

***Are the Tamils taken for a ride by Tamil charities, associations and activist for decades? Many Tamil outfits and charities are banned over the years and unable due to irregular conduct, and tend to lose hard earned Tamil money, are unable to even challenge the ban. WTCC, TRO, and WTM are banned in the past 12 months, in North America. FACT many years ago.***

***Now some members associated with them attempt to steal the Tamils For Justice name, domain, website, and their attorney, as well as their goals and objectives. The same players in different garbs, and other so call Tamil cultural or community organizations which are all inter related and connected.***

***Are they helping or hurting the Tamil Cause?***

***Nelliaddy Mafia has unclean hands?***

***A few wield too much power and ruin and hurt the Tamil cause.***

**<http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/040699-3.html>**

**Dinosaurs of the "Tamil cause" congregate in Ottawa.**

***The Island- 4th June 1999***

---

By Dushy Ranetunge

\*\*\*\*\*

Every year the LTTE and its support/front organisations, attempt to stage at least three "international conferences" around the world. These are normally staged in the UK, Canada and Australia. The objective of these "international conferences" is to keep the flame of "Tamil Liberation" alive and to raise its profile in the international arena. These, together with various rallies and marches the LTTE and its supporters clubs organise, attempt to portray the "Tamil people" unconditionally accepting the LTTE, as their sole political "representatives". This year, the "international conference/rally" in London was held at the Alexandra Palace. The "conference/rally" was called "Tamil Eelam, towards independence".

This was followed by another "international conference" in Ottawa on May 21st and 22nd at the Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. This one was called "International Conference on Tamil Nationhood and Search for Peace in Sri Lanka". We were told that the conference was organised by the "Academic Society of Tamil Students ( ACTS) of the Carleton University and the University of Ottawa" among several other groups. The true powers behind the "conference" become obvious later.

A similar "international conference" was held in early February 1998 at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Most of the participants at these "conferences" tend to be the same individuals. The LTTE and its supporters transport the "conference" participants from one country to another, in an annual circuit.

On Thursday 20th May 1999, I flew into Ottawa from London, via Toronto. During the Canadian Airlines flight from London I was seated in seat number 12F and in 12H was Dr Jayalath Jayawardene MP, a national list UNP member of parliament from Sri Lanka who was scheduled to address the "conference". Mr Jayawardene informed me that his photo was in the Daily News, newspaper that morning in Sri Lanka and that he had been branded as a "traitor" because of his participation at the "conference" which was alleged to have been organised by the LTTE, a banned organisation in Sri Lanka. He later showed me a newspaper cutting.

I reached Ottawa late that Thursday evening and decided to check into a room in the "Residents Commons" which was situated to the side of the Minto Centre, where the "international conference" was to be held the following day. I was booked into Room 420. The next morning, I discovered that Vasantha Rajah was in Room 421, opposite my room.

I was the first to register for the conference paying a CN\$ 25.00 fee. I found the registration process quite tedious and intrusive and registered giving a false name and address. I was given a folder and was immediately impressed by the programme and the speakers. Most of them were "regulars" who go on annual pilgrimage to such "international conferences" which are organised by the LTTE and its supporters, in support of the LTTE.

The Program committee comprised of the following. Mr Derek Thurairajah, President of ACTS and a student of Carleton University was the Chair. Co-Chairs were Ms Jeevachelvi Selvaratnum (student of the University of Ottawa), Mr Sathi Nannithamby and Mr Ravinthar Thomas. ( both, students from Carleton University). They were all presumably members of ACTS.

The heavy weights, dinosaurs of the Tamil cause, formed the program advisory panel. They were, Prof. Chelvadurai Manogaran MA, PhD Wisconsin USA, Prof. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham MSc PhD Los Angeles, CA, USA, Prof. Jayeratnum Wilson MA PhD DSc Fredericton, NB, Canada, Prof. Joseph Chandrakanthan MA PhD Toronto ON Canada, Prof. Elagu V Elagupillai MSc PhD Ottawa Canada, Prof. Chelvanayagam Kanaganayagam, MA PhD Toronto ON Canada, Prof. Nagalingam Srisikandarajah MSc PhD Sydney Australia, Dr Sinnathurai Vijayakumar MEng PhD Toronto ON Canada, Ms Avis Harrell Sri-Jayantha MA New York NY USA, Dr Meenan Vishnu PhD Pittsburgh PA USA.

In addition, there was an organising committee which comprised of Tamil students from Carleton and Ottawa Universities. The "international conference" kicked off slightly late with a white Canadian lady Ms Gail Gavan singing the Canadian national anthem. This was in contrast to the "Tamil Eelam national anthem" which was sung at the London "conference/rally". Ms Gail Gavan and the professional conference "manager" Raj Rasalingam seemed minimally involved in the proceedings.

Ms Gail Gavan was followed by the traditional lamp lighting ceremony by the Chair of the regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, Mr Bob Chiarelli. He spoke a few words about the Tamil community in the Ottawa area and wished the "international conference" well.

He was followed by a Sri Lankan Canadian Tamil Rev Francis Xavier. Rev Xavier prayed for Peace and began by praying for the millions of Canadian Red-Indians who had been massacred by the white Canadians and then went on to pray for Chandrika, Prabakaran and Tamil Eelam.

Rev Xavier was followed by welcome address by Mr Derek Thurairajah, President of ACTS and a student of Carleton University. There were two other speeches of greeting from Joe Belfountain who is the President of the Carleton University Students Association and Ms Kathy Olson, a white Canadian student who gave a profile of Tamil students in Ottawa. She stated that there were 3000 Tamils in Ottawa, 600 attending Universities with 2/3rd in Carleton University. Most, we were told, were studying Engineering as language was an obstacle. "Engineering is chosen because less language skills are required. High-tech computing studies was also an attraction." She complained that Tamil students don't have fun and that they are too serious and stated that most had commented that their experiences in Sri Lanka were influencing their life in Canada.

This was followed by an audio visual presentation, a profile of Tamil Canadians and a tale of two nations: Sri Lanka and Canada introduced by Raj Rasalingam. To the reggae music by Bob Marley, "War", we were shown a slide show titled "Who will save our children" presented by the "Tamil Community". Generally in this type of situation, I have realised that "Tamil Community" is liberation lingo for "LTTE and its supporters club." The slide show consisted of pictures of refugees in temporary shelters, temporary schools, bombed out temples, churches, businesses, hospitals, railway systems etc.

In the profile of Tamil Canadians, we were told that Tamils are distributed in Canada as follows. Vancouver 7000, Toronto 150,000, Ottawa 6000, and Montreal 20,000. I wondered if there were more Tamils now in Canada, than the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. We were told that there were now two 24 hour Tamil radio stations, 500 software engineers, 20 medical specialists and 30 self-financing cultural organisations under the umbrella organisation called FACTS, Federation of the Associations of Canadian Tamils. We were told that Tamils were supporting Canada since Canada helped Tamils in their hour of need.

Prof. Ethirveerasinghams' son, Ethirveerasingham Arjunan made a presentation titled "through the eyes of an American student: An impression about the life of young Tamils in the North-Eastern Province." He stated that he had travelled with his father in 1998 from February to July throughout Jaffna and the Vanni.

It seems the Governor of the North-Eastern Province in 1998, Gamini Fonseka had commissioned Prof. Ethirveerasingham to write a report relating to refugee conditions and to make recommendations. Prof. Ethirveerasingham who is firmly in the "Eelam camp" seems to be using these facts, figures and photographs of bomb damaged sites, (taken by his son) to support what can only be described as pro-LTTE propaganda.

Ethirveerasingham Arjunan told us about decades of destruction, rape and bombings. He warned second generation Tamils living in Canada not to be complacent as "our children and our children's-children will lose our culture".

After warning others about losing their culture, he then went on to say that he does not speak any Tamil. Arjunan also has a trendy pony tail which would make him the odd one out in Tamil Eelam, which is under the strict disciplinarian Velupillai, who executed his deputy, Mahaththaya for having a relationship with a girl and for breaking a strict moral code. It seems young Ethirveerasingham Arjunan has already lost his language, and his culture. We were told of fear of Tamils in Sri Lanka towards the police and the security services.

"Everyone expressed fear to me. Many adult Tamil women in Colombo do not wear their "pottu" when travelling in fear of being identified as a Tamil. Discrimination and persecution has robbed the future of Tamils.

We were told that teenage Tamil girls were sexually harassed by soldiers at road blocks and that Colombo Tamil parties were "collaborators" like the Vichy French during WW2. He mentioned of embargoes in LTTE held areas and malnutrition, malaria and scabies.

In the Vanni, we were told that there were no check points and people remained supportive of the LTTE. Arjunan stated that an army check point refused to allow them to take soccer balls into the Vanni, that teachers in the Vanni were unpaid and that civilians in the Vanni wanted independence. He explained how a Tamil woman in the Vanni had shared with him, her personal experiences and how Tamils had told him "don't forget us". Arjunan was close to tears at this point. I noticed that the Ethirveerasinghams, father and son, were extremely emotional. (AE, serves with TRO Colombo, EU, and UK for past 7 years).

