SPECIAL ISSUE ON SRI LANKA

Tamil Refugees and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka

As of the next issue, Professor Michael Lanphier assumes the post of editor of *Refuge*. I have held the editor's position for over ten years. It is somehow appropriate that my final issue deals with ethnic conflict, in particular ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. In the early eighties, many refugee claims from northern Sri Lanka were denied at the time since Canada only gave status to refugees affected by the riots in Colombo. This special issue tells why. But in the early eighties, the West was unaware of the insurrection in the north and the army repression under way. My report of my field trip was published in *Refuge* as well as in the *Toronto Star* and led directly to a change in refugee policy vis-à-vis Tamils who were fleeing northern Sri Lanka.
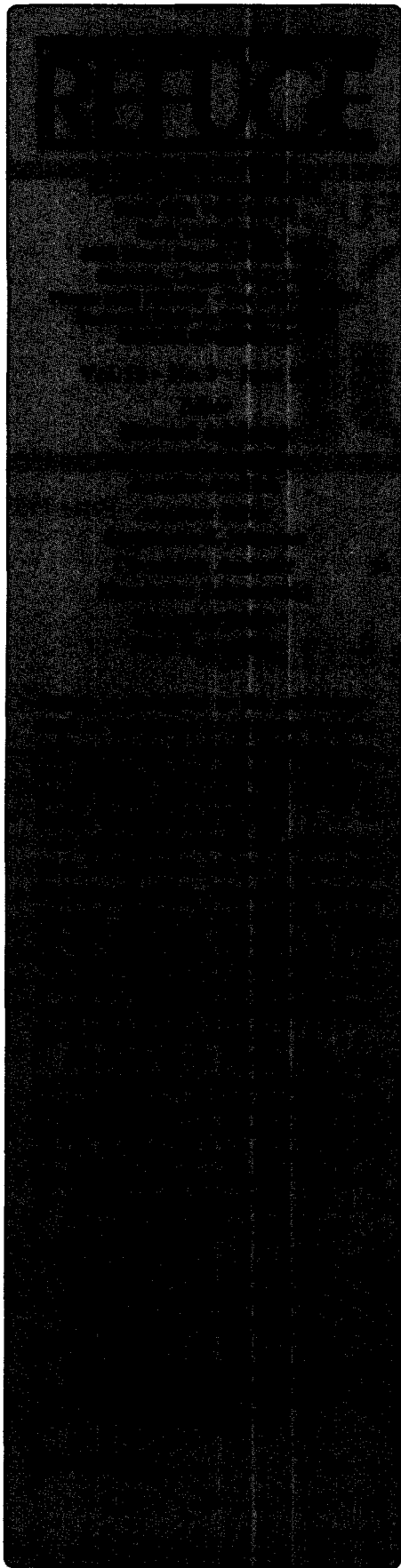
There is a second reason why this issue is important. Increasingly, the majority of refugees around the world are products of ethnic rather than ideological conflicts. Most states in the world are multi-ethnic polities with significant nontitular minorities who may have a compact pattern of settlement and strong cultural identities. When these differences are exacerbated by injustices, by

efforts that increase inequalities and social-economic disparities, or by efforts to redress those same inequalities and social-economic injustices by discriminating against a successful minority, then we have the conditions that can lead to conflict. If the political structure of a state favours the hegemony of one dominant group rather than promoting an ethni-

cally mosaic society with unity arising out of diversity, then the underlying conditions will certainly lead to open confrontation. Ethnonationalism can be used by political power brokers within a community as a basis for mobilization, particularly in a time of crisis. History can be constructed to reinforce ethnic identities *at odds with those defined as the*

other. Alternatively, historical understanding can be the basis of fostering harmonious relations with other groups.

The fact is, these conflicts are resolvable and can be prevented from developing into open violent confrontation. Early detection, fact-finding missions, mediation efforts and even interventionist techniques must be further developed.

It is important to understand that these conflicts are *not* the result of age old eternal rivalries, but are politically motivated as a result of power conflicts between *and within* ethnic groups. Civil war can be prevented. Solutions can be found. But they are based on ideologies of tolerance, on recognition of multiculturalism, on working to eliminate socio-economic inequalities based on race or ethnicity. They are based on political structures that adopt a federal model with a great deal of local self-determination rather than a highly centralized state. Further, the international community can assist through early detection and closer monitoring of minority rights abuses. The emerging international institutions to manage and moderate intrastate violent conflict and even to intervene for humanitarian purposes will help once these mechanisms are more developed. An international forum to address political minority issues and issues of self-determination can be a critical element to moderate the potential for conflict. New mechanisms of mediation appropriate to interethnic conflict can be developed.

However, when the conflict has gone too far and for too long a period, the only solution may be ethnic division, perhaps within a loosely federated state.

The fact is we are entering a new era in dealing with refugees—one that stresses analysis of causes rather than simply depiction of circumstances, preventive rather than simply responsive actions, international adjudication and even intervention when appropriate. They are all geared to mitigation or even prevention of refugee flows in the first place. ▪

Howard Adelman
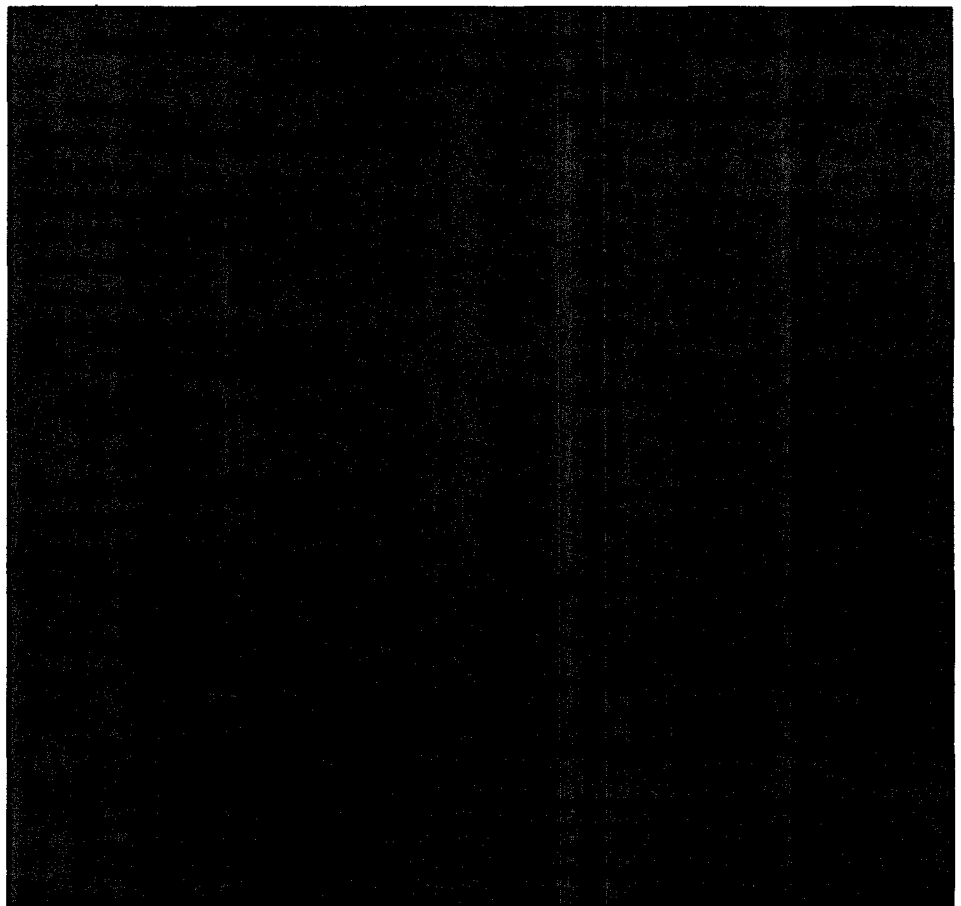
The Evolution of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka

Arul S. Aruliah and Anusha Aruliah

We can chart our future clearly and wisely only when we know the path which has led to the present.
— Adlai Stevenson.

Introduction

Ethnic conflict in the world today is a familiar situation. History is integral to understanding the ethnopolitics of any nation. Such is the case in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is an island nation located off the southern tip of India's coastline. Its history has been as varied as the many names it has had, among them Tamaraparani, Taprobane, Lanka, Ilam, Serendib, Ceylon and, in 1972, Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese (mostly Buddhist) constitute approximately 74 percent of the population; the Tamils (mostly Hindu) are approximately 18 percent (1981 census); and Tamil-speaking Muslims constitute 7 percent of the population. Other minorities include Burghers[1] and Malays. Islam was introduced to Ceylon by Arab traders around the eighth century A.D. The Portuguese introduced Catholicism in 1505. In 1638, the Portuguese were replaced by the Dutch, who were subsequently overthrown by the British (1796) in their quest to expand the British Empire. The British were a different type of invader. Their policies left a lasting impact on Sri Lanka in a way that had never occurred before. Historian D.C. Mendis suggested that:

> [the] Portuguese [had] left behind the Roman Catholic Church, and the Dutch their system of law. The British administrative system, helped by the great changes brought about by the modern industrial civilization, helped Ceylon to be unified and the people to progress once more (Mendis 1932, 8).

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The British provided the Ceylonese with an infrastructure that was quite modern. But unification, in a traditional nationalist sense (that is, identification with the nation as opposed to ethnic or regional identification), was noticeably absent. Prior to the arrival of the British, the northern regions of Sri Lanka were not integrated with the south. In fact, there were three independent kingdoms. "Out of what once were the two Sinhalese kingdoms of Kandy and Kotte and the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna, in 1802, the British created their first crown colony, Ceylon" (U.S. Committee for Refugees 1991, 4).

English education was beginning to be the norm for the higher castes of both the Sinhalese (the *goyigamas*[2]) and their Tamil counterparts, the *vellalas*. The anglicized schooling that prevailed was taught at missionary schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For many new Christians, motives for conversion were more practical than religious. They became entitled to free schooling. Introduction of the North-South railway system facilitated the southward migration of English-educated Tamils. And, as a result, "during the first two decades of Sri Lankan independence, Ceylon Tamils, who constituted only 12% of the island's population, held 40% of public sector employment" (Perera 1992). There was a feeling in the majority community that the minority community had a disproportionate hold on public service positions.

Furthermore, during the colonial period, there was growing discontent within the Sinhala-Buddhist community on the secondary position of Buddhism in the country. "The Buddhist revival of the second half of the nineteenth century was the first phase in the recovery of national pride in the island, the first step in a long process which culminated in the growth of nationalism in the twentieth century" (De Silva 1981, 343). The truth of this becomes obvious when placed in context. At the time, the British governors enforced a policy of state neutrality. Buddhism was slowly and convertly supported, especially after the Kotahena riots of 1883 (a Buddhist-Catholic conflict), with small monetary donations for the repair of a *dagoba*[3] and a gift of lamps. The incremental growth of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism ensured that elitist Christian Sinhala leaders, unlike their Tamil brethren, would conform to nationalist principles if they wanted to lead that community. Communal conflicts were religion-based at the turn of the century; as the end of the twentieth century draws near, Sri Lanka is being ravaged by a civil war that has its basis in an ethno-cultural perspective. "Ethnic identity has taken over from religious identity" (Stirrat 1984 197). In fact, in the 1983 riots that devastated Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, both Sinhalese Catholics and Buddhists carried out attacks on Tamil Catholics (Stirrat 1984). The change in the nature and size of the conflict in Sri Lanka has ramifications beyond the tiny nation itself, especially for countries at the receiving end of the steady stream of refugees from Sri Lanka.

The ethnic struggle used to have political beneficiaries; now there can be no beneficiaries until the war is over. The evolution and escalation of the conflict took place over a number of years with the tacit acknowledgment and later direct intervention of the state. There were many indications of where the conflict would lead—the type of government and its problems after independence and the communal riots that plagued the country are examples. After 1983, the very nature of the conflict changed. But the progress of the conflict was left unchecked. Painfully tragic results have changed the way of life for a nation.

Stirrings of Discontent

The religious conflicts that occurred in the early 1900s were the Sinhalese and Tamils' responses to the emerging sense

of animosity against an alien culture with all its trappings. One element of the alien culture was the Catholic church. There were a series of violent encounters between Catholics and Buddhists: Ambalangoda in 1890, Wadduwa in 1891, Kalutara in 1897 and Anuradhapura in 1903; and between Catholics and Hindus: Negombo in 1899 and Neervali in 1902.

The elite class of Sri Lankan society did not have well defined "racial" boundaries at the time. They were simply Ceylonese. A combination of wealth and English education elevated them to that position. They were mobilizing among themselves to become a viable political force. Their motives were quite clear-cut. They were being barred from the highest echelons of the land, no matter how qualified or how capable. In an extreme example, a Whitehall (British government) official told a prominent Sri Lankan lawyer that the man chosen to be attorney-general "must be a good lawyer and ought to be pure white..." (De Silva 1981, 322).

Political representation under the British was in the form of the Legislative Council. The ratio for the council, whose purpose was to elicit information about local conditions, was fixed, by convention, at three Europeans and one from each Ceylonese community: Sinhalese, Tamil and Burgher. However, the effectiveness of the representation was greatly limited by the fact that the successive Sri Lankan members of the council all tended to come from the same families. Finally the Ceylon National Congress was formed in 1917; it was a multiracial, multidenominational party whose common links were elitist in nature. Until 1921, its leader was Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, a Tamil, whose prestige was so great that it subsequently made his post prestigious:

What distinguished élite politics in Ceylon in the first two decades of the twentieth century from succeeding decades was the harmony that prevailed between the Sinhalese and Tamil leaderships. In the political jargon of the day there were two majority communities, the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and the minorities were the smaller racial groups. The situation changed fundamentally after 1922 [the time of the Donoughmore Constitution] when ... there was one majority community - the Sinhalese- the Tamils now regarding themselves increasingly as a minority community. It has remained so ever since (De Silva 1981, 387).

According to K.M. De Silva, this promising time in Sri Lankan history was unparalleled. However, there were stirrings of trouble from the outset. It is true that these were not of ethnic leanings, but were instead due to the fact that the Ceylon National Congress was the bastion of the elite, none of whom shared the same political outlook. When the party was formed, there were two identifiable factions: the constitutional elite, who proposed a political goal of responsible self-government for Ceylon as a member of the British Empire. The other sector was radical; they favoured forceful opposition to British rule in the tradition of the Indian model.

In 1919, Sir William Manning, the new British governor, arrived. He did not approve of the Ceylon National Congress (CNC) and he used his considerable power to hasten the path of self-destruction that the CNC appeared to be taking. By the late 1920s, after the deliberations over the Donoughmore Constitution, the shift towards ethnocentric perspectives began. "Whilst the Sinhalese leaders favoured the 'one man, one vote' system, Tamil leaders objected to this on the grounds that it would give the Sinhalese majority total control over the country, and so they demanded some sort of communal representation to safeguard their position" (Stirrat 1984, 198).

But the Tamil leaders did not get what they demanded. Sri Lanka was unique at that stage. It was a full twenty years ahead of its African and Asian counterparts in the British Empire or Commonwealth with its universal suffrage. In 1931, 1936 and 1947, legislatures were elected by means of universal suffrage and the Sinhalese majority began to get more and more power because of their numbers.

Disenfranchisement and the Issue of Colonization

When Sri Lanka became an independent nation in 1948, replete with Westminster-style democracy, Britain and the Ceylonese overlooked a fundamental flaw. By ignoring the fact that, although Tamils constituted a minority of the general population, they constituted a very definite majority in certain areas of Sri Lanka — the northern and, to a slightly lesser degree, eastern parts of the country — Sri Lanka was left in a state that could easily have led to disarray and eventually did so.

Colonization was and remains an important issue of conflict. It was the government-sponsored colonization schemes of predominantly Tamil areas that caused a problem. "Tamils see it as a deliberate attempt to deprive their areas of continuity and thus decrease their communal bargaining power. They point out that hardly any Tamils have been settled under official auspices in Sinhalese areas" (Schwarz 1988, 10). The colonization schemes began in the 1930s. One of the largest of the pre-1953 projects was the one at Gal Oya in the Amparai District, which was initially a predominantly Tamil area.

Table 1: Population Change in Selected Districts						
	Tamils			Sinhalese		
	1953	1971	% Change	1953	1971	% Change
Jaffna	477,304	673,043	41	6,183	20,402	230
Batticaloa	130,381	246,582	89	31,174	94,150	202
Trincomalee	37,517	73,255	95	15,296	55,308	262
Puttalam	9,010	30,994	244	31,587	309,298	879

Data adapted from Schwarz 1988, 10

The settlement of large numbers of Sinhalese peasants in the Gal Oya Basin made it feasible for the government to create a separate electoral district for the Sinhalese and increase Sinhalese representation in the parliament. Indeed, the Amparai Electoral District is represented by a Sinhalese member of parliament (Manogaran 1987, 93).

Such colonization has long been recognized as a part of Tamil grievances because of the loss of power to Tamil representation. However, the schemes have been amplified as shown in Table 1.

The prime minister of the newly-independent Sri Lanka, D.S. Senanayake, assured G.G. Ponnambalam and his Tamil Congress that Tamil rights would be protected under the direction of the United National Party (UNP). He convinced Ponnambalam and others, to cross the floor and join the UNP. Among those who remained in Opposition were S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, a Tamil Christian, and his retinue, who vehemently opposed the disenfranchisement of Indian Tamils who were rendered stateless by D.S. Senanayake's government in 1949. "The legislation denying citizenship and voting rights to most Indian Tamils was passed by a Sinhalese-dominated parliament to satisfy the Kandyan Sinhalese, who were resentful [because] ... the agricultural land and employment opportunities for the indigenous population were limited" (Manogaran 1987, 19). But the underlying fear of Sinhalese politicians was that the Tamil population, Indian and Sri Lankan, would unite against the Sinhalese.

The ease with which the laws were passed distressed Chelvanayakam who then founded the Federal Party (FP). His view was that within a unitary form of government, minority rights were not protected and indeed were in considerable jeopardy. He said, "[today], justice is being denied to Indian Tamils. Some day in the future, when language becomes the issue, the same [will] befall the Ceylon Tamils" (Ram 1989, 37). The disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamils became a contentious issue that demonstrated how much was lacking in the government structure. Much of the

blame can be connected to the elite politicians who formulated the political structure. On a very simplistic level, it could be argued that because of their Anglicization, they could not see the necessity of taking into account the needs of the masses. However, it is more likely that they chose to ignore the social reality, naively assuming that the 5 to 6 percent English-speaking population would remain in power after successive elections. By not acknowledging these realities, the elitists orchestrated their own downfall.

