

1988.

EROS PROCLAMATIONS ON INDO-SRI LANKA ACCORD

Appropriate Technology
121, POINT-PELFO ROAD
NALLUR, JAFFNA
No.



EROS

PUBLICATION

Andriate Private Technology Services
121, POINT-PEDRO ROAD
NALLUR, JAFFNA
No

**EROS PROCLAMATIONS ON
INDO-SRI LANKA ACCORD**

(The hopes and euphoria of peace envisaged by the Tamil-speaking people of Sri Lanka have now given way to the tragedy of war, arrests and indiscriminate killings.

In this grave hour of crisis, during which our people are faced with despair and anguish about their future, we, the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation, place the following demands and proposals)

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THE PEACE AGREEMENT AND SRILANKAN GOVERNMENT

The euphoria of the Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka at the time of signing of the Peace Agreement has now completely evaporated, giving way to a situation under which they are encircled by the tragedy of continued war, arrests and indiscriminate killings.

It is now time that, instead of squarely blaming the Indian or the Sri Lankan troops for this situation, we expose the real culprits responsible for this tragedy.

It is also clear that the Sri Lankan government has been engaged in a series of actions against the various Tamil liberation organisations, thereby aggravating the suffering of the Tamil-speaking people. It has now become clear that the Sri Lankan government has been guilty of inciting clashes between the various communities of the island from its attitude even during peacetime.

Within days of the signing of the Peace Agreement, the Sri Lankan troops stationed at Pooneryn army camp in the Northern Province arrested two of our comrades, Theva and Guhan, and brutally murdered them. Another of our comrades, Varadhan, was killed by the Sri Lankan troops at Thoppur in the Eastern Trincomalee District. Later, seventeen members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were arrested by the Sri Lankan naval forces off the Northern coastline and handed over to the Sri Lankan troops at Palaly. Despite protests from the Indian Government the Sri Lankan troops at Palaly attempted to forcibly airlift them to Colombo who, in turn, attempted to forcibly transport them to Colombo in an aircraft despite protests from the Indian government. The seventeen LTTE members committed suicide.

These have been instances of evidence of the Sri Lankan government's continued acts of provocation against the various liberation organisations in total violation of the Peace Agreement

Besides these, the very day after the Interim Administrative Council was constituted as per the terms of the Agreement, two Tamils were brutally murdered at Trincomalee by Sinhala homeguards. In the aftermath of these murders clashes broke out between the two communities, during which Sri Lankan naval forces came out of their barracks and tried to attack the people. There is also sufficient evidence to prove that the Sri Lankan government has been responsible for inciting communal clashes after the murder of the two Tamils.

Moreover, the Sri Lankan government has let loose a propaganda offensive that the unconditional General Amnesty clause of the Peace Agreement was applicable only for those arrested in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. It said those arrested in Colombo and the Upcountry region will not be released under this clause. This is in total contravention of the Agreement and indicates the self-styled manner in which the Sri Lankan government is going about interpreting the Agreement.

It is also relevant here to point out that all those arrested in the Northern and Eastern Provinces have also not yet been released.

The Sri Lankan government has also violated the Agreement by not disbanding the Sinhala homeguard units as envisaged in the Agreement. Not only were these units not deplored, they are being deployed with arms and made to move around freely in Tamil areas. The homeguards are also being given enough combat training and are also being financed.

It is also pertinent to recollect here about President Jayewardene's remarks at a National Security Council meeting after a number of Sinhalese became refugees in the aftermath

of the ethnic riots in Trincomalee and his cabinet ministers protested over the same, that he had lost faith in the peace-keeping abilities of the Indian troops. IPKF Overall Commander Gen. Depinder Singh was present in that meeting.

Jayewardene's stance that the Indian troops must, first of all, capture all the arms in possession of the liberation organisations (if he ought to keep faith in their peace-keeping abilities - was readily accepted by the Indian government. The Indian government got its troops prepared for the military operations. After these decisions were taken, Kumarappa and 16 other LTTE members were arrested, leading to their suicides followed by the ethnic clashes and confusion. This led to the tragic situation in which peace was disrupted once again in the Northern and Eastern Provinces and the Tamil-speaking people were once again faced with war and anarchy.

It is again relevant to recollect the utterances of the Sri Lankan president right when the Agreement was signed and when the Indian troops entered the island: "The Indian troops have come here to add strength to the Sri Lankan troops in disarming the militant organisations. If the arms are not laid down peacefully, they would be seized with force. The Indian troops would leave the island after disarming operations are completed."

It is now evident that the Sri Lankan government itself has become a force violating the Agreement. In this situation when the lives of Tamils are in jeopardy, the very future of the Agreement has become a question mark.

EROS and THE PEACE AGREEMENT

The EROS, after understanding the true significance of the Peace Agreement, has expressed its decision that the organisation will not hinder the implementation of the Agreement. To indicate this, we laid down our arms, in a satisfactory manner, with the hopes that the Indian government will not allow anyone to violently suppress our political activities. Even during those times when the Indian government

forcibly conducted its disarming operations, the EROS has struck to its undertaking by not resorting to any violence.

