



At the time this piece goes to print Tamils in Toronto threaten to walk 840 kilometres to the Oprah Winfrey show-a chat show watched by millions the world over-supposedly to protest over what they allege as a 'humanitarian crisis' in the North of the island where, they say, civilians are being killed in droves. Over 3000 Tamils gathered at the brink of the river Thames in England with the threat of drowning themselves. Over a hundred thousand other Tamils protested in London. Canada is equally busy. Our own Australian Tamil Diaspora have followed suit protesting in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra almost daily,

MDMK's Vaiko, as if on fire, has lashed out at Delhi for allegedly sending military assistance to Sri Lanka which was "unleashing a genocide attack on the Tamil race". Likewise the PMK's leader S. Ramadoss has alleged that "the situation on the island threatens to eliminate the entire Tamil race". This suggests that the campaign is tailored to the secessionist struggle of the LTTE. The Tamil Tigers want to demonstrate their message to the world forum: "Tamils and Sinhalese cannot live together."

Over the long history of the island it is hard to find instances where the majority Sinhalese people have practised genocide on the Tamil brethren. Discriminatory legislation had been passed. Some Sinhala politicians employ supremacist slogans during election time to gain votes. But that's it. Of course there was Black July in 1983. Inasmuch that has to be condemned it has to be understood in context. The background had been the Tiger provocation killing 13 soldiers - a huge event for that time; very mild for today. A backlash occurred that was largely manipulated by Colombo politicians. By and large the country stood aside silent, in horror and disgust.

On the other hand, serious provocation

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know that that did not happen.

A genocide-prone seventy-five per cent Sinhala majority will not permit Tamils to live among them peacefully and co-operatively in areas around Colombo for years and years. They will not be the friendly clients they are of Tamil businessman persons-big and small.

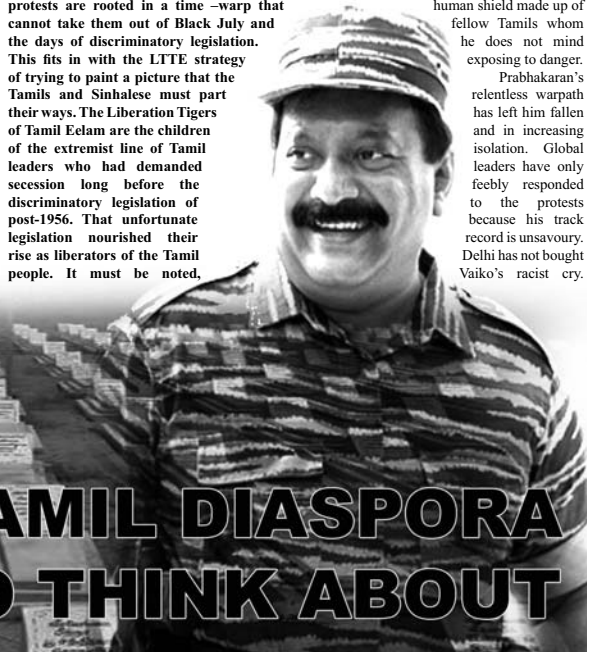
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It is clear that the Tamil Diaspora protests are rooted in a time -warp that cannot take them out of Black July and the days of discriminatory legislation. This fits in with the LTTE strategy of trying to paint a picture that the Tamils and Sinhalese must part their ways. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are the children of the extremist line of Tamil leaders who had demanded secession long before the discriminatory legislation of post-1956. That unfortunate legislation nourished their rise as liberators of the Tamil people. It must be noted,

shadow lurks behind this new campaign is evident in the demand of Dr. Ramadoss that the Union government to recognise the "Eelam Tamils' struggle for their rights." There is also an implied acceptance of the LTTE's claim to be the only authentic representative of the Sri Lankan Tamils in the declaration of Dr. Ramadoss.

What really gives away the true purpose of Diaspora protest, however, is its timing. At the time this piece goes to print the LTTE has been virtually completely ousted from the vast territory they have held by force. Velupillai Prabhakaran has lost almost all his key soldiers and the remnants of the LTTE force are confined to barely seven square kilometres of coastal land in the 'No Fire Zone.' This "sole representative of the Tamil people" now survives on borrowed time by holding on to a human shield made up of fellow Tamils whom he does not mind exposing to danger.

Prabhakaran's relentless warpath has left him fallen and in increasing isolation. Global leaders have only feebly responded to the protests because his track record is unsavoury. Delhi has not bought Vaiko's racist cry.



PROTESTING TAMIL DIASPORA HAVE A LOT TO THINK ABOUT

much to the amusement of passers-by who are indifferent to the political issue. Last night they surrounded Kevin Rudd's residence as if to take him hostage. Kevin, the globe-trotter, was not at home!

Let's try to take a fair look at this eruption.

The protest meetings have been dominated by a racial slant. One speaker interviewed by SBS TV charged that, "at this rate not a single Tamil will be left in Lanka." The Tamilnadu

by Tamil Tigers has occurred since then but there were no reprisals from the Sinhalese. Among these Tiger atrocities mention of just a few would suffice: the killing of 500 defence persons, the killing of Buddhist pilgrims at Anuradhapura, the killing of Buddhist monks at Arantalawa and the bombing of the great sacred icon of Sinhala Buddhists -the Dalada Maligawa. A community prone to race-hate and genocide would have simply massacred the Tamil minority over such offences. Yet, we all

however, that such laws were brought in to win over the large Sinhala electorate than to suppress the Tamil community.

Therefore, given that the Sinhalese have not exhibited genocide traits it is clear that the unfortunate killings of civilians today could be attributed to the cross-fires of war that can occur anywhere that war takes place. Although protestors claim to know the number of such deaths the fact is that nobody can know the statistics. Those who know anything about war will tell you it is not practical to conduct military action in a precise manner separating out the innocent and the guilty. Unfortunate destructions can take place. This is why we condemn war as an ugly and outworn method of solving disputes. Besides, the LTTE has in no small measure contributed to these happenings by using civilians as human shields and shooting them down if they dare to cross over for safety.

The Tigers are not a set of humane leaders fighting a just war. Had they been so, they would not snatch kids from weeping mothers, deprive them of the love and care of their families, blast their future and brainwash the little fellows to fight amidst grave danger to their lives. Are the overseas pro-Tiger Tamil sympathisers simply insensitive to this horrific child abuse? Overseas Tamils are safely ensconced in developed welfare countries, making money, enriching themselves and sending their kids to grammar schools etc.

According to a correspondent writing to India's Hindu newspaper, "that the LTTE's

Since 1990, India's position has been that the LTTE must be dealt with militarily but that the real problem of meeting Tamil aspirations must be addressed through negotiations. The Mumbai bombings by Pakistani and Kashmir militants have given Indians a taste of what terrorism is. In an environment like this Tamilnadu's frenzied protests seem unrealistic.

It is high time the Diaspora realises that Tamil leadership must pass on to moderate and reasonable persons who would be inclined to concede as well as to take; to cooperate as well as to fight. The outcome should be a constitutional arrangement and political culture that would guarantee equality and justice to all communities.



Shyamon Jayasinghe



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16 Bellerive Avenue Mount Waverley
Tel : 9544 7189 Mob 0418 351 620 Fax : 9562 5503