

MR COLES

A.S.C. 27.  
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cc Sir Antony Acland  
Sir John Leahy

Sri Lanka

I was approached yesterday evening by Mr Bagpai, who said that he was speaking on Mrs Gandhi's behalf.

2. The Indian Government are very worried about the lack of progress in Sri Lanka in sorting out the problems on the Tamils, the more so because of their fear of a major influx of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka into India.
3. They fear that Mr Jayewardene is under extreme pressure from the Sinhalese hardliners, though they regard him as the only hope for a reasonably satisfactory settlement of the Tamil problem.
4. They would hope that, if the Prime Minister has an opportunity of talking to Mr Jayewardene in Goa, she would urge him to keep open the dialogue with the Tamils, but also to realise that there is not indefinite time for dealing with the problem.
5. The Tamils in Sri Lanka are prepared to abandon their demands for a separate Tamil state, or for a federation, and are prepared to accept some kind of autonomous region within a unitary Sri Lanka, and (according to Mr Bagpai) the points at issue are now reduced to a comparatively narrow question of the number of provinces in which a measure of Tamil autonomy should be granted. The problem will not be quickly sorted out, and it would therefore be important to keep the dialogue with the Tamils going, so as to provide some time in which to sort it out.
6. The Indians are prepared to continue to "use their good offices" so far as may be needed for relations between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamils, but are deeply worried about the implications within India of any breakdown in the discussions between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamils in Sri Lanka, partly because of the possibility of a further influx of Tamil refugees and partly because of fears of the growth of a Tamil separatist movement within India.

RIA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

24 November 1983

Nonreply  
C/ROGUA Del ditm'anta

## EALAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA

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AA 4/11.



The Representatives,

Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference,

New Delhi,

India.

November 11th, 1983.

Honourable Delegates,

Please accept our good wishes to each of you attending this important international gathering. We are an association of Tamils from Sri Lanka and we wish to place the following for your kind consideration.

It has taken a long time for the persecution of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka to be noted by the outside world until violence of genocidal proportions was unleashed on our community since July this year. This is certainly not the first time such carnage has taken place and it is not likely to be the last either unless responsible members of the international community such as yourselves, use your good offices to defuse such a situation in Sri Lanka.

Till the advent of the Portuguese, Ceylon as Sri Lanka was then known consisted of two separate kingdoms, with distinct boundaries, language, religion and culture for more than 2000 years. The Portuguese administered the two states separately and so did the Dutch to whom the control of the island passed. Even for several years after the British took over, the administration was separate before it was amalgamated by them only for reasons of expediency and economy.

When the British handed over the government to the majority Sinhalese, meagre provisions for the protection of minorities were left behind in the British drafted constitution. But no sooner than the British left all the Tamils working on the tea plantations were disenfranchised and made stateless thus depriving one million Tamils of basic rights commonly afforded in any civilised country. These people are the backbone of the economy being the major foreign exchange earners for Sri Lanka, but they are subject to some of the worst living and working conditions in the world. Thus the seeds were sown for neo-colonisation in Sri Lanka with the minorities

becoming a subject race in their own country.

Shortly thereafter, the Sinhalese Governments commenced their planned and systematic persecution of the Tamil minority. Traditional Tamil homelands were subject to colonisation by mass movement of Sinhalese people into these areas ostensibly to provide land for landless people. But the fact of the matter is that there were landless Tamils and Moslems in these project areas who still continue to be landless. These colonisation schemes settled by convicted Sinhalese criminals and hoodlums were the centres of racial violence in 1956 and frequently thereafter and have drastically increased the ethnic tensions prevalent now. We are very sad to say that aid donor countries have not paid any attention to social impacts and that the projects they funded especially in the last few years have exacerbated these tensions even further.

When it became clear that the Sinhalese majority were stepping up their discriminatory treatment, the Tamils sought a federal form of Government within which they could hope to live as equal partners enjoying some regional autonomy. The Sinhalese majority have always spurned away any political propositions made by the Tamils. Even as early as 1956, peaceful and democratic campaigns by Tamil political leaders for a federal form of Government were met with brutal violence by the Sinhalese hoodlums under the protection and patronage of the Sinhalese leadership of all political persuasions.

