

THE ON-GOING PROCESS OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT -AN ASSESSMENT AND OUR POSITION.

After a carefull and through appraisal of the factors which motivated us to participate in the peace process initiated by the Government of India and the actual concrete situation that emerged as a consequence of this process, we are now firmly convinced that it is untimly and unrealistic to conceive an alternative to Eelam as the basis for a just and permanent solution. Furthur we are neither convinced that an interim "reasonable" solution rather than a "just and permanent" solution, would provide the base from which we colud further our political struggle through the ballot within the existing constitutional framework.

The purpose of this memorandum is to explain to the Government of India as to how we, the united front consisting of four liberation organizations, arrived at the above position. We do this not merely in recognition and appreciation of India's role as a mediator, but also as a neighbouring country which is perceived by the Eelam Tamils as a friend and whose sympathy and support for their struggle is generally taken for granted.

WHY WE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TALKS

When we were initially approached by the concerned officials of the Indian government to agree to a ceasefire as a prelude to talks with the Sri Lankan government, we expressed our strong reservations, both individually and collectively, for the following reasons:

- (1) The bitter expericence of our people with broken pacts and unkept promises by successive Sri Lankan governments which characterized the process of negotiated settlements in the past;
- (2) The more recent experience with the All Party Conference which was used by the Sri Lankan government as a camouflage to pursue a military solution and to engage in false propaganda internationally
- (3) The genocidal situation currently prevailing made us apprehensive of the possibility of anger and confusion arising in the minds of our people of peace talks taking place under thses tragic conditions and the alianation and demoralisation within the rank and file of the liberation organizations taking part in the Talks.

Despite the above reservations we ultimately did agree to the observance of ceasefire and sent our delegations to Thimpu for Talks with the Sri Lankan government. The reasons leading to our collective decision were as follows:

(i) In view of the international recognition and acceptance given to the initiative undertaken by the Government of India, we did not want the image of our host and friendly nation to be tarnished. Further, we did not want to precipitate a situation which would have appeared as a case of us shunning the goodwill of the Government of India.

(ii) The firm assurance given by the concerned officials of the Government of India that the interests of the Tamils of Sri Lanka would not in any way be compromised or subordinated to the interests of the Sri Lankan state;

(iii) Our realization of the potentials for demonstrating to the world opinion that we were neither terrorists nor mere secessionists who were obsessed with arms and utopian ideas; we sincerely hoped that by going through the peace process initiated by the Government of India, we would not only gain legitimacy, but also demonstrate our commitment to peace;

(iv) The lingering hope that a permanent and a just solution could be found through the force of reason rather than through the force of arms, despite the fact that our decision to take up arms was because all force of reason had failed to convince the successive Sri Lankan governments of the need to solve the Tamil National Question.

To sum up, we agreed to participate in the peace talks in recognition of the traditional friendship that exists between India and the Eelam Tamils, our recognition of India's strategic importance in the region and to our struggle, the need to establish our legitimacy internationally and most importantly, since we are for peace and are prepared to lay down our lives for peace. However, we were firm in our resolve that if peace could not be obtained by the force of reason then it shall be obtained by the force of arms, since what our beloved People expect from us is not to surrender but to achieve peace which would guarantee life and property and safeguard their honour and dignity.

Our Concern With The Increasing Divergence Between Our Expectations of The Peace Process And The Concrete Situation.

In view of the following developments arising out of the "peace process" where there is neither peace nor any rationality in the process, it is now evident that the Sri Lankan government is only bent on abusing the Indian initiative by pursuing a military solution:

(1) The so-called proposals placed by the Sri Lankan government delegation at Thimpu which was duly rejected by our delegation and conceded by the Government of India to be grossly inadequate, initially signalled the lack of seriousness of the Sri Lankan government to bring about a negotiated settlement. The subsequent "draft proposal" communicated through the Indian government although an improvement in terms of administrative reforms, does not even pretend to be a solution to the Tamil National Question. The total negation of the very concept of a homeland of the Eelam Tamils, and the proposed bifurcation aimed at undermining its territorial integrity and contiguity is just one instance. Although, as we have already pointed out in the enunciation of our four basic principles, we see the recognition of our homelands as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a just and permanent solution, the mere fact that even this necessary condition was negated in the draft proposal, clearly demonstrates the incapacity and the unwillingness of the J.R. regime to resolve the nationality problem in Sri Lanka. On our part we were left with no option but to reject the draft proposal outright as not even constituting a basis for negotiations.

