

OPINION

Sunday October 29, 1995

Page 6 The Island

WAR IN THE NORTH

—terrorism in the South

When will the Army take Jaffna? In a week, a fortnight? Before the rains come to ruin the pitch — to use a mandatory metaphor with the customary bow to the M.C.C. The trouble is that Comrade Velu doesn't have a cap since he didn't go to any decent school. And in any case, you won't find him hanging about town when the Army reaches Jaffna. There'll probably be enough young Tigers left behind to maximum mischief, throw a grenade here, slit a soldier's throat there. But the bulk of the LTTE's fighting force will surely retreat to fight another day in another way...in the way they fought the IPKF, which explains why I have been reading (re-reading in fact) M. R. Narayan Swamy's Tigers: from boys to guerrillas... and Lt. General Sardeshpande's Assignment Jaffna, and our own diffident student of unconventional wars, Rohan Gunaratne.

Where will the LTTE retreat to fight another day, meaning next month? The Mullaitivu jungles, the Wannu? Have they exhausted their missiles? Can our SLAF planes fly safely? Besides all that, what of their "sleepers" in the South? We saw what happened in Colombo last week. Do they have suicide bombers and the mayhem-and-murder squads in

other major cities/towns in the Sinhala south too?

Yes, questions, questions — just to remind ourselves that marching into Jaffna is not necessarily the end of a long struggle. Not at all. It is only the beginning of another phase, just as the IPKF discovered. And India has enough men and material to fight three-four-five ethnic/separatist



by Kautilva

insurgencies. After all, it has the second largest standing army in the world.

Will we ask for Indian assistance, and what would be Delhi's response? Intelligence, coastal surveillance, arms, probably, but men, no. Delhi is too sensitive to Tamil Nadu opinion; Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, a southerner, more so.

The thrust of his questions when I talked to him in the PM's office for about 30-40 minutes convinced me that no Indian prime minister, certainly no southerner like Mr. Rao, can be anything but deeply concerned in Tamil politics in Sri Lanka and the secessionist struggle in the north-and-east.

My question about the Gandhi assassination trial, and Indo-Sri Lankan cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism, received this measured answer:

"The concerned Indian agencies have received full cooperation from their counterparts in Sri Lanka. Both India and Sri Lanka in their determination to fight the scourge of terrorism, have passed enabling

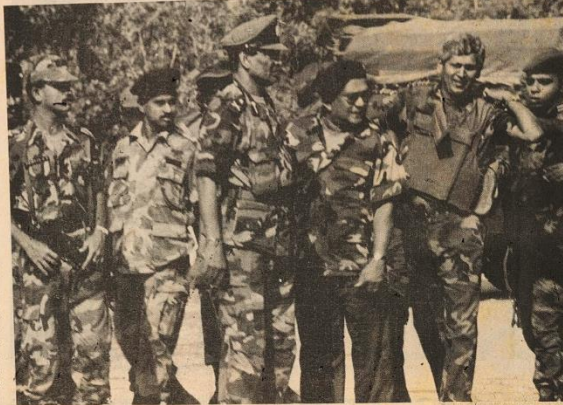
be picked to demoralise "the enemy" and rouse anti-government feeling.

Though it may seem purely theoretical, the persistence with which India, and Prime Minister Rao himself take up the extradition issue (Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman) is the plainest signal that the LTTE and the Rajiv Gandhi issue are not merely important political issues but matters that involve Indian national and regional security.

Tabloid terrorists

No, I am no whistleblower. Been too long in the business to do the dirty work. But with tough guy, Edmund Jay in charge, as Comrade President Chandrika's Super-Censor, here's an early warning to our Sinhala tabloid guerrillas who are getting away, with blue murder, say the Blue Brigade. Kindly note, comrades, that our judiciary takes the line from the British, not the Americans.

Recently, Judge Roger Sanders, abandoned a trial on account of "unlawful, misleading and scandalous reporting" in Britain's tabloid papers. The press was "warned that he would ask the Attorney-General to consider whether contempt charges should be brought against certain publishers and editors. They are in peril of far greater penalties than I can impose", he said.



The "star" of the show was Gillian Taylorforth, leading actress in a TV "soap opera" named Eastenders. Geoffrey Knights, introduced to us as the glamorous Gillian's companion, is facing charges of assault — the victim, Ms. Taylorforth's driver. Mr. Knights had his lawyers appeal to the judge that he could not be certain of a fair trial in view of the "unlawful, misleading and scandalous publicity" surrounding the case. In a 8 page judgment Judge Sanders

held that the media were guilty of "a grave abuse of process". Accusing a number of tabloid newspapers of publicity that was "unfair" and "outrageous" the Judge accused two journalists of conducting a "hate campaign" against Mr. Knights.

serve their party and/or personal interests and rewarded in various ways, direct or indirect. The ultimate test however is the journalist's professional performance, and the supreme court is the reading public, certainly in a highly literate, politically conscious community.

However smart the journalists, there is always a reader somewhere who is smarter than him (her). He (she) observes the change in tone, the issues picked up or more revealingly the

issues ignored. The only question that puzzles him/her is Where's The Loot?

Talking of intervention, a popular seminar topic these days, this was singularly well-timed. And the rewards immediate. What am I talking about? Dick's demarcate, what else?

Second thoughts

Asked by reporter Ranga Kalansuriya of the state-owned Daily News to comment on President Kumaratunga's trip to New York to participate in the

50th anniversary celebrations of the U.N. former President J.R.J. observed: "In retrospect, it should be said that her visit has produced positive results. The situation that developed at the time of her departure did not worsen either. Therefore I think that the protests against the visit are no longer valid". Even the last Emperor has a fundamental right to second thoughts.

I note also that the right hand of Junius the Genius has not lost its cunning: Responding to reporter Kalansuriya's next move, J the G (Junius the Genius) informed the Daily News man that he did not wish to speak at length on the current political situation". Fair enough. But Ranga why didn't you press him briefly? Or did you? If so, what did he say? If not, why not?

Finally, why don't you have another shot? Don't let "good manners" and all that restrain you. Trust your natural instincts as a reporter. You won't go wrong.

Who dun it?

Guess who? "asked the author of the briefest of notes who had chosen to introduce himself "Brain Teaser". Evidently he wanted me to guess the identity of "the Sri Lankan scholar" responsible for this extraordinary passage:

"This instrumentalist and constructivist perspective is currently the reigning one, and most of its insights and demonstrations are accurate, irresistible, and suited to our so-called post-modern ambience. But if the primordialist view is reactionary and prejudiced, the instrumentalist view, by its very voluntaristic constructionism and contextualism, gives us inadequate access to the seemingly enduring power of ethnic appeal" as structuring sentiments and as instant mobilizer of crowds for collective political action. And those theorists who have tried to combine the notion of throwback primordialist sentiments with presentist instrumentalist strategizing have not convincingly given the answer to the continuing cultural and social potency of ethnonationalism".

Guess who? Who indeed? It isn't you, Kumari, or wait a minute, how about you Radhika? All that strategizing. Okay, I give up. "Brain teaser" promises to help me if I am at a loss... That I am, comrade, that I am... Hold it... it is Susmitha G...? Comrade, give me a clue, pal Writing his Harvard pundit, S. J. Thambiah.