

refugees is meaningless unless the security and well-being of internal refugees is assured. To start with, the government must be made to account for those hundreds of refugees abducted by the forces in public view, for which responsibility was later denied. To talk of peace in the country would have no meaning if there could be peace one day and people disappear the next when the government forces have a quarrel with a rebel group, especially one with whom they were as thick as thieves.

3. The Tigers must be challenged to demonstrate that they respect dissent and that people could contribute to the well-being of their community without interference and as their conscience allows. To start with they must be made to account for the 4.000 or so political prisoners they hold. If those who are committed to the well-being of the community and actively cared for it can be tortured, killed or imprisoned by its so called representatives, the community has no future. The refugees would do well to stay where they are. The ability of those politically committed refugees to return and the early release of the LTTE's prisoners, will crucially determine the prospects for a politics of peace and a general return of refugees.

4. With these measures, rather than keeping refugees idle, they should be encouraged to acquire skills geared to the eventual rehabilitation of the whole community at home. These skills could be technical, psychiatric nursing, providing a future for the war-maimed and the founding and running of co-operative enterprises.

As mentioned earlier, apart from the security and political aspects of the return of refugees, the economic one is also a key to the whole process. The government, central or provincial, and large institutions probably cannot handle this and the people's past experience will hardly give them confidence in these institutions. Money must be much more within the reach of people. The host countries in the West could involve committed and appropriately trained returning refugees as a means of directing relief in a decentralised manner. This is just the germ of an idea whose working out would be more involved. Those who remained at home should not be made to feel powerless.

5. If those who were once politically committed had established themselves at home, and conditions are seen to have improved, then many other refugees will wish to return voluntarily. Although material advantages in the West could be habit forming, most of those from rural backgrounds who came to the West feel more keenly the loss of emotional security which the easy going communal life at home gave them. What they mainly ask for is a life with dignity and without want. If the problem is approached sympathetically and with understanding, without making the refugees feel threatened, I strongly believe that it could be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

(The author is a member of the organisation 'University Teachers for Human Rights', Jaffna)

# Tamil Refugees in Canada

## - A new form of authoritarianism -

Small groups of Tamils, often young and mostly males, gather weeknights and Saturdays at the Danforth Avenue office of the 'Tamil Eelam Society of Canada', located in Toronto, where they are learning to work with computers. Several courses offered by this Society are intended to make Tamils more competitive in the labour market, hit severely by the ongoing recession. Not far from there, down the Eaton Avenue, the office of the 'World Tamil Movement' (WTM) is located.

These are the two major community organisations that are widely recognized as representative organisations of the Tamil community in Canada by the Federal and Provincial Governments. There are about 70.000 Tamils in Canada, most of them live in Metropolitan Toronto area. The number may be even higher.

Before 1985, the number of Tamils who lived in Canada was less than a couple of hundreds. Between 1985 and 1992 the Tamil population in Canada has grown to unprecedented levels. The 'Statistics Canada' - the official Canadian Agency for statistics, census and other related issues - reported in 1992 that the Tamils belong to one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. The growth rate was put at a staggering 836 percent.

Except for a handful, all Tamils who enter Canada, often paying atrocious amounts to various 'human transport agen-

cies' (up to US-Dollar 10.-12.000), claim refugee status. The acceptance rate is also extremely high. According to the 'Convention Refugee Determination Division of Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada', between January 1, 1992 and Dezember 31, 1992 out of 5.742 claims, 5.729 were accepted by the authorities. This is 99,8 percent acceptance rate. Among the top twenty-five source countries that 'provide' Canada with refugees Sri Lanka ranks as first. Srilankan Tamils easily outnumber the Somalians, Russians, Haitians and Lebanese.

More than 30 percent of the Tamils who have recently found safe havens in Canada are professionals - accountants, teachers, engineers, civil servants etc. But in Canada, they are dish-washers and security guards. Doctors are door-to-door cleaners and salesmen. Educators pump gas at filling stations, if not collecting garbage.

Many Tamils have become permanent residents of Canada or 'Tamil-Canadians' as the multi-cultural jargon of Canada would like to have it, adding one more hyphenated identity to the ethnically and racially most diverse city in the world (The UN confirmed the most ethnically diverse city of the world on Toronto recently). Other Tamils have obtained "approval in principal" and are being processed for landed immigrant status.

In the past, three or four years, hundreds of Tamil business

establishments have mushroomed, 15 newspapers and magazines - three of them are weeklys - are in the market. Tamil movies are on the big cinema screen. The 'New Democratic Party' (NDP), the ruling provincial government, has already nominated Chandran Mylvaganam, a Tamil, as the candidate for the coming Provincial Government Elections. He would contest from the Donmills constituency of Ontario.

No wonder, why Tamils who have previously sought asylum or granted asylum and temporary status in European countries flock to Canada.

