on the part of all the leaders of India and the Prime Minister of India to the dangers inherent in the situation, not only to the Tamil People of Sri Lanka, but to the entire region. This is no longer an internal matter of Sri Lanka but is bound to affect adversely India and other countries of the region.

The Government of Sri Lanka while pretending to carry on negotiation is bent on imposing a military solution on the unarmed Tamil people. In order to facilitate this process the Government, through its media, is trying to discredit the democratic leadership of the Tamil People namely the T.U.L.F. and is playing up stray acts of violence by Tamil militants as an excuse for their mass killings of innocent Tamils. The attempt by the Sri Lanka Government media to present a distorted picture of a small incident at the fast organised by the T.U.L.F. on the 24th of July is a typical example of this tactics. I would like to use this opportunity to appeal for unity among all sections and organisations of Ealam Tamils. I would also appeal to the more than 40,000 Sri Lanka Tamils who have gone to Tamil Nadu as refugees to act in such a way as not to cause any embarrassment to the government or inconvenience to the people of Tamil Nadu. We should all act in such a way as to retain the sympathy and good will of the people who have given us shelter.

On the question of the T.U.L.F.'s continued participation in the all party conference there is difference of opinion among the Tamil people. I have during my present visit explained the difficulties encountered by us to the Government of India through the Prime Minister's Special Envoy Mr. G. Parthasarathy." It was because of their offer of good offices that we agreed to attend the all party conference in the first instance. Though it has failed to produce any results over the last eight months, we feel that India's good offices should continue. When we take a decision regarding our participation at the meeting of the conference fixed for 29th August we have to keep this fact in mind and take a decision which will be conducive to the continuance of India's good offices without which there will be no safeguard for the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

## INDIA CANNOT BE SILENT ON SRI LANKA : PM

From G. K. REDDY

NEW DELHI, Aug, 15.

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, made a poignant reference today to the tragic crisis in Sri Lanka in the course of her Independence Day address to the nation, voicing India's grave concern over the appalling killings of innocent Tamils by the rampaging armed forces.

The people of India, she said, were grieved over the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils and sympathised with them in this hour of their peril and persecution.

The Prime Minister conceded that Sri Lanka had a terrorist problem, but she drew a distinction between the responsibility of a Government in dealing with such a threat and using it as a pretext for persecuting the Tamil community by giving the Army a free hand to kill and pillage in a wave of counter-terrorism.

Mrs. Gandhi reiterated that was not India's intention to interfere in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, but it could not be a silent and disinterested spectator of this grim tragedy, when so many innocent Tamils with strong filial links with their brethren in South India were being killed, rendered homeless and treated in this inhuman fashion. It is this agonising aspect of the current happenings in Sri Lanka that has emotionally moved many in India, making them wonder what they could do in this sad situation to bring about a settlement of this ethnic problem.

The Prime Minister said that it was in a sincere and well-meaning effort to help resolve this tangle that she had urged the

president of Sri Lanka, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, to strive for a negotiated settlement, but unfortunately no progress had been made in finding an equitable basis for it. So she sounded doubly distressed that the island had been plunged into another orgy of violence, creating difficulties for itself and others like India which had to contend with the consequences of the current military action.

The developments in Sri Lanka last year, Mrs. Gandhi said, led to an exodus of nearly 40,000 Tamils from there. The present crisis could pose a much bigger refugee problem for India with all the attendant risks of many undesirable elements including spies infiltrating into the country to create trouble.

**Diplomatic moves planned :** The Prime Minister spoke with great restraint, but it was quite evident from her anguished tone that India could not afford to be indifferent to what was happening there. She was evidently planning to initiate some fresh diplomatic moves to press Mr. Jayewardene to do something to end the senseless killings before the situation got totally out of control and produced a chain reaction.

(THE HINDU)