

PEACE.....

tee to come out with its proposals. If the parties can make a clear commitment to a general framework of a solution (enhanced devolution or federalism), it will be a tremendous step in the right direction which would also set the proper context for the Moonesinghe Committee to conceptualise its own approach towards its terms of reference.

Once the principle of a political solution and its general framework are accepted,

the second step would be the working out of modalities for negotiations. To negotiate with whom, on what concrete issues and with what kind of guarantees are obviously matters that would need the patient attention of all major political actors. A group of Sri Lankan Tamil scholars living in the United States has made an excellent set of recommendations in this regard which we publish in this issue.

And indeed, a broadened framework of negotiations, with international mediation

and guarantees, would also address some of the anxieties now being expressed by Sinhalese nationalist spokespersons. With justification, Sinhalese people do not trust the LTTE. Any unilateral negotiations with the LTTE, without proper and adequate political safeguards, are certain to be resented in the South. However, the doubts and reservations of the Sinhalese people are not insurmountable, once confidence in a political solution has been created. **P**

“THERE CAN BE NO MILITARY SOLUTION ...”

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA, AND TAMIL POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANISATIONS

We call on the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to initiate a peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict.

We strongly condemn the resurgence of Sinhala chauvinistic opposition to a negotiated settlement.

We call for a broadening of the framework of negotiations to include Tamil civil organisations, who also represent the interests of the Tamil people.

The immense suffering of Tamils during the decade long ethnic conflict includes indiscriminate killings, imprisonment and torture of tens of thousands of Tamils by Sri Lankan armed forces, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Tamils. Living conditions in the North and East have deteriorated drastically, with severe shortages of basic foodstuffs, medicine, electricity and means of transportation. The greater misery experienced by women and children during the war is evidenced by the increasing number of women refugees, and the increase in infant and maternal mortality. Tamils have lost an entire generation of youth either as victims of violence or as participants.

The armed response of the LTTE, however, has included massacres of innocent Sinhala

villagers, and the torture and killing of prisoners. Recently, tens of thousands of Muslims were forcibly evicted from their homes and expelled from the North, while several hundreds were killed in the East. The LTTE has also been responsible for the imprisonment and death of student leaders, women's rights activists and human rights activists. Other Tamil political organisations, such as the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) have also contributed to the pursuit of vengeful politics, to the detriment of democracy in the North and East,

Further, caste discrimination continues to be a major obstacle to socio-economic advancement for a significant section of the Tamil community. Tamil women who have organised themselves autonomously for women's rights or against the war have been suppressed. The exclusionary basis of Tamil nationalism has been hostile to Muslims and has led to a breakdown in Tamil-Muslim solidarity, exacerbating the problem of achieving peace in the North and East. Finally, the sympathy of the international community for the suffering of Tamils has been eroded by the militarism of the Tamil nationalist movement.

We feel the nature of the LTTE response to Sinhala chauvinism raised important ques-

tions about Tamil nationalism that have not been sufficiently addressed. How has the development of Tamil nationalism alienated Muslims of the North and East? Why has the claim to a traditional Tamil homeland led to the expulsion of Sinhalese and Muslims who have been living in the North and East for generations? Do the demands of the Tamil nationalist movement reflect the aspirations of the Tamil people of the East, or do they only express the will of its Jaffna leadership? And why have the interests of women and "depressed" castes not been represented by the Tamil nationalist movement?

Today, the North and East have become a wasteland, devastated by the armed forces of the Sri Lankan state and silenced by the LTTE's suppression of all alternative political voices.

Recommendations:

We call on the Government and the LTTE to cease hostilities and to release political prisoners.

We urge both parties to facilitate the transportation of food, medical supplies and fuel to the North and East.

NO MILITARY OFFENSIVE.....

We recommend the participation of civil organisations from the North and East and eminent Tamil individuals as observers and negotiating partners. The Government's failure to grant regional autonomy to the Tamils, coupled by the LTTE's unwillingness to pursue a negotiated settlement has prolonged the violent civil war. Thus, the participation of other concerned Tamil organisations and individuals in the negotiations process is essential for a peaceful settlement.

We suggest the inclusion of civil organisations such as the Mother's Front and the Batticaloa Peace Committee, and eminent Tamil individuals like the Bishops of Batticaloa and Jaffna,

professors from Batticaloa and Jaffna Universities, professionals, trade union leaders, human rights activists, women's rights activists and student leaders.

We call on the Government and the LTTE to accept UN mediation in a search for a negotiated settlement. The UN would be an influential and neutral mediator that could help ensure that negotiations take place in good faith and dissuade both sides from resorting to violence, once again. We firmly believe there can not be a military solution to the ethnic conflict and all parties concerned should dedicate themselves to a negotiated political agreement in which the rights of all ethnic communities are respected within a Federal framework. ■

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You cannot avoid the interplay of politics within an orthodox religion. This power struggle permeates the training, educating and disciplining of the orthodox community. Because of this pressure, the leaders of such a community inevitably must face that ultimate internal question: to succumb to complete opportunism as the price of maintaining their rule, or risk sacrificing themselves for the sake of the orthodox ethic.

-from 'Maud'Dib: The Religious Issues' by the Princess Irulan

When law and duty are one, united by religion, you never become fully conscious, fully aware of yourself. You are always a little less than an individual.

-from 'Maud'Dib: The Ninety-nine Wonders of the Universe' by the Princess Irulan