The Tamils in Canada vigorously reproduce the Tamil society in Sri Lanka. This has resulted in the "re-creation" of a home away from home, molded along rigid and conservative traditions. But this "re-creation" by all accounts, is not a democratic one.

### Violent Society

The Tamil Society in Canada has become one of the most violent societies in Canada, according to some sources in the

Metropolitan Police. The reasons are manifold. The presence of hundreds of ex-militants and the activities of the LTTE and its acolytes are definitely a major reason. It is estimated that 60-70 percent of the population is man and the resulting gender-imbalance is also problematic.

The two major Tamil community organisations are, in fact, de-facto branches of the LTTE. In addition, there are several other organisations and welfare societies formed on the basis of traditional village, caste and regional identities in Jaffna. The phenomena, which has been swept away by the Tamil militancy in the North-East in the 80's. There is the 'Valvetturairai (VVT) Welfare Society', the 'Udupiddy Welfare Society' and so on...

Some of the old rivalries between these Jaffna villages, often based on caste disputes, come to the fore in Toronto, where the Tamils have found a space to express their form of "democracy". The best case in point is the on-going street "battle" between groups from VVT and Udupiddy. 12 people have been hospitalized so far. One is seriously injured.

The Tamil newspapers of Toronto, which publicise these

### Tamil Journalist attacked in Canada

*David B.S. Jeyaraj, a prominent Tamil journalist of Sri Lankan origin presently based in Toronto, was assaulted with baseball bats and metal rods by a group reportedly belonging to the 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' (LTTE) at the Ontario Science Centre car park. The attack occurred at about 12.40 am on 15 February 1993. Jeyaraj was taken by ambulance to the Toronto East General Hospital and treated for injuries including a fracture of the fibula of his right leg and stitches for a broken skull.*

*Jeyaraj, a recipient of the prestigious Nieman Fellowship for Journalism at Howard University, now edits the 'Senthamarai', the oldest and the largest circulated Tamil weekly in Canada. The newspaper has built up a positive reputation within the relatively large Tamil community there mainly because of its balanced and credible news coverage and independent editorial policy.*

*When he was in Sri Lanka, Jeyaraj was a regular contributor to the 'Sunday Island', and his indepth reports and analysis of the ethnic conflict and the military situation were widely read. He also frequently contributed to the many Indian journals, more notably to the much circulated fortnightly 'Frontline'.*

*Jeyaraj can by no means be considered an anti-LTTE journalist. Among the various strands of political opinions and allegiances within the Tamil community, Jeyaraj could be regarded as one who is closer to the LTTE's viewpoint than to any other. As a journalist, he has had close liaison with leading LTTE figures like the LTTE's Paris-based international spokesman and Central Committee member, Lawrence Thilagar, and the late Sathasivam Krishnakumar (Kittu) until his recent untimely death. Because of this relationship, 'Senthamarai' could be relied upon to have access to and cover LTTE's authoritative official versions of events.*

*However, the Canadian-based 'Tamil Tigers', who have their own weekly have not taken kindly to the independent Tamil journalism of 'Senthamarai' and its editor Jeyaraj. "If you are not with us, you are against us" has been their basic motto. They have gone to the extent of financing and backing another Tamil weekly, 'Canada Eelanadu', in an obvious bid to undermine Jeyaraj's paper and other independent Tamil publications numbering over fifteen in Metropolitan Toronto alone. On 1 January 1993, the editor of the Tiger-supported 'Canada Eelanadu' abused Jeyaraj verbally on the telephone and threatened him with bodily harm. On the night of 14 February, though not a journalist or writer, I.N. Ranjan who parades himself as the editor of the 'Canada Eelanadu' was present at the Science Centre and was seen in the company of the assailants at the scene of the incident in which Jeyaraj was attacked.*

*Jeyaraj was returning home after watching a movie at the Science Centre auditorium when two young Tamils accosted him to the car park and complained about a news report in the 'Senthamarai'. This particular report contradicted the 'Tiger' claim that India had promised through the Quakers safe passage to Kittu (who committed suicide on board the ship M.V. Ahat when intercepted by the Indian Navy on 16. January), and then went back on its word and caused his death. The other armed youth then entered the scene and began the attack. Sources close to Jeyaraj testify that the assailants are persons closely associated with Uthayakumar, a senior leader of the LTTE sponsored 'World Tamil Movement' and with 'Canada Eelanadu' editor Ranjan, who attends also to the technical aspects of the production of the LTTE's weekly in Canada, 'Ulahath Thamilar'.*

*'Tamil Tiger' supporters in Toronto have on earlier occasions been accused of anti-media activity. Those associated with 'Thayagam', another independent Tamil weekly which has been critical of the 'Tigers', have been subjected to continuous harassment and intimidation, and the shops in which this journal was being sold were made targets of attack and shopkeepers terrorised and prevented from selling it. On many an occasion, meetings and functions organised by persons holding independent or contrary views to those of the LTTE have been violently disrupted.*

incidents, get threatening telephone calls and the editors get beaten up. Most of the Tamil community organisations are reluctant to speak against these violences and could be characterised by their luke-warm attitude, while some organisations actively take part in the rivalries. The proliferation of gun-wielding Tamil gangs - a replica of Chicago, New York and Los Angeles - has raised concern in many circles. Some of these gangs are aided and abetted by the 'Liberation Tigers', the LTTE.