Public display of emotion and the highlighting of grievances, real and perceived, form the foundations of the "liberation struggle" and the justification for the use of violence. During the entire conference, although the word "peace" was its name, only suffering and injustices suffered by the certain selected Tamils were highlighted. Incidents that have taken place over several decades were condensed into 15 minutes and delivered. There was no mention of the ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in Jaffna, massacring of Muslims at prayer in mosques, the hundreds of Sinhalese from the so called border villages who were hacked to pieces with machetes in places like Kotiyagala, the thousands of Sinhalese who have been killed and maimed as a result of LTTE bombings in Colombo and in rush hour commuter trains or attacks on places of worship from Anuradhapura to the Dalada Maligawa. There was also no mention of the thousands of Tamil civilians, Tamil policemen, Tamil civil servants, Tamil politicians, Tamil militants of rival groups and planes full of Tamils who have been shot down and massacred by the LTTE in the name of "liberation."

In "Tamil nationhood and peace", the above are non-existent. They have been obliterated.

Arjunan was followed by Rev S J Emmanuel, former vicar General of Jaffna. Emmanuel has been a tireless campaigner for the "LTTE and the Tamil cause".

He gave the keynote address; Moral and Ethical Responsibility of the International Community to Help Resolve the Tamil National Conflict in Sri Lanka.

On 25th August 1996 Emmanuel participated in the opening ceremony of "Eelam House", the headquarters of the LTTE in London. ("Hot Spring" magazine, page 22, October 1996). Since then he has written a book "Let my people go" and travelled around the world meeting people like Desmond Tutu of South Africa, trying to drum up support for the "cause".

Emmanuel blamed the international community for double standards and hoped for the "ultimate triumph of the truth". He blamed the Sri Lankan Embassies abroad for not enlisting international support for mediation. He made his appeal for truth and justice in three stages. First by describing the background of the Tamil situation, then the Tamil aspiration for Peace and Freedom in terms of truth and justice and finally, on the basis of past experience and present convictions he spelled out his appeal to three different sections of the International community, the governments, the NGO's and the religions.

I wondered if Emmanuel had borrowed "truth and justice" from Desmond Tutu's "Truth and Justice commission". The bottom line as far as Emmanuel was concerned was that,

(1), "Sinhala Buddhist state" had bombed, raped and murdered the Tamils and therefore,  
(2), on the basis of "truth and justice we demand our freedom". This is "liberation lingo" for a separate state.

(3), that the international community must see the truth, (that is Emmanuel's version of the truth) come to its senses and turn the screws on the "Sinhala Buddhist state" so as to facilitate "freedom" for the Tamils.

There was also an appeal to the "Sinhala Buddhist brethren to liberate themselves from the Mahavamsa mind-set". This was directly contradicted by a later speaker, Prof. Peter Schalk who stated that "When we today speak of the "Mahavamsa mind-set" we usually think of anti-Tamil racism, because we are pre-formatted by the thinking of modern ethnonationalists. The Mahavamsa, however, did not think in racial terms but in sectarian terms".

There was a brief coffee break. In an adjoining room was a huge portrait of Velupillai, the "liberator" of Tamils and a room full of LTTE propaganda material. In the reception area where the coffee was being served, there were LTTE video's, books, flags, newspapers and various other LTTE memorabilia for sale. I briefly chatted to Dr Jayantha Jayewardene who stated that he was a humanitarian and therefore has no race bar. I also bumped into Vasantha Rajah.

I introduced myself as a freelance journalist based in London. He wanted to know about any of my recent publications. I told him that the "island" carried a piece by me regarding the London LTTE conference on the 1st of May.

He said, he had read it, and found one of my comments about him, quite amusing. I laughed and replied that the subject was too serious and in dire need of some frivolity.

After the coffee break, Mr Gary Wiseman, Rtd Naval Architect of the Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Armed Forces chaired what was labelled the first session ; Fate of civilians in National conflicts. He was careful in his comments stating that "Freedom is sacred. We are blessed in Canada" and called for more awareness. He introduced the next speaker Dr Sachithanandam Sathananthan, the founder -Secretary of The Action Group of Tamils (TAGOT) in Sri Lanka who was speaking on similarities between Sri Lanka and Kosovo.

Dr. Sathananthan found fault with the international community by stating that they have been mis-informed by the Sri Lankan missions and condemned the US for having a hidden agenda in Kosovo. The hidden agenda of the US was speculated to be three fold. To stop a pan-slav union between Yugoslavia and Russia-Belarus Union, Islamic argument like in Bosnia and economic interests to gain control over oil fields in central Asia.

Ethiopia and Eritria were mentioned as to how the US had re-named Eritrian Terrorists as Freedom fighters because of Marxist Ethiopian President Mengestu.

Nelson Mandela was quoted "It is the oppressor who determines the nature of the struggle".

We were told that the international community wants borders to remain stable, but that history proves otherwise. Dr Sathananthan criticised the left in Sri Lanka for not opposing land colonisation. "Sinhala working classes see colonisation as a reward for oppression. In order to maintain working class unity they are not prepared to oppose colonisation."

Sathananthan continued that "victory is dependent on the peoples determination to continue the struggle and that the left in Sri Lanka has sat on the sidelines and not participated in this historic process. The principle cause of national oppression is exploitation."

Returning back to Kosovo, he stated that the unfolding failure of NATO's intervention in Kosovo shows once again that neither time nor history is on the side of the international community.

Next to speak was Prof. (Fr) Joseph Chandrakanthan from the Department of Theology at the University of Toronto. As soon as he began to speak, I realised that it was his voice which was in the "War Without Witness" video, reading the commentary on the "exodus" from Jaffna. The video was produced by the propaganda arm of the LTTE and is distributed by them and could be purchased from "Eelam House".

He began by saying that "numbers never die. I will never be able to speak for the dead." He went on to say that "symbols" matter. His symbol was a bomb blast at "Potpathi" where he was called to serve as a priest. We were told of a great philosopher who had stated that idols must die, but symbols live. At this stage I could see Ms Deirdre McConnell, one of the "LTTE and Tamil causes" greatest supporters, shaking her head in sympathy.

"Vanni stands out as another symbol of death"

We were told of another symbol, 20th July 1996 when 400 dead bodies of Sinhala soldiers were lined up. I looked at Ms Deirdre McConnell. She was not shaking her head in sympathy any more. We were told of a prayer book in Sinhalese soaked in blood. " The government only accepted 50 bodies.

Chemmani, another symbol. We were told that these inhumanities were not done by ordinary people, but by top Sinhalese people from Sri Lanka's best universities. "Blood shed at Chemmani will not go unanswered". I wondered as to what he meant? A veiled threat perhaps from a man who claimed to be a man of god?

We were asked how the builders of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa could carry out such things? There was no mention of mass graves relating to the thousands of members of other rival militant groups executed by the LTTE in order to emerge as the "sole representative" of the Tamil people.

"What has "war for peace" produced? ?for which Canada has contributed." We got the answer " The largest number of refugees and handicapped".We were told of a Sinhala only judiciary, Sinhala only Military and a Sinhala only Bureaucracy and genocide(?) of education under this government. The largest number of children killed, the largest number of disappeared, the largest defence budget and the worst form of repression under this government.He concluded by saying that although Tamils may be living away from Tamil Eelam, that all its misery is within the Tamils.

Ms Avis Harrell Sri-Jayantha from the Ilangai Thamil Sangam, New York, USA was next to speak of mass graves in Tamil Eelam.

We were told that bodies have been dug up in Jaffna and sent to Colombo for analysis. "That's like digging up bodies from Kosovo and sending it to Belgrade for analysis."

Ms Sri Jayantha went on to state that due process has not been followed in the Mass grave investigations and that no one has been punished. " The very army officers who had direct responsibility for the Chemmani check point at the time of the burials Brig, Sri Lal Weerasooriya and under him Brig. Janaka Perera have been promoted this year to Commander of the army and deputy Chief of Staff respectively.

She stated that Jayawardene and Premadasa had committed genocide and by the same yard stick Chandrika might incur criminal responsibility.

Maps of mass graves in Sri Lanka were put up on the over-head projector and we were told of ethnic cleansing of Tamils in Weli Oya.

We were told that "Lutz Oette in his discussion of the genocide of Tamils agrees that the link between the intent of the state to destroy the Tamils, in whole or in part, must be established for genocide to have occurred." And then went on to proclaim that according to Oette the governments of J R Jayawardene and Premadasa are guilty of encouraging acts of genocide. Lutz Oette's study is published by the Tamil Information Centre.

So we have Ms Sri-Jayantha, a sympathiser of the "Tamil cause", at a conference in support of the "Tamil cause" attempting to pin a charge of genocide against the Sri Lankan government, by quoting from a study published by the "Tamil cause".

We were also enlightened to comments on genocide by others such as Nadesan Satyendra. The Krishanthi case was mentioned. She concluded by stating that excavations at Chemmani and elsewhere must be carried out by a neutral international body.

The next speaker was Deirdre McConnell and her topic was children and women in the conflict zone. She is a long standing supporter of the "LTTE and the Tamil cause". She explained that she had visited the North and she told us of her memories of stories of army massacres. We were told of 6000 war widows in Trincomalee who are living in extreme poverty and another nineteen thousand one hundred in Jaffna.

