

PROSPECTS OF FURTHER VIOLENCE AND RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES

LTTE leader Prabakaran wants only one solution to the problem – a separate Tamil state in the North East. 18,000 militants and 80,000 civilians have been killed during the struggle for the “Tamil Elam” separate state.

He has not gone back on this pledge in any occasion. All his statements on his birthday celebrations has been: “Kill me, if I deviate from the sacred path of achieving a separate Tamil Elam state.”

There were times when he did strategic deviations but that was only momentarily. When the Indians bundled him into a helicopter and flew him out to New Delhi and held him a virtual prisoner in the Ashok Hotel, he went along with the Indian proposal. But on coming back to Jaffna he within months was at war, with mighty India. When the Indian troops finally had him cornered after a long and hard struggle he did a strategic retreat, and entered into negotiations with President Premadasa. When the Indians left, he once again took on the Sri Lankan troops and finally killed President Premadasa and also a significant part of the UNP leadership. In 1994, when Chandrika Kumaranatunga offered to negotiate peace he simply could not refuse. He did commence negotiations but broke it off and once again warred. He missed assassinating her by a hair's breadth.

Meanwhile, world opinion was turning against the LTTE. They were no longer being considered ‘liberation fighters’ in the West which was accommodating expatriate Sri Lankan Tamils who were filling up the LTTE war chest with their contributions. The LTTE was being proscribed by these nations as a foreign terrorist organization. Then Prabakaran once again did a strategic deviation. He under pressure of the ‘International community’ signed the Cease-fire agreement with Ranil Wickremasinghe. Conditions around the world right now are not favorable for armed insurrections against democratically elected governments and he is compelled to hold his fire.

Prabakaran then fell into a Peace Trap. The all powerful ‘international community’ after organizing the peace negotiations between the LTTE and the GOSL, promised reconstruction rehabilitation and economic assistance. But all this would come when democracy is established in a federal state where human rights are guaranteed.

Prabakaran has all along fought not for a federal state but a separate independent Tamil state under his jackboot.

He was furious, as his one time Commander of the Eastern Province, Karuna revealed after he broke off from the Prabakaran faction. He called off negotiations claiming 'nothing had been achieved' although his mouthpiece Balasingham, has been claiming success after each round of negotiations.

To get out of this peace trap, he got his constitutional experts to formulate the ISGA proposals, which is a blueprint for a separate state. As the eminent lawyer H.L. De Silva said it would be impossible for any government agree to these proposals because it constitutes a virtual epitaph for the Sri Lankan state. Besides, the LTTE insists those proposals are non-negotiable!

It is quite obvious that this ISGA proposal is to stall the Oslo Declaration that calls for a federal solution. Prabakaran wants no such federal solution. The ISGA, it appears is Prabakaran's move to stall a democratic federal state from emerging. Meanwhile he keeps on killing all his opponents that come in his way.

The Southern politicians are so desperate in their scramble for power that now the UNP is willing to negotiate on the ISGA proposals while the SLFP is hemming and hawing. If the ISGA proposals go through Prabakaran has virtually achieved his separate state without firing a shot. If not he would be having other plans to further his dream.

In retrospect it is clear that Prabakaran has been sitting pretty and rejecting all political and legal proposals forwarded by Southern politicians because he is simply not interested in devolution of power and a federal solution. He wants a separate Tamil state under him and peace is of no immediate concern.

Karuna ENDLF Team up to work against LTTE

Eastern Regional Commander Karuna broke away from the LTTE roughly a year after the LTTE pulled out of talks quickly exposed Prabhakaran's duplicity and preparatory plans to get back to war. Last week his recently formed party Tamileela Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) teamed up with another party Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) to throw its biggest challenge.

ENDLF made its first face-to-face contact with Karuna in May, the same month when a new government took office in New Delhi.

ENDLF general secretary R. Rajarattinam alias Mano Master, who was a minister in the India-backed North East Provincial Council and now lives in the Tamil Nadu capital Chennai, made the surprise declaration of the two parties coming together.

