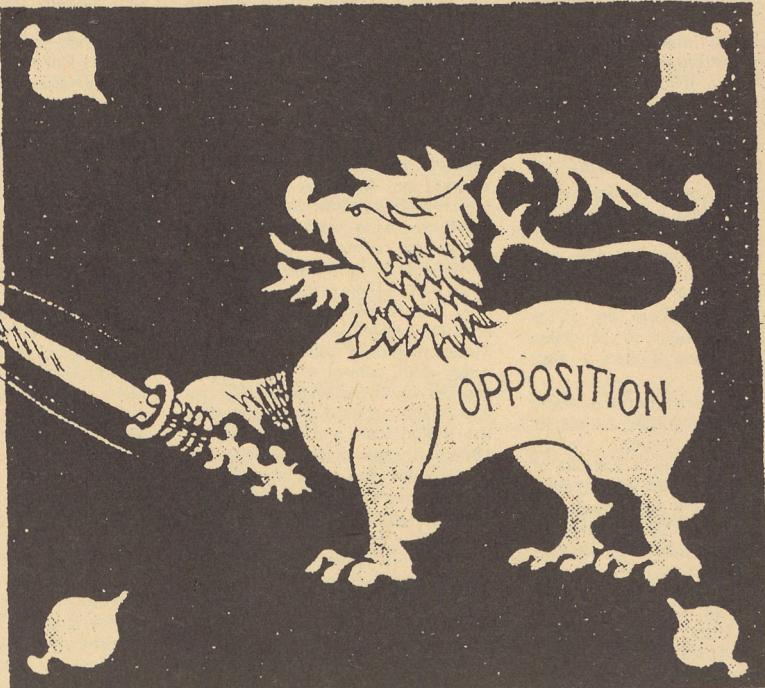
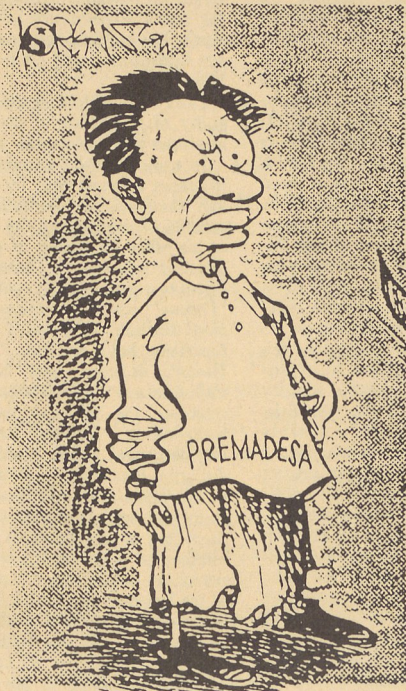


Sri Lanka Situation Report



aus: 'Far Eastern Economic Review', 12.9.91

Yet, he talks, walks, smiles (if and when the TV cameras are focussed on him), and pretends nothing has gone wrong. For President Premadasa, the dark haired populist and a self-styled emperor of sorts, the much publicised impeachment motion came not only as a rude shock but also as a 'guerilla attack' - sudden, unexpected, from within and with such devastation.

The motion to impeach President Premadasa - first of its kind in Sri Lanka - and thereby the removal of him from the presidency was handed over to the Speaker Mr. M.H.M. Mohammed by a group of MPs in accordance with the provisions of the constitution on the 28th of August 1991. Exactly on the same day, 13 years ago the then President J.R. Jayawardene introduced the Presidential system in Sri Lanka. The motion was signed by 7 opposition MPs and nearly 40 MPs from the ruling 'United National Party' (UNP). The impeachment move cleverly formulated and meticulously articulated, had its origins with the UNP 'dissident'-group led by former ministers Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake who came out openly against President Premadasa accusing him of being a 'dictator'. Five UNP senior members, some of them were ministers and deputy ministers in the Premadasa Government, too joined the dissident UNP group publicly.

Of the Tamil political parties, only the 'Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front' (EPRLF) signed the impeachment motion, the 'Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation' (TELO) came out against it and the 'Tamil United Liberation Front' (TULF), as usual, remained undecided til the last minute. The whole scenario has turned into a bizarre political episode

by the end of September. So much so, that the war in the North (and East) has almost been forgotten in Colombo (see also below).