(2) The manner in which the Sri Lankan government responded to our demand that the ceasefire should be effectively monitored is once again indicative of its bad faith. After rejecting our demand for the need of an international body to monitor the ceasefire, the Sri Lankan government was clearly determined to make a mockery of the internal monitoring committee. Its intentions were clear when it initially rejected our two basic and rational demands that the Monitoring Committee be empowered with the right to visit prisons and detention camps and the right to make its reports public. Although, the Sri Lankan government finally conceded to these with much reluctance

at the insistence of the Government of India, its intentions of ensuring that the Monitoring Committee would not be effective was exposed in the process. Further, the manner in which the Monitoring Committee was unilaterally expanded to include stooges of the government even while we were in consultation with the Foreign Secretary Mr. Romesh Bhandari and his officials and the subsequent harassments that have been carried out against our nominees to the panel by the security forces does not augur well for our efforts to restore normality to the affected areas.

(3) <sup>all</sup> Parallel to the above process of undermining the Indian government's initiative at a negotiated settlement is the intensification of the military option by the J.R. regime. Although initially it sought to use the peace talks as a smokescreen, the Sri Lankan government appears to have dropped even these pretenses. Recent policy statements by J.R. Jayawardena specifically refers to his government's commitment (including a time frame) to a military option whether or not there is a political settlement. Further, in the same tone he has referred to the holding of elections to the provincial councils whether or not there is a political settlement. What is of interest is that the above policy statement was made by J.R. in his tour abroad and reflects his smug confidence in the military option. The point that we wish to emphasise is that the process of negotiated settlement initiated by the Government of India and responded to favourably by us has been rendered totally irrelevant and redundant by J.R. Jayawardena.

What is of immediate concern to us is not only the jingoistic public pronouncements of the J.R. regime, but the actual situation in the field. The modus operandi of the armed forces of containment in the North and expulsion and annihilation in the East highlights the seriousness with which the Sri Lankan State is pursuing the military option. The massive induction of men and material to the affected areas, the purchase of sophisticated and deadly aerial and ground weaponry and the intensification of search and destroy operations which inevitably involves the massacre of civilians, in addition to constituting a flagrant violation of the terms and intent of the ceasefire is also a clearcut message to, both, the Eelam liberation movement and the Govt. of India of Sri Lanka's commitment to a military solution.

Our Earnest Request To The Government of India

Given the above premises and realities, we earnestly request the Government of India to understand our predicament that we cannot be party to any process which would lead to the anihilation of the Tamil Eelam liberation movement and, thus leave our beloved people orphaned with neither a political voice nor military capacity to continue with their legitimate struggle for freedom, dignity, honour, and peace.

As a future course of action, we wish to urge the Indian government to intensify the campaign to expose the real intent of the J.R. Jayawardena regime and highlight the genocidal situation facing our people. Further if the Government of India, owing to its own national interests wishes to persist with the process of negotiated settlement, then it is imperative that we be strengthened politically and militarily, so that we could negotiate from a position of strength -not from a position of weakness and under duress.

Secondly, it is important that the Government of India promote our united front as the sole legitimate representatives of the Eelam Tamils as a rallying point for a political and diplomatic offensive in the international arena.

In conclusion, we are of the view that the interests of our struggle for a permanent and just solution to the problem of national oppression and State Terrorism that face our people is inseparably linked to the interests of peace and stability in the Indian sub-continent. We are also hopeful that the strategic role of India in the geo-politics of the region would continue to maintain its anti-Imperialist orientation and the principles of non-alignment by ensuring peace, democracy and social progress.

We also wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of India and the Indian people for the solidarity that has been extended to our People.