We were informed of an "impunity" problem and comments by a UN Special rapporteur. We were told of suffering of women and children because of embargoes on food and medicine, which are used as weapons of war. (Deidre and TCHR does "real work" in the UN in Geneva" -T4J)

She spoke of gender related violence. "Jaffna is a town with many check points, sexual harassment at check points, molesting and touching women as they pass is all aimed to humiliate and demean and to give a powerful signal of control and domination by the army, a sign who the master is and who must be obeyed." No mention was made that women are checked and searched by female army or police officers.

We were given a definition of rape and told that rape is a weapon of war in Sri Lanka. " we were told that as the army raped Tamil women, that they say "you will give birth to a Sinhala Lion and not a Tiger". We were told that there were many cases of gang rape and murder by the army.

There was hissing from the audience. The attempt being made was clearly to shock. Krishanthi case was again mentioned. Koneswari case was mentioned, and how the rapists put a grenade in the vagina in order to destroy evidence. " Tamil life appear to be disposable". "One girl was gang raped when she was going to say goodbye to her relatives, because she was going to Canada to get married."

We were told of an Amnesty comment that the reason a few have been selected is because of the publicity. McConnell continued stating that 100 dead women Tiger bodies in Jaffna were shown on national TV and they had been stripped of their clothes. "In some cases, children have lost both parents".

We were told that in the Vanni, there is slow killing of children with embargoes. "Tamil children are being killed by Sri Lankan security forces, shot dead and bombed."

There was a short period for discussion before lunch and a Sinhalese Canadian girl Shamini Fernando, who described herself as a feminist Marxist who is actively working with women in Kurunegala, the free trade zone and the Eastern province inquired about the child soldiers of the LTTE.

McConnell first back tracked by saying that she was only interested in children who are not in a combat role, and then went on to say that its all propaganda by the Sri Lankan government and that there is no truth in it. She further stated, this whole child soldier thing is back-firing because of difficulties relating to cadets in Western countries. She also stated that the LTTE had given assurances to Otunnu from the UN and that he is satisfied.

The LTTE video "oliveechu" was for sale in the LTTE stalls outside. If anyone had purchased one and viewed it, they would have seen child soldiers of the LTTE, evidence provided by the LTTE in their own videos.

The conference adjourned for lunch to a pub within the Carleton University compound. I walked towards the pub with Dr Jayantha Jayawardene and I inquired if the UNP leader, Ranil Wickremasinghe had approved of his trip. He said yes, and that Ranil had even seen and approved his speech. We had rice, nan bread, a vegetable curry and tandoori chicken for lunch and I sat with Dr Jayantha Jayawardene and a Mr Subramaniam for lunch. GG Ponnambalam wearing a Tamil national dress came into the pub. Our eyes met several times and he seems reluctant to approach our table as he walked towards and around it several times. Finally he seems to pluck up his courage and walked towards our table.

He shook my hand and said "I know who you are? You are the information officer of the Sri Lankan High Commission." I replied "No, I think you are mistaken". He responded "you are the journalist from Hong Kong?". I explained to him that he has got me confused with Aruna Kulatunga of the Sri Lankan High Commission in London who is at present in Sri Lanka and I had never been to Hong Kong. Ponnambalam did not like journalists and he made that clear to me. He seemed quite annoyed with the Sri Lankan government and Sri Lanka as a whole and **referred to the Sri Lankan President as a "female dog."** ( I am being polite, as Ponnambalam's words cannot be published). He also complained that the latest he has heard is that the Police are trying to prosecute him on the basis that he was seen wearing a LTTE shawl.

"Some journalist had written about it to the Sri Lankan papers" he said. I explained to him, that I was the journalist concerned, and that it was mentioned in my report about the LTTE meeting held in London and that my report was factual.

Unable to challenge me on the factuality of my report he said that I am a racist, because I called him Ponnambalam and "government stooges" like Rasanayagam (editor of Tamil Times) as Mr Rasanayagam.

I explained to Ponnambalam that since both are Tamils and since I have referred to the President as Chandrika, I do not think that I am a racist. Further more, I doubt if the editor of the Tamil Times, Rasanayagam is a government stooge because I read his magazine every month and he is quite critical of the government.

The fact that he does not support the LTTE does not make him or anyone else a government stooge. He said that I was like all the other Sinhalese and my writing in the 1st May "Island" was worded in such a way as to ensure that he falls into trouble and that I would be happy if he is locked up. I told him, that while I agree that there are many Sinhalese who would like to see him locked up, I am not one of them.

I told him that as far as I was concerned he is a far greater asset to Sri Lankan democracy outside as a free man, than inside, and I meant every word.

Ponnambalam has such radical views and his comments so outrageous, he is a liability to the "LTTE supporters club".

We started to walk back after lunch. Ponnambalam later approached me and shook my hand and said "no hard feelings" and walked away.

The afternoon session titled: Safety, Security and the Rights of People in Conflict Zones, was chaired by Prof. Bonie Lena, Psychiatry, University of Ottawa. He looked an Asian Canadian, but I am not quite sure of his ethnicity. Prof. Bonie Lena introduced the next speaker Prof. Margaret Trawick, from the Department of Social Anthropology, Massey University, New Zealand. Her topic was the massacre of Kokkaddichchola and its aftermath.

Margaret described an incident involving an American businessman and Sam Thambimuttu MP for one of the Tamil militant groups the EPRLF and what she called a "Prawn project". The exact details were confusing, but according to Margaret, the EPRLF MP tried to play out the Tamils and in the end 85 people were killed and the "Prawn project" was destroyed by the STF. However she did admit that there was a LTTE involvement as well.

Margaret explained this and other incidents in Sri Lanka and about her stay in the Eastern province. "Come to Kokkaddichchola" she said. She urged others to go to Sri Lanka as tourists and smuggle their way into the Eastern province and be a "protective bubbles" towards the people there.

Margaret Trawick was followed by GG Ponnambalam who spoke of the current political dynamics of the Tamil National Conflict.

He spoke of the history of the "Tamil struggle", "Sinhala only", about the present chapter being the bloodiest in the conflict, about peace talks and of 43 letters which were exchanged between the two parties and how the government failed to meet LTTE deadlines. He complained that the Tamil parties were beholden to this regime and how the peace package has not made any progress for 21 months. He complained that government pundits who said they know of ways to get around the 2/3rd majority

are today silent. Thimpu principles were dragged out hammered and nailed to the wall and its recognition demanded.

Ponnambalam stated that the international community was falling over each other to present themselves as 3rd party mediators but that the government was not interested.

We were told that the LTTE favours 3rd party mediation at present and that Tamils could meet the Sinhalese on an equal footing. He called it a conflict between two nations and that the Sinhala nation must be represented by the UNP, SLFP, LSSP, NSSP etc., the Tamil nation must be represented by the LTTE.

There was applause from the audience.

"The LTTE are the only true representatives of the Tamil people. LTTE are the only ones sacrificing blood and fighting for the Tamils".

There was no mention of the fact that there was third party mediation in the past by the Indians and that when the LTTE, did not agree with the negotiator in the form of Rajiv Gandhi PM, the third party negotiator was blown up and assassinated by the use of a female LTTE human bomb.

Considering the risk involved and since the LTTE "true representatives" have assassinated two heads of state, Rajiv Gandhi of India and President Premadasa of Sri Lanka, some argue that it is quite understandable for the government to hesitate.

We were told that over a period of time various Sri Lankan leaders had described Tamils as being "creepers on a Sinhala tree" and that "Tamils are not the original people of the island". Therefore, only after the Sri Lankan government discloses its position on Thimpu principles can the Tamil people decide on talks. He said that the "indissoluble union of regions" goes counter to the Tamil right of self determination and that only a confederation can be a lasting solution.

"The UNP and the PA, the two major parties will form future governments and as such are not prepared to antagonise the Sinhala voter." Kumaratunga we were told, was "beaten and broken". He stated that the CP, LSSP and the NSSP were sympathetic to the Tamils, while the MEP and the JVP maintained that there is no Tamil problem.

We were told of the Buddhist factor and how JR gave them prominence in the constitution.

Ponnambalam stated that it was unlikely for the Sinhalese to solve the Tamil problem. "Even the Tamil parties do not know what they want. The role of the Tamil parties today is the darkest chapter in Tamil history".

The LTTE we were told, was a political organisation, which has taken up arms to protect its people. " If the Thimpu principles are accepted, the LTTE have stated that they are prepared to have peace talks. The LTTE will not be able to say that they will denounce separatism because of the 1977 election result and the mandate given by the Tamil people to the TULF"

We were told that there is opposition to 3rd party mediation because the government fears that the mediator will realise that it is the Sinhalese who are against peace. It was mentioned that Chandrika had duped the West by putting forward three peace packages and this together with her "war for peace" had bowled over sections of the "gullible West".

Ponnambalam highlighted an "urgent and crying need for the Tamil diaspora to play an immediate, positive, political, and high profile role, even at this very late stage, to complement the do or die battle that is going on in the war area, which is the traditional homeland of the Tamils in the North and East of Sri Lanka."

Ponnambalam now made an appeal to the Tamil diaspora. He requested that the aspirations of the Tamils be set out in a resolution to give legitimacy to the freedom fighters.

"If such a resolution is adopted by all the Tamil associations around the world, it will be considered the will of the Tamils and will result in a qualitative change.

He concluded by warning "If we fail, we must reconcile ourselves to allow events to overtake us.

