

Sri Lanka riots threat to India's stability

by Uma Zykofsky

Provoked rioting in the South Asian nation of Sri Lanka has increased threats to the stability of India, whose prime minister, Indira Gandhi, is the chairman of the Non-Aligned movement. The rioting follows ongoing separatist destabilizations of the northeast Indian state of Assam and the Sikh separatist "Khalistan" movement in the Punjab.

The riots have claimed the lives of several hundred Sri Lankans of Tamil origin at the hands of the Sinhalese majority. Tamils, who originally emigrated from southern India, make up about 20 percent of the population of this island nation located only miles south of India.

Instead of intervening to restore calm, the regime of J. R. Jayawardene has turned a blind eye to attacks on the Tamil population by the armed forces, creating a situation where ethnic animosity, a legacy of the British colonial period and experience, has resurfaced.

There is a long history of Tamil-Sinhalese tensions in Sri Lanka, a history which can be easily exploited. The immediate danger is that the Tamils, who maintain close cultural and emotional ties to India, will appeal to India, as they have in the past, for intervention and help. The Jayawardene regime appears to be provoking the Indian government, making statements virtually "predicting" an Indian military intervention.

The Indian response

Indira Gandhi told a special session of the Indian parliament convened to discuss the Sri Lanka crisis that India posed no threat to Sri Lanka and that it supports the "unity and national integrity" of that country. Mrs. Gandhi reported that she had talked by telephone that morning with President Jayawardene and told him that India's concerns over the events in Sri Lanka could not be seen as the views of just "another country," stressing India's ties to its neighbor. Jayawardene has sent his brother, H. W. Jayawardene, to New Delhi as a special envoy for talks with Mrs. Gandhi and other senior Indian officials.

The atrocities against the Tamils are a major issue in India. They have evoked memories of the events in 1971 when Henry Kissinger, then U.S. Secretary of State, used the genocide against the Bengali population of East Pakistan to push for a U.S.-Soviet confrontation in South Asia. In 1971, India was faced with 10 million Bengali refugees,

fleeing to avoid the butchery of the Pakistani military regime backed by Kissinger, and was forced to intervene militarily in support of the Bangladesh freedom movement. Refugees driven out by the Jayawardene government may seek refuge in India, as did the Bengalis during the Bangladesh crisis in 1971. Moreover, the suspicion exists that behind all these riots is a calculated design to set up a military base in Sri Lanka for the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force.

Sources in India suspect that Jayawardene has set up the situation to facilitate secret negotiations with Britain and the United States to set up a naval base in Sri Lanka at the port of Trincomalee. There have been rumors of such a deal for some time, and the Gandhi government has made clear its strong opposition to further creation of any foreign military bases in the Indian Ocean.

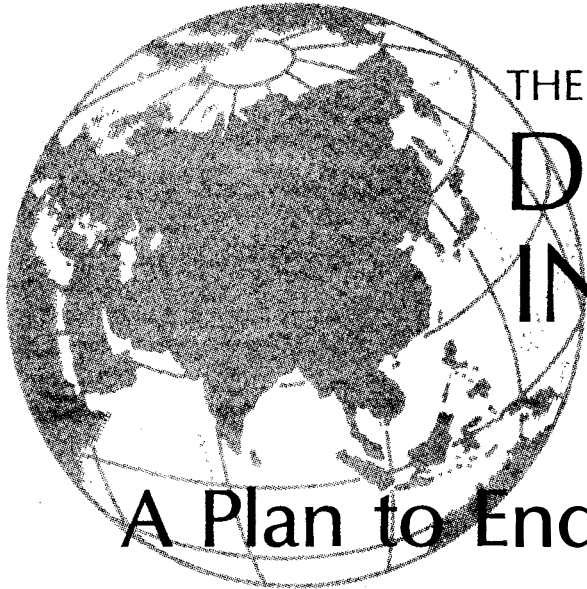
According to reports from India, Jayawardene has stated publicly that he is unable to stop the army from engaging in brutalities against the Tamils. Jayawardene, whose regime is strongly supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, has reportedly asked for "arms assistance" from the United States, Britain, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. He has also charged that "foreign elements" are behind the violence, including the Soviet Union, East Germany, and, by implication, India.

Mrs. Gandhi told the parliament that she asked Jayawardene about the request for "assistance" but that the Sri Lankan president claimed there were offers only of food and money from the United States and Britain. The Sri Lankan government called the reports of the arms request "untrue" and, in a gesture to India, aimed at "destroying friendship" between India and Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan trade minister reportedly stated that the government would not allow the country to be used as "an anti-India base," but in the same statement he indirectly charged India with allowing Tamil separatists to mobilize support within India.

The current violence was triggered late last month when Tamil separatist guerrillas reportedly ambushed and killed 13 soldiers of the predominantly Sinhalese army. The army retaliated with attacks on the Tamil community. A large amount of the ensuing violence to Tamils included murders inside the country's jails and extensive damage of Tamil-owned property and businesses in the capital of Colombo.

In Sri Lanka, following the riots, the government carried out a vote on a constitutional amendment in the parliament which demands that all parliamentary members take an oath proclaiming their opposition to separatism. The vote was intended to put pressure on the leading opposition party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which represents the Tamil minority.

The ruling United National Party and other opposition parties voted for the amendment, but the TULF boycotted the session, partly out of fear of coming to the capital. There are fears that the government will now move to ban the TULF, provoking new tensions. Several left-wing parties including the pro-Soviet Communist Party have already been banned.



THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE
INDIAN AND **PACIFIC**
OCEAN BASINS
A Plan to End the World Depression

Thursday, September 15

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

2 P.M.-4 P.M.

World Stability and Global

**Development: The U.S. Role in
Indian and Pacific Ocean Basin
Development**

Speaker: **Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.**,
Founder, *EIR*; Chairman, Advisory
Board, National Democratic Policy
Committee

4 P.M.-5:30 P.M.

**The Strategic Parameters of Indian and
Pacific Ocean Basin Development**

7 P.M.-10 P.M.

**Great Projects for Indian and
Pacific Ocean Development**

Speakers: **Uwe Parpart**, Research
Director, Fusion Energy Foundation;
Dr. Steven Bardwell, Editor, *Fusion*
Magazine.

CAPITOL HILL QUALITY INN

415 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.

(near U.S. Senate Building)

Washington, D.C.

TICKETS:

Corporate \$100 Individual \$50

For Tickets and Information Please Contact Laura Cohen or Dana Sloan

Executive Intelligence Review, 1010 16th Street N.W. (3rd floor), Washington, D.C. 20036

Telephone: (202) 223-8300.

In late October President Ronald Reagan will be making an extended visit to Asia, including the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Korea and Japan. The President will visit a region spanning the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean Basins, where almost two-thirds of the world's population lives. The region includes some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, economies that have continued to grow even under conditions of world depression, and is strategically vital to the security of the United States and the world. This is a region that many people believe will be the new economic and strategic center for the world in the next century.

It is vital that the United States approaches the Indian Ocean/Pacific Ocean Basin area with a coherent policy: a comprehensive strategy for stability and economic development. The *Executive Intelligence Review* will present such a strategy at this conference.

EIR founder, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., who has just returned from a tour of India, Thailand, and Japan where he had extensive discussions with political and economic leaders from those nations, will present the key concepts which should guide American policy for the future. The conference will present for discussion detailed plans for large-scale infrastructure development projects, including a new canal across the Kra Isthmus of Thailand, a second Panama canal, and large-scale riparian water-control projects for South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China.