

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.

During my visit to Jaffna, I saw with my own eyes the indescribable sufferings experienced by the people because of the economic blockade imposed on Jaffna. When will the war that is dragging on and the sufferings of the people come to an end?

The continuation of the war, the ending of the war and finding a peaceful solution - all these depend only on the decision of the government. It is the government that started the war and is prolonging the war. It is the government that believes in a military solution to the Tamil problem. In spite of the fact that we have on several occasions requested that the war be brought to an end and that the problem be solved in a peaceful way, the government appears to have turned a deaf ear. On the contrary, the government is engaged in intensifying the war and escalating the economic pressure upon the people. This war is directed at the Tamil people. It is the aim of Sinhala chauvinists to enslave the Tamil people by inflicting destruction and suffering upon them, by breaking their determination and by weakening their fighting spirit. The western countries are indirectly giving assistance to this ethnocidal war. It is with the help of loans granted by the west that the government is continuing the war. If the west stops the assistance given in the form of money and weapons, the government cannot continue the war. Then only an atmosphere conducive to peace will be created.

The number of government troops is 80.000. Your strength is estimated at 10.000 fighters. In this unequal situation, are you confident that you will emerge victorious in this war.

The strength of weapons or manpower does not determine the victory in a war. The testimony for this is provided by the history of wars of liberation in the world. Did not the superpowers with massive manpower and military might face defeats in Vietnam and Afghanistan? Unshakable determination, valour and fervour for liberation are the determining qualities for achieving victory. Our fighters and our people possess these qualities in full measure.

It is reported that the Sri Lankan military have acquired several modern weapons. Are you in a position to withstand these weapons?

From time to time, the Sinhala forces have introduced several modern weapons. The government seems to believe that it can achieve victory by introducing modern weaponry. They thought so when they purchased the Sia Marchetti planes and later some tanks. Even now they are buying hordes of new weapons. But weapons do not determine victory. A people in revolt cannot be destroyed by weapons.

From where do you obtain your weapons?

Weapons are forced out from the enemy forces. We fight the enemy with the weapons taken from the enemy. For example, in this war we captured a large quantity of weapons from the enemy last year. During last year, we captured a large quantity of weapons from the Sri Lankan military including 1172 automatic rifles, 106 light Machine guns, four 50 calibre heavy machine-guns, 23 anti-tank weapons, 25 rocket launchers, 1622 rockets, 30 communications instruments, 700.000 rounds of ammunition.

When I journeyed to Jaffna, I had to travel through the Kilaly lagoon with great danger to my life. Because the use of this route has been prohibited by the security forces, the plight of the people has become worse due to their inability to travel to and from Jaffna. If the Tigers and the government were to come to an agreement on this issue, people can travel without fear. What is your stand on the UNHCR's efforts to open up the Sangupiddy-Kerativu ferry route?

It is also our stand that the Sangupiddy-Kerativu route should be opened for travel. People must be able to freely use this route without any harassment from the security forces. In order to achieve this, there should be no military posts or checkpoints, and we insisted that the army should move a little distance away from this route, but the army was not prepared to agree to this proposal. The

army wants everyone who travel through this route to be subjected to their checking. But this would result in danger to the people, and in particular to our supporters and sympathisers. Because of the stubbornness of the army on this issue, the UNHCR's efforts have proved a failure. That is why we have suggested that at least the prohibition imposed on the Kilaly lagoon should be removed. Surely, it should be possible for the UNHCR to bring pressure on the Sri Lankan government to remove the prohibition on humanitarian grounds.


It is believed that the Parliamentary Select Committee appointed to find ways and means to solve the Tamil problem is to put forward a federal scheme on a provincial basis, that is to treat the northern and eastern provinces as two separate units. Will you accept such a federal proposal?

Even the Colombo-based pro-government Tamil groups have expressed their strong opposition to this federal scheme on a provincial basis. How can we, therefore accept such a proposal which dismembers our Tamil homeland?