Perhaps these events will lead to the inevitable establishment of Tamil Eelam. Perhaps this would be the most acceptable political solution to the Tamil national conflict, after all. Perhaps this is gods will".

Prof. Boni Lena, now introduced Prof. John Neelson, from the Department of Sociology, Eberhad-Karls University, Tubingen, Germany. His topic was "My Observations of Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka."

He said that there is a need to look behind Sri Lankan democracy, where counter insurgency strategy has institutionalised state violence. He spoke of the "privatisation of violence" and pointed to political body guards, Home guards etc. Thirdly, he spoke of the "politicisation of violence" and quoted as examples, false number plates, dead bodies on the street, political gangs and thuggery etc.

He mentioned that a UN rapporteur had commented on a "culture of violence" in Sri Lanka. He stated that this state crime is not mentioned in international law and that it exists as a part of the democratic system. We were told of wide spread abduction, disappearances and unaccountability and how a State

of Emergency had been effective since 1983 which has the effect of brushing aside basic laws that safeguard human rights violations.

Neelson spoke of internal colonialism and pointed out that the election system has been perverted for the benefit of one race in a multi-cultural nation.

Sinhala only, standardisation, 99% Sinhala army were highlighted as examples. It was argued that giving Tamil equal status in 1988 was too little too late. "

Where is equality when a Tamil is arrested and the statement is in Sinhala?" Devolution he argues is being used to discourage any moves against the Sri Lankan government. Neelson quoted a lot of statistics and stated that 35% of the rural population only contributed 19% to GNP.

Emmanuel, Jayawardene and Wickremabahu were nodding off and so were several others, the first casualties of excessive rice and tandoori chicken.

Neelson went on to self-determination and stated "An absolute right of self-determination does not exist; where such a right is recognised it has been so for political purposes in a power struggle in which the aggrieved minority is only a pawn; that is why the term self-determination has been coined; and finally the right to self determination is up against the foundations of international relations: sovereignty, non-interference, territorial integrity. "self determination is neither inevitable or desirable and contradicts globalisation.

Neelson now touched on Kosovo and stated that "Tamils should expect nothing from Kosovo." He stated that Western governments must withdraw support for the Sri Lankan government. "It is unfortunate that the US and the EU has recognised the LTTE as a terrorist organisation. This legitimises and covers up human rights violations."

He concluded by stating that because of Sinhalisation, nothing less than separation is on the cards. "Too much blood has been spilt".

The next to speak was Mr Rubin Friedman, B'Nai B'rith Canada and his topic was; A Trend to Watch for in Sri Lanka, An Experience of Jewish Victims in Nazi Germany.

He explained that he is a Jewish refugee from Poland and related the tragedy of his family during the holocaust. He said that you could not have a direct comparison because if that was the case, 90% of the Tamils in Sri Lanka would have to be dead as this is what the Jews experienced. But, he said that there are many things in Sri Lanka which are worrying and pointed to the identification of Jews as an enemy population living in the country and de-humanisation and ethnic cleansing.

He was cautious in the manner in which he used his words and explained that words can kill.

There was a short break for questions. I saw a short man with a grand moustache walking towards the microphone and I immediately recognised him as Gops Veerabadran of PASLO. PASLO stands for People against Sri Lankan oppression and it is a pro-LTTE Tamil organisation from South Africa.

All its members are radical South African Tamils, who are of South Indian decent. I looked around the audience and recognised several other faces. There were at least 5 South African Tamils in the audience. They resembled street fighters and looked quite out of place in this gathering of intellectual dinosaurs of the Tamil cause.

Gops Veerabadran stated that they have done a lot against Sri Lanka. To great applause he stated, "We stopped Air Lanka from flying to South Africa and we got South Africa to stop selling arms to Sri Lanka.

Electoral pressures in South Africa result in significant political power being concentrated in the hands of ethnic minorities in Nelson Mandela's rainbow nation.

South Africa has banned arms sales to both Turkey ( A NATO member) and Sri Lanka in addition to several other countries which have large minorities in South Africa. South Africa's primary reason for banning arms sales to Turkey is the presence and lobbying of a large Greek population.

Similarly, South Africa's primary reason for banning arms sales to Sri Lanka may be the presence of 600,000 (according to Dr K Rajoo MP, a South African Tamil of the Inkatha Freedom Party) Tamils in South Africa.

Investigations from the South African census office revealed that in the 1996 census records show 1,051,000 Indians in South Africa with a majority being Tamil and Thiligu. But interestingly they also told me that in the census only around 1408 households had said that they communicate in Tamil at home.

A majority of these South African Indians live in Kwazulu Natal, stronghold of the separatist Inkatha Freedom Party.

Veerabadran also stated "We know that only one Tamil is playing for the Sri Lankan cricket team and we have protested against that as well." This is inaccurate. During Sri Lanka's tour of England in 1998, there were four Tamils playing in the team. Muttiah Muralidaran, Pushpakumara(n), Mario Vellevarayan and Russel Premakumaran Arnold.

It is my understanding that players are chosen on their ability and not their race.

A few years back Gops Veerabadran, who is a South African of South Indian Tamil origin, was refused entry into India, when he attempted to attend a pro-LTTE conference there and was deported back to South Africa.

Another question was raised asking if the Tamils should form a government in exile, in order to gain equality with the Sri Lankan state and if they should go around the world as a government in exile canvassing for aid and support from the international community. Ponnambalam answered the question by saying that any decision should be taken in the Vanni.

Ponnambalam seems to feel that the question of a Tamil government in exile is some sort of a secret only to be discussed in private as he pointed to me and said "my friend here is writing it all down and it will be published in Colombo"

The next question was if Tamils can call themselves as being from Tamil Eelam and not Sri Lanka.

Ponnambalam: "there is nothing wrong in calling ourselves as Tamils from Tamil Eelam."

Another asked if the G7 countries could be embarrassed in some way since they help Sri Lanka. Dr Neelson said that Switzerland had stated that many Tamils will have to be sent back to Sri Lanka in order to make room for Kosovar refugees and Germany has stated that Sri Lanka is safe to send back Tamils.

In response to a question on third party negotiations, Ponnambalam said that he would not promote his party in competition with the LTTE.

A Coffee break followed and Nadarajah, an editor of the Tamil guardian approached Rubin Friedman who had spoken of the Jewish holocaust, presumably for an interview.

I noticed Friedman looking in my direction, as he was alerted to my presence with all the others in the hall, when Ponnambalam made his comment pointing to me. As I collected my things, in order to go out for coffee, Rubin came quickly towards me and said "I want to talk to you".

He was cautious and making sure that no one else was close by said "what do you really think about the situation in Sri Lanka.?" I told him that in order to be fair, I must tell him that I am a Sinhalese. He nodded and said "tell me your view"?

I asked him if he was aware that the Israeli government was supplying Kfir ground attack jets fitted with French Mirage fighter engines, Super Dvora fast attack naval crafts and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles(UAV's) to the Sri Lankan security forces.

I also asked him if he was aware that the Sri Lankan STF (Special task Force) was trained by the Israeli Shin Beth, Internal security agency?

He said that someone had mentioned it to him. I told him that he does not need me to answer his question, as it is up to him to evaluate and decide, if the Jewish state would arm and train a government committing genocide against the Tamils.

"interesting" Rubin replied.

I told him that I am interested in the LTTE, the PKK, the IRA and several other groups and I find they all want to project their cause as being special, but that they are all the more or less the same. I asked him a question.

"Do you think the Sri Lankan security forces commit any crimes not committed by the Israeli army?"

He said "Yes, Chemmani mass graves".

I asked him how the Israeli army disposes of bodies during their offensive operations?

"interesting" Rubin replied.

Then he asked me if I knew who was behind this conference. I told him that my guess will be as good as his, and perhaps a clue might be in the fact that none of the atrocities and human rights abuses committed by the LTTE have been mentioned at this "Peace" conference.

Rubin told me that he had noticed that as well and wondered.

"But then, there was that girl who asked that question about LTTE child soldiers?" I pointed out that the girl had introduced herself as Shamini Fernando a feminist Marxist. She was a Sinhalese.

"interesting" Rubin replied.

He gave me his card and said "I want to talk to you more" and I walked out to get some coffee. Like Vasantha Rajah, I never got round to talk to him.

[The next session; Life in the Conflict Zone was Chaired by Dr Muthuthamby Sreetharan, President & CEO Wireless Design & Communications, Bethesda, Maryland USA.](#)

[Dr Sreetharan introduced the first speaker, Dr Jayalath Jayawardene, the first Sinhalese to address the audience. \( Sreetharan is more than closely connected to WTCC, TRO, and Tamil Net\) \(and many other organizations which are operational.\)](#)

"Ayubowan, Vanakkam" and he went on to thank Prof. Elagupillai for inviting him. Jayawardene highlighted serious problems with refugees and accused the government for not preparing any reports by Ministers in Sri Lanka about the true refugee situation in the Vanni.

He pointed out the need for an honourable settlement to the conflict. He mentioned that the Sinhalese too suffered in the border villages. "I have no ethnic bar on my human rights activities."

He stated that he is a frequent visitor to refugee camps throughout the Vanni and that Medical camps organised by him were very successful. The latest in Mannar resulted in 150 cataract operations. A letter of thanks, by the Bishop of Mannar was read out.

