

Die Rolle der Frau ist derzeit in Ost wie in West einem Wandel unterworfen. Dabei gibt es Gemeinsamkeiten wie Unterschiede. So scheint beispielsweise eine offene Diskriminierung der Frau in Deutschland und Europa kaum mehr opportun, während sie in Korea noch an der Tagesordnung ist. Und das, obwohl gerade in diesem ostasiatischen Land eine ausgesprochen aktive Frauenbewegung existiert, wie sich in der akribisch-kritischen Aufarbeitung und Dokumentierung des Zwangsprostitutions-Unwesens während des Zweiten Weltkriegs oder im Kampf gegen die Benachteiligung von Frauen in Familie und Beruf zeigt.

Dennoch erscheint die Ohnmacht der progressiven Kräfte in der Frauenbewegung auf beiden Kontinenten evi-

dent und veränderungsbedürftig. Nicht zuletzt sind sie - insbesondere in Asien - deshalb geschwächt, weil es dort eine enge Interessenkonvergenz und Kooperation zwischen Politik, Beamtenschaft und Industrie gibt, die partizipatorische Ansätze kleinzuhalten trachtet. Dem muß durch die Stärkung der Zivilgesellschaften engagiert entgegengewirkt werden.

Dem asiatisch-europäischen Forum im Oktober in Bangkok gelang es leider nicht, bereits eine große NRO-Gegenkonferenz zum nächsten ASEM-Gipfel (April 1998) vorzubereiten, da es dieselbe aus Mangel an Finanzen wahrscheinlich gar nicht geben wird.

Die europäisch-asiatischen Beziehungen sollten künftig in größerem Maß als bisher von nicht-ökonomischen Zielen

und Inhalten bestimmt werden, wie: Schaffung von sozialer Gerechtigkeit, Verbesserung der Lage von Frauen, Entwicklung von unten und Erhalt der Umwelt.

Die Veranstaltung in Soest überzeugte mit eloquent-brillianten Referenten, interessiert-sachkundigen Teilnehmern und intelligenten Arbeitsergebnissen sowie Zielformulierungen, den europäisch-asiatischen Integrationsprozeß - nicht zuletzt auf Ebene der NROs - sozial, ökologisch und kulturell voranzutreiben. In Trier wird es voraussichtlich im Januar 1998 eine Fortsetzung geben, diesmal mit dem Schwerpunkt "ASEM und nachhaltige Entwicklung".

Bernd Basting

## International Assistance towards Peace

Vom 12. bis 14. November veranstalteten 'Dienste in Übersee' und die 'Evangelische Akademie Loccum' eine internationale Konsultation zum Thema "International Assistance towards Peace. The contribution of the churches' development services to conflict prevention and peace building".

Neben der Situation im südlichen Afrika, den Ländern der sogenannten 'Great Lake Region' (Burundi, Kongo, Kenia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Sudan und Uganda), Guatemala und Mexiko wurde auch die Lage in Sri Lanka erörtert. Dazu legten die beiden Referenten S. Balakrishnan ('Movement for Interracial Justice and Equality'/'Movement for Constitutional Reforms', Colombo) und Walter Keller (Südasiensbüro im Asienhaus, Essen) das nachfolgende Arbeitspapier vor, das wir im Original veröffentlichen:

"During the past 40 years there have been numerous initiatives (civilian, religious and at a political level) - more than 20 from 1957 - from 'inside' and 'outside' Sri Lanka to achieve a negotiated settlement to the multiple ethnic conflict in that country. But all the initiatives were largely an ad hoc reaction to the needs of that particular moment to be followed by the next one in response to a new set of conditions and imperatives.

So Sri Lankas polity has been (and still is) in an acute and deepening crisis for more than two decades. A viable way out of this crisis requires far reaching reforms in the political structures. The failure to solve the ethnic question, the prevalence of political violence, the decline of democratic institutions and practices, and the authoritarian tendencies of the state point to the fact that the existing political structures have become obsolete and incapable of accommodating new democratic demands.

The crisis had been made manifest over the past decades in a variety of ways: long periods of rule under emergency regulations that bypassed the normal procedures of democratic legislation, the use of the emergency for purposes of normal governance,

the denial and/or restriction of democratic rights including the rights of free expression at both political and cultural levels, violations of human rights of such magnitude that has attracted the concern of international and UN human rights organisations and, serving as the basis for the maintenance of the situation of emergency, an ethnic conflict that has resulted from the denial of democratic rights to the minority ethnic groups - a conflict that has reached the level of a civil war. Violence has become a part of political practice used by state as well as opposition forces. It has been used to silence political opposition and to suppress dissenting opinion.

