



If and when the LTTE is defeated in their hideouts and the rest of the country, the government of Sri Lanka and its armed forces should not think of resting on their laurels. They must consider that their real job has just begun, for how and what they operate immediately following that initial success will determine whether they have been ultimately successful in solving the long-standing problem, so that people in the tiny island can look forward to an era of peace and harmony among the two major communities, the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

An interesting and enlightening article by the renowned terrorism expert Dr. Rohan Gunaratna appeared in the Asian Tribune recently wherein he offers some useful advice to the Sri Lanka authorities as to what and how they should do once the actual war is over. I am pretty sure the authorities are aware of the danger of taking things easy, and alert enough to heed the warnings of such an

have a tendency to think of themselves as a defeated lot, which is inevitable in view of the constant propaganda and brain-washing carried out by the LTTE. This has to be understood in context and not treated as ingratitude or treachery on their part. Along with this come another possibility, that of being suspicious of the Sinhalese. Both these can be overcome through genuine exchanges and mutual respect which again has to be initiated by the Sinhala majority. The fact that SWRD Bandaranaike's Sinhala only policy divided the nation has to be recognized and remedied. Although officially the three languages are now accepted official languages of the country, initial resentment and discomfort has to be acknowledged and steps must be taken to ensure that the Sinhalese people too begin to learn Tamil so that the need for a so-called link language does not arise. It is an irony that Sinhala which has so much of Tamil words in its vocabulary and so many grammatical formations borrowed from Tamil cannot

kill innocent Tamils in the north. Apart from earning the singular honor of being the first Tamil speaker there, he made use of that opportunity to announce to the whole world that his government was determined to eradicate terrorists whatever the international community was going to say. He probably was aware of a basic truth, that the LTTE had outsmarted the government in carrying out their message right round the world whereas Sri Lankan High Commissioners and ambassadors were sleeping at the wheel, thus negating the effect President's historic address could have had. This is a very serious situation that ought to be corrected forthwith. The President has apparently indicated his desire to see the

not going to lie down. They will use all the tricks of the trade employed so successfully so far, that with increased vigor. It would be the responsibility of the government, while building a dedicated foreign service with hopefully, an understanding of not only lands they are going to serve in, but the language and culture of those lands. As far as I know, even press reporters from Australian media working in countries like Russia and China are conversant with their languages.

Personal contacts and relations with politicians and pressmen go a long way in getting ones message across. I have a feeling that these men are given what is called an entertainment allowance for such operations.

The failure on the part of Sri Lanka diplomats to keep the foreign governments and media informed on basic facts was amply demonstrated even when the LTTE was blatantly harassing the trapped civilians in the NFZ. The foreign media kept on repeating the same mantra, that they were not safe in the government controlled areas. The basic truth of the larger majority of Sri Lankan Tamils already living safely in Sinhala-dominated areas has not still been being conveyed by the responsible quarters.



IT HAS TO BE A CONTINUOUS ENDEAVOR

eminent scholar. What I propose to do here is not to reiterate what Rohan Gunaratna has said, but to add a few thoughts to the ongoing debate on the issue.

My advice, if it is taken seriously is not to over-do the so-called celebration of victory. Although on my part I have made no contribution what ever towards it, my thinking is, that it should not be taken as a victory as such. At best, the discerning citizens of the country only should pause to take a deep breath and think seriously about what the entire nation must do in order to ensure this does not fizzle out to be something hollow at the end. In other words, the hearts and minds of the people ought to be directed towards an all-out effort to preserve and build on what has been achieved. And what has been achieved would be the minimum required to put together scattered pieces of an entire nation in a coherent and meaningful manner enabling the Sri Lankan population to build mutual relations with individuals and groups, belonging to different ethnic and cultural traditions and backgrounds, and hope to live as equal citizens respected by their neighbors both as individuals and as groups.

One thing the majority community has to keep in mind is that most Tamils would

deal directly with that language.

Let someone step into L.H. Mettananda's shoes (as he was when he started teaching Tamil to children in the middle school of Ananda College) and recommence the process of teaching Sinhala children Tamil at an early age. Someone no doubt will reintroduce Sinhala teachers into schools in the north. They will no doubt think of the good old days when Buddhist monks were teaching in Jaffna schools. This ought to begin long before government servants are made to sit for farcical language proficiency tests. Let us hope that more and more Hisselle Dhammaratanas and Visvanath Vajirasenas appear to bring the languages and literatures of the two communities closer with translations and original writings in both languages. Whether we will see a second Superintendent of Tamil translations, with a Sinhala heart or not, this mutual interaction would foster the growth of both languages and the friendship between the two as well.

I cannot overemphasize the significance of President Mahinda Rajapakse being the first man ever to address the UN General Assembly in Tamil, and that at a time when LTTE terrorists were shouting out to the world that Sri Lankan government was

entire diplomatic service revamped. The failure on the part of Sri Lanka diplomats to keep the foreign governments and media informed on basic facts was amply demonstrated even when the LTTE was blatantly harassing the trapped civilians in the NFZ. The foreign media kept on repeating the same mantra, that they were not safe in the government controlled areas. The basic truth of the larger majority of Sri Lankan Tamils already living safely in Sinhala-dominated areas has not still been being conveyed by the responsible quarters.

Political appointees to diplomatic positions have produced disastrous results, particularly in the current situation. While terrorists built an effective network of information dissemination and volunteer workers dedicated their cause, the paid servants of the government did virtually nothing. They failed to build satisfactory relations with local politicians and media. On their part they got used to relying on the terrorist information that reached them in a steady flow. No one should fool himself that things will improve or change with the defeat of the LTTE in the north of the country. Their efforts to muster their forces everywhere will no doubt be redoubled. LTTE power-brokers and theoreticians who are now frustrated are

Do they really use that or use that for that purpose?

Rohan Gunaratna had very clearly indicated the need for Sri Lankan authorities to go after the terrorists operating from foreign countries. He has particularly identified an LTTE operative based in Malaysia or Thailand. Foreign governments will on their own try to apprehend them, he has said. It is incumbent on Sri Lanka authorities to undertake this task with their cooperation and assistance. Left untouched, they can grow into much bigger threats. And so are the remaining Tigers, whether they remain hidden in the island or manage to escape. All of them must be brought to book. Punishing or rehabilitating them is a subsequent issue. The process has to be completed.

Last but not least, the entire population ought to be educated as to the potential danger of terrorists within the country either operating from their hideouts or regrouping surreptitiously. People have to be taught to be vigilant, for there are obviously going to elements that would think of taking revenge or merely creating havoc. This would be a fact of life for the citizens to live with for quite some time.