

THE 1987 INDO-LANKA ACCORD

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If India can pardon the RSS and Sikhs, why cannot the alleged suspects of the killing of Rajiv Gandhi, whoever it may be, be pardoned?

Former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was in Colombo with pomp and pageantry to sign the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord with former Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayawardane on July 29, 1987, followed up by the arrival of 42,000 troops to the North-East of Sri Lanka. A Sinhalese navy cadre swiped at the back of Gandhi's head with his gun butt while he was in the process of acknowledging the salute of the Navy Regiment marching past. Further, the JVP and other Sinhalese extremist politicians with their anti-Indian 'hegemony' line and ethno-populism opposed the Accord. The IPKF abducted Prabaharan to India from Suthumalai amid the hustle and bustle, followed by the surrender of weapons. Thirteen LTTE cadres, comprising Kumarappa, Pulendran and others, succumbed to cyanide following their arrest by the Sri Lankan armed forces, because the Indian government shirked its responsibility to give them protection, to look after their interests, or to see that an impartial inquiry was conducted concerning their custody.

It is ironic to note that, in spite of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, recommended the principle of *ahimsa* as one of the highest moral values to live by, when Thileepan fasted unto death by resorting to non-violent means clamouring for equal rights, the Indian government ignored his principled action and allowed him to die.

Because the Tamils rejected the Peace Accord as it did not fulfil their aspirations, a division in opinion erupted between the LTTE and the Govt of India, which paved the way for an open confrontation - a 2 year guerrilla war against the Indian army. The Indian troops fought an inconclusive war with the Tigers and Ramasinghe Premadasa was elected in 1988 as Jayawardane's successor. He joined hands with the Tamils, had negotiations with them and secured the withdrawal of the Indian troops in early 1990. Tamils heaved a sigh of relief, but unfortunately, the war resumed between the LTTE and Sri Lankan forces within a few months.

India has a tendency to look after her own short term interests first. She was supportive of the division of Pakistan into West and East with the ulterior motive of overpowering them both. In the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils, she is aiding and abetting the Sinhalese rulers to discriminate and deny their basic human rights. India, being a regional superpower in the Indian Ocean, obviously has her vested interests in the region. She is hesitating relentlessly and vehemently to facilitate a settlement and this may be, among other reasons, due to an untenable and unfounded fear that it could spur the Tamils in India to enhance their political demands.

A perusal of the chronicle of events that took place from the date of arrival to the date of departure of the IPKF, it would be evident that the IPKF landed in Sri Lanka under the subterfuge of peacemakers to disintegrate the infrastructure of the freedom struggle of Tamils. India has both overtly and covertly helped Sri Lanka now and at that time. India has helped the Sri Lankan state militarily, provided military training to the Sri Lanka's top army brass in Indian defence colleges, and shared military and naval intelligence with the Sri Lankan armed forces, especially the Navy. Joint naval patrols are being conducted in certain key and vulnerable areas. LTTE merchant ships have been sunk in international waters with logistics provided by the Indian navy. Now it has transpired that India has gifted indigenously- made Indra radars to Sri Lanka.

Though Prime Minister S.W.R.D.Bandaranayake was assassinated in 1959 by a Buddhist monk, other Buddhist monks were not penalized. Mr.Vijaya Kumaranatunga, a screen idol, politician and the husband of former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaranatunga was assassinated by JVPers. In spite of that tragedy, Chandrika Kumaranatunga was magnanimous enough to put the past behind her, shelve the grudge she had with the JVP for killing her husband, forgave and formed a coalition government with the JVP to enable her to achieve her political goals.

India has also forgotten and forgiven all what the J.V.P. was up to, during and subsequent to the Indo-Sri Lanka Pact, together with the gun butt attack carried out by the Singhalese navy cadre on the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Similarly, for the welfare, betterment and uplift of the Tamils living in the North East of Sri Lanka, India has to forgive and forget if there was anything to lacerate or rankle her mind, offsetting against the atrocities and tragedies committed by the IPKF during their presence.