When the notice of impeachment motion was handed over to Parliament Speaker Mohammed no one except him and some leading members of the opposition and UNP dissidents, were sure about the exact number of signatures. A heavy responsibility was cast on the Speaker and he had to very impartially examine whether the allegations made merit inquiry and report by the Supreme Court (see also box: The charge sheet). Mr. Mohammed thought it fit to entertain the motion and acted accordingly thereby plunging the Presidency into a deep turmoil. It is virtually beyond the powers of the President to dissolve the parliament while an impeachment motion is on. But the President has the powers to prorogue the parliament and he promptly did so (till 24th September) and managed to win some time to counter the opposition and rebel claims and attacks.

Who will caste the first stone?

While the allegations against Premadasa to a large extent, merit not only inquiry but also a verdict from the people, the whole impeachment episode has been hatched in utter secrecy, giving it a conspirational element. The majority Sinhalese population got carried away with the grand allegations. However, the minorities, remained sceptical throughout. The reason is very much understandable. The history of the two main impeachers Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali (former Minister for National Security) and Gamini Dissanayake (former Minister for Land, Land Developments and Mahaweli Affairs) has been full of blood and atrocities against

THE notice of a resolution under Article 38 (2) (a) of the Sri Lankan Constitution submitted by a large number of dissident UNP and SLFP Members of Parliament alleges that President Ranasinghe Premadasa has been "guilty of having committed: (a) Intentional violation of the Constitution and/or (b) Treason and/or (c) Bribery and/or (d) Misconduct or corruption including the abuse of the powers of his office and/or (e) Any offence under any Law involving moral turpitude."

It contains 15 heads of charges:
1. The President has usurped the powers of Parliament and/or the Cabinet of Ministers by acts unknown to the Law and the Constitution e.g. issuance of Presidential directives and guidelines etc (Vide President's statement to Ministers on their assumption of office — 18th Feb. 1989).

2. The President has frequently ignored the provisions of Article 43 of the Constitution which states...there shall be a Cabinet of Ministers charged with the direction and control of the Government of the Republic, which shall be collectively responsible and answerable to Parliament... (A Presidential statement of 18th Feb. 1989 to the effect that "politically and constitutionally Ministers are delegates of the President appointed to assist him in his exercise of the executive power") is a direct violation of this Article.

3. The President has intentionally violated the Constitution and in particular Article 43 by misinterpreting the provisions to believe that he is the whole executive and thereby assuming that only one man is responsible for the direction and control of the Government.

4. The President in his statement maintains that: "The Provisions in Article 43 (1) according to which the Cabinet is charged with the direction and control of the Government is subordinate to Article 4(b)." The statement itself is a wilful and intentional violation of the Constitution, its terms, spirit and principles and it converts a democratically elected Cabinet Government into a one-man dictatorship.

5. The President has violated the collective responsibility of Cabinet of Ministers. (President's statement of 18th February 1989 is annexed and cited in the charge-sheet)... It is clear that the President has assumed

The charge-sheet

for himself powers which are not vested in the office of the President by the Constitution.

6. The President has acted ultra vires the Constitution in the allocation of subjects and functions to Ministers of the Cabinet, Project Ministers and State Ministers (for example, the allocation of the same subjects and functions to two persons, which is a violation of the Constitution, causes confusion and impedes the exercise of executive power...(and) is unknown to any other part of the world).

7. Article 52(1) provides for an appointment of a Secretary to each Ministry by the President. This Secretary shall, subject to the direction and control of his Minister, exercise supervision over the Departments of the Government and other institutions in charge of his Minister. But the President had acted ultra vires to the Constitution by making (several specified) appointments.

8. The President, by requiring Secretaries to Ministers to prepare Confidential Reports to him of the Ministry and submit them directly to him, has violated Article 52(2) which requires the Secretary to act "subject to the direction and control of his Minister." By direct instructions and by requiring direct reporting from the Secretaries (bypassing the Ministers), the President, contrary to the Constitution...has assumed powers not given to him by the Constitution.

9. Article 55(1) states that the Cabinet of Ministers shall not delegate its powers of appointment, transfer, dismissal and disciplinary control in respect of Heads of Department. But the President has (by specified acts) violated the provisions of the Constitution by usurpation of powers vested in the Ministers by Statutes passed by Parliament.

10. Article 4(b) casts upon the President the inalienable duty of the Defence of Sri Lanka and Article 30(1) makes him the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. However his actions do not prove that he has discharged this supreme duty to the people satisfactorily or to the best interest of the country, e.g. (1) Being the Minister of Defence he hardly ever has chaired a meeting of

the National Security Council. (2) Has failed to take any positive action to provide the people the necessary security and an atmosphere of peace. (3) Has been carrying on political adventures of such a nature as to endanger the security of the State. (4) *By carrying on secret negotiations with and arming of the LTTE which resulted in carnage of thousands of people including security personnel.* (5) Acting in derogation of powers and privileges of the Supreme Legislature of the country by conducting a Parallel All Party Conference into which all national questions are put up for discussion.

