CHAPTER - III

THE INTERLUDE - EFFORTS FOR PEACE
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In the General Elections held in Sri Lanka during March 1965 Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike was defeated and Mr. Dudley Senanayake was elected Prime Minister. The Dudley Senanayake rule lasted for only five years. It was also not an eventful rule as Dudley Senanayake did not have a clear majority in Parliament and had to rely on the support of many parties including the Federal Party of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Thus the Christians became a powerful community and highly educated in English medium. They did not favour the S.L.F.P. the Buddhist religion and Sinhala language. Mrs. Sirimavo had an antagonism to the Catholic minority over the Mission Schools and nationalised them. Later non-Buddhist teachers were not recruited to the nationalised schools.

As explained earlier, when Mrs. Sirimavo came to power, she appointed Kandyans to the Government services in large numbers and this was resented by the low country Sinhalese who were historically enemies of the Kandyan Kingdom. To win over the support of the 'Indian Tamils' Dudley co-opted S. Thondaman, their leader, as a nominated Member of Parliament. To win over the F.P., Dudley entered into a Secret Pact with S.J.V. Chelvanayagam. He offered Cabinet portfolios to Federal Party members, but S.J.V. Chelvanayagam declined the offer. In 1956, the Federal Party convention resolved not to accept any portfolios in any Sinhalese Cabinet. But to satisfy Dudley, Chelvanayagam agreed to allow M. Thiruchelvam, a leading member of the Federal Party to be nominated to the Senate and thus enter as a Minister. To further strengthen his position, Dudley created "a Committee of ten" as Mofussil Cabinet and included

1 GORAN LINDGREN & PETER WALLENSTEEN et al., Third World Dimensions in Conflict Resolutions, Uppsala University, (Sweden, 1989), p.98.

Chelvanayagam, Ponnampalam and Thondaman in this unofficial Cabinet.

No sooner was the Cabinet announced there was a hue and cry from the opposition for the appointment of Thiruchelvam as Minister of Local Government. Felix Dias Bandaranaike of S.L.F.P. queried thus,

"how can the local Government of Sinhalese be entrusted to a Tamil?"


Dudley agreed to the suggestion. Thus Dudley-Chelvanayagam Pact of 24th March, 1965 was born.

Major changes were stipulated in the Dudley-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1965 which restricted the rights of Sri Lankan Tamils. But it enacted regulations under the Tamil Language Act of 1958

3 Ibid; See also V.P. VAIDIK, Ethnic Crisis in Sri Lanka, India's Options, (New Delhi, 1986), p.30.

4 L.S.S.P. and C.P. were the Leftist Parties in favour of parity of status for Tamil language in 1956.
despite the opposition from the S.L.F.P. and the C.P.5

(1) Bandaranaike had agreed to regional councils. There was provision for amalgamation of regional councils "beyond provincial limits."

(2) But Dudley proposed District Councils which were fragmented units without politico-cultural contents.

(3) The powers to be delegated to District Councils were left out for later decisions.

(4) On the issue of language, Dudley agreed to formulate regulations to introduce Tamil language in the administration of Northern and Eastern Provinces.

(5) Provisions were made for the use of Tamil in all transactions with Government relating to the Tamil people's welfare.

(6) Dudley agreed to amend the language of Courts Act of 1961 which substituted Sinhala in place of English to make room for the use of Tamil.

(7) In respect of colonisation in Tamil areas, Dudley agreed

to provide:

(a) first preference to the landless local residents in the district;

(b) second preference to the Tamil speaking people in the Northern and Eastern Provinces;

(c) third and last preference to other Tamil citizens residing in the rest of the parts of the land of Sri Lanka. 6

On closer analysis it will be seen that the Federal Party was prepared to accept much less than what was given by Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact. It appears that the Federal Party having received nothing from Bandaranaike was prepared to accept this much from Dudley Senanayake and remain friendly with the Sinhala bourgeois which was the main obstacle to the progress of the Tamils.