The man who killed Mahatma Gandhi was linked to the RSS, and yet, the RSS is a major organisation in India today. Indira Gandhi was assassinated on 31st October, 1984 as a prime minister by her 2 Sikh bodyguards, and yet today, a Sikh is India's Prime Minister.

On 21st May 1991, as a former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a bomb blast. If India can pardon the RSS and Sikhs, why cannot the alleged suspects of the killing of Rajiv Gandhi, whoever it may be, be pardoned?

The Tamil community was obsessed with a fear psychosis because of the dreadful terror of all the daily atrocities, when the IPKF took it for granted that the lives of the Eelam Tamils were of no worth, and that they could be killed with impunity. In collusion with the Indian Government-sponsored Tamil renegades, the IPKF went on a killing spree of anyone who exhibited his/or her aspirations for equal rights, did not submit to their extortions of money, and who sheltered, fed or financed the militants. Crimes included three-prong combined attacks by the army, navy and the air force involving firing, aerial strafing, cannonade and shelling, conscriptions, reprisal killings of non-combatants, looting of homes, rape, a murderous attack on Jaffna Hospital, and the killing of a number of unarmed and disarmed guerrilla suspects in breach of the Laws of War without trial. Temples, churches, schools, refugee camps, business establishments and houses were also prone to attacks.

Tamil civilians killed, by the IPKF include Dr. A Sivapathasuntheram, Dr. M.K. Ganesharatnam, Dr. Parimelalahar, Mrs. Vadivelu, Mrs. Leelawathie, Mrs. Sivapakiam, Mrs. Ramanathan, Mr. Shanmugalingam, Mr. Kanagalingam, Mr. Krishnarajah, Mr. Selvarajah, R. Duraiswamy (SLAS) Retd. Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, M. Duraiwswamy Retd. Staff Officer Bank of Ceylon, Mr. S. Sivasubramaniam, retired Director of Irrigation, Mrs. Sivasubramaniam, his retired teacher wife and their only son, Prof. P. Chandrasekeram, University of Jaffna, Dr R.W. Crossette Thambiah, Dr Selvaratnam Former DMO Maskeliya, Dr S. Pararajasingham J.M.O, L.F.M. Samuel Rtd. Teacher (St. Thomas College, Mt. Lavinia & Royal College), K.J. Sambanthar Retd. DLO & Asst. Land Commissioner, Jaffna, Mrs S. Sivanandaraja (mother), Mohanraj (son) Technical Officer, Irrigation .Dept, Mrs Kishnam, Mrs M. Sebastiampillai, Mrs N.R. Thuriappa, Mrs V. Ruthiralingam, C.S. Aaron, A. Subramaniam Attorney at Law, Mr & Mrs Pancharatnam, Rtd. Teachers, K. Navaratnam Rtd. Divisional Supdt. of Post Offices, S. Nadarajah, Formerly SLBC, Tamil Service, P. Arooran , M. Nadaraja, S. Rasanayagam Rtd. Credit Controller CCC Ltd., Mrs M. Weerasegaram Pillai, (Mother), Pillai Yasotha Weerasegaram (Daughter), Mrs S. Thanapalasingham (Mother) Miss N. Thanapalasingham (Daughter) S. Kulasegerampillai, Retd. Station Master, Mrs M. Arumugam (sister of Senator S. Nadesan), Mrs R. Gnanamuttu , A. Candappu Rtd. State Officer, S. Selvaranee, S. Shanmugasuntharam, Electrician, Jaffna Municipal Council, S. Thambiah, (father of T. Sabaratnam), Mrs. Thambimuttu, Kannan Iyer and thousands more.

Because of the death of Rajiv Gandhi, attempts by anyone with bias and fossilized ideas to discredit the noble cause of the militants struggling for equal rights could only have a boomerang effect on the atrocities, brutal murders and cruelties wielded over the Tamils by the IPKF.