Now, supposed if a federal scheme encompassing the northern and eastern provinces as a merged single unit is put forward, will you accept such a scheme?

If a federal scheme that recognises the territorial integrity of the Tamil homeland is put forward, we are ready to consider it. There

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are many forms of federal system of government with varying degrees of powers that are devolved. We are prepared to consider a federal system which provides for sufficient autonomous powers that fulfils the political aspirations of the Tamil people.

What is your stand in regard to the Muslim people?

We have to approach their problem on the basis that the Muslim people are an ethnic group possessing their own cultural identity. We are of the view that, while the identity and land rights of the Muslim people are preserved, it is by living together with the Tamil people that their social, political and economic life will be enhanced. Sinhala chauvinists and selfish Muslim politicians are attempting to promote differences and enmity between the Tamil and Muslim people. The Muslim people should not fall victims of such conspiracies.

Muslims are also people of Jaffna. Then why did you expel them from Jaffna?

In the Amparai district, communal riots broke out in 1990 in which a considerable number of Tamils were killed, and following this there was the danger of riots breaking out in Jaffna also. In those circumstances, in the interest of the security of the Muslim people, we requested them to temporarily leave Jaffna. But once the war ends and a peaceful atmosphere prevails, we will permit them to settle again in Jaffna.

You oppose the settling of Sinhalese people in the northern and eastern provinces. The Tamil people have the right to go and settle in any part of the country. Don't you think the Sinhalese people also have the same right ?

We are not opposed to the Sinhalese people settling in the Tamil areas. We are opposed only to the planned colonisation settlements in Tamil areas. Tamil people are being driven out from Tamil villages, and in their place Sinhalese colonisation is taking place. These colonisation schemes are undertaken with the intention of splitting and dismembering the Tamil homeland, and it is these type of colonisation schemes that we oppose.

What is your view about the Indian government's present tough actions taken against the Tigers?

It is because of the wrong and exaggerated fear about the Tamil liberation struggle that India is adopting a tough approach against us. India is apprehensive that our freedom struggle will instigate separatism in Tamil Nadu and act as an inspirational force for national

struggles in India. During the last ten years, the Indian government has, in various ways, interfered with and obstructed our struggle in view of this unnecessary and exaggerated fear. It is determined to destroy our movement which is taking forward the liberation struggle of the Tamils. The Indians have misunderstood our legitimate struggle against genocide and we have been gravely affected by the unjust actions it is engaged in. The condition of our people have been worsening. Encouraged by India's hostile approach, the government is mercilessly intensifying its genocide of our people.

Are the speculative reports about differences of opinions within the Tigers and removal from positions of certain leaders true?

They are not true. There are no differences of opinions in our movement. Certain changes have been brought about in our organisation. Responsibilities of certain senior members have undergone change. These have been misunderstood giving rise to speculations.

Was Kittu's journey a peace effort?

He undertook the journey to Jaffna with a view to creating an atmosphere of peace and with a peace proposal from some western countries to commence negotiations about the Tamil problem. He tried to come to Jaffna only for the purpose of discussing the peace proposal with us. The Quaker organisation has confirmed the intention of his journey.

What do you feel about Kittu's death?

I cannot describe in words the depth of feeling that has affected me. Kittu was a pre-eminent Commander. He was a great fighter with an ideal. He was a great man of action. Kittu's death is massive loss not only for our movement, but also for our country.

Will this war which has gone on for ten years end with a peaceful solution?

If there is to be solution to our problem by peaceful means, there should be a fundamental change in the attitude and approach of the Sinhala chauvinist rulers. If such a change takes place, I believe that a peaceful solution to our problem is possible.

Mr. Prabhakaran, are you ready to genuinely enter into peace efforts? And what your conditions?

I genuinely wish for peace. My aim in life is that my people should live in peace, in freedom and with dignity. We have not prescribed any conditions for peace. It is the Sinhala government that has been prescribing preconditions for peace and negotiations.

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