Emergence of the Language Issue

The man who would eventually destroy the elitist stranglehold on power came from that social stratum. Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike, originally a Christian, was a member of a wealthy, prominent Sinhalese family. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's father was an Anglophile who named his son for the British governor, James West Ridgeway. Although Bandaranaike was very well educated in English (he attended Oxford), he was illiterate in Sinhala[4]; he was also the man who was swept into power under the auspices of the "Sinhala Only" Act. There was a growing sense of alienation with the realization that although English was spoken by a very small minority, it was the language of the state: the courts, police, parliamentary debates, government administration, banking and university instruction. "Initially, the Sinhala-language movement was purely anti-Western, but later it began to develop anti-Tamil overtones as well" (McGowan 1992, 155). Both Sinhalese and Tamil nationalists denounced English as an official language. Instead, they advocated a return to swabasha,[5] which would provide equal rights for both Tamil and Sinhalese languages. Soon, however, Bandaranaike was exploiting the explosive language issue for his own political purposes. The election year was 1956, which fortunately for Bandaranaike, was also the year of the Buddha Jayanthi:

Jayanthi was the 2,500 year anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment, the very epicenter of his 5,000 year teaching. A that point, Buddhists be-

lieved, the dharma would be spread throughout the world and would produce an unprecedented spiritual awakening. In Lanka, Jayanthi had an even greater significance, making the completion of 2,500 years of Buddhism, the life of the Sinhalese race, and the length of recorded history and continuous political institutions, a threefold event of great mystical power in the Sinhalese mind (McGowan 1992, 150-1).

The Buddha Jayanthi was instrumental in bringing religion into the fray of the language and culture wars. With Bandaranaike denouncing "the invisible yoke of evil, unenlightened teachings, practices, habits, customs, and views fostered by the British" (McGowan 1992, 151), the bhikkhus (Buddhist monks) were encouraging many Sinhalese to vote for Bandaranaike.

At the time of independence, Sri Lanka was left with two major parties and some smaller exclusively Tamil parties. The ruling UNP was technically a non-ethnic party. In reality, its members were "committed to Sinhalese nationalism" (Obeyesekere 1984, 156); but the UNP was also committed to unity, or more realistically, committed to allaying the fears of either community: "...[Sir John] Kotelawala [then prime minister] assured the Sri Lankan Tamils, during a visit to Jaffna in late 1954, that appropriate legislation would be adopted to make both Sinhala and Tamil the official languages of the country" (Manogaran 1987, 43). This action dismayed many Sinhalese. Bandaranaike capitalized on their fears.

The UNP reversed its position in 1955 by declaring that Sinhala should be the official language, but it was a futile action. To vote for the UNP, the bhikkhus assured the populace, would be cultural suicide. The reversal of the UNP position on language deprived them of whatever popular support they had from the Tamil population. It was no surprise then that S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) coalition[6] won a landslide victory in the April 1956 election. Bandaranaike had said that the Official Language Act would have a provision for what he

called "reasonable use of Tamil." However, once in power, any attempt he made to include Tamil in the Official Language Act was greeted with derision, and the Opposition accused the prime minister of conceding the rights of the Sinhalese to the Tamils. The Federal Party (led by S.J.V. Chelvanayakam) organized peaceful mass demonstrations against the "Sinhala Only" Act. Infuri-

demands of regional autonomy. In fact, in 1926 Bandaranaike promoted the federal state structure, within the existing unitary state framework to appease the Kandyan Sinhalese, who were demanding autonomy. The B-C Pact was considered "one of the few statesman-like compromises... ever to be attempted in Sri Lanka" (Ponnambalam 1983, 112). It was abandoned when Sinhalese Bud-

nation or state is incomprehensible to the popular mind. The emphasis on the sense of uniqueness of the Sinhalese past, and the focus on Sri Lanka as the land of the Sinhalese and the country in which Buddhism stood forth in its purest form, carried an emotional appeal compared with which a multi-racial polity was a meaningless abstraction (De Silva 1981, 512).

While the Sinhalese government was trying to implement its policies, the Tamil politicians were attempting to make clear the distinction between Sinhalese nationalism and Ceylonese nationalism, which were being equated at the time.

Even in 1951, the Federal Party was setting out the configurations for Tamil nationalism centred around the language, history and distinctiveness of the culture. In 1958, after satyagraha went into effect, the country was aflame with riots and four days passed without the declaration of a state of emergency. Hundreds of innocent civilians were murdered. People were tortured, beaten and shot simply for not being able to pronounce certain words correctly; a number of *goondas*[8] killed their own people who were too frightened to pronounce words correctly. The government's lack of response would prove to be the rule instead of the exception, and Tamils, moderates and extremists, were infuriated (Vittachi 1958).

> *There was a growing awareness among Tamil leaders that their Sinhalese compatriots, with whom they had agitated for independence from the British, were quite willing to subjugate Tamils if it was politically advantageous.*

ated Sinhalese mobs beat the Tamil protesters; "[this] violence was accompanied by an anti-Tamil riot, resulting in the killing of more than one hundred Tamils at the government-sponsored Gal Oya colonization scheme in Amparai District" (Manogaran 1987, 48).

There was a growing awareness among Tamil leaders that their Sinhalese compatriots, with whom they had agitated for independence from the British, were quite willing to subjugate Tamils if it was politically advantageous. The Tamil leaders, too, had their motives for their political strategies; however, much of their energies were devoted to fighting the openly discriminatory policies that the MEP coalition had introduced. By 1957, the Federal Party threatened Bandaranaike with a campaign of *satyagraha*[7] unless their demands—parity between Sinhalese and Tamil as two official languages, an end to the planned Sinhalese colonization of predominantly Tamil areas, the granting of citizenship rights to "Indian Tamils", and most importantly, regional autonomy were met.

Bandaranaike "...was convinced that the Tamils were determined to defend their legitimate rights and, in order to avert a major ethnic conflict, he agreed to negotiate a political settlement to the conflict in July 1957" (Manogaran 1987, 49). The settlement was known as the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam (B-C) Pact. Both leaders agreed on a devolution of powers in order to meet the

dhist extremists and the Opposition voiced their protests in a multitude of ways. One of the most famous, by J.R. Jayewardene of the UNP (who was originally a Christian), was the October 4, 1957 march to Kandy to invoke divine blessings for the campaign against the B-C Pact. Jayewardene, who would lead Sri Lanka after 1977, then said: "[the] time has come for the whole Sinhalese race, which has existed for 2,500 years jealously safeguarding its language and religion, to fight without giving any quarter to save its birthright" (McGowan 1992, 161). It was said that the B-C Pact would have reasonably assuaged Tamil fears of domination, but when it was abrogated

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in April 1958, the threatened campaign of satyagraha was enforced. Sri Lanka succumbed to a wave of nationalist tendencies as K.M. De Silva explains:

[one] of the immediate consequences of the transformation of nationalism was that the concept of a multi-racial polity was no longer politically viable. In Sinhalese the words for *nation, race* and *people* are practically synonymous and a multi-racial or multi-communal

Bandaranaike also had to deal with the many and often bitter conflicts within his coalition government. On September 26, 1959, he was assassinated by a bhikku who belonged to a radical right-wing faction of the coalition. Bandaranaike's wife, Sirima, immediately assumed power. Many Sinhalese and Tamil leaders had two very different ideologies as to where Sri Lanka should head in the latter half of the twentieth century. This

difference of opinion would eventually lead to disaster.

The politics of the 1960s were essentially under the control of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, the leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), who was returned to power in July 1960. The world's first female prime minister was "not reluctant to take on two inflammable issues at the same time" (De Silva 1981, 512). She passed the provisions of the 'Sinhala Only' bill into effect which stated that Sinhala should be the language of administration by 1961. "The Tamil people must accept the fact that the Sinhala majority will no longer permit themselves to be cheated of their rights" (McGowan 1992, 161), she explained. This was despite the unofficial

for the armed struggle that ensued in the following decades.

Mrs. Bandaranaike's party stayed in power until 1965 when Dudley Senanayake (son of former prime minister, D.S. Senanayake), returned to the office of Prime Minister, which he held briefly in 1952-53. Dudley Senanayake came when Sri Lanka's literacy (excluding the 0-4 age group) was almost 85 percent. "[As] a result of its long standing commitment to free education (in the sense of free tuition) at all levels–primary, secondary and tertiary–Sri Lanka in the 1960s became an outstanding example of the growing global phenomenon of educated unemployed" (De Silva 1981, 538). Dudley Senanayake's government devised a program of agri-

However, this goal was not necessarily achieved:

[Standardization] did not lead to better chances for schools in backward and rural areas as is sometimes alleged. In fact provincial distribution of places remained almost unaltered except for a fall in the share of science admissions from the Northern province. It is in the ethnic break-down that the real impact can be seen. The percentage of Tamil medium students entering courses in engineering fell from 40.8% in 1970/1 to 24.4% in 1973/4 (De Silva in Schwarz 1988, 9).

The corresponding period saw the emergence of armed militancy among Tamil students. Tamil moderate leaders became increasingly discredited in the eyes of the Tamil people because of issues like standardization but what finally reduced their political clout was their inability to protect the Tamil population from violence. Mrs. Bandaranaike's government clamped down hard on Tamils who supported secession, and Tamils living in predominantly Sinhalese areas began to feel the brunt of the repression. Those who lived in the North also faced repression in many quarters, and they reacted:

The problem has changed in nature. Initially, the crisis was a constitutional one involving the protection of basic minority rights that were subject to political exploitation. In more recent years, increased militancy has rendered the concept of political victors inconceivable.

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electoral promises she had made to the FP. The Federal Party, in turn, initiated civil disobedience, which led, for the first time, to military suppression of the Tamil disobedience in the north and east. Mrs. Bandaranaike also implemented state control over all state-aided secondary schools. The powerful Roman Catholic minority was incensed and fought against it. However, they, too, were forced to acquiesce.

In 1962, the armed forces (consisting mainly of Sinhalese Christians and Burghers) attempted a coup d'état that was put down. The acceptance of "Sinhala Only" by the major parties gave rise to an exodus of disillusioned intelligentsia from all communities who left Sri Lanka to go to England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Many Tamils also went to "Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia and other emergent countries of Africa which wanted their learning, skills and expertise" (Ponnambalam 1983, 112). These wealthy expatriates would ultimately serve as a financial support base

cultural activities designed to incorporate the ranks of the unemployed, but the educated were not interested in those types of jobs. The educated unemployed became very receptive to the criticisms made by the Opposition.

Mrs. Bandaranaike came back into power in 1970 after combining the SLFP with the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Communist Party under the banner of the United Front (UF). Mrs. Bandaranaike introduced ethnic quotas at universities in response to a general Sinhalese feeling that Tamils were somehow being favoured in admissions. The system of quotas, known as "standardization," was implemented in 1972. It was a system "in which marks obtained by candidates for university admission [were] weighted by giving advantage to certain linguistic groups and/or certain districts" (Schwarz 1988, 9). The government ostensibly sought to help the less proficient areas of Sri Lanka — in particular, Kandy and the upcountry Sinhalese.

The result was a spreading militancy and the growth of a martial spirit in a people who had long been known for passiveness.... But a generation of Tamil youth, raised in an almost perpetual state of conflict with the government–boycotts of schools, picketing of government offices, the performance of *satyagraha*, and the hoisting of black flags to protest government actions–had been radicalized (McGowan 1992, 177).

These radicalized youth, determined and fuelled by the conduct of the state police force, were the beginnings of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam militant group. In 1975, their leader, Velupillai Prabhakeran, led a small group who claimed responsibility for the killing of the pro-government mayor of Jaffna. In retaliation, the police and the army detained and tortured over one hundred Tamil students for a year. None were ever formally charged, "establishing a pattern of collective punishment for

acts committed against Sinhalese authority" (McGowan 1992, 177). After each communal riot, one of the most violent occurring in 1977, Tamils increasingly viewed the conflicts as struggles for personal and cultural survival instead of a confrontation over constitutional rights. The escalation was visible and Mrs. Bandaranaike's government was instrumental in using the police and armed forces as weapons of the state against its own indigenous population.

In 1977, J.R. Jayewardene and the UNP came to power. It was a year of reckoning for Sri Lanka. During the election campaign "[the] people's hatred of the long queues for essential foodstuffs, of injustices ... had been exploited with skill. At the same time every reactionary tendency, too, had been made use of" (Piyadasa 1984, 46). In the same election, a majority of Tamils supported the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) position as enunciated in the Vaddukoddai resolution:

> The convention resolves that the restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular Socialist State of Tamil EELAM based on the right of self determination inherent to every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in this country (TULF in Perera 1992).

Jayewardene had made electoral promises to the Tamils specifically about their employment and education grievances. But like many other Sinhalese leaders, these were more platitudes than promises. By 1979, the Tigers were carrying out more attacks on people and structures that had government links. In July of that same year, Jayewardene gave the the army a mandate to enforce the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which curtailed civil liberties and enforced what could essentially be called military rule in the northern and eastern provinces. In 1981, there was spate of anti-Tamil violence in response to attacks by the Tamil Tigers, but the communal riots of 1983 were the catalysts for full-fledged civil war.

At present, Sri Lanka is a country in dire straits. Refugees stream out of the country in record numbers to escape the consequences of the daily battles being fought in the north and east. Post-1983 has been a traumatic time for Sri Lanka. The Sinhala-Tamil conflict, which could have been averted with some forethought and a strong stance against political exploitation, appears to be uncontrollable in its present state. The problem has changed in nature. Initially, the crisis was a constitutional one involving the protection of basic minority rights that were subject to political exploitation. In more recent years, increased militancy has rendered the concept of political victors inconceivable. The survival of Sri Lankan society is now threatened, and the composition of minorities in the social fabric has been torn asunder. Inflammatory statements are the norm now for both the Sinhalese and Tamils. Sri Lanka is undergoing a most difficult time in its history. It remains to be seen whether a solution [see Manogaran in this issue] or solutions can be found to the complex and convoluted questions that make up the conflict. ■

Notes

1. Burghers: The Eurasian descendants of Dutch colonists.
2. Goyigama: the highest of the major Sinhalese castes; there are subcastes within the caste of the goyigama. Literally "agriculturalist" (Vellala: the Tamil equivalent of goyigama). The parallel caste systems of both Sinhalese and Tamils indicates the similarity between the two groups. "[It] may well be that Sinhalese and Tamils have much in common genetically, their separation being, like so many similar cleavages the world over, primarily a linguistic and cultural one" (Farmer 1963, 8). In much of the literature concerning this subject, "race" and "ethnicity" have been used interchangeably. [see Ramachandran in this issue on the role of culture in the ethnic conflict]
3. Dagoba: A Buddhist relic mound.
4. The language is Sinhala. The people and culture are Sinhalese.
5. Swabasha: Indigenous languages–Sinhala and Tamil
6. Mahajana Eksath Peramuna was formed by Bandaranaike's party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Viplavakari [Revolutionary] Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Basha Peramuna (Language Front) and independents.

7. Satyagraha: Civil disobedience movement along the Gandhian pattern.
8. Goonda: Hoodlum, unemployable vagabond.

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The Fragmented Island:
Ethnic Conflict and the Politics of Culture in Sri Lanka

Sujata Ramachandran

This article examines the role of culture in the ethnic conflict and strife in Sri Lanka. The general aim is to achieve an understanding of the nationalist process, the force of nationalist ideas and traditions in motivating action—action that is often violent and intolerant—and to demonstrate the value of a cultural approach to the understanding of modern societies. Culture has been examined in two ways here, namely, the dramaturgic approach to culture which emphasizes the expressive dimensions of culture, and the politics of culture or the political culture approach, whereby cultural manifestations are utilized effectively to maintain power between groups. The article concludes that the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is a product of modern politics, and culture has been used effectively to legitimate rival nationalisms in Sri Lanka.

Introduction

For nearly a decade, the island of Sri Lanka has been involved in the "continuing haemorrhage of a Lebanon-or-Ulster-style internecine civil war" (Wilson 1982, 295), where the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority are in violent conflict. This opposition is often portrayed as a product of ancient history or the outcome of animosity that has allegedly existed unchanged for centuries. The majority has turned to the elements of culture and cultural symbols, including religion, language and the historical past, to justify their actions of subordinating the minority. The Tamils eventually retaliated by engaging in a armed

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revolutionary struggle for Tamil national liberation, demanding the creation of a separate state of Tamil Eelam.

The role of culture and its effectiveness in legitimizing the rival nationalisms in Sri Lanka remains largely unacknowledged. This article attempts to examine the function or the politics of culture in this ethnic conflict pertaining to the generation of opposing ethnic identities, the role of the historical past, political myths and elite/interest groups in symbolic construction, and the meanings these provide for the groups in question.

The Culture of Nationalism and the Politics of Culture

> To inquire into the truth of the political myths is, therefore as meaningless and ridiculous as to ask for the truth of the machine gun or a fighter plane. Both are weapons and weapons prove their truth by their efficiency. If political myths could stand this test they need no other or better proof. In this respect, the theory was beyond attack and invulnerable. All it had to do was to put the political myths into action and to show their constructive and destructive power.
>
> — Ernst Cassirer, "Judaism and Modern Political Myths"

Culture has assumed a place of pride in the litany of nationalisms everywhere. Almost universally the culture that nationalists worship include the founding myths, legends, customs, traditions and language of the nation. These are at once constituted within the nation and constitute the nation. They are integral to national sovereignty and are made sacred in the nation as the nation is made sacred in them. Culture in nationalism becomes an object, a reified thing, something that can be separated or abstracted from the flow of social life. Made into a religious object, culture becomes the focus of de-

votion. It can have the character of a religious fetish, an idol, a thing that has self-contained magical properties (Kapferer 1988, 4).

Culture in nationalism becomes the focus of this article and is seen in a particular way here. The dramaturgic approach has been adopted relating to the expressive or communicative properties of culture (Wuthnow 1987, 13). Culture is identifiable as the symbolic-expressive dimension of social culture and social relations that communicates information about morally binding obligations and is, in turn, influenced by the structure of these obligations. Culture, in this approach, consists of utterances, acts, objects and events—all of which are observable. What is significant is the capacity of the various elements of culture, including rituals, ideologies and other symbolic acts, to dramatize the nature of social relations. Symbolic acts are likely to be meaningful if they articulate the nature of social relations.

Political culture "consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place" (Pye and Verba 1965, 9). In this article, I refer to the importance of politics as an independent variable shaping ethnicity, one that pits ethnic entities against one another and offers ethnic entrepreneurs high incentive for the cultural mobilization of their groups. Ethnicity has been highly politicized in Sri Lanka, and cultural mobilization is used effectively in the competitive pursuit of wealth, status or power. Political culture refers not to what is happening in the world of politics and society per se, but what people believe about these happenings. And these beliefs can be of several kinds: they can be empirical beliefs about the actual state of political and social life; they can be beliefs as to the goals

and values that ought to be pursued; and they may have an important expressive and emotional dimension. People respond to what they perceive of politics and its use of culture and they interpret what they see. From the cultural point of view, for instance, we would look at these events in the political history of Sri Lanka, not so much as a series of objective events but as a series of events that may be interpreted quite differently by different people, and whose effects on future events depend on their interpretations. The terms, "meaning" and "interpretation", here, are relational terms. They refer to the interaction between what exists in the mind of the individual or collectivity and to what happens in the outside world.

Ethnic conflict is, therefore, related primarily and sometimes solely to the problems of social organization that are conceived in terms of politics and the allocation of scarce resources. More specifically, ethnicity is said to be inherently related to competition and conflict. Ethnic actions are actions in which a claim to common provenance (or origin), ancestry or culture are potent (Shlomo 1974, 281-84). In the case of Sri Lanka, ethnic-cultural symbols are activated or manipulated in the framework of political conflict.

Who Is a Tamil? Who Is a Sinhalese? The Question of Collective Identity

All nice people like Us, are We,
And everybody else is They.

