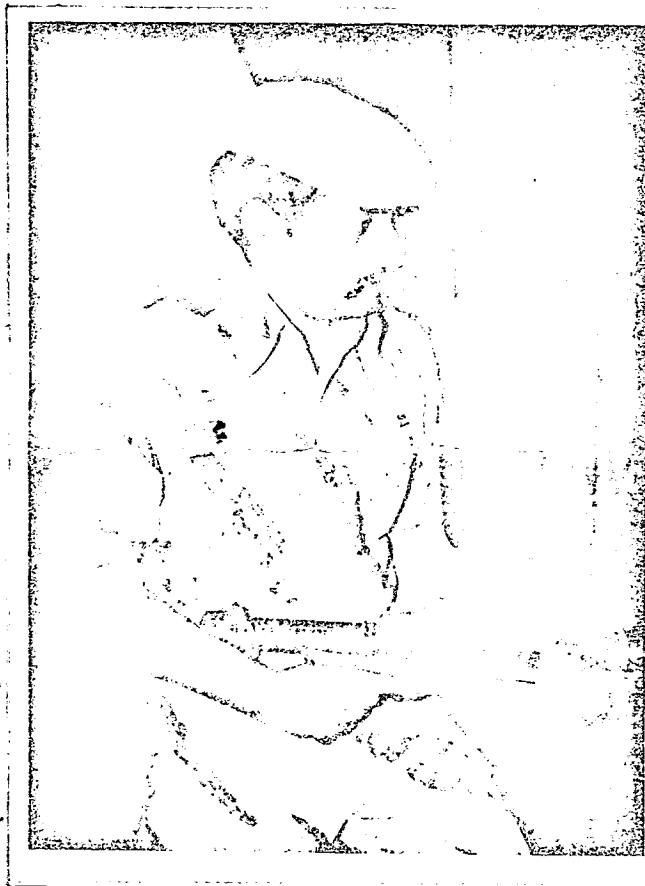




A PROFILE ON THE TAMIL TIGERS



V. PRABAKARAN

LEADER OF THE TIGER MOVEMENT

The history of the freedom struggles of the oppressed people of the Third World shows that armed resistance as a mode of political struggle arises when peaceful democratic forms of struggles have exhausted its moral power to mobilise the people, when the oppressor shows utter disregard to the spiritual and human values underlying non-violent agitations. The Tamil people in Sri Lanka have been pursuing a peaceful path of political struggle for decades. Following Gandhijees principle of ahimsa, the Tamils launched non-violent campaigns of satyagraha, of peaceful picketing seeking the restoration fo their basic human rights. For quarter of a century they pleaded for a federal system within a unified state structure to co-exist with the majority nation. Yet their legitimate and civilized demands found no sympathetic hearing. Instead of looking into the genuine grievances of the minority nation the racist Sinhala leaders unleashed military violence brutally crushing the satyagraha campaigns. A savage form of State oppression emerged attacking the very foundations of the ethnic structure of the Tamil society. Waves after waves of communal violence were let loose on the Tamils which reflected a genocidal intent aimed at the mass destruction of the life and property of the Tamils. Large contingents of armed forces poured into Tamil areas and the Tamil nation was finally brought under military seige. Because of the ever unfolding oppression, of the continuous military terrorisation, of the constant hostility and betrayals the Tamils have lost all hope of a peaceful negotiated settlement. It was during this period of utter disillusionment and hopelessness, when the Tamil people were presented with no other alternative other than to defend themselves against a savage form of genocidal onslaught, that gave rise to the phenomenon of armed resistance. The armed struggle that emerged in the early seventies must be viewed as a political phenomenon expressing the desperate struggle of the Tamil people to resist and fight back an intolerable chauvinistic oppression aimed at the systematic destruction of the Tamil national formation.

The Tiger movement which spearheads the armed struggle in Tamil Eelam was formed in 1972 by its present leader and military commander VELUPILLAI PRABAKARAN. At the time of its inauguration the Movement called itself 'THE TAMIL NEW TIGERS' and later in 1976 May 5th the organisation renamed itself as the LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM. From its inception the tiger Movement took into its ranks the most dedicated, the most zealous young revolutionaries disciplined with an iron will to fight for the cause of national freedom. Structured as an urban guerrilla force and committed to a prolonged people's warfare, the Tigers soon emerged as a revolutionary liberation movement with clandestine cells all over the Tamil nation. Ideologically bound to the revolutionary doctrine of scientific socialism, the movement's political objective is the national emancipation of the Tamil people and the socialist transformation of the Tamil social formation.

Prabakaran, the leader of the Tiger Movement, is an ardent young revolutionary, born on the 26th November 1954, in the coastal town of Valvettiturai a place famous for its militancy against Sinhala State

repression. He was drawn into revolutionary politics when he was sixteen, and earned the name 'Thamby' amongst the co-revolutionaries as he was very young. Prabakaran represented the aspirations of the rebellious Tamil youth who, having become disenchanted with the failures of non-violent political campaigns, resolved to fight back the barbarous form of state violence perpetrated on their people. Prabakaran soon organised a politico-military structure which found an organisational expression to the revolutionary ardour of these militant youths. Showing an extra-ordinary talent in planning military strategy and tactics and executing them to the amazement of the enemy, Prabakaran soon became a symbol of Tamil Resistance and the Tiger Movement he founded became the armed vanguard of the Tamil national struggle.

The armed struggle of the Tiger Movement from its inception was directed against the repressive State apparatuses, the Police and the military and against the traitors who betrayed the Tamil cause. The guerrilla operations of the Movement effectively destroyed the secret police network in Tamil areas. This military enterprise involved the execution of several secret service police officers and their informants. In the later stages the guerrilla attacks were directed at well guarded police stations resulting in the closure of police stations and destroying the Police administrative indiscipline in the armed forces, who, unable to pin down the evasive guerrillas, turned their frustrated anger in the indiscriminate killing of the innocents. The consequence of the Tiger guerrilla campaigns, not only disrupted the civil administrative system in Tamil regions, but also destabilised the politico-economic structure of the whole island. The Tamil people supported and sustained the Tigers and acknowledged them as their FREEDOM FIGHTERS. In the recent local elections the Tamil people, responding to a call by the Tiger Movement, boycotted the elections and rejected the Tamil United Liberation Front's appeal to vote, which amply proves the growing mass support for the armed revolutionary struggle.

The nature of the recent genocidal racial holocaust, the barbaric manner in which the Tamils were put to death, the utter callousness of the Sinhala racist leaders who shed no remorse, the clamp down on the Tamil political institutions and the banning of the Left parties who sympathised with the Tamil cause, the expulsion of the international aid agency (The Red Cross) - all these acts of uncivilized behaviour have hardened the will of the Tamil nation and made them realise that co-existence with the Sinhalese is an impossibility. Secession, even at the cost of a war of national liberation, has become a reality. In this grave and grim situation of a national crisis the Tamils are looking forward to the Tigers as their saviours and the rebellious youths are being mobilised under Prabakaran whose immediate objective is to form a people's army of national liberation.

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