

'Delhi has hardened'

The Thimpu talks are a farce, says Sri Sabaratnam



THERE is hardly any hardness of the terrorist (to use Jayewardene's term) on the boyish face of 32-year-old Sri Sabaratnam, leader of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) which is one of the big militant Tamil groups. But when this correspondent met him at his office in Madras soon after the deportation of his Thimpu delegate, Satyendra, the usual smile was gone. Talking to him, one felt he hardly had any hope of a solution without a total armed revolution that would fetch them Eelam. Sabaratnam was, however, willing to compromise on this separatist demand if any good alternative was made available. But on condition that such an agreement would be implemented in letter and spirit by the Sri Lankan government. The interview was interrupted many a time by frantic calls from different government agencies pleading with him to go to Delhi and honour Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's invitation. He always gave the same patient reply—that he was willing to go but would have to wait for the other leaders of the ENLF also and that the Liberation Tigers' leader V. Prabhakaran was out of Madras and he had to return before a decision could be taken. Excerpts:

Question: *You were one of the two 'unavailable' Tamil militant leaders when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's call came from Delhi. There is a general feeling that both Prabhakaran of LTTE and you had deliberately gone underground.*

Answer: We had already decided to meet the Indian Prime Minister. The termination of Thimpu phase-II was unfortunate. The Sri Lankan government had brought proposals aimed at only duping and insulting us. Massacre of Tamils even as the Sri Lankan government was placing its proposals at Thimpu only proved that it was bidding for time while continuing with the anti-Tamil policies.

It was in such a situation that the Indian PM had called us. We did not



want to go to Delhi and face an embarrassing situation where we might be forced to say 'no' to an inconvenient suggestion. However, we leaders of ENLF plan to consult and evolve a common plea to be placed before Rajiv Gandhi.

Q: *The impression created by some recent events has been that ENLF is hardening its stance and becoming more and more difficult to be managed by the Indian government.*

A: The Indian PM has been striving to find a solution to the Tamils' problems and we truly appreciate that. The very fact that we agreed to go to Thimpu for talks, stopping our attacks in the meantime, only shows we have not hardened and are quite willing to extend all cooperation to Indian initiatives. But ENLF has some special problems. The four groups in ENLF are the ones directly involved in protecting the Tamils from the attack of Sri Lankan forces. As such, we need some special solutions to our problems arising at every stage of this farcical exercise going on at Thimpu. We must convince our people we are not letting down their interests, nor throwing them to the Sinhala racist wolves. Some other groups and people like Amirthalingam have no such issue to settle. Besides,

we cannot be dishonest like the others.

Q: *Two of the three deported Tamils were linked to TELO, directly or indirectly. Do you think you are being singled out for harsh treatment?*

A: All the three deported leaders belong to Tamil Eelam. This deportation order meant that the Indian attitude towards our problem has hardened. It does not hurt us alone but hurts the entire movement.

Q: *There is a complaint heard in a few of the other Tamil militant camps that your representative at the Thimpu talks, Satyendra, proved to be rather difficult at times.*

A: Other organisations which had attended the Thimpu talks have told me that Satyendra reflected quite eloquently the Tamil aspirations. If these very groups are now desisting from making public their true assessment of our representatives, then it shows their two-timing nature.

Q: *Did you receive any specific complaint about Satyendra's conduct during the talks?*

A: No. None at all.

Q: *What do you think should be done now by India, Sri Lanka and the Tamils?*

A: I do concede that any path towards a settlement cannot be easy and straight like a line, but will undergo some turns and twists, some changes as it makes progress. But such a change in the Indian strategy, when it takes place, should ensure it does not hurt the Tamils further. Already we are a much troubled people.

Q: *Can you elaborate?*

A: Let us turn to the past experience. The late Indian Prime Minister had signed an agreement with the then Sri Lankan government about the affected Tamils who were not consulted. What resulted from that injudicious settlement was that even today 2,00,000 plantation Tamils continue to live in substandard conditions without even citizenship rights. So, we hope any settlement evolving now on the Indian initiative should take into account all our ideas also. Another point, why can't the Indian government pressure the Sri Lankan

THIMBUKTU: SITHATHAR

Bhandari's "bloody hell" enraged Satyendra. What happened at Thimpu— Dharmalingam's son explains

NEW DELHI, Sept. 16 — Mr. Sitharthan, one of the militant Tamil representatives at the Thimpu peace talks with the Sri Lankan Government (last month), today denied certain allegations about the role of the foreign Secretary, Mr. Romesh Bhandari, after the talks collapsed last month.

