



## TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

### **Critique of the UK High Commissioner Chilcott's speech in Colombo on 10th December 2007**

High Commissioner Dominic Chilcott has taken a very superficial approach to the fundamental flaws of governance of Sri Lanka. He has chosen to studiously ignore the ignoble role of Britain in granting a lop-sided constitution at independence, which disenfranchised a separate and distinct nation of Tamils and handed them over in constitutional slavery to an imperialistic race of Sinhalese from the time of independence. This selective amnesia on his part infects and affects his thesis on the resistance of the Tamils to Sinhala repression.

This self-proclaimed 'experienced' diplomat sees the incubus of a genocidal war by the Sinhalese as just humanitarian crimes and not as the denial of fundamental political rights of the Tamils. His two and a half years in Sri Lanka has given him the right to walk on egg shells when it comes to gently chiding the Sri Lankan government for its atrocities but he lambastes unfettered and seeks to weaken with old and hackneyed accusations of terrorism the only defenders of the Tamil nation pitted against the racist marauders. He commits and arrogates to himself the present and future governments of the UK to continuing with this belligerent attack on the Tamil political cause.

This is the same man who claims in his curriculum vitae  
2002-2003 - FCO: Director of Iraqi Planning (later Policy) Unit.

The Iraq war started in March 2003 and this man was in the Foreign and Commonwealth office at that time planning for and after it. Even if we consider the war itself as militarily successful, it is incontrovertible that the planning for Iraq after the war was an unmitigated disaster. Does this act of sheer vandalism give this man a right to pontificate on how to deal with the freedom cry of the Tamils of Sri Lanka? He has the temerity, presumably as the tinpot British overlord, to tell the Tamils who should represent us and goes on to give political credibility to the Tamil lackeys of the Rajapakse regime, who could barely muster a handful of Tamil votes in the general election.

### ***O! what hypocrisy and tripe in the name of diplomacy.***

The fatal defect in the mandate in governance in Sri Lanka is not the absence of liberalism but the absence of a mandate from the Tamils from 1948 in the Sri Lankan government to govern them. The first British secretary, Col. Hugh Cleghorn in his minutes (1799) wrote that "this island is inhabited by two very different nations from a very ancient period has divided the Island between them.

They differ entirely in their religions, language and manners." The British High Commissioner does not appear to know the history of the island nor the hauteur of his occupying ancestors. The British never pretended that they required a democratic mandate to govern us and they exercised their power through direct threat or the veiled threat of superior military forces of occupation.

The post-independence Sinhalese governments have enforced their hegemony and power over the Tamils in this same vein but in a more repressive way. If democracy is merely the counting of numbers, then in countries like Sri Lanka it



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installs a permanent racial majority that rides roughshod over the rights of the minorities. Thus enslavement is vested in perpetuity and no arcane and utterly vacuous words on good governance of the High Commissioner can gloss over this British perfidy.

Independent Tamil nationhood was snuffed out by the British imperial government for its administrative convenience in the 1833 Colebrook and Cameron colonial unification of Ceylon. Sadly, Britain in its decolonization process could not care less about the upheavals and turmoil left behind and the consequent loss of lives on a mass scale. India and Pakistan paid heavily immediately on attaining independence, while Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) continues to bleed with mortal wounds. These wounds can only be healed by Britain accepting moral and historical responsibility to stop the ravages of a genocidal war and assuming a leading role in creating a state for the Tamils of Sri Lanka under its ancient name of Tamil Eelam.

High Commissioner Chilcott states that that the political aspiration for Eelam is not illegitimate, and although this has never been in doubt, we should thank him for saying it. But, let us not get carried away by his declaration because he proceeds to deride our aspiration by comparing it to some crackpot demanding that Yorkshire or some other English county should become an independent state. He also encourages the racist state to continue with its aggression against the Tamils by pledging British support to weaken the organized resistance of the Tamils to Sinhala military oppression.

There is no need to get entrapped in false concepts like 'united Sri Lanka' or 'Federal constitution' as there never was a united Sri Lanka except in the contrivance of British colonial rule. This is cynical verbiage used by the Sinhalese oppressors to justify their hegemony over the Tamils and a slogan blithely taken up by Chilcott. There is no principle in international law to stop the break up of an unviable state and Chilcott knows it. Britain is presently working with the USA to grant 'supervised' self government to Kosovo, which was previously a province of Serbia.

It was just a few years ago that after fighting for separation, East Timor was granted independence from Indonesia by the United Nations. It is plainly dishonest to try to hoist this petard of a united Sri Lanka upon the Tamils by the British.

This problem will not go away by Britain and the international community closing their eyes to the murder and devastation wrought by the Sinhala government. Britain led the EU in banning the Tigers and signaling to the Sri Lanka government to abort the peace process and launch its war unhindered again on the Tamils. This was the last piece of blatant betrayal of the Tamils by Britain, which further compounded their malediction at the time of independence. It seems to us just like shedding crocodile tears when Chilcott talks about Human Rights abuses against the Tamils; for there will continue to be human rights abuses of the Tamils so long as they are held in subservience.