The Federal Party was a very powerful organisation among the Sri Lankan Tamils, because they had promised a separate State for Tamils. As a result in all the General Elections Tamils voted en masse for the Federal Party. Because of the struggle between the S.L.F.P. and the U.N.P. Sinhalese votes were divided. The Sinhala Party with the Federal Party’s support had a better chance of coming to power. The Federal

6 See Appendix II.
Party allied itself on the basis of 'responsive co-operation' with the Sinhala parties. Hence the Federal Party made pretensions to be the 'Kingmakers' in Sri Lanka. They wanted somehow to hold on to their Parliamentary seats rather than fight for a radical solution the problems of the Tamils.

Federal Party's policies ultimately paved the way for the Sri Lankan Tamil's endless disasters. It still remains a mystery as to the acquiescence of the Federal Party in accepting the proposals of the District Councils in place of the Regional Councils. Meanwhile, draft legislation for the establishment of District Councils was being frozen by the Government, as the members of the opposition had alleged that it was an attempt to introduce Federalism to Tamils in disguise. But the Regional Councils would have paved the way for more autonomy.

The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1957 conferred larger provisions of devolution than those found in the Indian States or in the Canadian Provinces.

The Federal Party was championing Federalism and talking about Tamil Arasu. Yet it was contented with the mere sanction of the District Councils from the Sinhalese over-lords.

State sponsored Sinhala colonisation of traditional Tamil

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7 C.R.de.SILVA, op.cit., p.167.
lands was the first act of treachery the Sinhala leaders adopted against the Sri Lankan Tamils. This action was taken as early as 1931 when Don Stephen Senanayake became Minister of Agriculture in the State Council. D.S. Senanayake continued this policy till his death in 1952. Later, his son Dudley Senanayake continued Sinhala Colonisation.

Mannar, Vanni, Trincomalee and Batticaloa were rice growing areas for the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Sinhala Prime Ministers launched colonisation scheme in all the above locations to grab the fertile lands from the Tamils.

Pavatkulam, between Vavuna and Mannar, Padavia between Vavunia and Trincomalee, Kanthalai in Trincomalee and Amparai in Batticaloa, were the major colonisation areas, Weli Oya at the border of Northern and Eastern Provinces is a strategic spot for Tamils. Colonisation of Weli Oya was started to cut off Northern and Eastern Provinces. The treachery adopted in the development of this area gives an insight into Sinhala treachery. Weli Oya comes under Vavunia administration but without the knowledge of the Government Agent of Vavunia, the colonisation work was carried out by Sinhala administration of Anuradhapura.


The Northern and Eastern Provinces are traditional Tamil lands. They are about 1/3rd the total area of Sri Lanka which is 68,000 Sq.Km. Through State sponsored Sinhala colonisations in traditional Tamils' lands, the Sinhalese have taken away 7,000 Sq.Km. out of 22,600 Sq.Km. of Tamil land and that too the most fertile which are the rice bowls of Sri Lankan Tamils. 10

Chelvadurai Manoharan, a Professor of Geography who has made a close study of Sinhala colonisation of traditional Tamil lands estimates that around 432,307 Sinhalese have been brought into Tamil areas between 1953 and 1981. 11 This does not include the large number of Sinhalese brought into the Eastern Province before 1953. This piece of evidence gives some idea of the colonisation practiced by the Sinhalese on the Tamils. It must be noted that the total Sri Lankan Tamil population is only 25,00,000.

Vast sums of money, mainly aid from Western capitalist countries, have been diverted for colonisation of Sinhalese in Tamil areas. The cost of Mahawali Development Project alone is estimated at US $ two billion. 12

Thus the State sponsored Sinhala colonisation of Traditional

10 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p.94.
Tamil lands is a vital factor in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. It appears the Sinhalese want to make Tamils a minority in their own traditional areas through Sinhala colonisations.

