

The outline of a false dawn. (1987, November 22). *The Island.*

Sunday 22nd November, 1987

THE ISLAND

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"This leprous daybreak, dawn nights' fangs have mangled
This is not that long looked-for break of day
Not that clear dawn in quest of which those comrades
Set out, believing that in Heavens' wide void
Somewhere must be the stars last halting place,
Somewhere the verge of night's slow washing tide
Somewhere an anchorage for the ship of heartache
....Night's heaviness is unlesened still".

Faiz Ahmed Faiz:
"Dawn of Freedom".

The above lines from a well-known poem in Urdu was written by the Pakistani poet at the time of freedom with partition. The freedom that came at mid-night to the sub-continent also brought with it the agony of partition. The travails and trauma that afflicted the sub-continent when it made its tryst with destiny made the sensitive poet cry out "This dawn was not the dawn we waited for".

Disturbances

To the Sri Lankan nation at large the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord signed on July 29 was at its own level a tryst with destiny. Yet along with it came violence when the police and security forces had to quell disturbances created by forces opposing the accord. Then came the Indian army.

The IPKF which according to the Indian envoy J. N. Dixit was establishing camps all over the North and East to prevent the outbreak of violence among Tamil groups turned a blind eye. In their "blindness" the IPKF followed John Milton literally by serving through standing and waiting.

Then came Trincomalee. The "Tamil ethnic soldiers" of the IPKF allegedly turned partisan towards the Sri Lankan Tamils. The result was a large number of Sinhala people getting uprooted. Then came the death fast of Thileepan and the suicide of 12 Tigers followed by the LTTE orgy of violence. Result? More refugees. No dawn yet.

At last the Indian forces stirred. The aim? Peace through force and so "Opera-

tion Pawan" was launched. The twin inter-related objectives were securing control over the peninsula and disarming the Tigers. So Operation Pawan (Gust of wind) went on. The Indian jawans went on marching from junction to junction heading for a "Blenheim" like famous victory. The Tigers started moving into the by-lanes and footpaths like "fish in the ocean". Victorious claims about conquest and control of territory are being made.

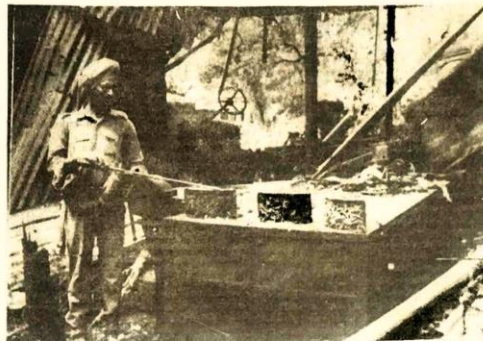
Fluctuations

The silent majority of Jaffna on whose behalf the war is being waged are just moving. Moving out from their homes, from their roads, from their villages and towns into places of refuge. They move from one area to another according to the fluctuations of fighting. Those who can leave the peninsula and move into the mainland staying at public refugee camps private homes. Their tales of woe are endless, their agony infinite. The people of the peninsula irrespective of religion are being affected.

Particular

The Sri Lankan nation in general and the Tamil people in particular cry out in the words of the Pakistani poet "This is not that long looked-for break of day". The raga of "Poopalam" sung in Carnatic music to denote the crack of dawn has now turned into "Muhari" - the funeral raga. The dawn seems as distant as ever to the people.

After six weeks of raging conflict a temporary ceasefire is emerging on the hori-



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zon. On several occasions during the conflict the Tigers have used for peace. Several letters and statements have been issued by the LTTE deputy leader "Mahattaya" to this effect. The ex-Jaffna commander "Kittu" who is in Madras has been trying for it. The LTTE's "father figure" Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran and opposition parties in India are also doing the same. A strong lobby within the Congress and the Indian bureaucracy is also trying. Several senior army officers in India have also expressed disapproval about the affair.