— Rudyard Kipling

The emergent nationalities in Sri Lanka indicate the tendency of individuals to identify with particular collectives or ethnic groups such as Tamils or Sinhalese. This is based on the principle of inclusion or exclusion (Breton 1988, 1992). These include the conditions for becoming or ceasing to be a member; and the circumstances under which one can be expelled (Breton 1992, 4). Identity is a subjective, individual phenomenon; it is shaped through the constantly recurring question, "Who am I?" with the inevitable corollary, "Who is he?" or "Who is she?" Generalized to the collectivity, these become, "Who are we?" and "Who are

they?" These questions involve the basic processes of cognition, perception and symbol formation. This identity can be an individual phenomena, but is also applicable within the social grouping to which the individual belongs. Indeed, identity "is a process located in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture: a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of these two identities" (Young 1976, 20).

The basis of these solidarity groupings are commonalities or affinities of ethnicity, language, race, caste, assumed blood tie, custom and/or territory (Young 1976, 12). The main formal criterion of membership of the rival Sinhalese and Tamil collectivities today appear to be linguistic, religious and historical antecedents. Although four different ethno-religious-linguistic collectivities reside in Sri Lanka, more than 92 percent of the inhabitants identify themselves with one of the two distinct groups, Sinhalese and Tamil. In 1981, the estimated population of the island was 14.85 million, of which the Sinhalese and Tamil communities account for 74 and 18.2 percent, respectively. The Tamils themselves have been divided into Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils which form 12.6 and 5.5 percent of the total population, respectively. The other group, i.e., the Muslims (Moors) form 7.1 percent of the total population. The last three categories are all speakers of Tamil, but are differentiated by religion and/or putative origin. Indigenous Sri Lankan (Ceylon) Tamils are settled in the north and the east; Indian Tamils are the descendants of estate workers brought in from South India during the British period (Spencer 1990, 14). [*Also see Manogaran in this issue*]

Of importance in the long run is how the political identities of the Sinhalese and Tamils came into being, how these groups came to represent the differences themselves, and how these ideas were used. Today these ideas about "Sinhalaness" centre around four themes:

• The Sinhalese share a certain biological nature; that they are a race. The unity of the Sinhalese is asserted over and above Low Country/Up Country or caste differences. Indeed, the

1981 census was the first to treat Sinhala as a unity. Although respondents had been classified in separate Up Country and Low Country categories by the enumerators, this division was not maintained in the published records. Interestingly, no such unification of the Tamil population was effected in this census.

• One manifestation of this biological community is the sharing of a common language.

• "True Sinhalese" also share a common religion: i.e., they are Buddhists.

• Sri Lanka is in its entirety the land of Sinhala and of Buddhism: it is the Sinhalese-Buddhist nation. The people, language, religion, culture and territory are all intimately linked.

These ideas are paralleled among the Tamil community (Nissan and Stirrat 1990, 30).

The groups involved here are not necessarily permanent, frozen collectivities, but are in a state of flux in response to long-term forces of social change and shorter-term alterations in political context. For example, the Sinhalese themselves were a divided group not long ago and the development of a common Sinhalese identity took time. In the 1920s, there was still a sizable number of Kandyan Sinhalese who demanded separate representation from Low-Country Sinhalese and who also favoured a federal system of government (Nissan and Stirrat 1990, 45). Similarly, the Tamils themselves were divided into the Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils, as described earlier. But Tamil and Sinhalese nationalisms today tend to overlook these differences.

The main criterion of membership of the rival Sinhalese and Tamil communities today is linguistic, but in the colonial period the most salient identities—at least as far as riots and disturbances were concerned—were religious. Catholics, who were pitted against the Buddhists and Hindus in colonial conflicts, are now divided into Sinhalese Catholics and Tamil Catholics. Yet Muslims, who are predominantly Tamil-speaking and as

such might to be thought to have suffered as much as anyone from linguistic discrimination since 1956, have stubbornly maintained their ethnic separateness from their fellow Tamil speakers and have pursued their own political course in recent years while remaining aloof until very recently from the central ethnic conflict. In fact, the particular assembly of "races" identified in the census of Sri Lanka, based on the mélange of religious, linguistic and geographical criteria, can only be explained through a detailed account of the politics of identity (Spencer 1990, 8).

The Power of the Past

> The use of history is no longer incidental with interesting snippets being taken to bolster an argument, but it is fashioned and streamlined to serve a purpose, and contradictory details are blacked out. — Anon

Sinhalese and Tamil communities in Sri Lanka tend to view their relationships in terms of histories that stretch back for at least 2,500 years. These histories buttress the opposing territorial claims of the two communities and make the conflict between them seem inevitable. For the Sinhalese, history justifies their claim to impose their rule all over Sri Lanka. For Tamils, too, history is used to justify demands, in the past for a degree of autonomy in Tamil-dominated areas, and today for total separation from the Sinhalese-dominated parts of the country (Nissan and Stirrat 1990, 19). Historical myths and legends are recreated to reinforce the idea. Just as the Sinhalese Buddhist ethnic majority seeks to review the past in modern garments, so the Tamil minority in its turn has begun to take refuge in the fact that in Ceylon there was once a separate Tamil kingdom (Wilson 1988, 22).

The Sinhalese people claim that even if they were not the first inhabitants of the island, a status they allow to the "primitive Veddas," they were at least the first "civilized" settlers of Sri Lanka (Nissan and Stirrat 1990). They claim to be descended from north Indian Aryan ancestors who spoke an Indo-European language that developed into Sinhala. Prince Vijaya, the mythical ancestor of

the Sinhalese people, and his followers are said to have arrived on the shores of Lanka on the day of Buddha's death; but even before Vijaya's arrival, Lanka claims to have had a close relationship with the Buddha. According to the island's ancient chronicle histories, the Buddha visited the island on several occasions and announced that in Lanka his "doctrine should ... shine in glory" (Nissan and Stirrat 1990, 20). However, the Sinhalese were only converted to Buddhism in the third century B.C. by Mahinda, son of the great Indian emperor, Ashoka, during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. Since then, so it is claimed, they have with few exceptions always been Buddhist. During the Anuradhapura period (circa third century B.C. to ninth century A.D.), a great Buddhist civilization flourished in Sri Lanka. This state was continually under

pressure from the South Indian kings; one in particular, Elara, ruled Anuradhapura for over forty years in the second century B.C. until he was defeated by the heroic Sinhalese-Buddhist king, Dutugamunu. Eventually, the Sinhalese were forced to retreat southwards, first to Polonnaruwa, then to various other capitals until the last phase of Sinhalese independence, which centred on Kandy. The Kandyan kingdom was eventually ceded to the British in 1815. The Sinhalese claim is that these Tamil communities never, or only rarely, formed separate political entities. Rather, once settled in Lanka they accepted the suzerainty of the Sinhalese kings (Nissan and Stirrat 1990, 20).

Not surprisingly, the Tamil version of the past is somewhat different (Nissan and Stirrat 1990). In its "soft" version, it is argued, Tamils have lived in Sri Lanka for at least 2,000 years (from the Elara period) and formed their own autonomous political units independent of Sinhalese control. Satchi Ponnambalam, for example, claims that the original in-

habitants of Lanka were really Tamil; that the Sinhalese were originally Tamil who converted to Buddhism and adopted Sinhala, a language based on Pali, the language of Buddhist texts; and much of what the Sinhalese uphold as monuments of their past greatness was actually produced by Tamil ancestry.

The historical arguments are numerous, but as it is the Sinhalese who are politically and numerically dominant in the island, so it is Sinhalese history, to a great extent, that sets the terms of the debate. Despite the fact that these two histories are opposing versions of the past, each stressing the claims of the community that generates it, they share many features in common. Both present the past in terms of the interaction of two opposed entities, the Sinhalese and Tamils, who have always been as separate as they are today. Secondly, they

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Despite the fact that these two histories are opposing versions of the past, each stressing the claims of the community that generates it, they share many features in common.

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consist of arguments over events that allegedly occurred between the fourth century B.C. and the tenth century A.D. Thirdly, they present the two communities as historically and continuously opposed through warfare, joining an ancient past to the present with no regard for the hiatus of centuries. Fourthly, the histories are both concerned with a "national people's" claim to its own territory. Finally, each side presents the other as little more than barbarians (Nissan and Stirrat 1990). Both sides in the present political context back up their respective claims through the selective and competitive use of archaeological evidence. Factions on each side have been willing to destroy or reinterpret evidence that would support the other party. Differing maps are produced that purport to show the distribution of Sinhalese and Tamils in Lanka in the past. In this context S.J. Tambiah writes:

> Although the major identity component of the Sinhalese are their Sinhalese language and Buddhist religion, and of the Tamils, their Hindu religion,

both these populations share many parallel features of traditional caste, kinship, popular religious cult, customs and so on. But they have come to be divided by their mythic charters and tendentious historical understanding of their past (Tambiah 1986, 5).

Another aspect that has been conveniently overlooked is that the Tamil and Sinhalese identities are largely created since "it seems that neither the Sinhalese nor the Tamils have remained racially pure" (De Silva et al. 1988, 13), and that intermixing has taken place, as revealed by the following statement:

Aside from its plethora of faiths, Sri Lanka is also a country of racial diversity revealed in the frequency of eyes coloured from brown to blue, crinkly and smooth hair, flat and hooked noses. Proof enough that no racial stock has escaped mixture with several others (Ram 1989, 31).

Power Relations and Symbolic Action: The Role of "Political Myths"

But meanings and symbols are not dependent on things as context; they are relations, not objects. Ignoring this point, seeing meanings and symbols as things, has allowed cultural analysts to erect a distinction between symbolic structures and concrete structures; to differentiate religion, myth, art—held to be "essentially" symbolic forms—from economics, politics, kinship, or everyday living. This is a position we reject.
— Dolgin et al. quoted in Gusfield and Michalowicz 1984.

The myth, an unquestioned belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning, is a particularly relevant form of symbol in the emergence of mass political movements. When we recognize the functions it serves for the group and its individual adherents, we can define the systematic ties between individual role attachment and common adherence to a controversial political movement (Edelman 1971, 53).

While myths or symbols exist in their own right and are observed for their intrinsic values, they are nearly always

manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, in the struggle for and the maintenance of power between individuals and groups. Political myths or symbols have distinctive characteristics that make them dynamically different from other perceptions. They develop and are mutually reinforced by large collectivities of people, evoking intense hopes and fears, threats and reassurances (Edelman 1971, 2). In other words, myths and symbols are objects, acts, concepts or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of disparate meanings, evoke sentiments and emotions, and impel men to action (Cohen 1974, ix).

In the following discussion of symbolic forms, a distinction is thus made between the kinds of meanings. The denotation of symbolism is that it stands for something else, but the meanings derived from these symbols are not the same—they provide different meanings to different individuals or groups.

First, collectives generally have a "myth of origin" that entails the reconstruction of the past and/or creation of a mythical past. It includes views about the present's continuity or rupture with the past, as well as the expectations and/ or desiderata for the future (Breton 1992, 6). Two significant dimensions of the past include the symbolically constructed past in which the past is the overflow of the present. It is oriented from the present. It is akin on one side to our escape fancies, those in which we rebuild the world according to our heart's desires, and on the other to the selection of what is significant that must be held or reconstructed. Its decisive character pushes back conditioning continuities of the present (Maines et al. 1983, 163). The other dimension includes the "mythical past," which refers solely to symbolic creations that are used to manipulate social relationships. These pasts are creations rather than re-creations because they are not empirically grounded. They are fictitious. However, they are empirical in their consequences because they can materially affect relationships (Maines et al. 1983, 164). In Sri Lanka, the myths of origin form the complex of the above and can be conceived as purposeful creations which control and shape

collective behaviour. They provide a manipulative dimension to social relations because they are created precisely for establishing and maintaining advantage. Cohen terms this "cultural extension," in which myth refers to some prior point in the society's history, the rooting of the present in the past and in so doing legitimizing the present by investing it with the values that have become sacred by their very historical or traditional nature.

The point has been made succinctly by Worsley, "Men ransack the past to find legitimations for the present: they discover precursors, trace intellectual pedigrees, rewrite history" (Cohen 1975, 15).

The great myth of origin of the Sinhalese people, as given in the religious chronicles, especially the *Mahavamsa*, of the foundation of their state and of the triumphant reconquest by a Sinhalese Buddhist king of Sri Lanka, creates a divinely sanctioned social order in which Sri Lanka becomes the land of the Sinhalese Buddhists and which legitimizes the right of the Sinhalese majority to subordinate the Tamil minority. The Buddhism of Sinhalese nationalism is one of nationalist practice and interpretation, a Buddhism reconstituted in the religion of nationalism. It creates the vision of a myth of symbiotic social order in which Tamils have a subordinate role and Sinhalese-Buddhists a super-ordinate one based on the divinely ordained order. It validates the dominant status of the Sinhalese and also convinces them of their "right" to their superior position in society.

On the other hand, detection of threats to the collectivity becomes a potent factor in cultural mobilization; anxieties and insecurities dictate solidary responses. Crises engender acute anxieties and highly polarized perceptions. Not surprisingly, the Tamils denounce the established practice of Sinhalese nationalism and claim that this conflicts with the manner in which their members live or ought to live. They feel that society frustrates their aspirations and denies them the kind of life they feel is rightly theirs.

When cultural communities collectively perceive serious threats to communal status in the political environment, group solidarity tends to increase, as in the case of Tamils. Thus, counterstate of a nation of Tamils is created to prove their stake to the claim. They suggest collective course of action to allay their anxiety.

The significance of the political myths is through their power to merge diverse perceptions and beliefs into a new and unified perspective that symbols affect what men want, what they do, and the identity they create for themselves (Edelman 1971, 6). Further, a political myth is always the myth of a particular

mogeneous, highly potent or omnipotent group that conspires to harm the in-group, i.e., the Sinhalese. The actions are dictated by fear, signed by distrust or executed by emotions. Each group has a generalized perception of the other, clothed in insecurity and hostility, which swiftly imputes aggressive and threatening intent and intense fervour in the response of the other to each stage of the unfolding crisis (Young 1976, 161).

A political myth tells the story of a political society; it is the story of a political society that was supposedly created in the past and that must now be restored or preserved. In reality, it concerns a political society destined to be created in the

which painful, inconvenient facts are excluded, conveniently ignored and in which self-serving courses of action are justified. Because the myth is a means of succour against severe anxiety or vice versa, it is strongly embraced and defended, and in doing so becomes the mould into which perceptions of political developments are organized (Edelman 1971, 74). Political leaders can thus rely on the ubiquity of anxiety and its externalization in the myths as an ever present base for a following. By the same token, anxiety readily converts even implicit and metaphorical references to mythic themes into vivid and intensely held beliefs (Edelman 1971, 80).

The Role of the Elite in Cultural Symbolic Constructions

Cultural symbolic constructions can be conceived as being deliberately built by social and institutional elites and more or less successfully imposed on members. As such, they are part of the exercise of power through which elites maintain the institutional order of society or ethnic community and their place in it. The symbolic universe is thus consciously created from "above" (Breton 1992, 15). Interest groups like the elite exploit the symbolic forms to shape power relations in society. In this respect, the two orders, symbolic as manifestation of culture and political as relations of power between groups and/or individuals, are interdependent or to some extent causally related and imply a competition between groups for resources and/or power.

In symbolic transformations such as those recounted earlier, the ethnic polarization of the present is defined in terms of past rivalries, and, in that process, the past itself is rearranged in terms of the policies of the present.

group. It has as its hero not an individual but a tribe, a race, a class, an ethnic group or collectivity, as in the case of Sri Lanka.

Evocation of the cultural map of reality depends on the reception of social cues that prompt this response. Very often, the cues are supplied by messages—communication face to face or through interpersonal media—which have already processed reality through a cultural symbol system and transmit information in a communal structure (Young 1976, 143). Riots by Sinhalese thugs on Tamils and their property, making Sinhala the national language in the "Sinhala only" policy, disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamils, the use of a Sinhalese cultural symbol on the national flag—all these actions have different meanings for the different communities. The Tamils feel that the status and benefits due them are being denied or threatened. It also evokes the feeling that the superordinate group, the Sinhalese, in this case, maintain and enjoy the privileges unfairly or unjustly. On the other hand, the Sinhalese majority registers these actions as the expected order of things. For them, the out-group, the Tamils are perceived as a different, ho-

future and it is told for the purpose of encouraging men to hasten its advent. Today, both Tamil and Sinhalese strive to create two different nations; Sinhalese nationalism attempts to establish Sinhalese hegemony on the entire island and Tamil nationalism demands the creation of a separate state of Tamil Eelam in the northern and eastern part of the island.

In symbolic transformations such as those recounted earlier, the ethnic polarization of the present is defined in terms of past rivalries, and, in that process, the past itself is rearranged in terms of the policies of the present. History/myth is of the past but not in that past; it is rooted and flourishes in the present.

Thus, political myths or metaphors create and filter value premises. These myths can be termed "political" because they serve as a means of establishing power relationships in society that are the basis of politics. The political myths highlight the benefits that flow from a course of action and erase its unfortunate concomitants, helping speakers and listeners to conceal disturbing implications from themselves. Ambiguous terms in a threatening context create a world in

In the context of Sri Lanka, government leaders, politicians or even academics compose the important constituencies of mythic acceptance, infuse their rhetorics with references to legends. The legends of the religious chronicles *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*, their stories of origin, armed struggle and heroic resurgence, are woven into the fabric of Sinhalese religious and ritual life. The president of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa [who was assassinated on May 1, 1993] was popular among the urban and rural poor. He published a short novel in Sinhala and in English that presents the heroic progress of Dutugamunu. The tone of the novel

aligned the president with widespread Sinhalese populist sentiment (Kapferer 1988, 42).

Public events are often the occasion of ideological recharging by politicians at all levels within the government. At the opening of a small deity shrine in Panadura, a town just south of Colombo, Cyril Matthew, then the minister of industries and scientific affairs, stated that "74 percent of the Sinhalese race should not be dominated by 12 percent of the minority community." At the same time, he announced that nationals in Sri Lanka, whatever their community, had the right to live anywhere in Sri Lanka, and that "300 Buddhist temples had been excavated by the archaeological department in the north and in the east." These areas are dominated by the Tamil minority. The program of the reclamation of temples was also announced on radio and television. Such statements are completely consistent with Sinhalese claims to territorial hegemony that are supported by a reading of the ancient chronicles. They are also consistent with schemes of Sinhalese colonization and resettlement and with the practice of building replicas of ancient monuments, such as the Ruwaveliseya of Dutugamunu, around the island (Kapferer 1988, 43).

Similarly, academics have been no exception to the rule. A scholar from Sri Lanka claimed that Sri Lanka or Sinhaladipa (Island of the Lion where the lion is a Sinhalese cultural symbol) is the land of the Sinhalese (People of the Lion) when she wrote:

> Sri Lanka was the land of the Sinhalese and ... non-Sinhalese who resided there were allowed to do so by grace and favour of the Sinhalese "master race" who had prior rights of possession and were the exclusive sons of the soil (Tennekoon 1990, 216).