The ethnic conflict is a crucial and central factor in the decline of democracy. Its origins lie in a number of factors aimed to ensure the monopoly of the majoritarian rule by denying the political rights to equality and equal participation of the minority ethnic groups. Tamil ethnic groups were the first to protest against these practices and ultimately some sections of the Tamil polity took up arms against the majoritarian state in order to realize Tamil ethnic aspirations. This armed conflict is at the centre of the Sri Lankan democratic crisis today.

We think that before going into more details as far as initiatives of civil conflict resolutions are concerned, the nature of the conflict and its escalation during the past 15 years have to be laid out in brief.

### Ethnic Conflict

Sri Lanka is and has been a multi-ethnic and multi-religious plural society. The Sinhalese form 73 percent, Ceylon Tamils 12 percent, Indian Tamils 7 percent and Muslims 7 percent of the total population of approx. 18,5 Million at present. There are other smaller ethnic minorities too, among them the Veddhas, the original inhabitants of the Island.

The Sinhalese (mainly Buddhist) and Ceylon Tamils (mainly Hindus) are living in Sri Lanka for centuries. Ceylon Tamils were historically inhabiting the northern and eastern provinces, the Sinhalese were predominantly inhabiting the other regions. The 'up-country' Tamils were later in the second half of the 19th century taken by the British colonial rulers from South India to the Island in order to establish coffee and tea plantations.

It was during the colonial rule of the British (1796-1948) that the unification of the entire territory into one unitary state was accomplished.

At the time of independence the minority groups - especially the Ceylon Tamils - persisted in their demand that political power must be shared between ethnic groups. A rudimentary method of power-sharing in the Central Government was proposed on the eve of independence in 1947 by a Tamil Member of the State Council. He suggested that the representation in the future Parliament ought to be shared equally between the major and the minor ethnic groups ('50 : 50 demand'). But this proposal was rejected. From the time of independence which was granted on 4th of February 1948 Sri Lanka became a unitarist democracy with the Westminster mode of majoritarian democratic government dominated by the major Sinhalese ethnic group.

The enactment of Sinhala as the sole official language in 1956 and the conferment of 'the foremost place' for Buddhism in 1972 re-defined the Tamil-speaking people and the Hindu, Muslim and Christian populations as social groups which are at best not entirely Sri Lankan in character.

In the economic sphere, the minor ethnic groups were marginalised by the discrimination in access to employment and alienation of state land. The Government sponsored Sinhalese land settlements in the Northern and Eastern Provinces (these regions are viewed by Tamils as their 'traditional homeland') in a manner calculated to disrupt the demographic contiguity of the Tamil population between the two provinces. The intention was to undermine the territorial attribute of Tamil ethnic identity.

In education the Government introduced selection procedures, euphemistically labelled 'standardization', for admission to higher (university) education. They discriminated in favour of students educated in the Sinhala language medium and to the detriment of students educated in the Tamil language medium: the Tamil-medium student was required to obtain higher aggregate marks than the Sinhalese-medium student for admission to the same faculty.

The restriction of opportunities for higher education was a significant 'push factor' which induced many young middle-class Tamils to consider the idea of a Tamil homeland - known as 'Tamil Eelam' - favourably and to join the militant organisations. The subsequent military action by the Government and its forces served as the political mid-wife to the birth of armed resistance by Tamil militant organisations from about 1974. And the most powerful one functioned (and is still functioning) under the name of 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' (LTTE).

In 1979 the Government enacted the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act' (PTA) and the forces were instructed to 'wipe out terrorism' within six months. For the first time,

the counter-insurgency strategy of collective punishment against the Tamil population as a whole was to be observed: Tamil youth in particular were subjected to widespread and indiscriminate violence. The objective was to discourage their participation in, and support for, the militants.

In 1983 Sri Lanka earned international notoriety following the horrific scenes of generalised arson, murder and mayhem that accompanied the anti-Tamil pogrom of July that year. The violence which killed an estimated 3.000 Tamils and created about 150.000 Tamil refugees was justified as the Sinhalese 'backlash' to the killing of 13 Sinhalese soldiers in an ambush by the LTTE in Jaffna. Since then the island, once described as the pearl of the Indian Ocean, and its people have experienced an era of violence and destruction unparalleled in its long history. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, once regarded as a purely domestic problem, became a regional and an international issue. The conflict and the resulting suffering inflicted upon the people by the warring parties became topics for discussion and criticism of the Sri Lankan government in foreign capitals, parliaments and international fora.