11. The President is required (by constitutional provisions) to... promote international peace, security and cooperation and the establishment of a just and equitable international economic and social order and...to endeavour to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in dealing among nations. (He is also required) to do all such acts and things not being inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution or written law as by international law, custom or usage he is required or authorised to do. But the President has repeatedly violated the same (in words and deed).

12. The President has failed in his duty to protect the Fundamental Rights of the people, particularly of those mentioned in Articles 10, 11, 13 and 14. (He is accused of several grave human rights violations.)

13. The President has violated the fundamental rights and duties enshrined in the Constitution for the protection of its citizens by the creation and operation of a 'Police' State in order to intimidate into submission the Sri Lankan population. The methods mentioned include telephone tapping; using the Inland Revenue Department and Bribery Commissioners Department to intimidate and destroy political opponents; the use of CID officers, Customs officers and Excise officers contrary to the law against political opponents for political and personal gain; the establishment of a separate Investigation Unit parallel to the Police Department under retired police officers, for extra-legal political operations; and dismissing, punishing, reprimanding, promoting and

demoting public servants and State officials in actions against the due process of the law.

14. The President, by ordering (specified items of) wasteful expenditure on frivolous matters and hiding public expenditure from Parliament, has violated the provisions of the Constitution and his own guidelines.

15. The President is alleged to be guilty of a number of corrupt and improper acts (instances specified).

In addition, the signatories list 24 instances to show that the Sri Lankan President is "permanently incapable of discharging the functions of his office by reason of mental or physical infirmity." These include: "getting a gold painted replica of the 'Throne' used by ancient Kings made for him to be seated at official functions held at the President's House"; ordering and conducting elaborate and costly arrangements to celebrate his birthday each year; antagonising "friendly Nations, to the detriment of Sri Lanka"; "by declaring that the LTTE has accepted his peace offer and thereafter by supplying arms and ammunition to them (he) caused the death of a large number of police and armed forces personnel which was a direct result of his ignorant and selfish attitude"; "making declarations that he was able to send off the Indian Peace Keeping Force from Sri Lanka and causing destruction to the Sri Lankan Army by the decision taken without due consideration of the military aspects"; "spending public funds for the maintenance of the President's House and his private residence, 'Sucharitha', and employing over 500 security staff for his protection and living in constant fear and suspicion"; "making use of the 'Temple Trees' residence of the Prime Minister without allowing the Prime Minister to use it"; "transporting a specially blessed chair for his use to all functions he attends"; "trying to create a false historical background of his life by setting up a 'Sucharita Museum' with his personal effects"; exhibiting a "quick temper and suspicion of all persons"; "granting favours and privileges to his kith and kin"; indulging in "a luxurious life style" while "claiming to be leading a simple life"; and "living in suspicion and hatred of all others, particularly his Ministers and partymen...and making use of a hired squad to intimidate and harass them." ■

aus: 'Frontline'

the minorities, especially the Tamils. When they came out accusing the President of "torture, disappearances, and Human Rights violations" the irony of the situation was beyond words.

Propaganda war

The eight UNP MPs who openly came out in support of the impeachment in the earliest stage were expelled from the party on the 7th of September, despite their efforts to obtain an injunction against their expulsion in the District Court of Colombo. Later, three more UNP MPs had joined the ranks of the UNP dissidents.

Immediately after the impeachment motion was 'entertained' by the Speaker, posters and banners in

their thousands appeared all over Colombo supporting and praising the President. Most of the posters were bilingual - a clever ploy on the part of Premadasa to attract Tamil sympathy. The President went on TV for hours and hours castigating the dissidents and the opposition, whereas the opposition and the dissidents struggled to get their views across (see also interviews with Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Lalith Athulathmudali). But when the UNP dissidents held their first meeting in Nugegoda, a suburb of Colombo on the 10th of September under the banner "Movement for the safeguarding of parliamentary democracy", the number of people attending the meeting was unprecedented. More meetings followed with large crowds of people attending. The opposition political parties too joined the pro-impeachment campaign with rallies held in the

South of the Island starting off from Panadura, on September 17th.

The Impeachment Racism

Even though the impeachment of the President contained several charges against him, the single charge that came to dominate the dissident campaign was President Premadasa's negotiations with the 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' (LTTE) and the supply of arms and ammunition to the LTTE to fight the rag-tag 'Tamil National Army' (TNA) during the final days of the presence of the Indian Army in the North and East of Sri Lanka towards the end of 1989.