In the case of the LTTE there seems to be according to some observers a desire for peace, because of an initial miscalculation by the Tigers. According to this view the Tigers while being prepared to go under-ground and revert to guerrilla warfare had not however expected the conflict to escalate at this level. The LTTE calculation had been based on (1) The Indian forces would not cause damage and destruction at this scale to the civilian population which well-earned them gleefully two months ago. (2) The public reaction in the Indian sub-continent would be a deterrent. (3) Enlightened opinion both Indian and International would also mute

the Indian response. On this basis the Tigers may have thought that after an initial burst of conflict a negotiated settlement would prevail in the Indian establishment resulting in a "via-media" being found. In the meantime the Tigers could prove a point by taking on the fourth-largest army single-handedly. Unfortunately those calculations did not pay off. The Indian army went into action on a scale that made allegations of excesses against the Sri Lankan security forces pale into insignificance. Tamil Nadu which had to a certain extent

by D. B. S. Jeyaraj

been alienated from the Tamil groups due to a variety of reasons did not react spontaneously. Also coming in the wake of alleged atrocities committed by the Tigers, Tamil Nadu International and some Indian opinion condoned the action against the Tigers. The media manipulation by the Indian authorities who succeeded greatly in the preliminary stage helped greatly. The ordinary citizens getting out of the peninsula, whose testimonies had a ring of authenticity all contributed in a cumulative sense. No longer was it possible to dismiss all allegations as a major casualty was the "five a'clock follies" the sobriquet given to the Indian news briefings by western journalists who had covered the Vietnam war.

The English, Tamil and indigenous lan-

guage war was lost in the drawing-rooms of the USA.

Committee

At present the LTTE is negotiating on two tracks. On one Sathiasivan Krishnamurthy alias "Kittu" through M. G. Ramachandran is approaching the Indian establishment in New Delhi. In Lanka citizens committee representatives from the North have met Indian diplomats in Colombo. The LTTE wants an (1) Immediate ceasefire; (2) a confinement of Indian troops to barracks; (3) A staggered hand-over of arms in three phases; (4) negotiations towards resuming

talks.

On the Indian side the strategy seems to be holding the LTTE at bay until the present hierarchy is eliminated. Thereafter setting up a uniform administration for the North and East and help conduct a referendum for the merger of both provinces. To create a proper climate for the ceasefire, the LTTE has released 18 Indian soldiers from the Indian forces unconditionally. Earlier they had handed over two injured Indian soldiers in their custody to the Red Cross who in turn handed them over to the Indian forces. However the eventual outcome of a lasting ceasefire would depend upon the modalities of an arms handing over. An Indian Union Minister K. Natwar Singh's unilateral offer of a ceasefire for 48 hours envisages the entire surrender of arms. The LTTE however wants it to be done in three stages. It is also reluctant about the position in areas out-

ganges press in India began to give publicity to the happenings here. From the earlier assumption that "Operation Pawan" was going to be a swift, surgical strike turned into the stark reality that the exercise was fast turning into a protracted no-win struggle within the peninsula. Yet as the Tamil saying "Kettikaran Pulugu Ettu Nalarkku" (The smart man's life will last for eight days) the truth had to come out one day and it did. The infiltration of the peninsula by journalists, clergymen, prominent citizens, social workers and above all

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surrender by the LTTE. These sections point out that the issue at stake to the Indian establishment is their regional supremacy. India's paramilitary in the South Asian region has been challenged by the LTTE. Therefore the LTTE has to surrender or be destroyed. Analysis of the Northern scene however feel that the LTTE would neither surrender unconditionally nor allow it to be destroyed completely. In that respect the views of the Indian South Command Chief Lt. Gen. Depinder Singh who understands military realities better than politicians and bureaucrats is relevant. Gen. Depinder Singh tells an Indian magazine: "If the Sri Lankan Army could not disarm them in four years of fighting how could we in a day?" Another point to be noted is to quote the "India Today": "Yet, there can be no denying that the local Tamil population currently views the IPKF

with suspicion and even hatred." There is also a basic understanding of LTTE psychology would reveal that if the Tiger leaders are killed then the cadres would become virulently intransigent. The organisational structure of the LTTE could always show up second and third line leaders as in the past. In the final analysis what matters most is the Indo-Lanka Peace



an interim administration. In the case of citizens committee representatives in close proximity to Rajiv Gandhi camps. A final decision would be taken over the weekend. The Indians also want a public commitment to the accord to be announced by Prabhakaran and not Mahattaya. Meanwhile others feel that India would never agree to anything except a total

accord which provides the "locus standi" for Indian involvement here. How are the Provincial Councils going to be worked out?

Even the moderate TULF has expressed dissatisfaction with the Provincial Councils Act. (a) The act does not provide substantial devolution of power (b) It does not provide safeguards to the Muslim community which in turn may prevent full-scale support for the merger.

Then again all other groups too could not help work the accord in the present climate.

Public opinion in Jaffna is hostile towards the other groups who by their unconditional support to India and their complete silence over the sufferings of the Tamil people have placed themselves in the unenviable position of being viewed as collaborators. The Sri Lanka based TULF is sensitive to this situation while the India-