After a period of 17 years in power, the 'United National Party' (UNP) - much responsible for the escalation of the conflict - was defeated in the parliamentary election held on 16 August, 1994 by the 'Peoples Alliance' (PA) led by the 'Sri Lanka Freedom Party' (SLFP). On 19th of August, Chandrika Kumaratunga, daughter of former Prime-Ministers S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike und Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of the country. About three months later, Mrs. Kumaratunga could triumph again as she secured victory in the presidential election held on 9th of November by a clear mandate of 62 percent of the votes. After the election victories (parliamentary and presidential) Chandrika Kumaratunga has been given a mandate to work for national reconciliation and an end to the ethnic conflict which has caused widespread misery to the country and its people. Thousands were killed including Tamils, Sinhalese und Muslims.

### Civil conflict resolutions

There have been numerous attempts to solve the conflict politically during the last decades, starting from the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1957 (during a time, where military conflict was not existing), which sought to redress the language issue to India's mediation efforts from about 1983 and the proposals put forward by the Chandrika Kumaratunga government in October 1997 (at the height of a military onslaught upon the Tamil regions of the Island). In all, there have been more than 20 initiatives which have been mainly coming 'from inside', though India's role in these 'inside attempts' cannot be ignored. Initially the talks

involved only government representatives and members of moderate Tamil parties. This setting changed from 1983, where also Tamil militant groups - particularly the LTTE - took part in bilateral or trilateral negotiations.

Peace initiatives of Sri Lanka can be categorized into 4 areas:

### 1. Peace initiatives by NGOs

NGOs have accelerated their activities since the mid of 1980s, campaigning to resolve this conflict by recognizing the inter-ethnic justice and equality within the multi-ethnic and broader democratic and united framework. NGOs' initiatives in drafting a federal political structure became the basis for the present government, to prepare own proposals for a constitutional reform that is currently in discussion. Peace rallies, peace marches, demonstrations and lobbies were frequent features during this period. These activities culminated towards a successful creation of a large peace constituency in Sri Lanka in 1992-94 period. This constituency was primarily responsible for the defeat of the previous government lead by the UNP. The local NGO community was also able to mobilize the support of international NGOs and created an international supportive network.

To support the peace process initiated by the new 'Peoples Alliance' led government from the end of 1994 peace initiatives in the South - comprising Sinhalese and Tamils - called for national reconciliation and an end to the conflict. These efforts are also supported by sections of the media. Activities were organised by a combine of NGOs calling themselves the 'Campaign for Peace with Democracy'. In separate letters they appealed to the LTTE and the government to do everything possible to arrive at a political solution bringing back peace to the Island. They call on the government to dispel all doubts about its intentions by firmly declaring its total commitment to the achievement of peace and that it will not permit its efforts to be thwarted or disturbed by any obstacles that may be placed in its path. They also called on the government to present without delay the contours of the political solution that it is prepared to implement for the resolution of the ethnic conflict; this solution should take into consideration the genuine aspirations of the Tamil and Muslim people and affirm to all citizens the full enjoyment of their democratic rights.

In order to win back confidence of the minority groups in the country the government should reconstitute national institutions such as the police, the armed forces, the state media and local government bodies so that they reflect the multi-ethnic nature of the Sri Lankan society.

In the appeal to the LTTE the organizers demand that the LTTE must make public their proposals for a democratic political

structure that they will consider as appropriate for a peaceful solution. The LTTE should also refrain from any action that will be harmful to the peace process and should allow persons living in areas under its control the free expression of their views on the peace process and the right to freedom of association on that basis. To strengthen the peace process the LTTE should permit the freedom of activity of national and international governmental and non-governmental agencies engaged in relief work in the North-East.

## 2. Religious initiatives

The churches, both the Roman catholic and non catholic are in advantage of easy access to address both the communities because of their multi-ethnic constituency. But, until recently, the institutionalized churches did not intervene in any considerable degree with the ethnic conflict. Being a minority institution the Churches were consistently facing the attacks from the Buddhist forces and therefore, taking much more precautionary role on national issues of controversial nature. Therefore, it was left to the most committed individuals within these churches to intervene in these processes. But, in late 1980s and early 1990s, the churches made some initiatives in a more meaningful manner to intervene in this process to campaign and to mobilize public opinion against the war and for the democratic resolution of the ethnic conflict.

The social arm of the 'Catholic Bishops Conference', SEDEC, took a leadership to focus on peace initiative in mid 1993. Earlier, their contribution was confined to relief and rehabilitation of the victims of the brutal ethnic war. This peace initiatives gradually progressed to form the 'Inter-religious Core Group' in May 1993 and a community based peace programme was initiated aiming at planning and implementing a long term peace agenda for Sri Lanka. A campaign launched against the election violence by the 'Inter-religious Core Group' during the general elections of 1994 focussing 'Peace for Children' created opportunity to consolidate the peace activists into a group. This process gradually developed towards the formation of the 'National Peace Council' (NPC). NPC is one of the active peace groups in Sri Lanka working towards the democratic resolution of the ethnic conflict.