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka, both Sinhalese and Tamils are engaged in a modern battle fought with traditional slogans and/or weapons. Ethnicity and nationalism in this context are thus seen to be fundamentally, political phenomena as the sym-

bols of the traditional culture are used to articulate political alignments and emerging ethnic cleavages. Cultural symbols, including history, lend significance to the collective violence of nationalism in Sri Lanka. But, the "myths" being used to legitimize the rival nationalism are being worked anew in the modern situation of ethnic conflict and relate to present political and social realities in Sri Lanka. ▣

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Reading Between the Lines:
Intra-Group Heterogeneity and Conflict in Sri Lanka

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We are working on borrowed time in the political space temporarily opened up by the reports of the various human rights missions [that have visited Sri Lanka] in the past year.

—Colombo-based
human rights worker, 1992

Introduction

Even a cursory glance at the history of refugees reveals a connection between mass violence and the creation of large refugee populations. However, the experience of Sri Lanka underscores the need to disentangle the nature and implications of this connection. In Sri Lanka, different communities have been affected and displaced in response to changes in the dynamics of violence: in the late 1970s and early 1980s, mob violence in the Hill Country forced thousands of Plantation Tamils to seek refuge in the Northern Province and in southern India; from 1987 onwards, military offensives by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and later the Sri Lankan Army displaced Tamils from the Northern and Eastern provinces, many of whom found their way to India, Europe and North America. More recently, the tactical use of massacres by all combatant groups in the Eastern province generated a stream of internally displaced Muslims as well as Tamils.[2] The bottom line is that in a country with an estimated population of 17.5 million, there are more than a million displaced people—the majority of whom are from the Tamil community.[3]

The starting point for developing an understanding of conflict in Sri Lanka must be the recognition that the major

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groups are internally divided into politically salient subgroups along a range of differentiating axes such as regional identification, religion, language, caste, political ideas and class. This approach stands in contrast to the representation of the conflict as the stark and violent confrontation between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. This article rests on the belief that to make sense of the patterns of ethnic violence, it is necessary to delve more deeply than the interaction *between* warring ethnic groups; it is essential that the structure and dynamics *within* the groups in conflict assume a central position in analysis. It would appear that the intransigence, intensity and insolubility of some cases of violent ethnic conflict may be less a consequence of the polarization of groups than a function of the splintering and warring of factions within factions.

The systematic examination of the impact of fluctuating violence on refugee flows in Sri Lanka and elsewhere has implications for the development of practical early warning capabilities concerning refugees and displaced persons. It also has implications for efforts to manage and settle such conflicts. Drawing on recent fieldwork, this article attempts to contribute to this examination by providing a current snapshot of the various Tamil groups in Sri Lanka in the context of changing patterns of violence.

Intra-Group Divisions of the Tamil Community

Our examination of the intra-group divisions of the Tamil community is made easier by a geographical correspondence to major social, political and economic differences between groups. Accordingly, we may identify the following principal subgroups: Colombo Tamils, Jaffna or Northern Tamils, East Coast Tamils and Plantation Tamils. Not surprisingly, within each of these groups

there are further subdivisions and systems of stratification and differentiation (for example, caste, economic and social class, and political allegiance). While recognizing the political salience of each of these subsequent axes of differentiation, this article privileges geographical categorization because in Sri Lanka, where one lives is central to the understanding of who one is. Or, as Jonathan Spencer puts it, "identity is a matter of belonging to place as much as having a history."[4] This is particularly important in the context of the current discussion because the patterns of violence and displacement are fundamentally rooted in "where one lives." Thus, for example, in 1991 the U.S. Committee for Refugees reported that in the Northern and Eastern provinces one in five residents has been displaced by the violence.

Members within these Tamil subgroups recognize a status hierarchy that conditions intra-group relations: Colombo Tamils and Jaffna Tamils place themselves on top, East Coast Tamils are located in the middle and the Plantation Tamils are at the bottom.[5] This division is further underscored by many East Coast Tamils' distrust of the economic domination by Jaffna Tamils.[6] It is ironic that while cultural differences and natural antipathies between the East Coast Tamils and Jaffna Tamils once may have encouraged each to pursue a separate political agenda, the government's heavy-handed military actions appear to have helped to push these two groups closer together. Similarly, this appears to have contributed to making the East Coast Tamils more receptive to the most powerful Tamil paramilitary, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—despite the Jaffna Tamil complexion of the organization.[7]

The great social distance between the Plantation Tamils and the other Tamil communities is reflected by a project ini-

tiated in the 1970s by the late Bishop Leo Nanayakkara to educate Jaffna Tamils about the poverty-stricken plight of Plantation Tamils. He was struck by two observations: 1) the Jaffna Tamils' lack of awareness concerning the conditions on the tea plantations; and 2) the low regard in which Plantation Tamils were held by Jaffna Tamils. This latter point is frequently reflected in the Jaffna Tamils' use of "low Tamil" when addressing Plantation Tamils. Unfortunately, political events eventually buried this project.

For the purposes of this article, the anthropological details of such divisions and stratification are less important than the fact that they exist and are politically salient in conditioning the behaviour of the members of these sub-groups. The remaining sections of the article will situate the intra-group divisions more explicitly in the context of violence and the displacement of people.

Internecine Feuding

The feuding among Tamil paramilitary groups is an especially bloody manifestation of one axis of division within the Tamil community.[8] Feuding between the major Tamil paramilitaries (particularly the LTTE, EPRLF, TELO, and PLOTE)[9] has been a common feature of paramilitary politics since the creation of these groups in the late 1970s and early 1980s—at times even spilling into the streets of South India. Violence became especially vicious following the gradual IPKF withdrawal from the Northern and Eastern provinces in 1989.

This created a power vacuum and provided the structural incentives for the paramilitaries to intensify their battle for territorial control of the traditional Tamil regions. The groups were also fighting to militarily win the right to represent the Tamil people in the eyes of both Tamil and Sinhalese constituencies. In the context of the current discussion, it should be noted that the withdrawal of the IPKF and subsequent reassertion of LTTE territorial control in the north and east sent many EPRLF supporters and government collaborators (voluntary and nonvoluntary) fleeing LTTE retribution.[10] This was reflected in a surge of applications for refugee status in Canada and elsewhere.[11]

To compete with the battle-hardened and militarily superior LTTE, the other Tamil paramilitaries have attempted to draw resources from the Sri Lankan and Indian governments. Indeed, all major Tamil paramilitaries (TELO, PLOTE and EPDP)[12] are now allied alongside the Sri Lankan military against the LTTE. The paramilitary cleavages appear to have been adroitly harnessed by both the IPKF and the Sri Lankan Army to pit Tamils against Tamils. At times, the government's manipulation of paramilitary animosities has subsidized the violence in unexpected ways. For example, the unsuccessful impeachment proceedings against President Premadasa in September 1991 produced well-founded allegations that he was responsible for providing the LTTE with arms and supplies for use against the IPKF and the India-backed Tamil National Army (TNA) in November 1989[13] (Incidentally, these same supplies are now being used by the LTTE against the Sri Lankan Army, East Coast Muslims, Tamil civilians, pro-government Tamil paramilitaries and Sinhalese settlers in the North). It would appear that the president was attempting to capitalize on the divisions between the Tamil paramilitaries in order to buttress his political position from challengers within the Sinhalese political arena. That is, covert support to the LTTE allowed him to circumvent the constraints of the 1987 India-Sri Lanka Agreement in an attempt to push the IPKF off the island. If successful, Premadasa would have been able to defuse a serious challenge from opponents that coalesced around the issue of expelling the IPKF. Interestingly, despite Sinhalese heterogeneity, the Agreement succeeded in rallying and aligning a diverse range of groups: political parties led by the opposition SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party), community groups, the media, academics, segments of the Buddhist clergy, and Sinhalese cultural and Buddhist patriotic organizations. Perhaps most dangerously, it provided a lightening rod to mobilize the discontent of the unemployed Sinhalese youth which was ultimately expressed in the Peoples' Liberation Front (JVP) insurrection of 1988-89.

Similarly, despite the alliance of the EPRLF and PLOTE with the Sri Lankan military, there are strong allegations that Colombo previously provided support to the LTTE for its feud against the pro-government Tamil paramilitaries.[14] At one level of analysis, the feuding is rooted in intra-group power politics. But at another level, the feuding is exacerbated by the rivalry between Colombo and Delhi. In the latter regional context, intra-group feuding assumes the features of a war by proxy—with Delhi backing the EPRLF and the TNA and Colombo backing (however counterintuitively) the LTTE.

	Northern Province				Eastern Province			National
District	Jaffna	Mullaitivu	Vavuniya	Mannar	Trincomalee	Batticaloa	Amparai	Average
Sinhalese	0.6	5.1	16.8	8.1	33.6	3.2	37.6	74.0
Sri Lankan Tamil	95.3	76.0	56.9	50.6	33.8	70.8	20.1	12.6
Indian Tamil	2.4	13.9	19.4	13.2	5.6	1.2	0.4	5.6
Muslim	1.6	4.9	6.9	26.6	29.0	24.0	41.6	7.1
Other	0.1	0.1	0.02	1.5	1.0	0.8	0.3	0.7

Table 1: The Demographic Composition in Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka

Source: Government of Sri Lanka Census 1981

This paramilitary feuding has impli-
cations for both current and future pat-
terns of conflict in the North and East.
The Tamil paramilitary coalition against
the LTTE is very clearly a coalition of
convenience rather than commitment. It
has been maintained by the organiza-
tional glue provided by Delhi and
Colombo and by the common under-
standing among the militants that they
are threatened by the LTTE. If the LTTE
threat is weakened or removed, the un-
ravelling of the coalition will likely fol-
low and the conveniently overlooked
intra-paramilitary tensions and conflict
will spill into more violent feuding in the
North and the East—and perhaps even
into the streets of Colombo since that is
where pro-government Tamil para-
militaries located their offices.[15] The July
1989 murder in Colombo of the leader of
the democratically-elected Tamil United
Liberation Front (TULF)—allegedly by
the LTTE—may presage things to come.

The fuelling of intra-group antago-
nism by Colombo and Delhi for short-
term, short-sighted political goals
contributes to the brutalization of civil-
ians in the North and East and will in-
hibit (or at least complicate) movement
towards accommodation in any effort to
construct a postwar settlement.

Tamil-Muslim Relations on the East Coast

The sensitive demographic balance on
the East Coast is a crucial difference
between the Northern and Eastern
provinces—a difference that has been
reflected in the dynamics of violence and
the displacement of persons. While the
northern Tamils clearly constitute the
majority group in the Northern Prov-
ince, the demographic dominance of
Tamils is far less secure in the Eastern
Province where Muslims find them-
selves pivotally placed in a precarious
ethnic balance (see Table 1).[16] There the
Muslims can substantially help or hinder
either Tamil or Sinhalese efforts to cap-
ture political and military control. Con-
sequently, they have been variously
wooed and attacked by militaries and
paramilitaries on all sides.

Until recently, relations between East
Coast Tamils and Muslims fluctuated

between cooperation and conflict, de-
pending on the political context. Because
of the Muslims' strategic position in the
demographic balance, they have tended
to support whichever political or mili-
tary group seemed best able to secure or
protect their interests. It should be em-
phasized that despite a common lan-
guage, the two groups are clearly
separated on the basis of religion.[17] Sur-
prisingly, in the past there has been suf-
ficient common ground to encourage a
number of Muslims to join the LTTE.[18]
This fact should not suggest that the East
Coast Muslim and Tamil political
projects are one and the same, but it does
illustrate the variable and nuanced rela-
tionship between the two groups. How-
ever, since June 1990 the two
communities are being violently sepa-
rated as a result of the LTTE campaign to
isolate Muslims out of the region. The
motives underpinning the LTTE version
of ethnic cleansing remain unclear. Nev-
ertheless, in October 1990, the LTTE ban-
ished all Muslims living in the northern
districts of Mannar, Mullaitivu,
Kilinochchi and Jaffna with the order to
"leave or be killed." Some villages were
given as little as two hours to quit their
homes.[19] A consequence of this strategic
shift in relations between the LTTE and
the Muslims is the massive exodus of
Muslims from the East Coast. It is esti-
mated that approximately 60,000 evicted
Muslims from these northern districts
fled south seeking refuge. In July 1991, it
was estimated that 40,000 Muslims were
living in some sixty camps in Puttalam
District. The Muslim Refugee Rehabilita-
tion Organization estimated that at that
time there were more than 100,000 dis-
placed Muslims in Sri Lanka.[20] By Sep-
tember 1992, it was reported in The Island
International that some 150,000 Muslims
were displaced from the North.[21]

The Sri Lankan government has al-
ways been aware that a coalition of Mus-
lims and Tamils on the East Coast could
effectively challenge Colombo's author-
ity. Thus, the government has employed
a two-pronged strategy to lessen this
possibility. First, it has attempted to alter
the demographic composition of the East
Coast by increasing Sinhalese settlement
in and control over traditional Tamil ar-

eas. This so-called "West Bank scheme"
envisions the resettlement of thousands
of armed Sinhalese settlers trained in self-
defence on government-owned land in
this area.[22] By 1985, over 50,000 Sinhalese
(ex-convicts, retired military personnel
and families displaced by the massive
Mahavelli water project) were resettled
on traditional Tamil land. Unable to af-
fect the government's colonization
policy, some Tamil paramilitaries re-
sponded with terror and violence against
these settlements—including the whole-
sale massacre of communities, such as
the Dollar and Kent Farm massacres in
1984.

The second part of Colombo's strat-
egy has been to encourage the separation
of Muslim and Tamil interests and iden-
tities. Education policy was conveniently
pressed into service to allow Muslim
children to study in "Muslim schools"
(until 1974), which helped to emphasize
religious differences while de-
emphasizing the shared Tamil language.
The establishment and expansion of
these schools, it must be emphasized,
vitiates the principle of nonsectarian
state education, which has been the de-
clared policy of all governments since
1960.[23]

Schisms are appearing within the
Muslim community. The Sri Lanka Mus-
lim Congress (SLMC), the first explicitly
Muslim political party, was created to
represent Muslim interests. However, it
has been hindered by the debate over
who or what constitutes the "Muslim
voice" and its subsequent poor showing
in the May 1993 Provincial Council elec-
tion suggests diversity rather than unity.
Furthermore, young Muslims in Sinhala-
speaking areas of the country are re-
ported to be losing their ability to speak
Tamil to their co-religionists on the East
Coast, thus suggesting the beginnings of
a linguistic as well as a regional divide
among the Muslim community.[24]

Especially effective in separating
Muslims and Tamils on the East Coast
was the Sri Lankan government's deci-
sion to create and arm a Muslim civilian
militia (the Muslim Home Guard) osten-
sibly for community protection. Mean-
while, Tamil villages are unarmed and
unprotected. As far as self-protection is

concerned, the Muslim Home Guard appears more likely to be involved in the massacre of innocent Tamil children, women and men than in the protection of Muslim communities. The consequence of this government policy has been the provision of the material means to militarily pit Muslim groups against Tamil groups. The victims, by and large, are the innocent civilians caught in the middle. This is graphically evident in the increasing use of massacres by all combatant groups in Sri Lanka.

The Tactical Use of Massacres

The Welikande massacre of 162 people illustrates the dynamics of this type of violence. At the end of April 1992 in the Muslim village of Alinghipotana, the Muslim Home Guard fled into the jungles when the village was attacked by thirty to forty armed men who were believed to be members of the LTTE. Twenty people were injured and seventy four people were murdered including five babies and twenty-eight school children; most were stabbed or hacked to death. A few hours later, the Muslim Home Guard left the jungle and teamed up with some Muslim policemen to launch its own massacre on the Tamil village of Muthugala. Fifty people were murdered and sixteen were injured. The slaughter continued in the Tamil village of Karapola—thirty-eight people were murdered including six children. Fifty-nine were injured.[25]

This incident reflects an especially brutal violence on the East Coast; one that is likely to continue festering for a number of reasons. The location of such villages in the "interface" between the Tamil north and the Sinhalese south places them on the front line in the battle for control of both territory and the "hearts and minds" of villagers. The disintegration of the rule of law in the country as a whole, and the failure to hold combatants accountable for their actions in the war zone (reflected in the systematic and pervasive human rights abuses by all forces) leave villagers open to continued abuse and intimidation. The most likely reason for the continuation of such massacres is that both pro-government and LTTE forces appear to have adopted

military strategies designed to pursue their battle for territorial and political control through intimidation and terror. Massacres have become part of the military repertoire for *all* combatant groups in the North and East.[26]

It is impossible to ensure the security of thousands of villagers in the midst of ongoing war. As in Yugoslavia, civilians are not simply caught in the crossfire, they have become targets.[27] Massacres are orchestrated to push people out of strategic areas and to create inter group enmity in order to inhibit the development of inter-group coalitions that might challenge the warring factions or the legitimacy of violence. While such atrocities may be instrumentally employed by group leaders, the barbarism is as much a consequence as a cause of the conflict.

Even more prevalent than the massacres are widespread disappearances and increasing vigilantism. From June 1990 to September 1991, on the East Coast, Amnesty International reported that over 3,000 Tamil people "disappeared" while in the custody of government forces.[28] By June 1992, the Missing Persons Project of the Batticaloa Peace Committee had a growing list of 3,600 names for the Batticaloa area. Especially embarrassing for the Premadasa regime are the recent allegations by Premadasa Udagampola, the former deputy inspector of police, that the United National Party (UNP) government of Premadasa employed its own vigilante squad called the "Black Cats" to murder opponents, including members of the official opposition party, the Sri Lankan Freedom Party.[29]

Until there is a lasting political solution, innocent villagers will continue to be brutalized, displaced and killed. Yet, even if a political solution was worked out, the most daunting obstacle to peace would be the traumatic legacies of dehumanization and distrust.[30]

The direct consequence of such violence in the North and East has been the massive dislocation of thousands of Tamils and Muslims. Many internally displaced people have found themselves in and around Colombo. A pressing question for many outside observers and agencies concerns the safety of Tamils in

Colombo—both newly arrived and permanent residents. The following section addresses this question.

The Situation of Tamils in Colombo

Depending on who one talks to, the situation for Tamils in Colombo ranges from "perfectly fine" to "dangerously unsafe." However, those who work with refugees tend to argue that Colombo is not a safe haven for displaced Tamils or an "internal flight alternative." The official number of Tamil refugees in Colombo is 11-12,000. But these numbers are considerably underestimated because the government stopped registering displaced peoples in November 1990. One human rights worker estimated that there were between 16-17,000 displaced Tamils in camps around Colombo, with the average camp holding 600-1000 inmates. In three camps visited by the U.S. Committee for Refugees in May 1991, 20-30 percent of the residents were unregistered. The impact of non-registration of persons both outside and inside camps is twofold: it makes it difficult to calculate the number of people displaced by the war, and those who are not officially registered by the government are not entitled to food rations.

The Tamil camps in Colombo consist primarily of East Coast Tamils.[31] One human rights worker explained that this is "because Jaffna Tamils, by and large, always seem to have an out." They have the international contacts and linkages that seem to enable them to leave the country. This observation should not be taken to imply that those groups with access to international networks are not legitimate refugees. But, it does point to a particular catch-22 of the refugee determination process: those individuals who might most legitimately and accurately be identified as refugees, according to even the most stringent definition, may be those who are least able to petition for refugee status. Further discussion of the situation of displaced Tamils in camps around Colombo lends support to this suggestion.