Jayawardene stated that over 50,000 have been killed as a result of the conflict and over a million internally and externally displaced. Women and children were the most vulnerable and many children we were told, lived in over crowded refugee camps. The good Doctor spoke of psychological and social trauma and highlighted that women and teenage girls were vulnerable to sexual abuse.

He said that 25% of the population of Jaffna was still displaced in the Vanni and that economic embargo's impact on their day to day life. In practice, most items do not reach the people.

Jayawardene stated that children were most vulnerable because of the unavailability of rehabilitation facilities and spoke of a shortage of jobs.

He said that the governments decision to cut supplies to the Vanni has caused hard ships. According to MSF malaria was one of the major problems. "there were more than 200 cholera cases in June 1998. Lack of medical staff and the undermining of health services was a problem. In the East the Ministry of Defence has denied certain medical mobile units to particular areas."

Jayawardene stated that Operation Jayasikurui has displaced many in the Vavuniya District and that transport facilities in the Vanni were unsatisfactory. "Sri Lanka Red Cross maintains an ambulance service with basic resources".

We were told of a reduction in the literacy rate which was once over 80%.

We were told of various shortages in the educational field and vitamin A & D shortages deficiencies causing vision problems. Political detainees from the Vanni held at Kalutara were considered an inconvenience. He said that the NGO's are meeting limited and basic needs in the Vanni.

He mentioned that the President had blamed him for going to the Vanni and that an SLRC driver had been taken into custody and later released by the Supreme Court with 200,000 paid out in costs. " I too was questioned by the CID for four and a half hours.

Jayawardene got roaring applause.

[Dr Sreetharan now introduced Joseph Pararajasingham MP for the TULF in Batticaloa. He thanked Dr Jayawardene and stated that he belongs to one of the two parties that created the present conflict in Sri Lanka. There was mention about a recent debacle by former UNP Foreign Minister Hameed who had attempted to meet with the LTTE and then denied it, blaming Joseph for it all.](#)

[\(T4J, would vouch to the veracity of that statement. He contacted the LTTE head in Paris, and interefered. He was reprimanded by his leader Ranil. That person now serves with TRO\).](#)

Pararajasingham stated that 65% of Batticaloa District is under the control of the LTTE and that only 30-35% is under military and not government control.

" The last five years have been the most brutal phase of the conflict."

Jaffna we were told, "remains under military occupation with over 40,000 troops deployed with the North-East a desolate sea of destruction. He said that the government maintains that the LTTE and the Tamils are different and that the LTTE maintains control with coercion. Tamils are hostages in a state of siege.

Vavuniya we were told, was the most militarised place in Sri Lanka with various pass systems to stop the freedom of movement for Tamils.

In response to a bomb blast in Maradana a new security plan which greatly inconvenienced Tamils was put into place.

We were told that checks were more draconian than the movement from the Gaza strip or the West bank into Israel. Pararajasingham stated that the Ministry of Defence put a ban on ADB rehabilitation work and that in response electricity was disrupted. ( LTTE was not mentioned by name as the responsible party)

"We were told that after the MOD lifted the restrictions and allowed the ADB to carry out work in LTTE areas, electricity supply was permitted.

"Agriculture and fishing restrictions were highlighted and that 80% of the Tamil people in the North and the East being under the poverty line, when the national average is about 50%. KKS cement factory and the Paranthan Chemical factories were closed and the Valachchenai paper factory was part occupied by the army."

We were told of the lack of civilian judicial authority in the conflict areas and that in Colombo and Kandy Tamils cannot find accommodation and jobs because of the perceived security risk. "Tamils only occupy 4% of government employment and 1650 youth are languishing in prison without trial". Pararajasingham stated that security measures must not be allowed to over-ride the welfare of the people. "The International community must take the following steps".

"Establish contact between the government and the LTTE, as any package will be a total failure without the LTTE".

"International and domestic agencies must be allowed to carry out work without government obstruction". "International aid must go, both to the cleared and uncleared areas" He concluded by thanking Prof. Elugupillai.

The floor was open to questions. The first was that the TULF collaborates with the Sri Lankan government, in voting and Jaffna elections etc.

Pararajasingham replied: "I urged Mr Sittamparam not to participate in the Jaffna elections. Party did not contest the East. But, even after assurances by Sivasittampalam, I only learnt of it in India. But, now the party has been brought back into line with my thinking. LTTE is the sole representative. On 5th of April 1995, I met Karikalan in Batticaloa. From June 1995 we are voting against emergency. There is a change in the thinking of the TULF leadership"

Replying to a question on medicines and supplies to fight disease, Dr Jayawardene mentioned that during the Mannar eye surgery that he had organised, two Tamil specialists from Colombo had assured him that they will help him, only to let him down at the last moment. Dr Jayawardene then told us how he contacted a friend in Madras and got down two South Indian eye surgeons to participate in the surgery in Mannar.

Another question was asked from Dr Jayawardene if the 60,000 who are dead are civilians. Dr Jayawardene replied "yes".

The gentleman who asked this question seems to think that he had scored a propaganda point and requested that it be recorded.

I questioned Dr Jayawardene about the figure later and he told me that it included Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils, including those who have been killed by the LTTE.

A question was asked from Pararajasingham if the check points from the East to the West of Sri Lanka are tantamount to passport and visa regulations which exists between countries. The reply was " Yes, there are two nations".

The first day of the conference had ended. After leaving my camera bag and various other things that I carried with me behind in my room, I made my way to the pub where we had had our lunch.

I ordered a club sandwich and made my way to a table with a pint of Moleson light. Within a short time I was joined at my table by Prof. Elagu V Elagupillai and Dr Meenan Vishnu. Both were heavy weights, dinosaurs of the "Tamil cause" and members of the program advisory panel of the "international conference".

By this time, I had realised that Prof. Elagu Elagupillai was the key organiser of this particular conference. He is a lecturer of Physics at the Carleton University and an Associate Director of the Institute for Research on Environment and Economy at the University of Ottawa.. His positions in both universities explained how the Tamil students unions of both universities were involved in this "international conference".

Dr Meenan Vishnu is a senior Hardware Design Engineer working for a US based IT company FORE Systems.

Prof. Elagu told me that they had a reception at the Ottawa parliament and that if he had known me earlier, he would have invited me. Various questions were asked from me by the two in order to establish as to who I was. I had a strange feeling that overnight, I might be checked out, possibly via the LTTE office in London.

We had quite a close and lengthy conversation about the meaning of life and the status of dinosaurs, all in relation to the "Tamil cause/LTTE" in North America.

Prof. Elagu told me that the Sri Lankan government had attempted to sabotage the "international conference" and the reception at the Canadian parliament by branding them terrorists.

A Member of Parliament who was at the reception had stated that phone calls had been received that the reception was being organised by terrorists and that similar telephone calls had been received at the University,

"but we knew the Sri Lankan government will resort to such mean tricks and we warned them before hand"

By then a white Canadian junior state administrator had joined our table and my food also arrived.

Prof. Elagu responded angrily by saying "how dare the Sri Lankan High Commission resorts to such mean action, I am going to take this matter up with the state authorities.

I have a block vote, you know, and I can remove any politician.

I only need a 1000 votes to do that. They are so mean and low"

I responded "this is a free country, no one can stop anyone from saying anything, unless it is offensive?"

" "yes" replied Elagu, "these people from the Sri Lankan High Commission don't realise these things.

" Later, I made my own investigations and discovered that the Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Ottawa was in Sri Lanka at the time and therefore it was highly unlikely, that individual officers would have carried out such an act independently, unless they were looking for a quick transfer to Sri Lanka. However, I was aware of several Sinhalese groups in Canada being annoyed about the "international conference" and it is perfectly reasonable to assume that some of the more enthusiastic elements may have decided to carry out an operation of their own.

Elagu also told me that he had invited over 50 Sinhalese to come for the conference but that they had all boycotted it.

"We even invited the Sri Lankan High Commission staff, but they declined".

Prof. Elagu explained that the purpose of the "International conference" was for "peace". "We must get back together, we can live together." I wondered.

I recalled what Rubin Friedman had said earlier, that words are dangerous and can kill.

I was aware that in this "liberation lingo" words mean nothing. You need a special dictionary to be published to figure out the true meanings.

For example "tactical withdrawal" means, "running like a bat out of hell from Jaffna into the Vanni using Tamil civilians as human shields" and "self-determination" means "separation." Today I deduced from Emmanuel's speech that "Tamil aspiration for peace and freedom in terms of truth and justice" is another brand-spanking-new-longwinded-confusing way of saying "separate state"

So what does Prof. Elagu mean by "we can live together"?"

I gently touched his arm and said "Elagu?, I am now all confused. Some of you guys have been saying that its all gone too far and nothing short of a separate state and now you are telling me that "we can live together". What's the bottom line here?"

"ah" says Prof. Elagu looking very serious. "we can live together, but the way in which we live together is to be determined".

I hate to put words into peoples mouths, but I feel what Prof. Elagu means is, living together as neighbours in two nations/countries.

Latest "LTTE and supporters club" thinking in London was that the devolution package does not go far enough and what is acceptable in an arrangement like the Benelux countries, two countries, Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam in a confederation.

The "package" would have retained the Sinhalese in control in the centre and this is unacceptable to a large influential section of the "Eelam supporters club" or Ilavar (citizens of Tamil Eelam)

After informing me that "we can live together" Elagu informed me that he wanted to invite both the government and the LTTE from the Vanni to the "international conference".