### Domestic violence

The Tamil community workers and women's groups allege that the scale of domestic violence among Tamil families is exceptionally high. A community worker from Montreal, working with Tamil immigrant women, reported recently that a Tamil person had the habit of locking up his wife inside the apartment while he was out. Stories are abound that battered and assaulted wife/women often ask help from women's groups. The Metropolitan Police in Toronto seems to be disinterested in inter-community violence. "Lethargy" complained a former Tamil civil servant, "is the character of the Police when it comes to community violence".

### The LTTE and its 'Front Organisations'

The initiators of the violence in Toronto are very often the 'Liberation Tigers'. There have been several incidents involving them in the past couple of years, the recent one being the attack on D.B.S. Jeyaraj, a Tamil journalist in Toronto (see box).

One of the main front organisations of the LTTE, the 'World Tamil Movement' (WTM) has offices in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa but also in European countries such as France, Germany and Switzerland. Another curious form that the LTTE takes is the 'Tamil Coordinating Committee'.

A fortnightly issued by WTM called 'Ulakath-Thamilar' (World Tamils), is distributed free of charge. This paper gets numerous advertisements from both Federal and Provincial Governments of Canada. In addition, the WTM has broadcasting and telecasting services.

The 'Ulakath-Thamilar' is, undoubtedly, a 'Tiger' newspaper, minus the official logo of the LTTE. Anyone who glances casually at the newspaper would testify to this effect. At times, they announce, of course, officially, the passing of death sentences on "traitors" and "dissidents" by the LTTE in Jaffna. Names, charges and other details would naturally follow. The official 'Tiger' press releases, statements by V. Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE and other LTTE documents are freely published in the newspaper. The editorials of the paper are sometimes written by prominent LTTE leaders. The late Kittu has written a couple of them. This was acknowledged by the paper recently, after Kittu's mysterious death in the Indian Ocean in January 1993.

The 'Tamil Eelam Society' which receives Federal, Provincial and Metro funding is subtle in its actions. It is a registered charity in Canada and therefore eligible for tax-free donations. The board that controls the society is not only controlled by the LTTE but a majority of the board members themselves are the expatriate tail end of the LTTE.

Nobody is certain as to how these organisations divert money to the LTTE in Jaffna. Nobody dares to take up these issues. Any attempt by a dissatisfied board member to question the accounts and the modus operandi of the organisation resulted in them being thrown out of the committee.

Organisations, which try to maintain an alternative perspective are threatened and attacked. An attempt to set fire on the 'Tamil Resource Centre' - an organisation run by young Tamil volunteers - was not successful.

It's an irony that Tamils - who escaped authoritarianism in Sri Lanka have to submit themselves again to an increasingly ugly authoritarianism of their making in Canada.

## Interview:

### Tigers Ready to Consider a Federal Scheme

"If a federal scheme that recognises the territorial integrity of the Tamil homeland is put forward, we are ready to consider it. There are many forms of federal system of government with varying degrees of devolved powers. We are prepared to consider a federal system which provides for sufficient autonomous powers that fulfils the political aspirations of the Tamil people", Veluppillai Prabhakaran, the leader and supreme commander of the 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam', said in one of his rare interviews with a foreign journalist. The interview was with Mrs. Anandhi Sooriyapragasam of the Tamil Service of the B.B.C. who recently visited Jaffna accompanied by the BBC's Colombo correspondent. The interview was broadcast over the Tamil Service of the BBC's World Service on 2 March. The following is an English translation of the Tamil version of the interview as published in the LTTE's weekly 'Kalaththil' published from London.

#### How will you assess the present military-political situation?

There is nothing specific I can say about the present military-political situation. As far as the political atmosphere is concerned, as usual a gloomy situation prevails. There is no sign of any effort being made to peacefully solve the Tamil problem. In this connection, there have been no fresh initiatives. The government appears to place a newly found confidence in the anticipated final report of

the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC). However, the Tamil people do not believe that the Parliamentary Select Committee would put forward a just and reasonable solution to our problem. That is because the main Sinhala parties that are represented in the PSC are not ready to accept any of fundamental demands of the Tamils. It has to be said that there has been absolutely no change in the approach of the Sri Lankan government.