The Sinhalese went even further to consolidate their discrimination against the Tamils by disestablishing English as the official language and making Sinhalese the *only* official language. With the stroke of a pen, the Tamils were disadvantaged overnight. This was only a small beginning in a long series of measures designed to ostracise the Tamil community from any active or meaningful participation in the life of the country.

In 1972, formal ties with Britain were severed by the adoption of a republican constitution thus preventing the Tamils from having access to the Privy Council and other recourses to justice. The Tamils boycotted the deliberations leading up to this constitution which was one in a series of constitutional manipulations which successive

Sri Lankan Governments have adopted in order to carry out their policies of annihilating the Tamil minority. The constitution adopted by the Jayawardene Government in 1978 has accelerated this process much further by even abandoning the secular nature of previous constitutions in declaring Buddhism as the State religion in addition to Sinhalese as the official language. The most disturbing nature of this is that in Sri Lanka today, it is *Government by amendment, not by constitution*. By the time you, honoured delegates, read this, the constitution may have undergone the eighth amendment, in six years! This time to further oppress the parliamentary participation of the Tamils. Does not this speak for itself?

Successive Sri Lankan Governments, most notably that of President Jayawardene since 1977 have devised subtle ways under the guise of parliamentary democracy to deny the Tamil minority avenues for advancement in education, employment and in areas of language rights, culture and religion. We give below in brief form a list, by no means exhaustive, of the more blatant acts by the Jayawardene Government against the Tamil people :

1. Constitutionally endorsing the adoption of a Sinhala Buddhist society without any real place for other groups.
2. Adoption of highly discriminatory admission procedures shutting out even well qualified Tamil students from higher education at the universities.
3. Denial of equal employment opportunities for Tamils.
4. Deprivation of development funds for Tamil areas.
5. Distressingly retrograde legislations permitting arbitrary arrests, torture and murder by the armed forces.
6. Use of violence against the Tamils under the protection and patronage of Cabinet Ministers by the armed forces as happened in Jaffna during the summer of 1981.
7. Encouraging violence by the Sinhalese hoodlums under the aegies of armed forces in Tamil areas such as Trincomalee this year, and other areas in the south for many years now.
8. Colonising traditionally Tamil homelands with Sinhalese clearly intended to eventually drive all the Tamils out completely.

9. Giving a *carte blanche* for the armed forces to inflict State terrorism against the Tamil minority resulting in looting, rape, burnings and murder by these so-called guardians of law themselves.
10. Encouraging the burning of Hindu temples and other cultural institutions of the Tamils.

The list could go on and on.

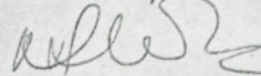
Is it little wonder that with all this track record, the Government of Sri Lanka wants the international community to regard these as internal affairs? When does it assume international significance? Had the world waited longer for reasons of not "meddling" in internal affairs, would not there have been more Adolf Hitlers and Idi Amins in this world?

With all its penchant for preventing the internationalisation of the Tamil plight, the Sri Lankan Government is nevertheless anxious to internationalise its economic woes, most of which were brought about by its own making. We urge every country in the world at large and the members of the Commonwealth in particular, to question this double standard which the Sri Lankan Government is seeking to impose on the international community. If Sri Lanka wants to belong to the international brotherhood of nations, it too, must be expected to pay its subscription out of its own pocket, not by dipping its hand into someone else's.

As a nation of people in distress, we earnestly appeal to you esteemed delegates, to take up the plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and prevail upon the Sri Lankan Government to address the Tamil grievances in a just manner. The continued oppression of the Tamil speaking people in Sri Lanka will eventually be a destabilizing influence in the region. It is with the interest of regional peace in mind that we make this fervent appeal to you.

We wish the meeting every success.

Yours truly,



Secretary,

The Eelam Tamil Association of Alberta.