At this juncture, the Sri Lankan government arrested four of our members in the Eastern Province and forcibly took them to Colombo. A charge for an offence allegedly committed in 1984 was slapped on one of them by the Sri Lankan government. The Indian officials, who tried to mediate for their release, were also told by the Sri Lankan government that the Peace Agreement was valid only in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Arresting four of our members in the Eastern Province, even while declaring that the Agreement is valid for the Northern and Eastern Provinces, and slapping charges on those who have been given General Amnesty are clearly violations of the Peace Agreement.

The Tamil-speaking people are realising that in the face of such odds, the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement has become impracticable to be implemented. The fact that the violations of the Sri Lankan government are going on in a self-styled and unilateral manner overriding the powers of the Indian government, has also made the Tamil-speaking people lose faith in the abilities of the Indian government.

TO RESOLVE THIS CRISIS...

- All political prisoners must be released immediately.
- The Indian and the Sri Lankan governments must change their policies of unilaterally trying to resolve the problems of the Tamil-speaking people and pursue the issue by constituting a high level council consisting of representatives of the governments as well of the various Tamil organisations.
- The unilateral declaration of war and search operations pursued in the guise of disarming the liberation organisations, must be halted forthwith.

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH

Even before the signing of the Agreement, the Sri Lankan government has been insisting that the Tamils accept the

provincial councils proposals and that the liberation organisations lay down their weapons and surrender. The climax of the Sri Lankan government's efforts in this direction was the Vadamarachchi genocide in June last year in which hundreds of Tamils were massacred.

The Indian government, which protested against these killings, threatened the Sri Lankan government by dropping food packets b air. This threat had brought Jayewardene to his knees for an Agreement. In this respect, the Agreement signed on July 29 last year seeks to spells out the security concerns of India as well as the future of the Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka.

The Agreement brings home the steps to be taken to see that no threat will materialise from the Trincomalee port, the Oil Tank Farm there, the Voice of America broadcasting station at Puttalam and the various foreign espionage services operating in Sri Lanka. The Agreement also paves the way for military assistance from India to the Sri Lankan government and for the extradition of the members of the liberation organisations now in Tamil Nadu.

These provisions of the Agreement, which concern themselves with India's security needs about peace in Indian Ocean, are being implemented successfully. At the same time, the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation has accepted these provisions and has made it clear, at the very time of signing of the Agreement, that the organisation will not hinder the implementation of these provisions.

The rest of the provisions of the Agreement emphasize the political solution concerning the future of the Tamil-speaking people of the island, spelling out the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, provincial council proposals and the equalrights for the Tamil language. Along with these, the Agreement also spells out the repatriation of a part of the Upcountry plantation workers as Indian citizens, release of political prisoners, disarming the liberation organisations, disbanding of Sinhala homeguards and the confining of the Sri Lankan troops into their barracks, The entire responsibility of the above provisions are left totally in the ands of the Sri Lankan President.

Both the Indian and the Sri Lankan governments have proposed the above panacea for all the ills of the Tamils. If the true significance of these provisions is analysed, it becomes clear that the problems of the Tamil-speaking people of the island have been conceived merely as those of getting greater devolution of powers and of securing equal rights for the Tamil language.

THE DANGERS FACED BY OUR PEOPLE

But the dangers faced by our people are totally different and deep-rooted. The 1948 Ceylon Citizenship Rights Act, which stripped the citizenship rights of the Upcountry Tamil plantation workers, the 1964 Sirimavo-Shastri Pact, which sought to force the repatriation, the various Sinhala colonisation schemes which stripped the Tamil and Muslim peasants of the Eastern Province of their lands, the Sinhala Only Act which threw the Tamil middle classes out of gear, the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which has been responsible for the genocide perpetrated on the entire community, are the dangers faced by the Tamil-speaking people even today. It is evident that the Peace Agreement has not resolved these problems in any way.

It is for these reasons that we insist that the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Agreement has been hastily drawn up with the security needs of India in mind. This Agreement is not a solution to the ethnic issue in any way. Not only this Agreement is incapable of providing a solution to the problems faced by the Tamil-Speaking people, it also denies the Tamils their rights to find a solution to their own problems. Through this Agreement, the Indian government has arrogated itself the power to decide on the future of the Tamil-speaking people. It has also announced that it will find a solution to the ethnic issue in collaboration with the Sri Lankan government.

It remains a big question to be seen as to how far these two governments would understand the long-cherished aspirations of the Tamil-speaking people and find a solution to their problems. As the Indian government understands it, the problems of our people are being grasped as the problems concerning its own security needs. It also thinks that the only way of resolving this problem is to station the Indian troops for a long period of time in

the island. On the other hand, the Sri Lankan government has been trying to pose as though the whole issue is about granting equal rights for the Tamil language. It has attempted to continue the evasive approach that by giving parity of status for Tamil language, the whole issue can be resolved.

Both these governments are attempting, jointly, to portray and understand the ethnic issue as one of language, of security needs of devolution of powers. They are trying to reach a settlement by promising decentralization of power. This superfluous approach and practice will ultimately result in providing yet another opportunity for the assertion of Sinhala hegemony in the island.