The 'National Christian Council', the non-Catholic alliance of denominational churches, along with a number of Buddhist clergy initiated the formation of the inter-religious 'Peace Foundation' (IRPF). IRPF is involved with other peace groups in educating the people and to campaign for the negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict. IRPF is mainly focussing the spiritual aspects of peace on the basis of the teachings from the respective religions.

'Quaker Peace and Services' is another

group focussing on the spiritual aspect of peace making are involved in training peace activists and facilitating peace activism in the country. They came to Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the anti-Tamil violence of July 1983.

There are a number of Buddhist groups working towards peace among the Buddhist communities in various parts of the country. But, these are fewer in numbers and strength compared to the involvement of the Buddhist clergy in their campaign against other ethnic or religious communities. Ideologically, the majority of the Buddhist forces unfortunately still identify with this perspective.

## 3. Political level initiatives (from 'inside' Sri Lanka)

It is a very small segment of the left and democratic forces among the political society that has given leadership for peace initiatives in Sri Lanka. Historically, two major political parties were very clearly committed for chauvinist politics. But, the historical experience has turned the situation to a different dimension for these two parties to realize that the resolution of this conflict based on power sharing is indispensable for the survival of every individual in this country. The 'Indo-Sri Lanka Accord' initiated by the previous UNP government in 1987 was the first indication of this realization. But, it is primarily due to the lack of political will and commitment on the part of that government, the accord has failed to achieve its expectations. The failure has intensified the conflict by maximizing the damages. The awareness created by the NGOs and alternative media to the people resulted to consolidate the anti-war-sentiments among them. But, this development did not transform into a support to the political solution immediately. The 'Peoples Alliance' government made use of this situation very tactfully and put forward its agenda for peace and campaigned its elections to a remarkable victory in 1994. The people's expectation for peace maximized to the highest degree. But the negotiation process, initiated by the government in 1994/95, failed to bring any results and it had ended up by resuming the armed conflict in a much more brutal manner.

After the breakdown of the peace negotiation, this government has drawn its strategy of 'war and peace' trying to achieve peace through a dual strategy of war and constitutional reform. But, still war remains the major 'show' and the constitutional reform process to bring political solution remains a 'side show' of the government.

## 4. Political level initiatives (from 'outside' Sri Lanka)

From about 1983, India's role as an external mediator became more prominent, but the peace moves initiated by India failed one after another as the conflict continued. Be-

ginning with the 'Annexure C' proposals authored by G. Parthasarathy in late 1983, the 'All Party Conference' which commenced in January 1984 and ended ingloriously in October 1984, the failed negotiations at Thimpu in Bhutan in the middle of 1985 to the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987, the Indian government had been making continuing efforts to bring about a resolution of the conflict without success. The 'Indo-Sri Lanka Accord' of 1987 was the most wounding initiative. Although the dominant Tamil armed group, 'Tamil Tigers', rejected the agreement characterising it as "a charter of servility", many hoped that the agreement providing for devolution of power to a merged 'North-Eastern Provincial Council' would have offered an opportunity for settling the conflict. The presence of the 'Indian Peace Keeping Force' (IPKF) also gave the people of the north-east, who had suffered enormously at the hands of the Sri Lankan security forces, initially a sense of security and reassurance. But the expectations of peace and the feeling of reassurance were soon to be shattered with the outbreak of confrontation between the IPKF and the LTTE in October 1987. During the confrontation between the IPKF and the LTTE that lasted until December 1989, the people were subjected to untold atrocities by the IPKF with massive loss of lives and destruction of property particularly in the northern areas. There were those among the Tamil community who garlanded and welcomed the IPKF on its arrival but were happy to see the last soldier depart in March 1990.

## What is the way out?

Ethnic conflict is a political conflict. Therefore, it has to be resolved politically. The political process must have two aims: first, to find a political solution through the concept of territorial or segmental self government at the region and shared government at the centre. This involves reorganization of the entire political structure where the majoritarian democratic practice will have to come to an end and the multi-ethnic consensus and democratic practice has to be guaranteed.

The second one is the peace process that would be framed in such a way to facilitate the commitment of the three major actors - namely, the government, the major opposition and the LTTE - into a tripartite approach to find a solution. The bi-partisan consensus between the two major parties - the ruling 'Peoples Alliance' and the opposition 'United National Party' is inevitable towards the proposed tripartite approach.

The majority of every ethnic community stands for a peaceful political solution to this conflict. But, still the above mentioned major actors have not demonstrated their political will towards the democratic means to resolve this conflict. This remains the major challenge to the peace community in Sri Lanka."