Although the displaced persons camps are the responsibility of government authorities (such as the Ministry of

Social Services and the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction), the help of a pro-government Tamil paramilitary, the EPDP, has been harnessed to administer and police the camps. By all accounts, the EPDP maintains oppressively tight control within the camps. It suppresses all "political talk" and has been known to kidnap and murder individuals to enforce its control. In a recent case, a Colombo-based human rights group was actively involved in negotiating the release of a boy who was kidnapped from a camp by the EPDP. The boy eventually reappeared on the East Coast in Batticaloa, an area where the EPDP is militarily active. Despite the successful retrieval of the boy, he was described as having been "hollowed out" psychologically, emotionally and spiritually as a result of torture.[32] It would appear that intimidation and terror is a central element of EPDP control in the camp. As well as restricting activities within the camp, the EPDP also restricts the movement of people out of the camp by imposing an inhibitive bureaucratic process. Only recently has the role of the EPDP in the security network attracted public notice when it was reported that the inspector general of police stated that he had no control over the EPDP.[33]

It is interesting to note that displaced Tamil women are allowed somewhat easier access to the few activities available on the outside (such as training in "traditional women's skills" like sewing and typing). This is because prevailing cultural attitudes do not immediately cast women—even Tamil women—as a potential political threat. Unfortunately, for both economic and security reasons, these newly acquired skills are not generally put to use outside of the camp. The economic disincentive is that even if camp Tamils managed to secure employment on the outside, the EPDP levies a very heavy "tax" on the earnings (as high as 50 percent).[34]

The security disincentives for not venturing from the camps are even more constraining. During the height of the second JVP insurrection (1987-90) all urban residents in Sri Lanka had to register at the local police stations in their neighbourhoods. There was a tight network to enforce this control. For example, landlords were responsible for ensuring that all tenants were registered at the police station (this required character statements from the police station in the hometowns of the tenants—obviously, a difficult requirement for those fleeing violence). While this government directive has recently lapsed, it has been reformulated to apply only to landlords in Colombo who want to keep Tamil tenants from the North or the East.[35] Furthermore, anonymous phone calls and letters frequently draw the authorities' attention to "visitors" and strangers from outside. This is one form of control that discourages displaced persons from straying from the camp.

There are also frequent cordon and search round-ups in and around Colombo where there are even more problems for those who are not where they are supposed to be.[36] The frequency of the round-ups and detentions depends on triggering events (such as assassinations and explosions) and the general political climate. These round-ups affect both long-time residents and displaced Tamils.[37] Everyone is collected and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. One human rights worker estimated that the typical minimum detention is ninety days. And in jails, as one human rights worker explained, beatings are routine. Because everyone from an area is rounded up, there is often no one on the outside to exert external pressure for release. When an employee for a Colombo-based human rights organization was rounded up and detained, it took tens days to gain release—and that was the result of a concerted effort by a human rights group! The process is even more protracted for an intimidated ordinary citizen. The bureaucratic and political obstacles to gaining release are formidable and recent amendments to the emergency regulations have not substantially improved the situation.[38]

It is very important to emphasize that those detained by government forces may be held in any place designated by the secretary to the Ministry of Defence and that the officers in charge are not required to inform magistrates or anyone else that they have in custody persons arrested under emergency regulations. This has contributed to the masking of human rights abuses.[39]

A Tamil in Colombo is at risk of being "detained" not only by the official security forces but also by the pro-government Tamil paramilitaries. While the risk of being detained by the Tamil paramilitaries remains lower than that of being detained by the police and government forces, it remains a group-specific risk nonetheless and contributes to the sense of insecurity of Tamils in Colombo (as well as other parts of the island, particularly Batticaloa and elsewhere on the East Coast). Although the pro-government Tamil paramilitaries have no legal authority to detain and arrest people in Colombo, it appears to be accepted by the authorities. As the leader of one pro-government Tamil paramilitary explained, "Yes, of course this is illegal" but "it is common practice and accepted." The Tamils will not go to the police because "they know what the next action will be": "We'll just shoot somebody, or somebody will be missed from their family." This was all explained as part of the commonplace daily activities within a system animated by "everybody [being] afraid of everybody." The Tamil paramilitaries claim to either "settle" the problem themselves or to deliver those they have abducted to the police. There is some informal cooperation and coordination between the pro-government Tamil paramilitaries in the event that one group mistakenly arrests a member of another group. "Cordial" arrangements are made to release the detainee. Most noteworthy is how common and accepted this type of activity is. This further suggests the disintegration of the rule of law and the prevalence of intimidation as a common form of social control.

Thus the displaced Tamils in Colombo face a dead end at every turn: they are at risk in their home provinces; they are at risk in Colombo, and they are at risk in the camps. Although camp Tamils appear to be a group at risk, there are few avenues open for them to get out. Ostensibly, passports are available from local city halls (*kachcheris*), but in order to get a visa, one has to journey into Colombo. Yet the group-specific restrictions noted

earlier penalizes Tamils from all subgroups and further puts them at risk. Thus, they are often afraid to come to Colombo and are unable to stay the amount of time that it takes to get a visa; another door is closed.

Plantation Tamils

Like other groups of Tamils, the Plantation Tamils have been displaced by successive waves of communal violence. The postelection riots in 1977, as well as the violence against the Plantation Tamils in 1980 and 1981, sent many seeking refuge in Vavuniya and other northern districts. A number of Sri Lankan observers reported that this helped to facilitate tentative contact between Plantation Tamil youths and some of the Tamil paramilitaries, such as PLOTE and EROS—contact that has not yet resulted in any type of concerted action or cooperation. It was not until the 1983 violence that displaced Plantation Tamils began seeking refuge in South India from the violence. It has been estimated that in 1983, two-thirds (approximately 20,000) of those Tamils who sought refuge in Tamil Nadu were Plantation Tamils from the Kandy and Nuwara Eliya regions.[40] It is important to note that the violence that has displaced Plantation Tamils has been that of rioting mobs rather than that of Tamil paramilitaries and government forces. Thus in recent years this group has not suffered the same type of dislocation as those in the North and the East. Political powerlessness and social and geographical separation from other Tamil groups have tended to cast Plantation Tamils into the political backwater. However, changes within that community may soon increase politicization and volatility.

Changes within the Plantation Tamil community that are altering the politics of identity include increasing literacy, education and political awareness. These changes are reflected in the shifting political demands of Plantation Tamils from issues of citizenship and labour to issues of political representation and governance. The emergence of a Plantation Tamil political movement called the Up Country Peoples' Front (UCPF), led by the now imprisoned P. Chandra-

sekaran, is a recent development that presages political mobilization. The significance of the UCPF lies less in the organization per se than in the internal social changes noted earlier that have made this development possible. As one researcher noted, "in the course of my research, I have met ten Chandrasekarans." One community worker predicted that it will be the next generation of Plantation Tamil youths—those who are educated and unemployed—that will be the basis of the politicization of the Plantation Tamils interests.

In the mid-to late 1980s there were tentative efforts by Northern Tamil militant groups to enlist Plantation Tamil youths into the broader Eelam struggle. Indeed, Chandresekaran contested the 1989 elections under the PLOTE banner. Such contacts have been relatively limited and results have been minimal. Nonetheless, the government's fear of such infiltration has recently led to mass arrests of Plantation Tamils by police in the Hill Country.[41] The hitherto failure of Northern militant efforts to expand the Eelam struggle into the plantation areas suggests the fundamental social tension between the Northern Tamil and Plantation Tamil political projects. Ironically, the more severe the crackdown on the alleged political activities of the Plantation Tamils, the more likely it may be that they will respond to Northern Militant overtures. Indeed, despite the apparent incongruity of the arrangement, a number of Plantation Tamils teamed up with the Marxist Sinhalese JVP during the terror of the 1987-89 insurrection. Clearly, political convenience may go a considerable distance towards blending the ostensibly incompatible.[42]

Many of the "new" political voices among the Plantation Tamils arise from the disgruntlement with the inability of the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC), the largest Plantation Tamil trade union, to "deliver the goods." In the past, political dissent and demands could be pacified or defused by the adroit manoeuvring of the leader, UNP Minister S. Thondaman, which included cracking down on opposing unions as well as delivering significant political gains on paper, such as citizenship for those Plan-

tation Tamils who were disenfranchised after independence. However, the advanced age of Mr. Thondaman (now eighty-one years old) has given rise to jostling for leadership within the CWC. His eventual death will set in motion a battle for succession and will remove an element of stability within the Plantation Tamil areas. At this stage, a struggle for political control will likely take place both within the CWC and among the political groups in the Hill Country. This struggle need not necessarily be violent, and it need not attract the mobilized violence of Sinhalese chauvinists, but the destabilization will provide convenient points of access for those with political scores to settle.

Conclusion

The situation is potentially dangerous for all Tamil groups in Sri Lanka. Tamils in the North and East are increasingly subjected to systematic abuses by all combatant groups. As one former military officer put it, such atrocities are justified by "the necessity of authoritarianism in the face of crisis." A similar sentiment is reflected in the statement by a highly placed government official: "any solution must *begin* with the total military annihilation of the LTTE." Further, those Tamils and Muslims who have already been displaced by the violence are still in potential danger. Those in camps are still subject to abuse. As for the plantation areas, political rumblings suggest that the flare-up in labour violence is a real possibility in the wake of the inevitable exit of Thondaman who has provided a degree of stability through his leadership of the Ceylon Workers Congress.

While the focus of this article on the Tamil community is in keeping with the theme of this issue, a complete understanding of the conflict clearly requires the incorporation of the Sinhalese community into the intragroup level of analysis. The recent assassinations of President Premadasa and his political rival, Lalith Athulathmudali, only underscore the need to examine the impact of Sinhalese intra-group politics on inter-group conflict. The immediate future of Sinhalese-Tamil relations will be indelibly affected

by the outcome of power struggles currently taking place within the Sinhalese arena. There is a looming danger that the jostling for position in Colombo may encourage some political entrepreneurs to play the chauvinist card (i.e., encourage anti-Tamil sentiment) in order to consolidate internal support. While the absence of anti-Tamil riots in the wake of Premadasa's assassination was welcomed with relief by all observers, there remains considerable uncertainty as to the way in which the new president, D.B. Wijetunge, and his prime minister, Ranil Wickremasinghe, will choose to address Tamil grievances and the festering violence in the North and the East. A host of factors adds to the uncertainty. The leading political parties are riven with competing factions. While the leaders of the JVP have been killed, the root causes that precipitated the insurrections of 1971 and 1987 remain unaddressed (especially youth unemployment and political disillusionment). And particularly ominous in the midst of this political turmoil is the issue of the future role of the military in Sri Lankan politics; its leadership has been decimated by assassinations and the loyalty of its troops is open to question.[43]

The immediate future does not look especially promising. Yet, I will conclude somewhat optimistically with a passage from a story told to me by a community worker in a war-torn area:

> After the spray of machine gun-fire, the ragged and pock-marked wall was left unplastered for about a year. During that time a small sparrow decided to make one of the bullet holes its home. It pecked and picked the loose plaster away, eventually dislodged the slug and made a tiny nest (Fieldnotes from Batticaloa, June 1992). ▣

Notes

1. The author acknowledges the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Graduate School of Cornell University. A version of this article was presented on a panel cosponsored by the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute and the South Asia Council of the Canadian Asian Studies Association. I wish to thank Bruce Matthews of Acadia University and Richard Harmston of South Asia Partnership for pulling the panel together. For security reasons, I have maintained the anonymity of those individuals who were interviewed for this article. I am in their debt and remain encouraged by their dedication and integrity in the face of adversity. I am solely responsible for the views expressed in this article.

2. In summary, government military action may be recorded as follows: 1) 1983-August 1987, Sri Lankan military engagement; 2) August 1987-March 1990 IPKF engagement; and 3) June 1990 - present, Sri Lankan military forces/ pro-government Tamil paramilitary engagement.

3. The U.S. Committee for Refugees estimates that more than 210,000 fled to the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu and that 700,000 are displaced within Sri Lanka (News release, November 12, 1991). For a general discussion of displaced persons in Sri Lanka, see: Jennifer S. Thambayah, "The Displaced in Sri Lanka: The Relevance of International Humanitarian Law." Unpublished paper, 1992.

4. Jonathan Spencer, ed., "Introduction: The Power of the Past" in Sri Lanka: History and Roots of the Conflict (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 10.

5. Personal interviews, Sri Lanka, May-June 1992.

6. Ganath Obeyesekere, "The Origins and institutionalization of Political Violence" in Sri Lanka in Crisis and Change, edited by James Manor, (London and Sydney: Croom Helm), 153-74.

7. Determination of popular sentiment in a war zone is problematic, however. Attitudes and allegiances are context-dependent according to who is asking the question and which group is "in control" at the moment. As a resident of the East Coast explained to me, "there is always undying support for which ever group is holding a gun to your head".

8. For details, see Rajan Hoole, D. Somasundaram, K. Sritharan and Rajani Thiranagama. The Broken Palmyra, The Tamil Crisis in Sri Lanka: An Inside Account (Claremont, CA: The Sri Lanka Studies Institute, 1992).

9. EPRLF: Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front. EROS: Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students. PLOTE: People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam. TELO: Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization.

10. The first incident is reported in the University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) Jaffna, "The Debasement of the Law and of Humanity and the Drift Towards Total War," Report #8 (August 28, 1991). It was also recounted to the author in the course of discussions with residents of Batticaloa. The murder of the policemen is reported in Amnesty International, "Sri Lanka — the North-East: Human Rights Violations in a Context of Armed Conflict." (London: Amnesty International, 1991). A statement attributed to the vice-chancellor of the University of Jaffna, dated November 16, 1992 disclaims any university connection with the publication "Human Rights in Sri Lanka" by the University Teachers for Human Rights—Jaffna Branch. This may be more indicative of the intimidation that rules the North than the legitimacy of the UTHR (Jaffna), a group that has consistently reported on human rights abuses in the North and North East. The murder of Professor Rajani Thiranagama (Department of Anatomy, University of Jaffna) in September 1989 for her refusal to accept the abuses of any military or paramilitary organization is but one example of such intimidation (see note 8). Ultimately, the credibility of any material is determined by critical and politically sensitive scrutiny. All details derived from UTHR (Jaffna) publications in this article are independently confirmed in other sources. The most recent UTHR (Jaffna) publication of which I am aware is "Report #11: Land, Human Rights and the Eastern Predicament" (Thirunelvely, Jaffna: UTHR (Jaffna), April 15, 1993).

11. This was brought to my attention by Dennis Cole, senior analyst, Immigration and Refugee Board of the Government of Canada.

12. Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) is a Tamil paramilitary group that splintered off from the EPRLF in 1987.

13. For details, see A.K. Menon, "The Other Battle field," India Today (October 15, 1991): 99; The Hindu (Madras) (September 6, 1991): 1; Frontline (Madras) reprinted in Christian Worker (Colombo), (2nd and 3rd quarter 1991): xvi. For an excellent analysis see: Bruce Matthews. "Trouble in Sri Kotha: Strains and Perils of Democracy in Sri Lanka," Roundtable 322 (1992): 215-27.

14. Christian Worker (January 1990): viii-x.

15. Interestingly, this is a view that was candidly shared by both military and paramilitary leaders.

16. Unfortunately, the most current demographic information is the 1981 Census. This does not indicated the mass movements of peoples since then. Nonetheless, the data do suggest the differences between these areas and the rest of the country.

17. See K.M. de Silva, Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Sri Lanka, 1880-1985 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986): 228 and "Sri Lanka's Muslim Minority" in Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies: Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma edited by K.M. de Silva, Pensri Duke, Ellen Goldberg and Nathan Katz (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988).

18. Ameer Ali, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic War: The Muslim Dimension," Pravada, 1, no. 11 (November, 1992): 5-7; University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna), "The

Debasement of Law and of Humanity and the Drift Towards Total War," Report #8, (August 28, 1991): 53; and personal interviews.

19. U.S. Committee for Refugees, *Sri Lanka: Island of Refugees*, prepared by Court Robinson (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1991): 25-28.

20. Figures from *Sri Lanka Monitor* (July 1991); and the U.S. Committee for Refugees, *Sri Lanka: Island of Refugees* (1991), 25-28.

21. *Island International*, (September 9, 1992), 4.

22. Mary Anne Weaver, "The Gods and the Stars," *The New Yorker* (March 21, 1988), 67; See also Rodney Tasker, "Brink of Civil War..." *Far Eastern Economic Review* (February 21, 1985), 39.

23. K.M. de Silva, "Sri Lanka's Muslim Minority" in *Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies: Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma*, edited by K.M. DeSilva et al. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 211.

24. Ameer Ali, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic War: The Muslim Dimension," *Pravada* 1, no. 11 (November 1992): 5-8.

25. Shantha J.R. Pieris and Jeanne Marecek, "Report on the Welikanda Massacre." Unpublished report commissioned by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, May 11, 1992; and Sunila Abeysekera, "Report on the Massacres in Karapola, Muthugala and Alanchipothana." Unpublished report, INFORM, Colombo. May 15, 1992. See also Amnesty International, "Sri Lanka: An Assessment of the Human Rights Situation," (February 1993), 9-10 (AI Index: ASA 37/1/93).

26. Alleged army massacres include the Mahilanthanai massacre on August 9, 1992. INFORM, *Sri Lanka Information Monitor*, Situation Report September 1992, 14 and February 1993, 14; the murder of 100 Tamil civilians near a refugee camp in Amparai in June 1990 and the massacre of eighty-three people in two buses on the Mannar-Vavuniya Road: U.S. Committee for Refugees, *Island of Refugees* (Washington: USCR, 1991), 16, 22; the Kokkaddicholai massacre in Batticaloa in June 1991 [British Refugee Council, *Sri Lanka Monitor*, March 1992, 3 and January 1992, 1.

Alleged LTTE massacres include the murder of at least ten Muslims who were separated from fellow passengers on a train in Batticaloa in July 1992. Amnesty International, "Sri Lanka: An Assessment of the Human Rights Situation" (London: Amnesty International, 1993); the massacre of 200-300 TNA conscripts during LTTE's entry into Batticaloa in December 1989. University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna, "The Debasement of the Law and of Humanity and the Drift Towards Total War." Report #8 (August 28, 1991); the massacre of more than 100 police officers who surrendered to the LTTE in June 1990. Amnesty International, "Sri Lanka—the North-East: Human Rights Violations in a

Context of Armed Conflict" (London: Amnesty International, 1991); the Anuradhapura massacre of 150 people in May 1985 and the Dollar and Kent Farm massacres in 1984. More recently, the LTTE has been accused of the massacre of 120 Muslim men and boys at prayer in Kattankudy and the massacre of 173 sleeping children, women and men in Eravur in August 1990. It should be noted that observers on the East Coast are not convinced that the LTTE was in fact responsible for the latter two massacres.

27. A view shared by the authors of the following: University Teachers for Human Rights, "The Politics of Destruction and Human Tragedy," Report #6 (Jaffna: University of Jaffna, 1991): 22; U.S. Committee for Refugees' *Sri Lanka: Island of Refugees*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1991, 2.

28. Amnesty International, "Sri Lanka—the North-East: Human Rights Violations in a Context of Armed Conflict" (London: Amnesty International, 1991), 17.

29. This incident has been reported in both local and international media. See, for example, Thomas Abraham, "Kill and Tell," *Frontline* (Madras) (May 8, 1992): 51-52.