When the IPKF troops with-drew in March 1990, scores of ENDLF guerrillas and their family members retreated to India. They set up a camp, with the help of Indian authorities, at Malkangiri, a tribal-dominated area in Orissa. Even now ENDLF maintains the Orissa camp and another one in Salem in Tamil Nadu. It also runs a school for Sri Lankan Tamil children in Karnataka.

The ENDLF-Karuna statement is very harsh on the LTTE and equally critical of the Norwegian facilitators and the Scandinavian-manned Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission.

The sudden urgency by New Delhi to finalise the Indo-Lanka Defense Co-operation Agreement should be seen in this backdrop where the new party TIVM has sought in its maiden statement to strip the LTTE of its arrogated status of sole representatives of the Tamil people.

This is despite the LTTE demanding from the new Freedom Alliance government that it be recognized as the sole representatives of the Tamils.

The second important aspect brought out in the TIVM statement is that the Tigers could not be allowed to rule the north and east. This again is curious as the government and the LTTE are expected to begin negotiations on setting up a modified ISGA with Tiger dominance.

The statement also says, "Tamils will tolerate no more the prolonging treacherous and barbarian act of Pirabakaran."

The LTTE has been responsible for the killing of some 1200 Indian soldiers during the IPKF times while its leader is wanted for the killing of former Indian Premier Gandhi. A request for Prabhakaran's extradition may also be made.

The JHU brought a motion in Parliament yesterday to call off the Norwegian facilitation, but the LTTE-backed TNA demanded an English translation preventing a vote being taken. The matter would come up at the next session.

If there was one Sri Lankan cabinet minister who backed this accord to the hilt it was Gamini Lionel Dissanayake whose 10th death anniversary falls today.

Incidentally, the Fifth Memorial Lecture in honour of the slain co-architect of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's Peace Package, Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam was delivered recently.

The two leaders were assassinated by the LTTE as so was the co-signatory of the Accord, Former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi while President Kumaratunga escaped death at the hands of an LTTE suicide bomber.

The Tigers also snuffed the life out of President Ranasinghe Premadasa and former National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali who opposed the Indo-Lanka Agreement to varying degrees.

The whole wide world is now beginning to wonder what type of freedom fighters the Tigers are to kill members of their own community after forcing themselves as the sole representatives.

In the immediate post 1987 accord the LTTE had maintained that it was not a signatory to the agreement but this time its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran himself signed the February 22, 2002 Cease-fire Agreement and could not wriggle out of responsibility for the many violations.

“Mr. Pirabhakaran agreed to the composition of the Interim Administrative Council..” stated the agreed minutes of a meeting held on September 28, 1987 between the Tiger delegation headed by the LTTE Supremo and the Indian delegation led by Mr. Dixit. The council was to have a Chief Administrator (one of three persons nominated by the organization, 5 LTTE members, 2 TULF members, 2 Muslims and 2 Sinhalese, totaling 12.

The LTTE uses violence to distract attention when it is tied down to a commitment and wriggles out of it.

The LTTE's pattern of befriending leaders, tricking them and later eliminating them continued from Gandhi through Premadasa but appears to have stopped mid-stream after a failed attempt on Kumaratunga's life.

The organization continued its pattern of befriending the former UNF government but withdrew from talks this time with a valid excuse demanding an interim administration to channel funds and oversee development/resettlement in the former war-torn North and East.

If this was its sole aim why did the organization pitch its demand (Interim Self Governing Authority) so high to make any compromise seem impossible?

Also, what is the logic in stating that the sole basis for talks should be ISGA alone and no other document should be tabled before talks commence? After all the LTTE should be reminded that ISGA was only a set of counter proposals to two sets of UNF government proposals for an interim council which the organization rejected. The UNF had earlier said its third set of proposals the July 17 Discussion Paper should along with ISGA e discussed.

The LTTE which says “ISGA only” however has said the document was not a rigid one and the organization was flexible. But the LTTE was not willing to accommodate any other document as the basis for negotiations but was willing to consider government criticisms and proposals at talks.

As I said before, the time spent on splitting hairs for an interim administration should have been spent for setting up some effective structure within the law to usher in development.

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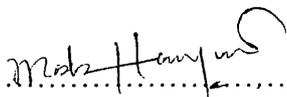
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