But, since the government was not responsive, he did not invite the LTTE from the Vanni.

I remarked "but surely, the LTTE representatives in Canada are here".

"yes" said Elagu and confirmed that they were present at the "international conference"

Prof. Elagu inquired from me as to why it is that the government is not responding to offers of third party mediation.

I was tempted to say that since the last third party negotiator was blown up by the LTTE, the government has every reason to be cautious.

But I thought that would spoil my dinner and these north Americans dish out big portions.

So I pushed my plate towards Prof. Elagu and sharing my french fries with him I explained that during my recent visit to Jaffna, to my astonishment I had only found one soldier who wanted to have a cease-fire and peace talks.

I had spoken to many soldiers and civilians during my four day stay in Jaffna. I was surprised at the response as I expected them to be war weary. When I told them of my surprise, they told me that they are fed up with governments asking them to fight and then stop fighting.

They were fed up with the start, stop, start, stop scenario and they all were confident that the war could be persuaded to a successful conclusion if a sustained offensive is maintained on the current lines.

Later I had e-mailed my findings in Jaffna to Rohan Gunaratne a fellow writer. Initially he had disagreed with my assessment. A few weeks later, he had received an e-mail from a senior British

Diplomat, assessing the situation along the same lines as I had done. I believe that Rohan has since revised his position.

There was more confirmation in a survey carried out by the National Peace Council and published in the Sri Lankan newspapers. In the survey, a majority of Sri Lankans wanted the LTTE weakened further before any negotiation.

I explained to Prof. Elagu, that with an election around the corner, the government may be listening to the people.

The following day as I walked into the canteen at the Carlton University for breakfast, I met another South African Tamil, T M Padotan who seems to be a Director in a commodity broker/financial consultant company called STA International, based in Benoni South, in Gauteng, South Africa. He was with a friend. They too identified themselves as members of PASLO, the same organisation that Gops Veerabadran belongs to.

Padotan is a particularly committed PASLO member who said that he confronted the Sri Lankan foreign Minister in Pretoria and when he inquired about the Tamil problem, he told me that the Minister, who is also a Tamil had replied by saying that there is no Tamil problem.

Later I noticed another South African Tamil, K Chinappa who is also a PASLO member. Padotan informed me that a South African delegation of MP's and reporters had visited Sri Lanka, and that they were both disappointed with Sri Lanka, since they wanted to meet the LTTE in the Vanni, but that the Sri Lankan government failed to oblige.

These MP's and reporters were previously heavily lobbied by the LTTE and its supporters, and it is my understanding that after their visit to Sri Lanka, they have somewhat distanced themselves from the "Tamil cause".

This was confirmed by an article critical of the visitors to Sri Lanka, written by PASLO to the pro-LTTE magazine Hot Spring in London.

I had breakfast with the two PASLO members, Wickremabahu (Leader of a left wing party in Sri Lanka) and Prof. Ethirveerasingham. We had Marxism for breakfast.

Before the first session of day two began, I saw Dr Jayawardene being led to a quiet corner by Rev Emmanuel. For quite a long time, Jayawardene was subjected to "psychological lobbying" with Emmanuel and Prof. Ethirveerasingham sitting on either side. This is no different to what I had experienced with Prof. Elagu and Dr Meenan Vishnu.

The session titled Human Rights Violation was chaired by Prof. Bill Skidmore, Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, Carleton University. He introduced the first speaker, Ms Barbara Jackman, LLB Waldman & Jackman Law Associates, Toronto Canada.

My suspicions that Prof. Elagu might check me out overnight was proved right.

He came up to me and said that he had seen the article I had written to the "Island" on the 1st of May about the London LTTE conference and that I had distorted facts.

May be the "LTTE and its supporters" did not approve of my writing.

Is there a free press in the Vanni? I wondered how many independent newspapers are published in the Vanni in LTTE controlled areas.

None, I believe.

Since the LTTE is the "main representative, they tend to be the "main" and the "only" mouth piece and operates in the name of the Tamils.

I told Elagu, that I had not distorted any facts and that Vasantha Rajah who was at that London meeting and who had read my article had stated that it was "objective".

I challenged Prof. Elagu to point out to me, what I had distorted, since he was making the allegation.

Prof Elagu backed out and never came back to me with that one.

Ms Jackman told us of the Tamil homeland and that Tamils had arrived at a point where they have the right to self determination and to secede from Sri Lanka.

We were told that Canada was wrong in the Suresh case and that Canada is as guilty as Sri Lanka as it returns Tamils to Sri Lanka where torture takes place.

Europe and America were also guilty as they all violated Tamil rights like Sri Lanka. " Canada like Sri Lanka, violated human rights".

"States can be guilty(?) into improving their human rights."

Prof. Bill Skidmore now introduced the second and last Sinhala speaker of the conference, Prof. Vikramabhahu Karunaratna, Leader of the New Democratic Party from Colombo.

His topic was Security and the Rights of Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

He started by stating that GG Ponnambalam had called his party a Sinhala party and that this was not accurate.

He stated that 25% of the membership of the NSSP are Tamils and that several members of the leadership are also Tamils.

Vikramabhahu stated that Sri Lanka was a society of nationalities as people consider themselves Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim etc and rarely as Sri Lankan.

We were told of "jathiya" and "vansa" and how high caste Sinhalese or Tamils of the past, including Royalty would prefer to marry an equal from another race, than marrying a low caste from ones own race.

"I explained all these in order to show that Tamil and Sinhala nation as we know it today did not exist in the past. Nation building is a relatively new phenomenon."

Vikramabhahu stated that the present ethnic conflict is a creation of the capitalist class and that the LTTE and the leftist parties of the Sinhala areas must unite in order to defeat and overthrow the ruling capitalist class. This is the only way to solve the problem.

The next speaker was Prof. Nadarajah Srisikandarajah, University of Western Sydney, NSW, Australia. His topic was The effects of war on the ecology in the conflict zone. He was a mild man in his early forties originally from Karinagar in the islands off Jaffna. He had left Sri Lanka for Australia in 1977 and had been at Peradeniya in the 1970's.

He told us that he had visited Jaffna university in Killinochchi and saw the efforts of the LTTE to improve the ecology. He explained that the coastal ecology of Tamil Eelam is under threat from the war and that the LTTE has taken many bold steps to protect the environment.

"Land, which is the reason for this war, is being destroyed by the war." As an example of LTTE's concern for the environment we were told that the LTTE moderated the fire wood crisis in 1994.

Prof. Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham, who is based in Los Angeles, USA was next and his topic was The Effects of War on the Education of Tamil Children in the War and Conflict Zones in Sri Lanka.

As usual with great emotion Ethirveerasingham showed us pictures of destruction of the war, and confirmed that the pictures were taken by his son, presumably when compiling the report commissioned by the Governor of the North Eastern Province at that time, Gamini Fonseka.

A slide of St Peters in Jaffna was shown and he said "this is our Dalada Maligawa". I wondered if it was a simple case of an eye for an eye.

We were educated and informed that the killing of 13 soldiers in Jaffna was not responsible for sparking off the 1983 riots and that there was another version.

We were told that the demand for 50:50 was not serious at all, but an innocent attempt to demand more with the expectation of getting something. Some others would argue otherwise.

They will say that long before any Sinhala-Tamil riots or satyagrahis in Galle face, the 12% Tamil minority in Sri Lanka made an attempt to restrict the democratic representation of the 75% majority to 50% by putting forward a 50:50 demand. The only other minority to attempt such an act was apartheid of the White minority in South Africa.

Outrageously, he showed a slide of a damaged school building with school children in it and said "I don't want these children to be targeted, so I won't say where it is". Was Prof. Ethirveerasingham a dinosaur of the "Tamil cause" insinuating that the "Sinhala Buddhist state" will dispatch a Kfir ground attack aircraft to take out the school full of Tamil children, if he had disclosed the location of that particular school? I had no doubt that I was among dinosaurs from a prehistoric time.

With tears in his eyes he said "we walked from Thandikulam after getting our visa/pass". He went on to say that 70% of children are not going to school because of war and displacement. We were told that Ratwatte had asked all those who come to cleared areas to be sent to welfare camps. These we were told were not welfare camps, but detention camps.

We were told that the war strategy of Sri Lanka is breaking down the social fabric of Tamil people.

"LTTE is trying to hold it together."

Questions followed.

Veerabadran, the PASLO man raised a question of support regarding Suresh, a LTTE activist in Canada, whom the Canadians almost deported to Sri Lanka.

Another asked from Vikramabhahu, "how can we trust the Sinhalese"? Vikramabhahu: "I am not asking you to trust me. We have to overthrow the chauvinist state and within the struggle we can decide if we can live together or separate."

A lady calling herself Sujatha inquired from Vikramabhahu, "Why don't the Sinhala parties get together and solve the problem?"

Vikramabhahu: "That is the most stupid question I have heard during this conference. I was imprisoned 8 times during the UNP regime. How can we get together with the UNP/PA who are the oppressors of the working class?"

Jayalath Jayawardene is not a humanitarian. The UNP has a political agenda. I do not believe that the UNP has become humanitarian.

Another stated that we must not have peace in Sri Lanka, but peace in Eelam.