30. INFORM, a local Colombo-based NGO has undertaken projects addressing this facet of the conflict. Particularly noteworthy is a recent rehabilitation project funded by South Asia Partnership. The project will establish a family rehabilitation centre with outreach activities throughout the island to address the severe psychological and physical effects of the violence. I am indebted to Anthea Mulakala, program officer of the Sri Lanka Canada Development Fund for bringing this to my attention.

31. Separate camps for displaced Muslims are located north of Colombo in Puttalam District.

32. Personal interviews, Colombo, May and July 1992. Similar incidents are noted in the 1991 US Committee for Refugees report.

33. Reported in INFORM, *Sri Lanka Information Monitor*, Situation Report (April 1993): 9.

34. Personal interviews, May-June 1992.

35. This was brought to my attention by a Sri Lankan newspaper reporter.

36. For example, INFORM reports, "Arrests of young Tamils continued to take place in Colombo with 17 youth arrested in Fort on the 8th of February supposedly because they did not have sufficient reason to be in Colombo. A young man named K. Shanmuganathan from Kytes [an predominantely Tamil inhabited island in the North] was hacked to death at Bodhiraja Mawatha, Petah." *Sri Lanka Information Monitor*, Situation Report (February 1993): 16. Similarly in December 1992, the police detained for questioning over 500 Tamils from all the major towns in the south because their "explanation of being in the South appeared unacceptable to them." INFORM,

Sri Lanka Information Monitor, Situation Report (December 1992): 10.

37. For example, following the November 16, 1992 assassination of the Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Amnesty International reports that "the police detained over 3000 Tamil people living in the south and screened them for connections with the LTTE. The majority were released within a few days." Amnesty International, *Sri Lanka: An Assessment of the Human Rights Situation*, February 1993 (AI Index: ASA 37/1/93).

38. For example, one amendment provides for the issue of receipts to relatives of persons arrested in cordon and search operations *only if a request is made*. As Suriya Wickremasinghe, secretary of the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka points out, "arresting officers may falsely deny that any such request was made [and] relatives may fear to make or may be intimidated from making such requests." For a brief discussion of the February 1993 Amendments, see the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka, "Emergency Regulations—The Recent Amendments," E 03/2/93, February 25, 1993.

39. Ibid.

40. Figures from a 1985 survey conducted by the Madras Christian College, Department of Statistics cited in U.S. Committee for Refugees. *Sri Lanka: Island of Refugees* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1991), 9.

41. 124 Tamils arrested in March 1992: *Sri Lankan Monitor* (March 1992): 2; over 100 Plantation Tamil youths arrested in Uva: *Sri Lanka Monitor* (January 1992): 3; see also *Sri Lankan Monitor* (November 1989): 3.

42. Personal interviews, Sri Lanka, May-July 1992.

43. Assassinations: Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne in March 1991; Vice Admiral Fernando November 1992. The Kayts land mine explosion killed Major General Kobbekaduwa, northern commander of the army, the security forces commander of Jaffna, the commander of the northern naval area and three senior lieutenant colonels. These assassinations have hindered the military's fighting ability in the North and East and exacerbated the ongoing friction between career officers seeking advancement (see Waruna Karunatilleke "Changing of the Guard," *Counterpoint* (April 1993): 30-31. JVP Infiltration: There is continued concern with JVP infiltration of the military, illustrated by the arrest of an army officer for helping the leader of the JVP escape to India. "Army Officer Charged with Helping JVP Leader," *The Island* (April 5, 1992); see also the *Sri Lanka Monitor* (December 1991): 4. Loyalty of the Forces: Officially, it is estimated that between 3,000 - 4,000 soldiers have deserted from military service; *Sri Lanka Monitor* (March 1992); 3; and *The Island* (June 1992). •

A Political Solution to the Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka

Chelvadurai Manogaran

The ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka began in the mid-1950s, yet little progress has been made at the negotiating table to settle their differences on the issues of regional autonomy for Tamil areas, colonization and economic development of Tamil-dominated districts. The military confrontation between the Tamil militants and government forces, which accelerated with the anti-Tamil riots of 1983, has resulted in a de facto separation of the island into a Sinhalese majority region and a Tamil majority region. Whatever impact the Tamil militant movement has on the geopolitics of Sri Lanka and South Asia, its activities are largely confined to a well defined region in the North-East Province where the Tamil-speaking people are in the absolute majority. When the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) was deployed in the North-East Province, only Tamil majority areas were under the direct supervision of the IPKF, while the Sinhalese majority areas in that province remained largely under the control of Sri Lankan security forces.

Large portions of rural sections of the Tamil majority region continued to remain under LTTE control when the war between the government security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) resumed in June 1990. By late 1990, government forces attempted to bring the Northern Province under their control by launching attacks on key towns along the main routes leading to the Jaffna Peninsula, the militant stronghold. At the outset, the security forces attempted a three-pronged attack on the

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Jaffna Peninsula from the mainland. They encountered major setbacks along the routes, especially in Vavuniya and Kokkavil, and had to change their original strategy. Instead of gaining control of the main roads leading to the peninsula from the mainland, they strengthened their positions around the peninsula, including the Elephant Pass and the islands to the west.

By controlling the land and sea entry points to the Jaffna Peninsula, the army sealed it off from the mainland and prevented the LTTE from moving freely between the two locations. Tamil Nadu has been virtually sealed off from the Jaffna Peninsula, after the Indian government moved a number of ships into the Palk Straits to patrol the Indian coast and enforced strict security measures to prevent militants from entering or leaving. A high-ranking LTTE leader, Sathasivam Krishnakumar (alias Kittu), lost his life on January 16, 1993 while attempting to reach the Jaffna Peninsula by sea.[1] The army hopes to defeat the LTTE and to find a political solution to the ethnic problem by blockading the Jaffna peninsula, besieging it by launching attacks from land, sea and air.

There are no indications, however, that the security forces have complete control over the Northern Province or over most of the rural areas in the Eastern Province. Although they control the town of Vavuniya, the surrounding areas are under the control of militants. The army has already cut off food supplies, electric power and gasoline to the peninsula. It also intends to isolate the LTTE from the one million civilians of the region by mounting massive attacks on the Peninsula, using its air and artillery power. There is little doubt that these military tactics will only result in the killing of thousands of Tamil civilians, since is it impossible to isolate LTTE hide-outs from civilian settlements, especially be-

cause the peninsula, with its closely knit settlements, tall fences and market gardens, is very densely populated. While the security forces may succeed in inflicting heavy losses on the local population and the militants by attacking from the air and sea, they would face tough resistance from the militants on land. Indeed, there will be heavy losses on both sides if the attack were on land. It is not known what military strategy the army will ultimately adopt to launch its final assault on the Jaffna Peninsula, but it is safe to state that the odds of the Sri Lankan government defeating a guerrilla army, which has the support of the population of the peninsula, is doubtful. A massive assault on the peninsula will result in the genocide of the Tamils.

The government cannot, however, prolong this war because it costs thousands of dollars to maintain and supply the troops every day. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and donor countries have shown reluctance to furnish additional loans to Sri Lanka unless a real effort is made to put an end to the ethnic problem.

In addition, international pressure from human rights groups, including the UN Subcommittee on Human Rights and donor countries, may eventually compel Sri Lanka to halt human rights violations and find a solution to the ethnic conflict. Therefore, the future of peace in Sri Lanka and government's military operations in the North will depend on how fast it will respond to international pressure, both on the questions on human rights violations and on the use of borrowed money to fight the militants. At this stage, there are no signs that the army or the LTTE is willing to cease hostilities and to find a political settlement to the conflict. Nevertheless, there are indications, given the statements made recently by the LTTE leader, Veluppillai Prabhakaran, in an interview to the Brit-

ish Broadcasting Corporation, that the militants may be willing to negotiate a political settlement if the Sinhalese-dominated government was willing to amend the constitution to grant semi-regional autonomy in order to the Tamil-majority region, under a full-fledged federal system of government.[2]

Since the ethnic composition of the Eastern province where Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim populations are equally divided, is so complex, it is impossible to find a lasting political solution to the ethnic problem even under a federal system of government. Moreover, the Sinhala majority will not accept a situation in which the LTTE is given the complete control of the North-East Province under a federal system of government, which includes many Sinhalese-majority divisions. This does not imply that the LTTE and the Sri Lankan forces have no alternative but to fight it out to the bitter end because many thousands of civilians will lose their lives in such a protracted war. It is also unlikely that the people who have been directly or indirectly affected by the violence of the past and present will return to the devastated areas of Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Amparai and live peacefully in areas of ethnically mixed neighborhoods. Indeed, given the recent events in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, there is little hope that communal harmony can be restored in ethnically mixed-conflict zones in Sri Lanka.

One possible solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is to readjust the boundaries of the North-East Province, which were drawn during the British colonial period. Ethnic harmony can be restored in the North-East Province if the western boundary of the Eastern Province can be adjusted to exclude the Assistant Government Agent's (AGA) divisions that are Sinhalese-majority divisions. The Tamil majority could be given political control of the eastern two-thirds of the Eastern Province, while the rest of the province would be annexed to Sinhalese provinces. It is imperative, given the mistrust that the members of the major communities have of each other, that Tamil-speaking people and

Sinhalese should be given the opportunity to live in clearly defined, separate AGA divisions in the Eastern Province. If these readjustments to the boundary of the Eastern Province were accompanied with the establishment of a full-fledged federal system of government for the island, the members of the LTTE may be willing to enter into the political mainstream. Tamil militants have called upon the government to halt the policy of colonizing Sinhalese in Tamil areas because they fear that the government will carve out more Sinhalese electorates, in addition to the existent Amparai and Seruwila electorates. The LTTE became belligerent when the government openly challenged it by attempting to settle

One possible solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is to readjust the boundaries of the North-East Province, which were drawn during the British colonial period.

Sinhalese peasants in the Mullaitivu and Batticaloa districts, via the Maduru Oya and Vali-Oya projects, during the 1980s. This hostile behaviour of the militants against the government is motivated by their desire to preserve their Tamil traditional homeland and the distinct identity of the Tamil-speaking people. They are also concerned that if Sinhalese settlement of Tamil areas goes unchecked, the political power of the Tamils will ultimately be undermined. To them, the only solution to end Sinhalese colonization of Tamil-speaking areas has been and continues to be the creation of a separate Tamil state. I have suggested in a previous study that the problem of colonization can be resolved by redefining the limits of the North-East Province so that Sinhalese majority areas, rather than Tamil-majority areas in the North-East Province, would become the focus of Sinhalese colonization.[3] More than any other factor, land settlement policy of the government has contributed to the escalation of the ethnic conflict since the early 1980s. Indeed, the ethnic conflict cannot be resolved unless the problem of colonization is solved to the satisfaction of both Sinhalese and Tamils. Allowing for a

fixed quota of Sinhalese to settle in Tamil districts is not going to end the ethnic conflict. Most of the violent incidents involving brutal killings of civilians by government forces and Tamil militants have occurred in Tamil majority AGA divisions rather than in the Sinhalese majority AGA divisions of Eastern Province. Moreover, the Tamil majority AGA divisions, which have been increasingly targeted for Sinhalese colonization since 1983, have generated most of the refugees in the Eastern Province.

It is feasible to preserve the territorial integrity of Tamil majority AGA divisions under a federal system of government by redefining the boundaries of the North-East Province using the 1981 Census data on population.[4] Likewise, under a federal system of government, Sinhalese citizens who are long time residents of the Tamil-speaking majority region would continue to reside in the area. Sinhalese who are not sponsored under government-funded colonization schemes could settle in the Tamil-speaking majority region. Spontaneous migration of Sinhalese into the Tamil-speaking majority region would be similar to the migration of hundreds of Tamil-speaking people into the Sinhalese-speaking majority region on a voluntary basis. Thousands of Tamils have taken temporary refuge in Colombo because it is no longer safe to reside in the war-torn Tamil majority districts. Indeed, individually funded Tamil migration into Sinhalese areas has not resulted in the creation of a Tamil electorate in Sinhalese areas. On the other hand, government-sponsored colonization of Sinhalese peasants in the north and east has contributed to the creation of Sinhalese electorates in the North-East Province. Sinhalese continue to maintain an absolute majority in all the districts in the Sinhalese majority region, except in the central and south central parts of the

country, where Tamils of Indian origin were settled by the British in the nineteenth century. Unless tangible solutions are found to resolve these problems, there cannot be any peace in the island.

To contain Sinhalese colonization to the Assistant Government Agent's divisions in which the Sinhalese have an absolute majority, the boundaries of the North-East Province should be redrawn so that Sinhalese majority AGA divisions will be detached from the North-East Province and annexed to the North Central and Uva Provinces. The AGA divisions that would be annexed to the North-Central and Uva Provinces under this plan are Padawi Siripura, Gomarankadawala, Morawewa, Western one-third of Thampalagamam, Kantalai, Padiyatalawa, Mahaoya, Uhana, Damana, Lahugala and Vavuniya South (Sinhalese).[5]

Sinhalese population in these divisions, is between 82.5 percent and 99.4 percent of the total, except for Morawewa and Thampalagamam, where the Sinhalese population is 55 percent and 31.4 percent, respectively. Nevertheless, Morawewa and the western one-third of Thampalagamam, which had approximately 11,654 Sinhalese in 1981, can become part of the Sinhalese-speaking majority region. This would make it feasible for Seruwila, where the Sinhalese population is 57.7 percent of the total population, to be an integral part of the Tamil-speaking majority region. Under this arrangement, the 11,654 Sinhalese from the Morawewa and Thampalagamam AGA divisions would become part of the Sinhalese-speaking majority region, while the 11,665 Sinhalese of the Seruwila AGA division would remain in the redefined North-East Province. The Seruwila and Kuchchaveli AGA divisions would furnish the linkage between the northern and southern Tamil-speaking majority areas of the North-East Province. Tamil leaders insist that this linkage must be maintained if there is to be lasting peace in Sri Lanka.[6]

By redrawing the boundaries of the North-East Province, the ethnic composition of the Tamil-speaking majority region would be altered. The reconstituted

Figure 1: Districts of Sri Lanka (Source: see note 6)

Tamil-majority region would contain 94.9 percent Tamil-speaking people according to the 1981 census (see Figure 1). The rights of the Muslim minority in the redefined Tamil majority region could be guaranteed by enacting legislation and by devolving legislative and executive powers to the district councils, which should be established in areas where the Muslims are in the majority. Given the fact that Sinhalese leaders mistrust Tamil leaders and vice versa, it might be necessary for the Sri Lankan government and the leaders of the LTTE to agree on a list of foreign countries that can be invited to participate in the peace process. It might even be necessary for an international organization like the United Nations to settle the issue of the boundary of a newly reconstituted North-East Province and to maintain ethnic harmony along the readjusted boundary.

Finally, unless substantial legislative and executive powers similar to those vested in the constituent units of a full-fledged federal system of government are devolved to the government of the Tamil majority state, the ethnic problem cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities. ▣

Notes

1. The cargo vessel owned by the LTTE was intercepted by the Indian Navy on January 13, 1993 and escorted towards the Indian coast. When the Indian Navy commandos attempted to board the vessel on January 16, 1993, Kittu and nine other senior military personnel committed suicide. See *Tamil Times* 8, no. 2 (February 15, 1993): 4-6 and 19 for the conflicting accounts that have been presented by the Indian government and the LTTE leadership on the circumstances that led to the interception, the exact location of the vessel when it was impounded, and the manner in which the LTTE personnel lost their lives.

2. Veluppillai Prabhakaran's interview with Mrs. Anandhi Sooriyapragasam was broadcast over the Tamil service of the BBC on March 2, 1993. An English translation of this interview was published in *Tamil Times* 8, no. 3 (March 15, 1993):4-5. In reply to a question of whether the LTTE leader will accept a federal system of government to resolve the ethnic conflict, Prabhakaran stated, "If a federal scheme that recognizes the territorial integrity of the Tamil homeland is put forward, we are ready to consider it. There are many forms of federal systems of government with varying degrees of powers that are devolved. We are prepared to consider a federal system which provides for sufficient autonomous powers that fulfills the political aspirations of the Tamil people."

3. see C. Manogaran, *The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 29 July 1987, Round Table*, 306, 1988, p. 198.

4. *Census of Population and Housing* (Population classification by Sex, Age, Religion, and Ethnic Groups by Towns for Urban Areas and AGA Divisions) Colombo, Government Press, 1981.

5. Padawi Sripura is the newly formed AGA division in the Trincomalee District. See Sri Lanka Survey Department, *Map of New District Divisions* (Colombo, 1987).

6. Some of the reasons advanced by Tamils for the need to maintain the North-East Province intact (merged) have been presented in C. Manogaran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka* (Honolulu: Hawaii Press, 1987), 179-80.

Mental Health Resilience of Refugees: The Case of Tamil Refugees

Megan Stuart Mills

What Fanon described as "The Pathology of Atmosphere" created by counter-insurgency in Algeria has been recreated over the last decade in Sri Lanka. Warfare involving guerrilla and antiguerrilla organizations does indeed present special threats to the mental health of combatants and civilians alike (Fanon 1961).

Canada's Tamil refugees, often hailing from Sri Lanka's now devastated northern and eastern provinces, bring with them many memories of state forces' manoeuvres designed to affect ordinary civilians. A key concept of counterinsurgency everywhere in the world continues to be found in the aim of destroying the popular power base of "terrorist" organizations. The nature of guerrilla activities dictates heavy reliance on the cooperation of ordinary people within districts of operation. Thus, those endeavouring to curb insurgent fish will focus strategically upon the waters in which the fish swim. The Tamil refugee's experience is also likely to be one of extreme apprehension due to the presence of sometimes volatile internecine struggles among insurgent factions pursuing different approaches to a secessionist goal of Tamil Eelam [*see Bush in this issue*]. Furthermore, some in the Ontario Tamil community will carry with them memories of the brutal sweeps of the Indian Army in Jaffna, who were ostensibly involved in peacekeeping operations. Violence, acute fear and everyday suffering represent a Sri Lankan Tamil experience not likely to be forgotten for several generations.

Sri Lanka's often appalling human rights record through the 1980s translates into factors of strong importance within the Ontario Tamil community. Community leaders who assist refugees

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consistently referred to a large number of male refugees under the age of thiry-five from directly affected areas in Sri Lanka. Sixty percent of this group are known to have undergone torture. When the whole Tamil refugee community in Canada was described, it was stressed that 90 percent of males and females of all ages have suffered extreme and longstanding fear, loss of family members and kin, plus loss of property and livelihood. The stresses of displacement, curtailed movement and lack of access to information have a profound effect on the refugees. It sometimes is not realized, by people unfamiliar with war-time conditions, that the Sri Lankan conflict carries on within a sea of propaganda. In such situations violence or threatened violence and rumours combine powerfully to create a "hall of mirrors" effect in which it is difficult to determine what is true or what is actually happening (Barnett 1988).

One Toronto psychiatrist involved in the treatment of refugee patients explained to me that, "one would have to be singular indeed to come away from such environments minus some eventual trouble or other". Nevertheless, it is important to understand that "many simply do." This fact became very plain over the course of research carried out through the summer months of 1992; it became obvious that Tamils, at least in the southern Ontario locale covered, are very resilient. In fact, this resilience came to characterize those within the community who endured the most terrifying experiences prior to leaving Sri Lanka.