When the Solbury commission was appointed by the British government, the Tamils had put forward their demand of 50: 50. The Britishers too accepted the legitimacy of this demand, but betrayed the Tamils when the then Sri Lankan Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake agreed to lease the Trincomalee port and the Katunayake airport for to the British for a period of 20 years.

The Tamils, who have not forgotten this scar of history which occurred in 1947, tend to believe that the Indian government is trying to do the same thing. It is our fervent hope that the Indian government will not repeat this act of betrayal of the British 40 years ago.

That India is facing a lot of pressure, both internal and external, to the pro-U. S. interests in the Indian Ocean region, in which it is geo-politically centrally established, is clear. It is also evident that the Indian government is being forced to do anything for its own interests. Since India's security needs are interwoven with those of the Tamil-speaking people in the island, the imperative is on us to co-operate with the need for defending India's security interests. At the same time, if India acts in a way ignoring the aspirations of the Tamil nationality of Sri Lanka, it will be construed that India had historically betrayed the interests of the Tamils. This is why we have put forth that the rights of determining the future of the Tamil-speaking people of the island be left in their own hands.

ELECTIONS AND TAMIL REPRESENTATIVES

Both the Indian and the Sri Lankan governments have sought to provide the solution to the present crisis by creating democratic conditions in the presence of Indian troops, to implement the provincial council proposals and to decide as to who the representatives of the Tamil-speaking people are. By this, we think that the Sri Lankan President, who speaks of elections and democratic conditions, will try to continue his evasive approach to the whole issue.

It is relevant here to recollect that during the 1977 elections to the Sri Lankan Parliament, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) had nominated their representatives as candidates, calling for the ratification of their demand for Tamil Eelam. No one can deny the fact that the representatives elected by the vast majority of Tamil-speaking people, as well as the demand for Tamil Eelam, were well within the limits of the democratic framework.

But the TULF representatives, who were elected democratically to the Parliament, were unseated by an amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution in 1983 by the very same Jayewardene. This must provide us with ample proof about the kind of respect being given by the Sri Lankan President for democracy and for elections.

THE FUTURE OF TAMILS

The Tamil-speaking people view the present policy adopted by both the Indian and Sri Lankan governments with respect to the ethnic issue with suspicion. The current and urgent need of the Tamil-speaking people is the right for themselves to determine their own safety and economy and a powerful framework to decisively delink themselves from the Sinhala hegemony, especially with respect to the Sinhala colonisation schemes. For this they require political power very urgently so as to empower themselves to decide on these issues. The Tamil-speaking people have been forced into a situation where they have to fight for these rights. If the present situation continues, the Tamil-speaking people may even have to resort to an armed struggle to fulfil their aspirations.

The Eelam Revolutionary Organisation puts forth the following proposals as a means of reflecting the aspirations of the Tamil-speaking people - for their political demarcation, stability and political power:

OUR PROPOSALS

□ Constitution of new districts in the contiguous predominantly Tamil areas of the Northern and Eastern provinces and the Upcountry region; constitution of new provincial borders after linking these districts.

□ Constitution of a new political and administrative structure in the new demarcated Tamil homeland to meet the long cherished aspirations of the Tamil speaking people.

□ Setting up of a new armed force for this region with proportional representation to various ethnic groups of this region to ensure the security of the Tamil - speaking people.

□ Launching and implementation of projects to economically link the Northern and Eastern provinces and the Upcountry region and to build a socialist mode of development.

□ Replacing the present colonisation schemes of the Sri Lankan government, which are based on proportional representation of the entire country, by settlement schemes based on district wise proportional representation. These schemes are to be launched with 1948 as the base year.

□ Ensuring of the self-identity and self-sufficiency of the Tamil-speaking people in the fields of education, art, culture and technology.

□ Following an anti-imperialist stance on the international issues and creating the necessary political power to secure direct assistance from friendly countries.

In achieving the above political objectives, the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation has resolved to pursue within the limits of democracy, thereby exposing those forces which violate the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Agreement and to identify the weaknesses of the Agreement itself

OUR IMMEDIATE DEMANDS

□ Release of all political prisoners as envisaged by the Peace Agreement.

□ Conferring of citizenship rights to those "stateless" plantation Tamil workers.

□ Scrapping of the proposed plan to repatriate plantation Tamil workers since the plan has only followed the Srimavo-Shastri pact which had lapsed.

□ Halting of all Sinhala colonisation schemes in Tamil areas and disbanding of all Sinhala homeguard forces.

□ Setting up of a high-level council to analyse and settle the various problems faced by the Tamil-speaking people of the island. This council must include representations of the Indian and the Sri Lankan governments and the various Tamil organisations.

□ Immediate ceasefire and halting of search operations in the present conflict between the Indian troops and the LTTE; resumption of negotiations.

□ Limiting the role of the IPKF to that of a 'strategic surveillance force' to be stationed only at those installations which are strategically important to India's security.

□ Scrapping of the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and various acts usurping trade union rights in Sri Lanka.

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