The Federal Party members were mostly lawyers and trying to argue for the rights of the Tamils legally whereas the Sinhalese were more nationalist than legal. Hence in their campaign at the general elections, they whipped up national, racial, religious, sentiments to get the support of the masses for victory in elections.

While the Sri Lankan Tamil leadership was prepared to give up the rights of the Tamils, the Sinhalese leadership was whipping up Sinhala chauvinism to a high pitch of feverishness.

In 1965 Mr. Anagarika Dharmapala's writings were collected and published by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. These were highly provocative and advocating a "return to righteousness". Dharmapala thus proclaimed

"the pagan Tamils .... devastated the land, destroyed ancient temples .... and nearly annihilated the historic race."\(^{13}\)

Statements such as these found echoed in political speeches.

Thus Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike said in 1967,

"the Tamil people must accept the fact that
the Sinhala majority will no longer permit
themselves to be cheated of their rights."\(^{14}\)

Not to lag behind the demagogues, the Buddhist Clergy
was adding fuel to a raging fire. Thus to echo the sentiments
of Dharmapala, Maha Nayake of the Ramanya sect said in May
1967

"if the Tamils get hold of the country the
Sinhalese will have to jump into the sea. It
is essential therefore to safeguard our country,
the race and religion and to work with that object
in mind."\(^{15}\)

As a result, Dharmapala's statues were erected every-
where in cities, towns and villages. Many streets were named
after him. Sinhala chauvinism was broadcast in nook and corner
of the Sinhalese areas. Even highly reputed Buddhist academics
clamoured for Buddhist hegemony and not just a Sinhalese majority
domination over Tamil minority population.

Professor Obeyasekera, Professor of Anthropology in

\(^{14}\) ROBERT KEARNEY, *The Politics of Ceylon*, (Colombo, 1973),
p.163.

\(^{15}\) S.U. KODIKARA, 'Communalism and Political Modernism in
University of California sums up the situation thus:

"Anagarika Dharmapala died in 1933. In 1948, the Ceylonese achieved independence. In 1956, effective political power was in the hands of the Sinhalese Buddhist population .... It became possible for them to claim for Sri Lanka, the status of a Sinhala Buddhist nation"\textsuperscript{16} (and not simply a Sinhalese nation).

To achieve this goal the Sri Lankan Tamils have to be liquidated as they also belong to a religious minority community. Herein lies the seeds of the Sri Lankan Tamil genocide.

Even during this grave hour, the Indo-Sri Lanka relations remained friendly. The Sri Lankan Tamils were left to fend for themselves.

Even highly educated academics kindled the fire of racial fanaticism. Prof.I.D.S. Weerawardene, Professor of Politics and Government in his work titled "Ceylon and her Citizens" (1956) wrote thus,

"The Sinhalese who form the largest group in our country came more than 2,000 years ago, probably from the region close to Bengal. You must have

read the story of Vijaya and his 700 men. That story illustrates the fact that our Sinhalese ancestors came from the regions of North India. They settled in the North Central part of the Island and gradually spread over the rest of the country. It is difficult to say exactly when the Tamils came to this country. Some people think that a few Tamils might have been in Ceylon as traders even when the Sinhalese first came. But it is certain that they came in large numbers during the era of Tamil invasions which began very early in our history. In the 13th century they were powerful enough to establish an independent Kingdom in the North."  

In January 1966, the opposition parties organised a procession led by Buddhist Monks along Dharmapala Road, towards the Parliament buildings in spite of a ban on meetings and processions. The demonstrators were violent in the streets. They threw stones and broke shops. The police opened fire and one Bhikku, Ratnasara Thero, was killed. A State of Emergency was declared.  

Meanwhile in Parliament, opposition party members led

17 Ibid., p.141.  
by Mrs. Bandaranaike violently denounced the Government measure. Dudley was afraid and delayed implementation of Language Bill he had promised. Even Dudley-Chelvanayagam Pact became a dead letter. Thus the Federal Party was betrayed. Tamils faced a dead end. Tamils were transformed into frustrated community, especially the Tamil youth.

