

These are all aspects of the overall Kurdish problem that need to be addressed, but they should not be handled as after thoughts; rather they should be worked into the main presentation. It is as if someone wrote a two character play, and then in the last act introduced a group of additional — important — characters with no attempt to weave them into the plot.

There ought to be — and as yet there does not exist in English — a scholarly work about the Kurds that tackles this problem head on. Are the politically active Kurds primarily concerned with promoting the cause of self-determination, or do they rather serve as useful foils by means of which others seek to sabotage the national struggles of the Iraqis, Iranians and the Turks?

Stephen C. Pelletiere
U.S. Army War College

O'Ballance, Edgar. *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka 1973-88*. London: Brassey's, 1989.

O'Ballance has provided a balanced and objective study of the 1973-88 Tamil insurrection in Sri Lanka. There are a few inaccuracies as to dates and events (as for example, S.J.V. Chelvanayakam died in 1977, not 1976, Anton Balasingham is not an Oxford graduate) but these need not be cavilled at in the context of a well-constructed documentary. In most places the author has successfully mineswept an area replete with misinformation, disinformation and blatant falsehoods sown by both sides. All credit to him, for the Sinhala-Tamil conflict has ethnic, social, economic and political factors criss-crossing a multicultural landscape.

The last chapter (9), "Retrospects and Prospects" provides valuable clues to an understanding of the situation on the ground. O'Ballance correctly attributes the crisis to "Sinhala nationalism" (is "chauvinism" more appropriate?) becoming "rampant" once "freed from British colonial rule" when "the government began to discriminate against the Tamil community in Ceylon." (p. 124) He is apocalyptically correct when he states that "future prospects for tranquillity in Sri Lanka are not good" (p. 126), an understatement and quite prescient, writing as he did in 1989 before the great inter-ethnic tragedies of 1990 began to unfold.

The author opines that the two most dangerous men to peace and compromise in Sri Lanka are Prabhakaran of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and Wijeweera of the JVP (People's Liberation Front). (p. 127) The latter and his command structure have been killed by the Sri Lankan army and the JVP uprising consequently is now under control. But can Prabhakaran's elimination pave the way for a peaceful resolution? Or will his deputy, Mahathaya alias Mahendrarajah, be more intractable? The irony is that the Sri Lankan government now and the Indian peacekeepers on previous occa-

sions have alleged that Prabhakaran was killed by Mahatthaya and that the "Prabhakaran" that Justice Minister Hameed talked to in his forays into Tiger territory in Jaffna was a double of the original. Who can say? Besides, unlike the JVP, the LTTE cadres disappear into the Tamil population (who are supportive of them) like fish dissolve into the ocean, a favorite guerrilla tactic. And the LTTE and the Tamil movement have the sympathy of neighboring Tamil Nad.

Chapter 1, "Resplendent Island" gives a useful background, just the adequate balance in information, for an understanding of the tangled web of inter-ethnic war and the internecine bloodletting among the five main Tamil militant groups. The chapters that follow explain the stages through which the Tamil militant groups fought their way past the Sri Lankan army, the Sri Lankan Special Task Force and the Indian Peacekeeping Force, spying on each other, slaying rival commanders and the moderate politicians of the Tamil United Liberation Front until the LTTE gained supremacy. This was presumably the LTTE's way of enforcing the unity of the Tamil people! Certainly Mao's dictum of politics being in command took a back seat. Was all this a price worth paying?

We learn about the various attempts of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayewardene to find a way out of the maze. Junior players are M.G. Ramachandran and M. Karunanidhi from Tamil Nad, and Sri Lankan Prime Minister, R. Premadasa and the Sri Lankan Minister of National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali. There is little doubt that India has been a destabilizer, and is acting as the region's hegemon. But the Gandhis failed to persuade the Tamil militants, especially the LTTE. A conspicuous omission is Gamini Dissanayake, a senior Sri Lankan minister with cricketing connections at the highest levels in New Delhi who played a vital role in the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayawardene rapprochement and the resulting Accord of July 1987.

Operation LIBERATION by the Sri Lankan army (Chapter 6) and "Operation PAWAN: 1987" (Chapter 7) are laid out in all their grim and military detail and made comprehensible to the lay reader. Only a writer of O'Ballance's army experience and skills as a military journalist could have accomplished this task. The Sri Lankan army in Operation LIBERATION was dead set on an all out victory but failed because of India's intervention.

The last section, "The Future" is insightful. Some of O'Ballance's questions have been answered. The Indians have left and the JVP threat has receded. But the LTTE has abandoned negotiations with the Premadasa government which had dragged on inordinately for fourteen months. They have re-commenced their armed struggle. The future is thus left uncertain.

A. Jeyaratnam Wilson
University of New Brunswick