It would be more believable if he actually threatened to withdraw British or EU aid and ban the murderous President and his entourage from travel to the EU. This is what they have done with Mugabe and his cronies in government in Zimbabwe. He trades in half-truths. He gives credit to the UK for the legal action taken in the UK



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against the dictator Pinochet. It was Margaret Thatcher who personally wanted him admitted to the UK as a friend and it was a Spanish initiative that resulted in Pinochet's detention in this country. This polished diplomat carefully chooses his references to suit his brief: to prevaricate for his country.

He has made some scholarly but anodyne points on Western political philosophy and the art of diplomacy and of governance, starting from Athens and Rome. Much of what he has said on Western philosophy may be considered as valid but the premise that a diplomat accredited to represent his country is anything other than a glorified salesman for his country with flags and luxury cars and budgets to entertain and to corrupt the locals is a fallacy. He states that "Fortunately for one Sri Lankan national, currently in detention in the UK, that practice does not apply in modern Britain, otherwise the penalty for reportedly entering the UK on a diplomatic passport with a false identity might be very severe indeed".

But this veteran diplomat does not mention that this notorious killer and kidnapper was given the diplomatic papers and the Passport for his false identity to enter the UK by the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry and that under the old Athenian convention the Sri Lankan High Commissioner in the UK would have been summarily executed along with this fiend. Why is His Excellency Chilcott so reticent to upbraid the Sri Lankan government for such a blatant violation of established modern protocol with a supposedly friendly country?

He is a timid man in a difficult position that requires honesty and courage. Although I do not wish to queer his pitch, it is a shame that he has chosen to speak with an eye to glossing over the inherent conflicts and dare I say the duplicity involved in much of what passes for diplomacy today.

*Machiavelli on the Art of Diplomacy ( some excerpts):*

*A wise leader cannot and should not keep his word when keeping it is not to his advantage or when the reasons that made him give it are no longer valid.*

*It is good to appear clement, trustworthy, humane, religious, and honest, and also to be so, but always with the mind so disposed that, when the occasion arises not to be so, you can become the opposite.*

Machiavelli on diplomacy, is a much better known figure than Sir Harold Thomson, although I am sure Chilcott will pejoratively disavow him as more notorious than famous, and many skilled in diplomacy will not deny practicing his treatise in some form in their career. Judge for yourselves as to what happens in Foreign Relations in the present day West; no moral principles but self-interest reigns.

On the subject of Dudley Senanayake, it is true he was a gentle and honest man but he was so weak that he allowed the brutal and radical forces of Sinhala nationalism to take root and to capture power through the mendacity and political machinations of SWRD Bandaranaike (Sinhala only in 24 hours and Buddhism as a state religion) and the greed and political zealotry of Buddhist monks to subjugate the Tamils. It is not enough being just good, if you are too weak as a head of



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government to stop other evil men from exercising power. He lacked moral fibre and physical courage.

It does not seem that Chilcott has learnt to speak the moral truth in his stay in Sri Lanka but, instead has learnt to state the anodyne and to sing for his Sri Lankan hosts and the British pension to come. He describes the human rights crimes but does not condemn the known human rights criminals in government. He is no doubt aware that a number of Sinhalese people and clergy have recently denounced the merciless attacks by the Sinhalese armed forces on the Tamil people of the North and the East as genocidal. He could have taken his cue from them. The National Peace Council in Sri Lanka has the courage to condemn the state's role in the indiscriminate bombing and killing. He should know that the Free Press is no longer free in Sri Lanka and that he has a duty to accost this evil by speaking the truth on the platform provided for him. The Presses of the Sunday Leader, a leading national newspaper were raided and vandalized by government thugs.

Tamil youth in their thousands were arrested only last week and taken away to be kept in inhuman conditions in detention camps, reminiscent of Hitler's fascist storm troopers and Stalin's Gulags. Their only crime was that they were Tamils to be treated as suspects and vermin by a fascist government. This year alone there are over 400,000 Tamils displaced by the President's war to 'liberate' the East languishing without proper food and in filthy conditions in temporary camps. Their homes and their land have been appropriated for government use and to bring in Sinhala interlopers.

Many women and children are dying everyday in ruthless bombing and shelling of the Vanni. The government is hell-bent on carrying out a scorched earth policy in the Vanni.

This High Ambassador in Her Majesty's service is the embodiment of the three wise monkeys; See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. Is this not worthy of criticism on proper governance, Your Excellency – who represents Mother Britain?

Because of his timorous diplomacy and political expedience, High Commissioner Chilcott has missed the opportunity in his valedictory address as a diplomatic representative of a major EU nation and the former colonial power, to call to account the murderous Rajapakse regime in the fora of international opinion. Not many are privileged to have had access at the highest levels of the government of Sri Lanka as he had, and his words had he chosen them well may have helped to stop the bloodshed. We would still like to wish him well in his new posting as the Deputy Ambassador to the United States.

**O tempore; O mores – of self-seeking career diplomats.**

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