The Federal Party, to salvage its image, demanded Koneswaram in Trincomalee to be declared as a "Sacred Precinct." Dudley refused. M. Thiruchelvam resigned his position as Minister of Local Government. The Tamil politicians obviously hoped that neither Dudley Senanayake nor Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike will win enough seats at the General Election to do without Federal Party support.

Sri Lankan Parliament was dissolved in March 1970. Fresh elections were fixed for May 1970.

AGITATION IN TAMILNADU

From the days of the Chera, Pandya and Chola invasions of Sri Lanka from the Seventh to Thirteenth centuries the Sinhalese have a mortal fear of Tamilnadu with a population of 60 millions. This situation is very clear from an incident

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in Kalaignar Karunanidhi's life. Kalaignar himself was very much affected by the incident and records it in his book "Nenchuku Neethi". 21

"The Federal Party sent an invitation to attend their Trincomalee Convention held on 24.8.1964. But the Sinhala Government refused me admission. Mr. V. Navaratnam raised a question on this issue in the Sri Lanka Parliament.

"Replying to this question Mr. C.P. de Silva said that the D.M.K. was a proscribed Party in India. Some D.M.K. members are in jail. The Sri Lankan Government does not wish a member of D.M.K. to enter Sri Lanka.

"This false statement was immediately denied by Mr. V. Navaratnam.

"The D.M.K. is not a proscribed Party in India. It is an accepted Democratic Party. The Party's members are in the Central and State Legislatures.

"In the next elections the D.M.K. has a good chance to come to power in Tamilnadu. D.M.K. is carrying on agitations against forced imposition of Hindi in Tamilnadu. D.M.K. is not connected

21 KALAIGNAR M. KARUNANIDHI, Nenchuku Neethi (Tamil) (Madras, 1985), pp.524-525.
with any unlawful activities.

"This clear understanding of V. Navaratnam even after lapse of many years has not known by many parties even in Tamilnadu. This situation is very painful to me." \(^{22}\)

While not allowing Kalaiguar Karunanidhi to visit Sri Lanka, they allowed M.G. Ramachandran, in the name of cultural 'troops' visit. \(^{23}\) Kalaiguar had identified himself totally with Tamil Nationalism and Tamil culture and in addition he was an acknowledged Tamil scholar and in his several speeches he had identified himself closely with Eelam Tamils.

In Tamilnadu, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (D.M.K) came to power in 1967. C.N. Annadurai became Chief Minister. He was a great public speaker and distinguished writer spreading the Dravidian ideology. These changes had their impact amidst the Sri Lankan Tamils. \(^{24}\) The D.M.K. in power was different from the D.M.K. in the opposition. Responsibility in office stood on their way to the Sri Lankan Tamil question. The D.M.K. maintained its contacts with the Sri Lankan Tamil leaders. The anti-Hindi agitation in Tamilnadu was a similar emotional

\(^{22}\) MURASOLI (Chennai), 19.8.1964, p.1.

\(^{23}\) Interview with the President: Anna Repatriates Association, Sri Lanka Branch, Dr. Ilangai P.A. Nainar on 22.9.1997 - Chennai.

\(^{24}\) Interview with the General Secretary of M.D.M.K. V. Gopalswamy on 22.3.1997 - Chennai.
exercise to the anti-Sinhala agitation in Sri Lanka. Hence there was greater understanding and fellow-feeling between both the people.