From the inception of the pro-impeachment campaign there had been fears that it could turn into an anti-Tamil and racist forum since the President's attempt to hold negotiations and talks with the LTTE were portrayed very negative. And, the fears materialized into reality. Meeting after meeting the dissidents, especially Gamini Dissanayake and former Minister Premachandra came out with racist attacks on Jaffna and Upcountry Tamils (Plantation Tamils).

They alleged that the country is being ruled by the Tamils by pointing to the fact that the Jaffna Peninsula is still under the effective control of the LTTE and in the South President Premadasa has allowed the top Tamil bureaucrats to control the affairs: "Uthurey Prabhakaran, Dhakuney Paskaralingam" (referring to the ruling of Prabhakaran in the North and Paskaralingam, the Tamil secretary to the President in the South) being one of the catch-phrases. This trend was heightened by the claim made by Gamini Dissanayake that Mr. Thondaman, a Tamil Minister in the Premadasa Cabinet and the leader of the powerful trade union, the 'Ceylon Workers Congress' (CWC) with a huge support of upcountry Tamils was slowly eating into the traditional Sinhala territories - the hill country. All the plantation trade unions vehemently condemned Mr. Dissanayake's statement.

Dissanayake also charged publicly at a press conference on the 23rd of September that the Premadasa Government had supplied sophisticated weapons including anti-air craft guns to the LTTE. The Minister of Defence was quick to deny the anti-air craft guns while, later Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe, UNP spokesman and the Defence Ministry acknowledged that the LTTE had been given weapons to fight the 'Tamil National Army' as a tactical manoeuvre in 1989.

Apart from that, the Sinhala paper 'Ravaya' - which is often extremely critical of the Premadasa regime and 'Yukthiya' - another Sinhala paper published by the 'Movement for inter racial justice and equality' (MIRJE) - came out with several expose type of articles about the President and his dealings with the deported Chinese origin 'casino king' Joe Sim of Singapore. 'Ravaya' further reported that when the bodies of Mr. A. Amirthalingam and Mr. V. Yogeswaran - both TULF leaders who were assassinated by the LTTE - were

sent to Batticaloa and Trincomalee for the people to pay their last respect, the Government sent a secret letter, together with the bodies, to the Army Commander in Trincomalee and Batticaloa, instructing him to give 45 AK-47 rifles (Kalashnikov) and 45 automatic pistols to the LTTE.

The President and his men on their part totally manipulated the TV and Radio. Premadasa declared that Gamini Dissanayake was responsible for the burning of the Jaffna public library in 1981, the allegations by the President and counter allegations by the dissidents, brought in a lot of 'misdeeds' and 'offences' supposed to have been committed by both parties and the alternative journals and papers had a hay day in picking them up.

The Ghost of Jaffna Library

President Premadasa's accusation against Gamini Dissanayake is revealing. On October 19th, speaking at a rally in Kandy the President said: "Who created the situation in the North and East? When I introduced the 'District Development Council' System (DDC) in Parliament (at this time Premadasa was Prime Minister and Minister for Local Government Affairs under J.R. Jayawardene) it was Gamini Dissanayake who rebelled against it. The elections were held. Before the day of the poll Gamini Dissanayake took a large crowd of people to Jaffna. Having gone there he collected ballot boxes and caste bogus votes... Even at that time Prabhakaran was a member of the youth front of the TULF. It is after the sabotage of the DDC elections, the burning of the Jaffna library - it was a valuable library, an international library - that the young militants thought that if our leaders cannot secure justice by ballot we will secure it through bullet. I would like to declare in public that it was Gamini Dissanayake who was the Chief Contributor to the creation of the situation in the north and east."

Although, Gamini Dissanayake rejected the charges the President insisted the role of the former Minister in the carnage of Jaffna in 1981. The dissidents, in turn, blamed the President that he was the one who orchestrated the 1983 ethnic holocaust against the Tamils.

The Mohammed Move

All the heat generated by the impeachment move had dissipated in the middle of October when the Speaker Mr. M.H.M. Mohammed suddenly decided not to place the impeachment motion on the parliament order book, thereby making the move nul and void. He did not give sufficient explanation for doing that. However, he mischievously maintained that the signatures were not enough. This decision came as a turning point in the whole episode and several questions remain unanswered at least officially. How come the Speaker even after entertaining the motion to impeach the President, thereby accepting the validity of the motion suddenly proclaimed that the motion was invalid? Now, the rumour has it that several millions of Rupees (or Dollars), were handed over to the Speaker and he was

virtually bought over by the ruling party and Premadasa.

