

Perumal family told the three ministers sent by Premadasa that the devolution package adopted by Parliament was inadequate. (1989, August 15). India Today.



Gamini Dissanayake

**P**erumal firmly told the three ministers sent by Premadasa that the devolution package adopted by Parliament was inadequate.

Ranjan Wijeratne

S. Thondaman



RAGHU RAJ

should be construed as creating an obligation for the Indian armed forces to remain in Sri Lankan territory without the concurrence and against the express wishes of the Sri Lankan Government, I as President of an independent, sovereign republic, would have no option but to treat the agreement as being inimical to Sri Lanka's sovereignty and national interest."

The Lankan official media backed Premadasa's tirade with a string of editorials and articles urg-

ing the IPKF to pack up and go home. Sections of the Indian media also supported this view. The official Sri Lankan news agency, Lankapuvath, and the state-run television, Rupavahini, reproduced articles by Indian political commentators like Bhabani Sen Gupta and Sunanda K.

Datta Ray urging withdrawal of the IPKF.

But last week, Premadasa revealed that beneath the sabre-rattling facade, there could be a rattled government: the President personally intervened to lift state censorship of the media after suspected JVP assailants gunned down Thevis Guruge, the top man on the censor board and director-general of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), in the heart of Colombo. The killing was followed by an unprecedented appeal by SLBC personnel calling for a fair presentation of news because of the threat to their lives. Said Prins Gunasekhara, a former opposition MP and a leading human rights activist: "It is a government that is skating on thin ice." Guruge's murder was the third major assassination in Colombo in less than two weeks, following the killing of Tamil leaders Appapillai Amirthalingam and Uma Maheswaran by suspected LTTE militants.

Premadasa had made attempts to score diplomatic points including an elaborate effort to highlight the fact that hundreds of Tamil youth—many of them LTTE sympathisers—are trekking into Colombo to escape harassment by the EPRF and IPKF. More than 500 such youth are lodged in Colombo's Hindu College, ironically enough, guarded by Sri Lankan soldiers, who were once hunting them.

After all that, the communique was a burst of sunlight. And July 29—which would have marked the end of the deadline—saw the dawn of a new bright day in Indo-Sri Lankan relationship.

—CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA in Sri Lanka