Mr. Bhandari, who is criticised for his alleged "high-handed" behaviour towards the Tamil representatives at Thimpu, was a friend of the Tamils and an important link between Indian Government and the Sri Lankan Tamils, Mr. Sitharthan said.

Mr. Sitharthan, who is the spokesman of the Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) narrated what has happened on the evening of August 17 after the Tamils had walked out, complaining of massacre of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Bhandari met the Tamil representatives in their guest-house and was having discussion with them about their future strategy. Once, in between, he has uttered the words "bloody hell". An enraged Mr. N. Satyendra, representing the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisa-

tion, demanded an apology from Mr. Bhandari for this "great insult and humiliation".

Mr. Bhandari immediately told the Tamils that he (Bhandari) was there as a friend of the Tamils and not merely as an Indian diplomat. He also appreciated the reasons for the Tamils' walk-out.

Mr. Sitharthan said, though he didn't mean it, Mr. Sitharthan said, despite this, Mr. Satyendra was not satisfied and made angry remarks against Mr. Bhandari. Later

Mr. K. Vasudeva, the other representative of the PLOT apologised to Mr. Bhandari for Mr. Satyendra's remarks on behalf of all the Tamil delegations, he said.

Mr. Sitharthan said in fact Mr. Satyendra was the one who has stalled the peace progress. Mr. Satyendra had left for London immediately after the Thimpu talks.

Mr. Sitharthan, whose father was among the two TULF MPs killed in Jaffna last week, blamed one of the "renegade" militant organisations of the ENLF for the murders. — PTI



தமிழர் மக்கள் விடுதலைப் போராட்டம்
PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ORGANIZATION OF TAMIL EELAM

திம்பு பேச்சுகளின் போது நடந்ததென்ன?

பி. சி. என். பண்டாரி (பி. சி. என். பண்டாரி) திம்பு பேச்சுகளில் கலந்துகொண்டிருக்கும் போது, சிங்கள அரசு தரப்பில் சிங்களப் படைகள் திம்பு நகரில் தாக்குதல் நடத்தியதாகத் தகவல் தெரியவந்தது. இதற்குப் பின்னர், பி. சி. என். பண்டாரி, தமது மகிழ்ச்சியை வெளிப்படுத்தி, திம்பு பேச்சுகளில் கலந்துகொண்டிருக்கும் தமிழ் மக்களின் மனநிலையைப் பற்றித் தனது கருத்தைத் தெரிவித்தார்.

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தலைநகர் திட்டக் குறைபாடுகளும் உடனடிநீர்ப்பாயம்

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SITHATHAR BLUNDER

The above statement was made by Mr. Sithathar (Mr. S) to Press Trust of India soon after the Thimbu talks have collapsed due to Sri Lanka governments uncompromising stand during the talks.

The statement is an emotional outburst by Mr. S. giving expression to his anxiety and disappointment over stalled Thimbu talks.

If not agree with all Mr. S. brand of politics, at least we understand the reasons for his anxiety and disappointment, he is painfully trying to overcome.

But we dont share any of his views or feelings on stalled Thimbu talks. Why?

Because we didn't have mystical misconceptions about the Sri Lanka government's willingness to compromise, nor we expected miracles from Mr. Bhandari at Thimbu.

Therefore disappointments, if any was for Mr. S. and his fellow comrades, certainly not for TELO and to ENLF.

Even if there was no disappointment at Thimbu or anywhere else for that matter, emotions shouldn't dictate one's rational judgement on matters of importance such as Thimbu talks.

Political prodigee-in-making of Mr. S. calibre should have been aware of these things.

The most unfortunate thing is that Mr. S. statement to PTI on Thimbu talks has boomeranged on Mr. S. face even without he realising it.

On it's face value, let alone in it's meanings Mr. S. statement is full of amateurism and narrow thinking and we dont consider it worthy of the expression "Criticism"

Was Mr. S. statement a news worthy matter?

Speaking about news-worthiness, there are one kind of people - who by speaking about newsworthy matters to the press promote a cause they are involved with. And there is another kind, who by speaking about anything create themselves newsworthy and in the process often prove their - - - - - stupidity (sorry we are using the same informal expression Mr. Bhandari used at Thimbu on the seventeenth of August evening).

It is unfortunate for Tamil cause and for Mr. S. that he fits into the second category.

We are sure Mr. S. has made mistake or his tongue has failed to coordinate with his brains, to not to have given thought to the consequences his statement is likely to make on the struggle we are engaged in.

Because, if he had thought about it, he wouldn't have made the statement in the first place. Now that his statement is a reality, let us see why his statement is - - - - - , stupid (sorry we are using again Mr. Bhandari's informal expression).

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