Interestingly, the Sinhala magazine 'Ravaya' of 20th October exposed all the UNP members who had signed the impeachment motion numbering well over 40. According to informed sources and 'Ravaya', it was the Speaker who was behind the move. Later, EPRLF MP, Suresh Premachandran, declared that he together with some others had signed the motion even at the Speakers house. So, the Speaker must have been party to the impeachment episode. The UNP dissidents and opposition MPs attempted to oust the Speaker afterwards through a no-confidence motion in him. But without success. The President seems to have overcome the dangerous hurdle, but the dissidents continue to attract large crowds and what is going to be their next strategy is not certain.

Commotion in Parliament

The speech made by President Premadasa at the re-opening of Parliament on the 24th September and the barrage of allegations that were raised by Opposition MPs throughout his speech, from the beginning to the end, will surely go in as a critical event in Sri Lankan Parliamentary history. On that day, Parliament was convened following its being prorogued by the President in the wake of the impeachment motion being presented against him.

The Secretary to the Parliament began to read out the proclamation announcing the proroguing of Parliament and the date of its reconvening. The Opposition MPs began to register their protest by banging on their tables. As the time neared for the President to commence his speech, the sounds of protest from the Opposition benches grew louder. The President commenced speaking at about 10.42 a.m. At this precise moment, the Opposition whip Richard Pathirana rose to his feet and began to speak, over-riding the President's words. The President was momentarily silenced. What Pathirana said was that this was a period when a majority of MPs had presented an impeachment motion against the President, according to the conditions set out in the Constitution; thus, he maintained that it was improper for the President, who stood indicted in the case.

But Premadasa carried on with his speech regardless of interruptions. At this point, the Opposition MPs began to disturb the President, banging on their tables and also raising questions aloud. The Opposition MPs held up large posters printed in green - the party colour of the UNP - and also displayed a range of photographs of Joe Sim (the 'casino king') taken with various government officials and UNP bigwigs. The MPs started to shout: "Who brought in casinos to Sri Lanka?" "Where is Joe Sim?" "Here are the people who brought in casinos" (showing the photographs); "Don't lie", "You've mortgaged our country to your son-in-law", "That's where all the garbage is", "You are the one who armed the LTTE", "Get out, get out", "Enough now,

why are you hanging on", "The Joker of Sri Lanka", "Enough now, stop talking and leave this place", "Where is Richard de Zoysa" (referring to a journalist who was killed presumably by Government dead squads). The Government MPs who had remained somewhat silent throughout the heckling showed signs of life by banging on their tables to register their approval when at one point in his speech the President said that the World Bank had agreed to grant large sums of money as aid to Sri Lanka.

The freedom of the media

A major area of discussion in the wake of the impeachment motion and the public campaign mounted by the pro-impeachment groups both within the UNP and within the Opposition has been the total denial of freedom of expression to the pro-impeachment campaigners. Starting off from the stabbing of a person putting up posters to publicise the UNP dissident rally in Nugegoda on September 10th, there were many complaints about harassment and intimidation of pro-impeachment supporters. In particular, the absolute silence of the state-controlled media, in particular the 'Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation' (Radio) and the 'Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation' (TV) was condemned by all respecters of democratic practise. The blatant use of the state media to publish and broadcast government propaganda was also very obvious to media observers during the past month. A statement by the Minister for State for Information, A.J. Ranasinghe, that the dissidents and the pro-impeachment groups could not of course expect coverage on the state controlled media received wide publicity during this period. The printing press of 'Yukthiya' was sealed and later destroyed by 'unidentified persons', while the policemen who were at the gates of the press were looking on.

The War in the Northeast

From early September, reports circulated in political circles that the LTTE was making moves towards initiating negotiations. Reports of press conferences addressed by LTTE leader Prabhakaran and his deputy Mahendrarajah as well as interviews given to the BBC confirmed these speculations. The LTTE openly issued an invitation to Mr. Thondaman, to visit Jaffna to discuss the context in which negotiations could take place. Letters too were exchanged between Thondaman and Prabhakaran. Later, during November, this process came to a halt again. It is very clear that issues such as the merger of the north-east and the allocation of land in these areas to settlers will continue to constitute major stumbling blocks in any peace process. A new dimension to the proposed negotiations has been the involvement of the 'Quaker Peace and Service Group' in some of the preliminary meetings.