When the D.M.K. came to power in Tamilnadu, the Sri Lankan Tamils were jubilant. This had its adverse impact on the Sinhalese. The Sri Lanka Government wrote:

"The D.M.K. Party would lead a secession from India, and the Federal Party would lead a secession from Ceylon and the two would join to form a United Tamil Nation and State." 25

C.N. Annadurai speaking to the Sri Lankan Newspaper denied the charges and said that they had no contact with any political party abroad. 26

When 'the greater Tamilnadu' cry was renewed in 1968, the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo met Sri Lankan leaders and produced many paper cuttings to prove Tamilnadu had no territorial ambitions over Sri Lanka. 27

The Sri Lankan Tamil leaders took advantage of the victory of the D.M.K. in Tamilnadu and tried to console and comfort

26 Ibid.
27 INDIAN EXPRESS, 22.9.1968, p.5.
themselves with proclamations and provocative statements through their party meetings and party papers. Thus, the 'Suthanthiran', the official paper of the Federal Party wrote,

"No one can cut off the link between Tamilnadu and Eelam after Annadurai and D.M.K. helped for the growth of same thinking, ideas and principles among the Tamils of Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka. Any attempt to cut off the link would only increase the attachment between the two." 28

As time went on the D.M.K. began to cool down and its contact with the Sri Lankan Tamil leaders became less frequent.

C.N. Annadurai died in 1969 and Karunanidhi became the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu. He modified his stand towards the Sri Lankan Tamils, to suit the intentions of the Indian Government. In 1972 S.J.V. Chelvanayagam came to Tamilnadu to canvass support for regional autonomy. D.M.K. said it was an internal matter. 29

ACTION BY INDIA

Jawaharlal Nehru died in 1964. Lal Bahadur Shastri succeeding Nehru as the Prime Minister of India in 1964. He

28 SUTHANTHIRAN (Tamii Daily), 7.10.1967, p.5.
entered into the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact in 1964, aimed at bringing some relief to the Indian Tamil plantation labour and their problem. The Agreement of October 1964, was arrived at on the basis of an estimated total of 9,75,000 persons of Indian origin in Ceylon who were without citizenship. This estimate excluded illicit immigrants from India and the holders of Indian passports. Shastri in his brief and crowded period had no opportunity to evince interest in relation to the Sri Lankan Tamils and their problems. He died in 1968.

Dudley Senanayake of the U.N.P. became the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and was in power from 1965 to 1970. As a general rule the U.N.P. did not take kindly to the India's initiatives in the Sri Lankan political matters. Further the pressure from Tamilnadu was also weak during this period. Hence Sri Lankan Tamil problem remained in the background both from the Indian point of view as well as the view of the Colombo over-lords.

In summary, in the 1965 General Elections in Sri Lanka, Dudley Senanayake became Prime Minister. He was supported by the Federal Party. In return Dudley promised to enter into an agreement with Chelvanayagam to remove disabilities of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Dudley-Chelvanayagam Pact was signed in 1967.

The Sinhala chauvinist brought pressure on Dudley. He delayed action on the Pact and eventually nothing substantial was done till he lost the 1970 General Election and went out of power in Sri Lanka.

The S.L.F.P. and U.N.P. the two leading parties which ruled Sri Lanka from Independence to date let down the Sri Lankan Tamils. There was none to whom they could talk to find a peaceful solution to Tamil ethnic problem in Sri Lanka.

As the period 1965 to 1970 was a relatively quiet period, Sri Lankan Tamil problem did not receive much attention. The 'Nam Thamilar' movement in Tamilnadu suggested 'Greater Tamilnadu Plan' to bring Sri Lankan Tamils into Tamilnadu influence, and take them away from Sinhala domination.

Nehru opposed the move vehemently. Sri Lankan Tamils had to fight their battles by themselves.

In 1970 General Election, Dudley Senanayake was defeated and Mrs. Sirimavo came to power. In general, the U.N.P. was anti-Indian and pro-West, and most of its supporters came from Western oriented capitalist society. Whereas the S.L.F.P. represented hard, Sinhala, Buddhist national ideology. S.L.F.P. had a close contact with the Indian leadership. In the field of economy, S.L.F.P. was more closer to the masses than the
rich. Therefore the change which occurred in the 1970 General Elections, brought back the rule of S.L.F.P., with severe suppression of Tamil aspirations which is discussed in detail in Chapter IV.