

NATIONAL CRISIS

objectives of peace. Ultimately, any peace settlement must make the Tamils feel that they are truly fellow citizens of this country, enjoying, in concrete terms, both equal rights and equal opportunities. For this, the Tamils, especially the young among them,

have to be patiently won over. This must go much deeper than providing name boards in public places in Tamil. It must also go beyond the removal of restrictions placed on travel and the transportation of goods. It must look at the disabilities faced by minorities in the whole process of justice and administration. It must also look at the

humiliations and insults officially meted out to Tamils, and seriously attempt to heal the deep wounds inflicted on the Tamil people. Unless these are publicly explained to the Sinhalese in order to make them feel the need for a radical change, the prospects for lasting peace in this country are dim. ■

Tigers as Jailers and Executioners

Are there more Tamil political prisoners in the LTTE's fortified bunker jails than in the prisons of the Sri Lankan state? Yes, according to some observers.

The actual number of prisoners in LTTE custody is not known. However, well-informed Tamil sources claim the number to be anywhere between four and five thousand. The prisoners, according to these sources, are regularly tortured, and many have died under interrogation.

It appears that there are five categories of political prisoners in LTTE jails:

- (i) members and sympathisers of rival Tamil groups,
- (ii) those who had links with the Indian Peace Keeping Forces,
- (iii) ex-members of the LTTE,
- (iv) critics of the LTTE and
- (v) captured Sri Lankan soldiers and policemen.

Human rights activists express particular concern about the fate of these prisoners in case the Sri Lankan army launches a major offensive into LTTE strongholds in Jaffna. The prisoners are likely to be summarily executed by the Tigers, they fear.

Execution of opponents is not a new thing in the LTTE's manual of warfare. What is new, however, is the practice of public executions. In the month of October alone, nearly 35 'deterrent' public executions are reported to have been carried out by LTTE cadres. Horrendous details of such punishment of 'traitors' have now been revealed. In the typical execution ritual, the victim is brought blindfolded in a jeep to a public place and given 2 or 3 minutes to confess. While the confession progresses, and the public listens, a young executioner standing behind the victim holds a gun at his head and pulls the trigger. ■

INIMICAL FORCES

Einstein is loved because he is gentle, respected because he is wise. Relativity being not for most of us, we elevate its author to a position somewhere between Edison, who gave us a tangible gleam, and God, who gave us the difficult dark and the hope of penetrating it. Not long ago Einstein was here and made a speech, not about relativity but about nationalism. "Behind it," he said, "are the forces inimical to life." Since he made that speech we have been reading more about those forces: Bruno Walter forbidden by the Leipzig police to conduct a symphony; shops of the Jews posted with labels showing a yellow spot on a black field. Thus, in a single day's developments in Germany we go back a thousand years into the dark, while a great thinker, speaking not as Jew but as philosopher, warns us: these are the forces inimical to life.

E.B. White
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