At the beginning of October, there were several reports of clashes between the security forces and the LTTE in the Eastern province, especially around the Amparai area. By mid-October, it was clear that there was a massing of troops in the northern sector,

Lalith Athulathmudali, who made a name for himself as Sri Lanka's Minister for National Security in President J. R. Jayewardene's Government in the late 1980s, is now spearheading a movement against President Ranasinghe Premadasa. When Athulathmudali and half the members of the Sri Lankan Parliament (including some Ministers and 40-odd members of the ruling United National Party, UNP) gave notice of a resolution to Speaker M. H. Mohammed to impeach Premadasa in August, the President retaliated by expelling him along with Gamini Dissanayake and G. M. Premachandra. But Mohammed surprised everyone by rejecting the impeachment petition. Athulathmudali and his colleagues have challenged their expulsion in the Supreme Court. Premadasa has been saved by Mohammed, at least for the time being. But the UNP dissidents are continuing with their struggle for reducing the "super powers" of the executive presidency and for increasing the powers of Parliament. Athulathmudali, Dissanayake and Premachandra are busy holding largely-attended rallies all over this island nation of 17 million people to garner support for their campaign.

The situation in Sri Lanka today is somewhat similar to that in India in 1987 after Prime Minister and Congress President Rajiv Gandhi expelled Vishwanath Pratap Singh from the party. Athulathmudali is confident that in an election the people will accept him and his disgruntled colleagues as the real UNP, just as the people of India accepted the Congress led by Indira Gandhi as the real Congress after she split it in 1969 and 1978. If that does happen, this suave and soft-spoken politician is likely to emerge as a strong contender for power.

The Oxford and Harvard-educated Athulathmudali is now engaged in building a movement for the restoration of democracy in his country. Excerpts from an in-

'Premadasa can't win again'

Interview with Lalith Athulathmudali

terview he gave S. Venkat Narayan at his busy Colombo residence:

► *What are you doing these days?*

We are in the process of creating a more meaningful democracy in this country. We find that the concentration of all powers in the executive presidency is not a satisfactory arrangement. We want to reduce the "super powers" of the executive presidency and increase the powers of Parliament at the same time.

These constitutional changes apart, we want to improve the quality of freedom in Sri Lanka. Since our campaign began, the quality of freedom in this country has certainly increased. We are having record crowds at our meetings. People feel something is happening. The public outcry has advanced ahead of the politicians in spite of the fact that the parliamentary process of impeachment has been pushed back.

► *How are you going about achieving your goal?*

At the moment we are fighting a court case, challenging our expulsion from the UNP as absolutely illegal and invalid. This may go on for another month. Our plans will depend on the court's decision.

If our expulsion is upheld by the Supreme Court, we are confident that a situation will develop in the UNP that is similar to that in India, when the late Mrs. Gandhi was expelled from the Congress. We are confident that over 95 per cent of the UNP will come with us.

► *How soon will you get an opportunity to prove your electoral strength?*

The first opportunity will come when the provincial elections take place in about 14 months from now. In case our expulsion is upheld by the Supreme Court, we will form a new political party and participate in the provincial polls.

► *What if the Supreme Court invalidates your expulsion from the UNP?*

We have to see what powers we have within the party to campaign for what we are saying. Even then, we are fairly confident of bringing the party round to our point of view.

► *What will be the fate of the other UNP MPs who had signed the impeachment notice?*

Their fate is in the hands of the President who won't trust them at all. It's for them to decide their future course of action.

► *How do you look at the recent cancellation of the sixth SAARC summit in Colombo at the last minute?*

Well, the President takes great pride in saying "I am undiplomatic." He has absolutely nothing but disdain for all the customary diplomatic niceties and conventions. One of the reasons we have sought to impeach him for is that he does not know how to conduct foreign relations.

He may have deserved what he got from India for all those insults he has heaped on it since he became President two-and-a-half years ago. But, from Sri Lanka's point of view, I am greatly disturbed. Because an insult or snub to the President results in an insult or snub to the country as well.

I am also worried about Indo-Sri Lankan bilateral relations in the short term. In the long term, they will always right themselves. I am disturbed about the future of SAARC because I cannot see how the summit is going to take place so long as Mr. Premadasa is the President, because not all the heads of state want to come here.

Besides, he has got himself into even a bigger mess. At least six Western countries have cut off aid to Sri Lanka for a variety of reasons: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Holland and Britain. Canada and the U.S. are giving the bare minimum. Even Japan is talking about media and human rights. There was no meeting of aid-giving countries this year. Normally, Sri Lanka gets \$1 billion as aid every year. A lot of it won't be forthcoming this year.

► *How do you assess Mr. Premadasa's performance as President?*

He started with a lot of promise, a lot of hope. He assumed office under difficult circumstances. Things got slightly better after Ranjan (Wijeratne) managed to put down the IVP (Janata Vimukthi Peramuna). But, in terms of public confidence, Mr. Premadasa has lost terribly. He has angered his own

party. He has totally alienated the middle-class.

► *How confident are you of victory if and when you get a chance?*

We are very confident that Mr. Premadasa cannot win again because the rank and file of the UNP is deserting him in hordes. There is now what appears to be a UNP-type alternative before the electorate. We are seen as the UNP now. If you remove Mr. Premadasa from the UNP podium, Gamini (Dissanayake), Premachandra and I are the three who will be speaking. These days, at UNP meetings, it's Mr. S. Thondaman who speaks after Mr. Premadasa. But Mr. Thondaman is a CWC (Ceylon Workers' Congress) man, not a UNP man. Partymen are laughing at this state of affairs.

► *Am I talking to a future presidential candidate?*

(Smiles) We don't know. You have to wait and see.

► *How will you solve the problem in the Northern and Eastern provinces?*

It has to be an imaginative political solution. I think we can sort it out. The colonisation issue can be sorted out. The problem in the Eastern province is what to do with the Sinhala areas and the Muslim areas. We have to get some give-and-take there.

► *You had dealt with the problem under Mr. Jayewardene, but it didn't get sorted out then?*

But now it's different. India is out of the picture. We couldn't go ahead with our plans because of India. Unfortunately, Mr. Premadasa doesn't have the imagination for getting India's co-operation to tackle the LTTE. He should cooperate with India on the LTTE issue.

► *How important is Indira in Sri Lankan politics?*

You can survive even after antagonising India for some reason or the other. But it's an unnecessary hurdle you'll place on yourself. One should make it a principal instrument of one's foreign policy that you keep good relations with India. Otherwise, you are putting on an unnecessary burden on yourself. And there is no reason for any antagonism to exist between India and Sri Lanka. ■

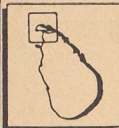
despite formal denials from the Ministry of Defence. On the 17th October, the Ministry announced commencement of 'Operation Valampuri' aimed at capturing Jaffna town and bringing the peninsula under the control of the security forces. Residents of the Vadamarachchi area (a part of the peninsula) were issued with evacuation orders and curfew was declared.

After about 10 days of fighting, the forces reported that they had control of the entry points to the peninsula and that all the islands in the northern sea were also under their control. Casualty figures from the operation were very low; a newspaper on the 26th October reported as few as 3 soldiers killed in the entire operation. Colonel Munasinghe of the Ministry of Defence said on the 24th October that phase 2 of 'Operation Valampuri' has been completed on the 22nd October. The area from Elephant Pass east to Vettilankerni had been declared a 'prohibited zone' but the road from Vavuniya to Jaffna via Elephant Pass remained open.

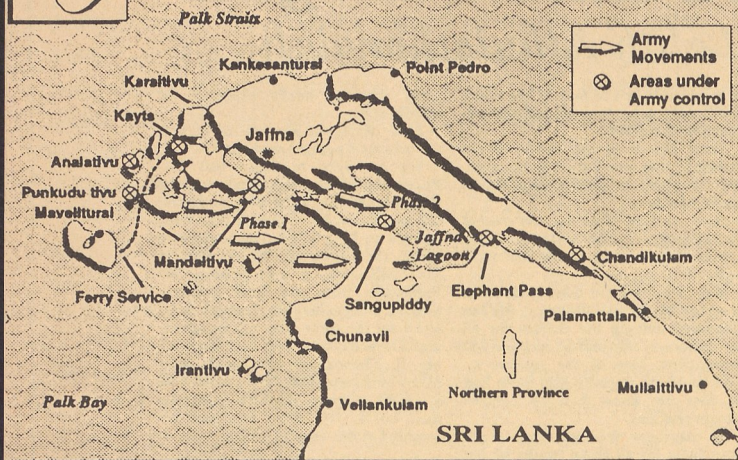
The Government had begun moves to restore civilian administration in Vavuniya. Two Ministers, Ranil Wickremasinghe and P. Dayaratna were sent to Vavuniya on a preliminary mission to ensure that the Government's decision was being implemented.

The heightening of military operations has resulted in a further flood of people leaving the northern area; in addition, troop movements in the early part of the 'Operation Valampuri', severely hampered the transport of food, particularly to the peninsula. Damage to the harbour at Point Pedro was also a major obstacle to bring in food supplies. There were many reports of acute food shortages and exorbitant prices of essential goods in the North. It was only on the 25th October that reports of food shipments once again moving to the North were received.