In this way research undertaken to assess the extent of psychiatric illness among Tamil refugees quickly moved on to research that attempted to account for a widespread absence of mental illness. Matters of Tamil mental health began to fit well with material drawn from fields of cross-cultural psychology and particularly ethnopsychiatry. This sec-

ond field boasts a great depth of work concerning South Asian peoples, both within their indigenous culture zone and abroad. Previous study of Tamil culture and religion and exposure to the Tamil areas of South India and Sri Lanka helped to piece together factors which I later felt I ought to have predicted. It remains true that South Asian questions tend to drive the neat-and-tidy thinking of occidental theorists to distraction. South Asian phenomena will continue to contrast and confound; despite the march of development and globalized everything.

Drawing a thumbnail sketch of Tamil refugees' resilience involves several factors, particularly issues of Tamil identity. The sense of Tamilness within each refugee arriving in a country of asylum has proven stronger than the ravages of

concerning mental resilience against war-time trauma. Rutter concludes that children in particular may be unaffected, given the buffering mechanisms of group membership and a strong spirit of group identity (Rutter 1985). Of course, both of these advantages are part and parcel of the Tamils' survival. Tamils abroad continue to live within elaborate networks of extended families, reciprocal relationships and longstanding social or other group connections. It must be realized too, that group identity is predictably enhanced by conditions of adversity. That the Tamil condition is inseparably related to a firm ethnonationalist political agenda in the absence of less radical goals for a Tamil future can only be a galvanizing source of identity. Differences of old are forgot-

1970s. It now seems that Northern Irish children in disturbed areas do grow up faster, that individuals are tougher minded and generally very cautious in encounters with strangers. Nevertheless, Northern Irish children have been protected from major psychiatric trauma by closely knit families, a sense of ethnic identity, plus a reinforcing resolve that is the result of the shared experience of adversity (Curran and Greggs 1990).

In addition to the identity factor, Tamil resilience results from the more expressly South Asian. As a South Asian people, it is simply predictable that some advantage will stem from matters of the psyche which are *religious*. The integrally religious cultures of South Asia can be seen as both the fruit and the very foundations of a civilization pitted against sometimes trying challenges of survival. It is interesting that developments in Western theories of applied social science now show new appreciation of world views shaped by religious ideas and observances. According to a recent article, religious outlooks offer constructive philosophies, plus more holistic and accepting ideas of personhood, life and notably, the way to cope effectively with adversity (Anderson et al. 1991). Furthermore, religious world views are seen to encourage a sense of group responsibility and of group solutions to the challenges of living. Those North Americans who are prone to notions of religion as a set of rules or as a kind of psychological crutch will not easily understand Tamil culture in which religion, in different ways, permeates life. Most Tamil refugees in Ontario are *Saivite*—Hindus of the *Saiva Siddhantin* philosophies existent in Sri Lanka since the sixth century. Hinduism of this variety is noted for its open-minded style: the tradition encourages the individual to follow his or her own path to union with the divine while putting a strong emphasis on group involvement and service as the individual's earthly duty.

An estimated 25 percent of the Ontario Tamil population are Christians, mainly Roman Catholics. Typical of South Asia's propensity for religious synthesis, Saivite Hindu and Roman Catholic ideas have merged since the in-

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Tamils are blessed with the identity and cohesion of a millennia-old classical culture understood better by some than others, but which is part of the awareness of all.

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counterinsurgency, including the terrifying military and "Psyops" techniques designed to wear down resistance, to disorient and politically paralyze. This resolve undoubtedly owes much to the social cohesiveness of South Asian peoples at large. Ethnic affiliation and connection with kin prevail as facts of life which have only been intensified by the experience of what can be considered a destructive anti-Tamil campaign. Family and kin remain knitted together also, in patterns possibly long gone from the Western industrialized world. Moreover, Tamils are blessed with the identity and cohesion of a millennia-old classical culture understood better by some than others, but which is part of the awareness of all. Whether dwelling in India or Sri Lanka—or for that matter, London, England, or Mississauga, Ontario—Tamil refugees are individual members of *Tamilakam*, the ideological and literary term for the collective Tamil cultural region (Stein 1977, 7-26).

An interesting comparison exists in Rutter's work of the past twenty years

ten, shared traits and interests are obviously strengthened through the arrival of a clear political goal. It may even be necessary in the 1990s to learn to see world ethnonationalisms, including the Tamil Eelam movement, as equivalents of "ethnic religion" a phenomenon of powerful unifying ability (Smith 1990).

Matters of mental resilience that have to do with factors of Tamil identity by no means implies that all Tamils have supported or support the aims and methods of Tamil Eelamist paramilitaries. Indeed, many refugees are those who suffered at their hands. With regard to averting psychiatric consequences of trauma, and much to the envy of many a Westerner, the Tamil at least possesses an indelible, fully internalized sense of who he or she is.

A clarifying comparison is easily made with the Northern Irish case. A full two decades of study have culminated in themes accounting for the non-appearance of the "generation of psychopaths," once routinely said to be promised by the communal and state violence of the early

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troduction of Catholicism in Sri Lanka by the Portuguese in the 1500s. Many refugees hail from families of virtual Saivite Catholicism. I learned that since the Tamil diaspora of the early 1980s, the involvement of Tamils in Roman Catholic parishes and temple congregations in countries of asylum has tended to be high. It is most significant that there are few gaps between members of these religions: in fact, Tamil language or cultural classes will quite normally be taught in Canada by practising Roman Catholics; also, Tamils who possess a very English-style education and culture may be known as quite orthodox Hindus. While religious life is an important component of Tamil culture and identity, its strains

A comparison is possible with the methods and aims of current Western psychotherapy—the psychotherapeutic process of the patient's dedication to the true nature of feelings and situations is familiar to many Tamils. While South Asia's ideal of *acceptance* has often been criticized by Westerners who regard it as fatalism, the reality is ironically different. A North American who is unable to accept a given situation or personality might be told by a South Asian that the heart of the matter is the person's *unwillingness* rather than inability to accept.

Nevertheless, the suffering undergone by Tamils in Sri Lanka particularly through the 1980s can often be identified as extreme. In fact, the ordeals of indi-

lenges related to their ethnicity. As two research psychologists once put it, South Asians "are different" (Good and Good 1986).

The growing literature of ethnopsychiatry suggests that diagnoses and treatments of disorder can be incorrectly identified. For instance, victims of war-time conditions, torture or other trauma are often diagnosed according to the late twentieth century's blanketing label of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD's symptoms are often discernible in patients after a short or sometimes very long interval following experienced trauma (Davidson 1991). Patients from South Asia however, are apt to have symptoms that are atypical within Western populations: anxious states are more common than depressive ones, and somatized or conversion reactions not regularly found in North American-born patients are frequent in South Asia and among South Asian expatriates (Csordas 1990; Steiner and Bansil 1989)

Metabolically, Tamil patients can be expected to respond a little differently to drugs administered by physicians. Antidepressants and tranquilizers given to relieve unpleasant symptoms en route to adjustment, will often show effects in comparatively low dosages (Keh-Ming et al. 1986; Qureshi 1988). It is to be hoped that mental health practitioners who assist Tamil patients will avail themselves of a body of findings that are emerging mostly from the United Kingdom's larger and longer established South Asian communities.

The growing literature of ethnopsychiatry suggests that diagnoses and treatments of disorder can be incorrectly identified.

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are merged within a larger historical ethnic identity. With regard to the psychiatric resilience of Tamil refugees, both religious traditions have fostered an unmistakably South Asian and Tamil outlook of great protective strength. Contact with Tamils in Ontario revealed that refugees have transplanted a mindset that stresses continual discernment of *what is true*, plus an ideal of *accepting* events that are not alterable. South Asia's philosophical cornerstone of the world as a great cosmological chaos within God's larger plan, early on encourages an awareness of the often unpleasant elements of life that cannot be changed. In contrast with the Westerner's typical interest in *what should be* or *what ought to happen*, Tamil thinking involves adherence to what is simply true. Balance and symmetry and purpose—the things that render life worth living—are promoted by devotions and observances in a family, community or a broader form of membership. In short, there is much to be said for the determination of what is to be immediately and properly done in a situation as opposed to the parts of a situation which cannot be affected (Gangadaram and Selvanayagam 1992).

vidual refugees prior to their arrival in Canada will often shock Canadians of more normative life experiences. Few Canadian-born people are likely to understand the variegated horrors of an air attack; very few will know the psychological imprint of having a family member taken into custody, or knowing that offspring were tortured while in custody. I was particularly impressed by a recurring and straightforward statement from several people interviewed: "others have gone through far worse." In many cases, the stresses of migration and resettlement will provide powerful distractions from their previous experiences in Sri Lanka. In keeping with other refugee populations in Canada, Tamils sometimes have longterm effects of the civil war even after adjusting to the demands of finding employment, housing and other immediate concerns. As emphasized elsewhere in this discussion, the fact that Tamils are proving mentally resilient does not imply a complete absence of psychiatric trauma. Most important with regard to the provision of better refugee health services, is the likelihood that occasional Tamils who seek psychiatric treatment will present strong chal-

It is significant too that what occurs in the course of treatment will bear the imprint of patients' different ideas of mental health and trauma. Tamils arriving in Canada in the mid-1980s, who are more apt to come from less Westernized, Tamil-speaking backgrounds can be expected to present and respond differently. To summarize a host of cultural and acutely psychological factors to a great degree, the psychiatric disturbance in a South Asian patient will often be the instance of intrapsychic adjustment. The long "talking cure" of Western psychotherapy may not seem relevant or helpful due to the continuing phenomenon of a South Asian patient's experience of a

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short-term but acute psychiatric distur-
bance, which is the catharsis. Such an
episode may be followed very shortly by
complete adjustment and the departure
of symptoms. All of this must seem very
odd to an uninformed medical profes-
sional who anticipates long stages of
gradual recovery (Jones 1976; Kakar
1984).

Furthermore, those hoping to help
Tamil refugees must accept the likeli-
hood of ongoing respect for traditional
Tamil forms of naturopathic medicine.
British communities of South Asians
from various origins have indicated a
prevailing respect for non-Western heal-
ing approaches. Sometimes these are
used in conjunction with the Western
medicine dispensed by the National
Health; different types of therapy may be
sought depending on the ailment
(Waqar 1991; Bhopal 1986).

In short, just as factors of Tamilness
have proven equal to the trials of contem-
porary counterinsurgency in terms of
protecting Tamils from widespread psy-
chiatric disturbance, factors of their eth-
nicity must be taken seriously in better
helping individuals who are trauma-
tized. Moreover, a number of shortcom-
ings in Canadian popular thinking must
be taken into account; as suggested ear-
lier, stresses placed upon refugees do not
cease upon arrival in countries of asy-
lum, nor with an apparently satisfactory
resettlement. It is frequently overlooked
that Tamil refugees often continue to
contend with the stress of waiting for
loved ones from Sri Lankan districts
known to be dangerous. Few Canadian
human service workers are likely to fully
grasp the implications of the Sri Lankan
state's increasingly aggressive anti-
Tamil campaign. Ongoing awareness of
hardship and suffering in Sri Lanka are
not simply cancelled by the minister's
permit or for that matter, the case worker
(Beiser 1991).

At different times in the course of
research, I wondered if the only hope for
Sri Lanka might lie in what appears to be
a widespread and largely cultural resil-
ience. Dr. Hellman-Rajanayagam's notes
on her 199091 visit to Jaffna are probably
still relevant—trips to villages she said
possessed a "surreal quality." Despite

falling bombs and the general mayhem
of destruction, there was a good deal of
squabbling over social niceties befitting a
visitor (Hellman-Rajanayagam 1991).

Similarly, a Canadian photojour-
nalist returning from Sri Lanka in late
1992 remarked that stereotypical Tamil
traits of warmth and generosity seemed
to have withstood the years since her last
visit to Sri Lanka. A certain distinctly
Tamil attitude prevailed even among
families living in precarious conditions
of displacement and economic uncer-
tainty. Tamil identity, whether consid-
ered as a by-product of ethno-
nationalism or a typically Third World
product of an age-old Tamil culture, of-
fers its ideals of the proper approaches to
even the sufferings of war. Adaptability
as a part of resilience would seem to be
proving as equal to the deprivation and
bloodshed of late twentieth century
counter-insurgency, as it has to all trials
endured over centuries within the Tamil
zone of India and Sri Lanka. ▣

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"History can be constructed to
reinforce ethnic identities *at odds
with those defined as the other*. Al-
ternatively, historical under-
standing can be the basis of
fostering harmonious relations
with other groups."

— Professor Howard Adelman
(in this issue).

Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India

Asha Hans

Background

A poet once described Sri Lanka as a tear dropped from the Indian face. Today the land, awash with unending violence, epitomizes this description. The ravaged island and its link to India remains unbroken by the presence of approximately 200,000 Sri Lankan refugees in India.

The discrimination and violence by the Sri Lankan state against the Tamils throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s form the backdrop to this refugee situation. As the crisis deepened, small numbers of Sri Lankan Tamil educated elite migrated. The majority went to the developed West, the rest to neighbouring India. The expatriate community swelled and would in time provide sustenance to the movement.

In 1983, the Sinhalese violence against the Tamils and Tamil insurgency resulted in the displacement of all communities in the north and the east. These included the Tamils, Tamil-speaking Muslims and Sinhalese settled in the east. India, for security reasons, could not overlook such political developments. Its fears were not unfounded, for the next step was the exodus—crossing the narrow Palk Straits—into India.

All the refugees who came to India in 1983 took refuge in the state of Tamil Nadu, with a population of 55,638,318 (1991 provisional census). By the early part of 1993, there were an estimated 200,000 Sri Lankan Tamils. There is no exact number available as many do not register, despite local government orders. It is easy to remain undetected with many refugees living outside the camps.

The 8,0241 camp refugees are all registered, as are the 1,714 in special camps. In outside camps 27,000 have been registered. Despite threats of deportation and internment in special camps since 1993, the rest remain unregistered. The basic problem is the refugees fear of being branded militants and being deported or interned in the special camps.

The Camps

When the first wave of refugees entered India in 1983, they were divided into three groups. Besides the camp and non-camp refugees, there were the militants in special camps (Mohandas 1992; Karunanidhi 1990).

- The Refugee as Militant: Militant leadership has always been elitist and there is a clear line of distinction between them and the mass of refugees. The leadership drew its support and recruited its forces from the refugee camps. These camps no longer exist. They were all closed down after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, but their legacy continues to haunt the refugees.

- Noncamp Refugees: These are the refugees who do not receive financial assistance from the government. They are mostly rich businessmen and professionals. They also include a small number of near destitute young men who are in India to escape from being recruited by the militants. Since Gandhi's assassination, noncamp refugees have been moved into the camps for security reasons or have gone underground for fear of being interned in special camps.

- Ordinary Camp Refugee: There are 132 camps in Tamil Nadu and one in Orissa. All refugees in camps are registered. This entitles them to government assistance—cash, shelter, health facilities, clothing and provision of essential items. The refugees

from Sri Lanka have been the recipients of one of the most advanced systems of education in the world, but since 1991, this privilege has been withdrawn. There is no uniformity in the camp facilities. Some are good, some are unsatisfactory. In the same way, the reception from some locals is good while others are hostile. Women have a number of social and psychological problems that continue and increase with time.

The Militant as Refugee

With increasing militant activities in the state, in March 1990 Tamil Nadu refused to grant asylum to 1,638 Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) and Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) cadres. They were then sent to Malkangiri in the state of Orissa. Today only the ENDLF members remain in this camp. The 200 remaining refugees are very young. They have came from Trincomalee and Batticaloa. They are all in their twenties, and according to the security guards posted outside the camp, can dismantle and assemble a gun in seconds. According to them they have all been trained by the Indian security forces. They are an army in waiting. When the right moment comes, they will, like their predecessors, escape away in the night.

Their lifestyle is similar to that of the ordinary camp refugee in Tamil Nadu. The reason for providing a view of the militant camp is to show that the dividing line between the refugee and the militant is very thin indeed when it comes to the rank and file. It is the militant leadership as mentioned earlier which is totally different. The mass of militants face the same problems as all refugees. The only difference is the fervour and the sparkle in the eyes of the men. Immaculately dressed, they do not have the mark of a downtrodden humanity.

Aid From NGO's

No aid is asked of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or voluntary agencies for refugee rehabilitation in India. The central government provides the finances and the state, the infrastructure. India does not encourage international NGO's to work in the camps except the Red Cross (local branch). The only organizations allowed to work are those run by the refugees themselves. In the Sri Lankan camps, the largest voluntary organization working with the refugees is OFERR (Organisation for Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation). It is run by S.C. Chandrahasan, the son of the late Sri Lankan Tamil leader, S.J.V. Chelvanayagam. The working of this organization proves the effectiveness of refugee NGO's vis-à-vis international NGO's and the need for refugee leadership. Refugee NGO's know the needs of their people and leadership is a requisite to coordinate activities.

Forced Repatriation

Repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees took place in 1987 and 1991. The first repatriation took place after the signing of the Indo -Sri Lanka Peace Accord in 1987. It was voluntary in nature. After the first repatriation most of the camps were closed down (Public [Refugees] Rehabilitation Department 1987, p.6), The assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on May 21, 1991, prompted the Indian government to repatriate the refugee. For a year attempts at forcing the refugee to go back were made. The policy was ambivalent, not uniform and carried out by local officials. In some camps the refugees were explained about the process of repatriation, given the option to stay and forms in Tamil were distributed. In other camps no explanation was offered. Some refugees signed the form without realizing what it meant because it was given by the officers who distributed the cash assistance. Others who did understand that it was a returnee form signed it under pressure from the officer concerned under a threat that if they did not do so, no further assistance would be given. As a result

30,000 signed the repatriation consent forms.

India, which had never turned back genuine refugees, or used force in repatriation blotted its record in this case. The reasons were not related to any formal change in policy towards refugees. It was a reaction to the assassination of its Prime Minister. According to the Sri Lankan refugee it reflected the view that "unless all Ceylon Tamil Refugees were repatriated, the activities of the LTTE could not be curbed in India." The answer was not so simple. Increasing militancy and the assassin being a Sri Lankan were the catalyst in a complex situation of national politics.

The Entry of the UNHCR

India is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees, and the UNHCR has not been allowed to work in India. During the Tibetan crisis in 1959, and the Bangladesh crisis of 1971, the only help taken from UNHCR was financial. But in a surprise move on the July 27, 1992 India signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNHCR.

Before the entry of the UNHCR, the Government of India had repatriated 23,126 persons between the January 20,

1992 and May 15, 1992 (UNHCR). Though it has the legitimacy to work from Indian territory and opened its first office in India, in Madras, it is on a very limited mandate. Sunil Thapa, the Repatriation officer who had earlier worked in the UNHCR operation in Sri Lanka, said that at that moment their work was confined to interviewing refugees. All those who signed the returnee forms are interviewed in Transit camps to ascertain whether the repatriation is forced or voluntary. UNHCR has no financial commitment. All financial help in repatriation to the refugee comes from the Government of India.

It is obvious that the UNHCR presence has deterred any forcible repatriation. At the same time it cannot be overlooked that of the 2,938 persons screened by UNHCR only 90 withdrew their applications for repatriation (UNHCR). Thus no general conclusion can be drawn that total repatriation was forced, a number of refugees did go back voluntarily. UNHCR officials now wait in Madras for repatriation to restart but the refugees are not interested in going back. The channels of communication open through their network show a very confused scene in Sri Lanka.