After a coffee break, Ms Janet Conn, a media relations adviser chaired the next session titled; Media and Conflict Reporting.

She introduced Vasantha Rajah, Journalist and ex-chairman of Sri Lanka (Rupavahini) Television Corporation whose topic was; Can International Media Play a Positive Role in the Resolution of the Tamil National Conflict in Sri Lanka.

He began by describing Kosovo as one of the most enlightening and tragic experiences ever, and one which has tremendous implications for the world organisations, the UN as well as for the world media. He spoke of the UN's and the Media's obligations to defend the democratic rights and human rights of oppressed minority people.

He went on to say that nobody could challenge the Kosovars right to self determination, including the right to independence, although alternatives to total independence, at least as a temporary measure, are being discussed on pragmatic grounds.

He spoke of the criminalisation of liberation struggles as terrorists and of a change in perceptions in the West and appealed to the world media to show more interest in the Sri Lankan conflict. He spoke of a Milosovic style regime in Sri Lanka which is bent on denying the rights of Tamil people. He spoke of the SNP and the Scottish Independence campaign.

Wasantha Rajah asked the audience to compare the Tamil plight which is being overlooked in the media with the day and night coverage in Kosovo.

He concluded by calling for urgent steps to be taken to reform the UN so as to discipline chauvinistic regimes anywhere in the world, and for overriding of sovereignty by democratic principles. He called for the setting up of a permanent TV channel focusing on conflict resolution.

The next speaker was Dharmaratnam Sivaran alias Taraki whose topic was Media Bias and Censorship in conflict reporting in Sri Lanka.

He stated that the Public Security Ordinance and the sixth amendment to the constitution throttled the islands press, with the former also being used to oppress Tamils and Sinhalese in 89. He stated that Sri Lanka has been ruled under Emergency Regulations for 20 years.

He went on to say that the Saturday review and Aththa newspapers have been banned in the 1980's and that Military men had been appointed as censors.

He pointed out that there is well researched work by scholars which goes to show that the Sinhala media portrays the Tamils as aliens and interlopers in a Sinhala Buddhist nation. He said that the arrest and harassment of Tamil reporters has led to the formation of the Tamil Media Alliance. He accused Tamil journalists as being over cautious, of low pay and the lack of accreditation passes. We were told that although the constitution guarantees freedom of movement, in reality Tamils are denied this fundamental right.

Taraki was followed by an audio visual presentation by an animated Ponnampalam Kulendiren on the history of the media dynasty in Sri Lanka. Soon afterwards, we were led to the pub within the University grounds for lunch.

The final session of the "international conference" was titled Conflict Resolution and was chaired by a South African Canadian Prof. Joseph Moinyoni, from the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Carleton University. He introduced the first speaker, Prof. Chelvadurai Manogaran, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin, USA. His topic was the Historical Perspectives of the Tamil National Conflict in Sri Lanka.

He began by stating that the "Sinhalese have not been nice enough to recognise the Tamils as a nation." He showed an old British map with Tamil place names and concluded that a Tamil nation existed. Prof. Manogaran seems blissfully unaware that an overwhelming majority of the place names in the North and the East are Tamilised Sinhala place names. He showed us an old census which showed that 4.2% of the inhabitants of Trincomalee were Sinhalese. He stated that Tamil language has evolved separately from South Indian Tamil, because of the existence of a Tamil nation.

"To me, we do not need a separate state. If the Sri Lankan state can generate true autonomy, it would be satisfactory. Two states, a Tamil and a Sinhala one - Federalism".

We were told of Ethnic cleansing of Tamils from Manel Aru, and the re-naming of it as Weli Oya, an attempt by Gamini Dissanayaka to enlarge the Anuradhapura district by taking over the Weli Oya region till the sea in order to divide the Tamil homelands and how it was prevented by the Indian High Commissioner Dixit with whom he had a chat.

Prof Manogaran is a consultant to the United States Department of State on the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka since 1989. (Late Prof. Manogaran was a very honest and great person -T4J).

Manogaran was followed by Prof Peter Schalk whose topic was Distortion of History by Ethonationalists in Sri Lanka.

He began by saying that people cannot be analysed within history and he asked Tamils to learn their history and it is essential for self determination. He stated that Tamils were not foreigners as mentioned by Paranavithana.

He spoke of Dhammadipa, its mis-interpretation by the Sinhalese and projection as the ultimate refuge of the Sinhala race.

He stated that Eelam is derived from the word, Simhala, and that when all the Tamil students are doing Engineering, where are we to find the historians from in order to challenge these historically accepted theories. "Actually it was an English language expert who first stated that Eelam is from Simhala and it has now even been adopted by several Tamil historians."

He was followed by Dr Sachithananthan Sathananthan who is from a group called TAGOT in Colombo. This was his second speech to the conference and the topic was Why the PS's devolution package is not workable.

"My friend Rudrakumaran has stated that only equals can negotiate. Colombo Tamil parties have no equality with the state so they cannot negotiate on behalf of the Tamils. Only the LTTE has broken the monopoly of force which the state had. That's why this state is pursuing this war to break the LTTE and reduce it to the same state as the other Tamil groups who eat crumbs."

"In Sri Lanka today, it is the army that rules. The army will dictate when to negotiate. No negotiations will take place without the authority of the army. Future negotiations rely on the military success of the LTTE." "Buddhism is given the foremost place. Any party, including the left which cannot repeal this cannot negotiate. There is no party in Sri Lanka, which can roll back this theocratic state. This is power relation. If one concedes, one concedes a principle and the principle is lost.

Tamil parties have dishonestly and traitorously marginalised the LTTE and are marooned in Colombo (applause).

"Moderate"?

"What are they?, by whose point of view"?

The British considered those who collaborated as moderates, while those who do not are extremists."

" I have no place for moderate" politicians."

"Tamil struggle is now a military struggle, military mode is the dominant role.

Third party mediation is an important military facet." Someone told me that I seem to think that might is right. No!, might must be on the side of right."

He was followed by Mr. Viswanathan Rudrakumaran, the LTTE's lawyer in NY who is involved in the legal action to overturn the LTTE ban. (Not correct at all -T4J 2008)

He stated that Prabakaran in his speech had stated that the door of peace is not shut. He spoke of the demonisation of the Tamils and the benefits of 3rd party mediation. He said that it was absurd to think that the Sri Lankan government may be thinking of a military victory.

"Considering the governments reluctance to third party mediation, what can be done to involve the international community" We were told that Cost Benefit analysis leads to 3rd party mediation and that the PA's agreement falls short of the Rambui agreement or even below the counter, proposed by Milesovic"?

The chair, Prof. Moinyoni concluded the session by stating that there are many similarities between Sri Lanka and the South African experience. I wondered if he was aware that in South Africa, a majority had fought for one man one vote, after their democratic representation was restricted by the white minority, while in Sri Lanka, a 12% minority, after failing in an apartheid style attempt to restrict the democratic representation of a 75% majority to 50% via a dubious 50:50 proposal was now fighting a war of separatism, after having ethnically cleansed a smaller Muslim minority in Jaffna.

This could only be equalled to the white minority in South Africa, after the failure of apartheid, ethnically cleansing the Indians and trying to carve out a separate white South African state.

The floor was open to questions. A Question was asked about the possible demise of the Sri Lankan Tamil population, if the war continues.

Sathananthan replied by saying not to even think about it. He mentioned that in Nicaragua the fighters had said that its freedom or death. "Psychology wins wars".

From this point onwards, the most extra ordinary things took place at the "international conference".

A heavily built white Canadian, who later introduced himself to me as Richard MacPhail, rose to his feet and pointed out that the main banner of the hall was deceptive.

The banner read in English as "International Conference on Tamil Nationhood and Search for Peace in Sri Lanka". Richard MacPhail pointed out that the Tamil writing on the banner, below the English writing said something quite different, more in the lines of Eelam, and Tamils the world over looking

for a country. (since there was no Tamil country) I wondered if this was to make the banner appealing to the South African Tamils who were there.

To my astonishment, Richard MacPhail read out the banner in fluent Tamil.

The panel sitting on the stage looked embarrassed, and was unable to answer the question as to why the English writing on the banner said one thing and the Tamil writing said something else.

Visuwanathan Rudrakumaran, the LTTE's lawyer from New York was shifting around uneasily on his chair on the platform.

Now, more strange things were to take place. Rev S J Emmanuel, the former vicar General of Jaffna, came running towards the stage, grabbed a microphone, and attempted to answer Richard MacPhail's query by saying that it was a mistake. I wondered what Emmanuel had to do with this "international conference".

His name does not appear in the list of names which show the chair, co-chair, program advisory panel, organising committee or sponsors. We were told that this "international conference" was organised by the Academic Society of Tamil Students (ACTS) at Carleton and Ottawa Universities. So, why was Emmanuel answering questions about the banner? Did he have a hand in preparing the banner? In this Tamil liberation game, things are not quite what they appear to be. More was to come.

Richard MacPhail finally sat down and Prof Moniyoni stated that the "conference" had exposed the hypocrisy of the international community and he stated that he was impressed and moved by Deirdre McConnell's presentation on children in Tamil Eelam.

K Chinappa a PASLO member from South Africa came to the stage and stated that the Tamil struggle had a lot of support from South Africa. "Tamil Eelam will be ours".