The situation with regard to those who have been displaced as a result of the conflict in the North and



The siege of Jaffna



East continues to be grave. On the 8th of November, it was one year since the Department of Social Services stopped registering any new residents in the camps in Colombo. However, all the organisations working with the displaced people vouch for the fact that almost double the number of 'registered' persons are acutally resident in the camps. There has been no resolution of this 'number game' yet.

From Puttalam, there were reports that Muslims who had fled Mannar (because of LTTE threat) last year and who had lived in temporary shelters in and aroud Puttalam since then were being forced to return to camps on Mannar island. There were similar complaints of Sinhala settlers who hat been displaced in the Trincomalee area and who were being 'resettled' in their villages. In all such cases the lack of adequate security was preventing any genuine re-settlement taking place.

Human Rights

The UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances visited Sri Lanka from 7th to 17th October. During their time in the island, they met with Government officials and with NGOs working on the issue of disappearances. They also heard personal testimonies from families of victims of disappearance.

The team travelled to Batticaloa (East), Hambantota

and Tangalle in the South while they were in Sri Lanka. The team consisted of five persons with Dr. Agha Hilaly of Pakistan being in charge. In spite of repeated assurances from the state that the situation with regard to 'disappearances' was now under control, during the time that the UN Working Group was in the island, on the 8th October, there were reports that three young men from a village in Welimada (upcountry) had been abducted from their homes; their bodies were found burned by the roadside on the following day. Two of them were ex-detainees (JVP suspects) from the Telawala Detention camp who had been release a few months ago.

Foreign Aid

With the budget for 1992 due, the question of the country's finances is assuming priority. Reports were published that the World Bank had agreed to grant Sri Lanka a massive Extended Structural Adjustment facility of US \$ 445 million but that there were certain conditions to be fulfilled for receiving the grant. Later on, the Ministry of Policy Planning refuted the story about conditions and anonuced that the first amount of US \$ 76 million had already been disbursed to Sri Lanka.

The unilateral decision of the Dutch government to cut off aid to Sri Lanka and subsequent discussions at the Commonwealth Conference in Harare about the linking of aid to human rights issues make the forthcoming Aid Group meeting (February 1992 in Paris) a critical one for the Sri Lanka Government, especially in view of the fact that the budget deficit is close to 70 billion Rupees.

Both Norwegian and German Governments have also referred to the need to clear up the country's human rights record in allocating monies to Sri Lanka for the coming year (inspite of that, the German Government recently pledged large sums of money; see press clipping).

The increase in the defence expenditure is one of the main points to focus upon in the forthcoming budget: In 1991, defence expenditure was 10,2 billion Rupees; in 1992, the defence budget is going up to 15,3 billion Rupees (1 DM = 24 Rupees).

Germany pledges Rs. 1,165.6 m. in aid

Annual negotiations between Sri Lanka and the Federal Republic of Germany took place in Colombo from 23 to 25.

The German Government pledged a grant of Dm 15 mn for the Poverty Alleviation (Janasaviya) Programme and grant of Dm 10 mn for the Rehabilitation of Internal Refugees using the services of NGOs. Further grants totalling Dm 22 mn were pledged for the GTZ Assisted grant projects in Agriculture, Vocational Training, Hydrography, Regional Development, Coast Conservation, etc.

The total assistance pledged for 1992 and 1993 accordingly is approximately Rs. 1,165.6 millions grant aid.

The major projects undertaken up to now with German assistance were the Randeniya Reservoir Project, Dm 400 mn (approx. Rs. 8,000 mn), and the Rantambe Project, Dm 230 mn (approx. Rs. 4,500 mn), a Finance and Planning Ministry press release stated.

Other significant development activities funded under the Ger-

man Economic and Technical Co-operation include a Research Project in 'Farm Machinery Development', German assistance to the German Technical Training Institute at Moratuwa, Kegala Teacher Training Project and the German assistance for Railway Projects.

The agreements in respect of the above were signed on Friday the 25th, by Dr. Wolf Preuss of the Ministry of Economic Cooperation, on behalf of the German Government and by Mr. R.

Paskaralingam, Secretary, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of Sri Lanka.

The German Government was represented by the delegation led by Dr. Wolf Preuss of the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation, and H. E. Mr. K. M. Franke, the German Ambassador in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka side was represented by the delegation led by Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Mr. R. Paskaralingam and the Director, External Resources, Mrs. S. L. Kuruppu.

aus: 'Island', 12.10.91