Women refugees in the camp (Photo D. Krishnan)

Despite the UNHCR's presence and role in rehabilitation, studies and reports by refugees on the returnee camps established the facts that the situation in Sri Lanka is not conducive to return. Refugees have gone from a camp in India to a camp in Sri Lanka. According to refugee sources in areas such as Trincomalee resettlement in urban areas has been possible, but not in rural areas. As the majority are from rural areas they continue to languish in camps. Refugees have always established their own informal channels of communication and the reports from Sri Lanka on existing conditions has not created a confidence to return (Varadakumar also provides an insight into camp conditions in Sri Lanka).

Impact on host society

The presence of the Sri Lankan Tamil has had immense influence on the host society. Its politics and society became deeply involved with the issue. A warning was sounded that sooner or later Prabhakaran and his ideology would have a "profound influence on the minds of Tamil Nadu youth, and the effect of such an influence will be a volcanic eruption which cannot be neutralized (Thillai Rajah, 7)." Though the situation is not as grave as predicted, the impact on Tamil Nadu's politics, police, bureaucracy and society has been increasingly felt.

Conclusion

The impact of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi had far reaching consequences on the refugee. An environment was created which brought about changes both in their lifestyles and acceptance by the host country. The immediate response of the government and people was that it was difficult to differentiate between the militants and refugees so all Sri Lankan Tamils should be deported.

The support the refugee has provided to the militant either willingly or under duress has proved costly for them in the long run. In the initial euphoria of the Tamil Eelam the authentic refugee gained, but as militant and related activities increased in the state, the refugee began to suffer. In most cases it was not directly but by a negative fall out. According to many local Tamils, the local support is either by reflex or has vanished completely in some places.

The above scenario shows that the Sri Lankan Tamil is no longer welcome. But the fact is that the crisis is nowhere near resolving and the problematic issues that leave the refugee environment unchanged and that can result in further flows are many. The ethnic problem is the major issue, though in a different dimension. It is being increasingly recognized that the ethnic issue cannot be

solved simply with the cessation of hostilities between the Sinhalese and the Tamils and settlement of their dispute. This is because the Tamil community is itself divided. The divide between the Sri Lankan Tamil and the Indian Tamil, the Sri Lankan Tamil and the Muslim Tamil and between the Sri Lankan Tamils themselves in the north and north east is widening.

The assassination of President Premadasa on May 1, 1993 will complicate matters and the refugees in India realize that there is no easy solution to the problem. Despite this, they themselves have provided recommendations which could bring some relief to them.

The major items on their agenda include India's continuance of a major role in settlement of issues. Having become a party, they say, it should continue to play an important part in the process of settlement. As Sinhala intransigence remains, they feel that international pressure should be applied simultaneously. In the meantime an interim arrangement to ensure security and safety of refugee returnees in Sri Lanka would facilitate discussion.

They feel that improvement in their status can result if India accedes to the United Nations Convention regarding refugees. It should also strengthen the role of the UNHCR. Repatriation on a bilateral basis without giving importance to the refugees contravenes their human rights, they say. The agreement should be, they contend, at least be tripartite with the UNHCR as a third party. It should also cover resettlement and integration of policy implementation in India and Sri Lanka.

Indian policy they maintain should be more humanitarian and less political. It should handle the refugee on a humanitarian basis alone and refugee assistance until their return should not be seen as a temporary phase. Provision of education and opportunity to gain skills be restored. It should sustain the
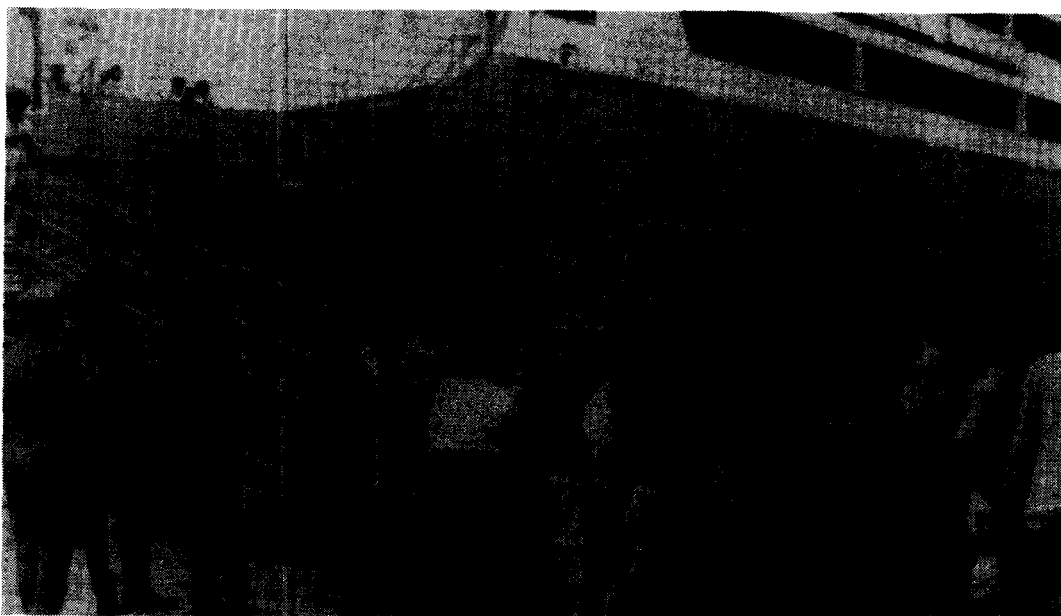
Shortlived repatriation exercise (Photo D. Krishnan)

refugee community as an active community by providing better health facilities, especially as prevention of malnutrition and blindness is an input which requires minimum facilities and finances. They feel the international community could help in this.

Basic needs of housing could be provided by NGO's who are more than willing to step in. Drinking water, better sanitation and work opportunity are basic rights of the refugee. Dole should be increased according to inflationary tendencies. They feel change can come if members of government staff are trained in the process of refugee rehabilitation.

The above are the combined views put forward by refugee NGO's, TULF members in India and journalists interested in refugee work.

Some of them are important and part of a refugee's human rights. Others will frighten any asylum giving country as it denotes the refugees' attempts to remain. Through speaking to refugees, it was noticed that the refugees want to remain only temporarily. Policy makers do not believe this and the continuation of the crisis confirms their stand that the Sri Lankan refugee is to stay a long time.

The Indian policy towards the Sri Lankan refugees was magnanimous until the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi two years ago. As people forget the event the situation will normalize as it has already done in many camps. In the meantime, repatriation takes a back seat. So the Sri Lankan refugee remains a cornered humanity with few rights and fear of the future. ■

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Only Man Is Vile: The Tragedy of Sri Lanka

by William McGowan
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992. 382.

Reviewed by Ravindiran Vaitheespara

This is a book that is difficult to categorize. It is, in part, a travelogue—a journey of discovery and self discovery and in part, an account of McGowan's experience of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka during the period of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. McGowan, an American magazine journalist became interested in the ethnic conflict on his first visit to the Island in 1986 while in charge of an American college semester-abroad program. Sri Lanka and its ethnic conflict intrigued him so much that he went back in the fall of 1987.

The narrative style, more like that of a travelogue or novel, is a far cry from the usual dry academic tomes on the ethnic conflict. McGowan has combined an unusual mixture of literary skill and sensitivity. He uses the acute skills of observation of a reporter and an impressive knowledge of the literature on Sri Lanka in presenting this powerful book. The range of personal experiences he chronicles is also immense. They are as diverse and contradictory as his visit to a brothel, a Buddhist retreat in the jungle and dinner with two Generals in charge of the Indian offensive against the Tigers in Jaffna. He skillfully weaves these accounts of his personal experiences with historical insights to bring home the horror and tragedy of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. His writing, with its Orientalist overtones in places, is unusually evocative. He writes of approaching to land in Sri Lanka:

> The plane seemed to hang in the sky, without weight, without momentum ...The mists that rose from the jungle

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> made the scene look creational...My dread grew more pronounced as the jungle became more articulated below us...It had a raw and visceral look to it now, the pulpiness of freshly wounded flesh. (:15)

Despite his penchant for metaphors and a mystical streak, his observations can also be very down to earth and incisive. Writing of his visit to a small town hospital to see one of his poorer Sri Lankan friend, Bonasuriya, who had been attacked by his neighbour with a machete over a fence dispute, he writes:

> The hospital ward like most in Sri Lanka, was open to the air. Dogs prowled between the beds, licking the nights meal from the dishes of those who weren't quick enough to shoo them away ... Many of the other patients were also victims of violence. The man next to Bonasuriya had been set on fire by his own son, and was also lacking an ear from a similar fracas years before. (:202)

McGowan's analysis and description of Sri Lankans and the ethnic conflict seems to draw heavily from the literature on Sri Lanka, both old and new. In this regard, he seems to have done his homework rather well. One can see the influence of writers as diverse as Robert Knox, Anagarika Dharmapala, Walpola Rahula, Stanley Tambiah, Richard Gombrich, James Manor and Jonathan Spencer. Much of what he has to say about the origins of the ethnic conflict or of Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism is not new. However, what makes this book remarkable is that he illustrates the truths of what many of these writers have to say through accounts of his personal experience. It is this potent blend of the subjective and the anecdotal with the historical and the sociological that makes this book unique and powerful.

Like many of the recent scholars that he draws from, McGowan blames the ethnic conflict on the wave of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism that initially swept the country in the late fifties. Like Gombrich, he argues that this form of Sinhala Buddhist revivalism—which Gombrich calls 'protestant Buddhism'—is a far cry from the more eclectic and syncretistic variety that existed traditionally. He sees Tamil nationalism and the demand for a separate state largely as a defensive nationalism on the part of a minority, whose more moderate elites lost out to extremists as a result of their powerlessness in the face of increasing state discrimination. He has a more nuanced understanding of the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, especially the post-1971 JVP variety—seen by some as part of the trajectory of the decolonization process; a reaction against the colonial and Christian missionary impact and the rule of corruption of the anglicized and westernized "Black English men." His own views of its rise seems to be close to that of a westernized Tamil he quotes in the book, "the road to hell can be paved with incredibly good intentions"(:158). This problem, essentially one of how to deal with this kind of reactive cultural nationalism, which of course is not unique to Sri Lanka, is not pursued seriously in his book. How does one deal with the rising discontent in the more secular but increasingly marginalized westernized ruling classes in many of the Third World countries which have often taken the form of a narrow and intolerant cultural nationalism of the majority community? The case of Iran and, more recently, India, has the academic community—drawn largely from this westernized class—totally perplexed. Should the ideal be a Hong Kong or a Singapore or a reassertion of a more eclectic vision of indigenous culture than the ones handed down by people such as Anagarika Dharmapala or Arumuga Navalar? The problem seems to lie with the uncritical anti-Westernism and uncritical cultural jingoism of much of these reactive cultural nationalist movements.

The accounts of his many encounters with the participants of the conflict is the unique feature of the book. Recounting a conversation with a bishop in Batticaloa, who was acting as a mediator between the Tamils and the Indian army there, he writes:

> The core of the problem, the Bishop explained, was that the Indians were frustrated. 'In my opinion they do not understand terrorism properly. You can never put them down...Seven and eight year old boys can do it. Yes they are that young now. And girls too... True, there are those in the towns with ambition who want the war to end so they can get on with their own lives. But those in the villages whose lives are dull, they can easily be led into this. And the Tigers are their own flesh and blood. Do not ever forget that. That is the key factor—the emotional identification.' (:236)

In another episode, just after McGowan is prevented from proceeding further to Jaffna by the Indians at a road block near Vavuniya, and having been given an Indian captain as an escort back to the nearest town, he writes:

> It was the unhappy task of a young Indian captain to wait with me for the public bus. As we sat on a log at the side of a dusty, untravelled road, the captain proved he was a philosophical sort, with the Hindu knack for cosmic irony and the grand sweep of time. "It is like the way you Americans went into Vietnam after the French had already lost. History tells it is a lost cause....What are we in this bloody country for anyway? These Tigers are trained killers and we will never win. The Buddhists are to blame. They have turned these Tamils into killers, and we are their dupes for coming to the rescue. (:311)

It is McGowan's knack for story telling that brings the ugliness and horror of the war home more vividly than any of the usual works on the subject. In one of the most surrealistic scenes in the book, where, McGowan, along with another American journalist is coaxed to have dinner with two Indian Generals in charge of the Indian offensive against Jaffna, we get McGowan at his best:

> When we arrived back at Gnaniam's from the day's rounds, there was a jeep and an armed escort of two soldiers waiting for us. There was no begging off the banquet. 'You need not be wor-

ried about anything,' one of the generals assured me over the phone. 'We can promise you that there will be no problem. Our troops are well trained and disciplined and will make sure there will be no incidents.'

This scene in the heart of Jaffna takes on a surreal quality, given that it was happening in the midst of fierce fighting between the Indians and the Tigers in Jaffna. McGowan continues:

> Initially the Brigadiers reminded me of two college frat boys. Brigadier Kahlon complained about his weight, and said that since he only played golf, there was no way for him to get any exercise, as Jaffna lacked a golf course ... The scotch loosened their tongues ... Kahlon continued ... He had been shocked when he realized just how deep the breach had grown between the two communities. The prior autumn, he had seen the aftermath when Sinhalese helicopter pilots fired on Tamil civilians trying to flee the Jaffna peninsula. 'They are filled with hate toward them, pure hate,' Kahlon said in disgust. 'How could they fly out to that ferry, hover twenty feet over the heads of people below, while the people held out their babies so they see they were not militants, and fire directly on them? The sea turned completely red, bloody pure red. I saw it with my own eyes ... In the generals estimation, the Research and Analysis Wing had screwed up in backing the other rebel groups and trying to cut the Tigers out of the equation for power sharing.' (:327-329)

When Catherine Manegold, the other journalist with McGowan, asked the generals about allegations of rape by Indian soldiers in Jaffna, the reply of general Magid Singh, according to McGowan was:

> 'Four rapes, forty, four hundred. How can we ever tell how many? It is so very hard to say,' said Singh. 'Anyway you don't have to worry about us. We are Sikhs and we like our women fair.'(:329)

The book is full of such accounts. It is such candid glimpses of many of the participants of the war that makes this book especially valuable.

On the negative side, the book suffers from a lack of in-depth analysis of the

Tamils and their political behaviour in Sri Lanka. By focusing largely on the Sinhalese, McGowan is not as critical of the Tamils, nor does he address the complexities of Tamil society and political behaviour in Sri Lanka. In a way, this shortcoming reflects the relative paucity of scholarly works on contemporary Tamil society in Sri Lanka. There are also a few factual and spelling errors of names. For example, he spells Velupillai Prabaharan as Vellupai Prabakeran and talks of the Buddhist emperor, Asoka as a South Indian Buddhist King. The book's focus is largely on a culturalist understanding of the Sri Lankans and the ethnic conflict. A little more emphasis on socio-economic factors would have been more balanced. The lack of footnotes and bibliography is also a significant shortcoming. Apart from these limitations, I would recommend this book to any student of Sri Lanka, especially to those who have had an overdose of dry academic discourses on the subject. ▣

The Refugee Crisis in Russia

by Professor **Rozalina Ryvkina** and Dr. **Rostislav Turovskiy** (Russia)

Edited with an Introduction by Professor **Robert J. Brym**
(University of Toronto, Canada)

Published by York Lanes Press for the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University.

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Convention Refugee Determination Hearings
January 1 - March 31, 1993

Regional Summary

	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	B.C.	National
Claims heard‡	128	2,274	3,524	132	289	6,347
Decisions rendered	125	2,281	3,212	155	340	6,131
Claims rejected	48	1,015	1,303	72	240	2,678
Claims upheld	77	1,266	1,909	83	100	3,453
Withdrawn/abandoned	4	174	472	5	30	685
Decisions pending *	65	740	1,834	18	144	2,801
Claims pending **	168	7,369	13,116	209	1,461	22,323

‡ Claims heard to completion; includes cases heard before 1993.
* Decisions pending include all claims heard to completion for which no decision had been rendered by the end of the reporting period.
** Claims pending include all claims referred to the Convention Refugee Determination Division that have not been finalized (i.e. by a positive or negative decision or by withdrawal or abandonment) as of the end of the reporting period.

Statistical Summary by Major Source Countries

	Source Country	Claims Heard to Completion	Withdrawn/ Abandoned	Convention Refugee Status Yes	No	Claims Decided	% Accept.
1	Sri Lanka	1,101	37	849	168	1,017	83.5
2	Somalia	800	27	783	35	818	95.7
3	Pakistan	292	30	80	159	239	33.5
4	China	274	27	42	259	301	14.0
5	Iran	241	16	157	79	236	66.5
6	Lebanon	236	31	77	144	221	34.8
7	India	213	29	50	127	177	28.2
8	El Salvador	179	35	41	173	214	19.2
9	Guatemala	154	32	97	89	186	52.2
10	Russia	148	10	84	47	131	64.1
11	Haiti	147	5	84	52	136	61.8
12	Romania	138	3	71	55	126	56.3
13	Ghana	137	68	20	109	129	15.5
14	Peru	128	5	90	32	122	73.8
15	USSR	110	23	44	96	140	31.4
16	Nigeria	108	16	12	66	78	15.4
17	Zaire	107	3	67	65	132	50.8
18	Bangladesh	106	15	32	60	92	34.8
19	Israel	106	17	25	69	94	26.6
20	Sudan	92	2	87	9	96	90.6
21	Ukraine	86	6	43	23	66	65.2
22	Uruguay	85	16	5	79	84	6.0
23	Cuba	71	4	59	20	79	74.7
24	Argentina	67	30	13	56	69	18.8
25	Ethiopia	63	3	46	23	69	66.7
	Top-25 countries total	5,189	490	2,958	2,094	5,052	58.6
	Total Claims	6,347	685	3,435	2,678	6,113	56.2

Source: Immigration and Refugee Board News Release, May 28, 1993

	Year	Male	Female	Year Total	M:F Ratio
1.	1973	220	185	405	0.84
2.	1974	271	256	527	0.94
3.	1975	167	202	369	1.21
4.	1976	92	143	235	1.55
5.	1977	62	106	168	1.71
6.	1978	58	88	146	1.52
7.	1979	70	67	137	0.96
8.	1980	84	101	185	1.20
9.	1981	192	179	371	0.93
10.	1982	139	151	290	1.09
11.	1983	90	108	198	1.20
12.	1984	531	559	1,090	1.05
13.	1985	446	405	851	0.91
14.	1986	1,287	574	1,861	0.45
15.	1987	3,041	1,506	4,547	0.50
16.	1988	1,224	1,591	2,815	1.30
17.	1989	1,213	1,570	2,783	1.29
18.	1990	1,834	1,722	3,556	0.94
19.	1991	4,230	2,965	7,195	0.70
20.	1992	7,758	5,228	12,986	0.67
	Total	23,009	17,706	40,715	0.77

Note: *Admission data for 1973-79 refers to country of last permanent residence. 1980-92 data is by citizenship.*
Source: *Immigration Canada.*

Legend

——□—— Male

----△---- Female

----○---- Total

Backlog landings

ADR Landings