A young Tamil girl, a member of ACTS now came to the rostrum and read out a two page preamble and resolution of the "conference". Its too long to reproduce here, but the relevant parts are as follows.

Under the heading Preamble, included was ? "Delegates of the conference re-affirmed that any meaningful negotiation for a peaceful resolution of the Tamil-Sinhala national conflict must be based on the recognition of four cardinal basic principles, also known as "The Thimpu Principles". These four principles, *intra alia*, stated that,

- 1) Tamil people have a distinct culture, language, religion, and they together constitute a nation.
- 2) The Tamil people have lived for centuries in a clearly established HOMELAND, with defined borders, in the Island of Ceylon, and
- 3) The Tamil people have an inalienable right to self determination." ??

Under the Heading Resolution, included was?. "(2) Our national liberation movement which finds justification and legitimacy, under the international law, to take up arms in defence of the Tamil people in distress and their national aspirations, ?.

Be it resolved that this national liberation movement is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which is also the political voice of the Tamil nation."

Under normal circumstances, the resolution will be read out and a vote will be taken, and the "LTTE supporters club", raise their hands in support and the resolution is passed. But, things were not normal today.

As soon as the resolution was read out and a vote called for, there was a loud cry "I wish to OBJECT". The indomitable Richard MacPhail stood up, hand raised.

All hell was breaking loose and I almost fell off my chair as I grabbed my camera and began clicking as I took up position.

Several angry looking young Tamils and the emotional Ethirveerasingham rushed towards Richard MacPhail.

MacPhail objected to religion being included in the first Thimpu principle and questioned the status of Christian Tamils in the grand design. Majority of the Tamils are Hindu's. After having bludgeoned the "Sinhala buddhist state", the "Sinhala Bauddhas", the "pre-eminent position of Buddhism in the Sri Lankan constitution", the "Buddhist monks" and after having demanded the "rolling back of this theocratic state", it seem that the LTTE and its supporters too are interested in slipping in religion, into Thimpu principles. Perhaps they want a pre-eminent position for Hinduism in Tamil Eelam?

If Emmanuel's attempt to answer, MacPhail's previous question was strange, what happened next was even more ridiculous.

The LTTE lawyer from New York, Viswanathan Rudrakumaran tried to explain the resolution of the "international conference".

Where was the Academic Society of Tamil Students (ACTS) ?

Surely, this is their "international conference" and their "resolution" and it is they who should be answering all these questions? Why is the former vicar General of Jaffna trying to explain the banner and the LTTE lawyer trying to explain the resolution?

Another in the audience demanded "where is the fourth Thimpu principle?"

The fourth Thimpu principle relates to Citizenship of all Tamils in Sri Lanka and in particular to the Indian Tamils.

This has now been dropped, because those seeking Tamil Eelam are not interested in Sri Lankan citizenship.

Abandoning the fourth Thimpu principle would also mean that the "Tamil Cause" has abandoned the Indian Tamils.

The citizenship of these Indian Tamils was cruelly denied to them by the first Ceylonese Parliament after independence, with the enthusiastic support of almost all the Sri Lankan Tamils and their political parties in that parliament.

In the 1980's the UNP government led by J R Jayawardene gave the remaining stateless Indian Tamils, full citizenship of Sri Lanka.

There was considerable disruption of the "international conference" at this stage. Prof Elagu, seated in the front row was looking back at Richard MacPhail and the crowd which had gathered around MacPhail, in horror. Emmanuel had his head in his hands and looked forward as if in a daze.

As the conference was getting disrupted, Raj Rasalingam called for a vote. About 60% of the 150 or so participants in the "international conference" raised their hands. One, voted against. The rest kept their hands down.

These included Dr Jayalath Jayawardene. To my astonishment, Joseph Pararajasingham MP raised his hand in support.

I have a photograph of him doing so. Since no attempt was made to alter the resolution before the vote, Joseph Pararajasingham MP and member of the TULF had voted to introduce religion into the first Thimpu principle, delete the fourth Thimpu principle, and he had accepted the LTTE as the political voice of the Tamil "nation" and approved of the justification and legitimacy of the "arms struggle".

Vasantha Rajah looked at me and smiled. I told him "I got my scoop". He replied "I know".

Prof Elagu came rushing towards me and said "we are happy that you have come, but?.." before he could finish I realised his insecurity of the situation. I cut in and said " I will be responsible and factual in my reporting". He then told me "The LTTE did not pay a penny for this meeting.

Its the boys and girls from the university who begged and borrowed and even held a lottery to raise twenty eight thousand Canadian dollars to pay for the meeting" I told him that I will report that as well.

As I packed my camera bag and tried to make my way out a Canadian approached me and introduced himself as John Argue, Director: Executive Committee, Amnesty International, Canada section.

He told me that he was responsible for the Sri Lanka desk. We chatted for awhile and he gave me his card and agreed to keep in touch.

Dr Jayalath Jayawardene came towards me with two others and introduced two Sinhalese gentlemen, with whom Jayawardene was going to stay.

They were having a party that night and wanted me to join them. I thanked them for their kindness but declined the invitation. I wanted time and space on my own to think through the many things I heard and observed over the two days.

I checked out of the "Residents Common" of Carleton University and checked into a down town hotel in Ottawa, the Crown Plaza, which was near the Canadian Parliament.

Richard MacPhail was in my mind. I had to find out more about the man.

After a midnight walk near the magnificent Canadian parliament with its green copper roof and majestic buildings I decided to address three burning issues relating to this "international conference". Firstly, was this an LTTE meeting? I had no reason to doubt Prof Elagu Elaguppillai, when he said that the students had raised the funds and that the LTTE had not spent a cent. But, at the same time the overwhelming presence of the LTTE at the meeting was quite obvious. The behaviour and operation of the LTTE in foreign countries is very similar.

It operates with the support of local Tamils and Tamil organisations sympathetic to their cause. I also learnt that other than the students raising funds, certain other Canadian "parties" had also contributed

with honourable intentions, and wanted the "international conference" to focus on peace and have the word "peace" in the title.

Despite the noble attempt by "outsiders" to make the "conference" focus on peace, peace itself was lacking from the heart of the conference. For example the word "peace" is missing from the two resolutions which were passed.

The second resolution is about taking up arms. I doubt if the LTTE and its supporters understand peace.

After making initial investigations about Richard MacPhail and his connections, I decided to drop the matter. The LTTE and its supporters have succeeded in antagonising Canada, the most liberal democracy in the Western world. They must now live with it as they have to live with the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Ranasinghe Premadasa.

The second issue is Dr Jayalath Jayawardene and his involvement in the "conference". Is he a "traitor" as the Daily news had said? The answer is clearly no. He is a doctor by profession, a humanitarian, perhaps with electoral motivation. President Kumaranatunga came to power playing the "peace card". There is nothing wrong if the UNP is trying to do the same at the next election. I am sure Ranil Wickremasinghe sees a lot of Tamil votes in Dr Jayantha Jayawardene's humanitarianism. Going by the applause that Jayawardene got at the "conference", I would say that he is right. But, electoral conditions may be different. While the Sinhalese electorate was yearning for peace at the last elections, this time around, they are wiser about the situation, after going through so many cease-fires which the LTTE have broken.

The only reservation I have about Dr Jayawardene attending such meetings, is that the LTTE is using his humanitarianism to enhance their propaganda. This must be weighted against the positive effects, generated as a result of Sinhalese, such as Jayawardene and Wickremabahu participating in such meetings.

It breaks the ethnic isolation of the Tamils and gives hope to reconciliation and peace, however remote it may be at present. Such participation has the effect of pulling to the middle ground, and prevents the "demonisation" of Sinhalese, by extremist Tamils within their own society.

The third issue is Joseph Pararajasingham and his participation and voting at the "conference". I think he, like many of the others who participated at the "conference" belong to a bygone era. Dinosaurs of the "Tamil cause" both in stature and time.

end.

Although the article was written 9 years of yet anoth Tamil gathering and conferance, the same players are still only talking but not doing any work.  
NATO - NO ACTION TALK ONLY.

They love the platforms, titles, positions, and above all want to preside at public meetings, hog the microphone and give lengthy speeches. Or write articles mostly plagiarized from the internet, without any original ideas, plans, or credible way of conflict resolution.

Or they discuss so much, for so long, that it is too late.

Case in point presenting the ISGA, on 31st October, 2003, after giving up Eelam demand n September 2002, in Bangkok. Ranil Wickramasinghe lost 3 important ministries including Defense the next day, and Parliament was dissolved in a few weeks in February 204. Meanwhile, Karuna and Pillaiyan split from the LTTE in mid March, a few days bedore the Parliamentary elections on the 4th of April 2004.

Karuna and Pilliayan assisted Rajapakse in the Parliamentary elections, although the Tamils did not listen to them in April 2004, or November 2005.

Anyway, without the Tamil help, the Rajapakse's could never have been installed in power in 2005.

The moral of the story, let sleeping snakes sleep in the snake pits. Thereafter, do not jump up and down at Pongu Tamil gatherings.

Anyway, Tamils have no alternative but to move on, and keep their eyes on the prize.

Truth and Justice will prevail.

Moses or Joshua will lead the Tamils to the promised land of Tamil Eelam, where milk honey, and oil will flow.

Tamils For Justice: