

EDITORIAL, EELAM NATION

Winning Kilinochchi is not winning the Tamils



Fidel Castro, the former President of Cuba in his biography, MY LIFE, 2008, Penguin, edited by Ignacio Ramonet and translated by Andrew Hurley, says: "I always trusted in the possibilities of an irregular war. Throughout history, in all wars since the times of Alexander and Hannibal, victory was always within the grasp of those who used the wiles of secrecy in their movements and surprise in their deployment of men and arms, terrain and tactics. How often those strategies used the sun or the wind against their enemies! The commander who knew best how to use his own resources, and in some cases even nature –that was the commander who won."

This was true at a time when barbaric aerial bombings of civilian targets including schools, hospitals and refugee camps and internally displaced people running for their lives and cluster bombings by a state that should provide protection to those whom they claim to be their own people, were not known. It is now just a romantic illusion.

Castro with 3000 rebels brought the repressive regime of Batista backed by 80,000 strong army to its knees. Subsequently embracing Marxism Castro, a utopian socialist then was not engaged in an ideological struggle along with his trusted compatriot

Che Guevara an avowed Marxist and others, leading the revolution to end the spurious Batista regime. The French Revolution, the American Revolution, the workers' revolution of the Soviets led by Lenin in 1917 and the African National Congress were all armed struggles for liberation. The Tamil national liberation movement is a struggle not directed against any culture, any religion, a way of life or any nation. It is being conducted with the definite purpose of Tamil self-determination and their freedom from the repression of a racist terrorist state based on some primeval and mythical notions of Sinhala superiority over the Tamil people.

The armed struggle started with the introduction of the new constitution in 1972 which ignored the very existence of any minority community expecting measures bettering their political position in areas of equality and equity but frustrating their expectations and aspirations. The most far reaching of the consequences was that all the safeguards for the minorities incorporated in the constitutional settlement of 1946, on the basis of which the Tamil and other minorities had agreed to subject themselves to majority rule in independent Ceylon, were removed.

This was not all. The north and the

east were governed not through their elected representatives but by persons appointed by the Prime Minister based on affiliations to her party which was not supported by the Tamils at the elections. In other words the north-east was a police state run by the stooges and sycophants of the prime minister Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike, elected to power for being the widow of the architect of the Sinhala only policy. Her knowledge of politics and democracy was no more than that of an eighth grade civics student. For her the Tamils were suspect. These sycophants though treated by her with contempt and scant regard, vied with each other for the crumbs of office with the pecking order determined by the extent to which they could help to keep the Tamil people subservient. There is no dearth of such scoundrels even now. With the north and the east already equipped with a network of army posts put in train in 1962 in the guise of preventing smuggling and illegal immigration from India, it was easy for them to oppress and harass the Tamils for their own advantage and to please the Sinhala polity. What were lacking then were the white vans of the modern day. In absolute arrogance, all representations by elected Tamil representatives were ignored by the Prime Minister.

The Tamil militant action started off

after the cultural conference of the International Association for Tamil Research (IATR), held devoid of any politics. Instead of taking advantage of the tremendous success of this occasion to forge better relations with the Tamil people and participating in the conference, the Sri Lankan government saw this as an affront to Sri Lankan sovereignty and chose to shoot down 7 innocent Tamils who were spectators and injuring hundreds in the ensuing stampede, on the advice of Alfred Duraiyappa, a principal advisor to the prime minister on matters of the North. He was also responsible for the unlawful arrests and incarceration of many Tamil youth some of them losing their lives. The formal commission of inquiry into the killings at the cultural conference that followed was a farce as all other such inquiries are. The police and army atrocities continued with unabated impunity. The militants then incipient took the law in their own hands and gunned down Duraiyappa. The Tamil people, hitherto most peace loving, then realized with relief, that there was an unseen arm of justice though crude, and began to hope for better things to come for their own salvation. It was the policy of restricting Tamil students entering the Universities that sustained the militancy. The Vadukkodai Resolution 1976, of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was the inevitable consequence of the 1972 constitution.

The response to the Vaddukodai Resolution with the new government under JR Jayewardene in 1977 was the massive race riot unleashed on the Tamil people throughout the country in collaboration with the resources of his defence secretary and his nephew, the police chief. His constitution of 1978 is a living disaster to the Tamil people. It strengthened Sri Lanka as an autocratic theocratic state. Any references to unitary state, to Buddhism and the definition of sovereignty, may be amended by a two thirds majority followed by a majority at a referendum. In other words Parliament alone cannot amend these provisions. Further there is increasing potential for the proportional representation provisions being abused making way for more Karunas and Basils with the composition of Parliament frozen as on the date of election by the device of expelling a member who was no longer a member of the party through which they were elected, and by replacing that member with another belonging to the same party.

Even assuming that the recent statement by the LTTE leader that the Sri Lankan government was living in a dream land of military victory was mistaken in his Heroes' day speech and the Sri Lankan government were to gain a temporary victory they can never win the "hearts and minds" of the Tamil people. Not for centuries. New problems will arise with the band aid solution of the imposition of a devolution package on the Tamil people in such a state of mind and with no political space provided. Any notion that the Tamil people would look at themselves as an integral part of the Sri Lankan nation has already been shattered. Imagine that after cluster bombs being dropped, some on the IDPs the Sri Lankan Peace Secretariat unashamedly deny it and or implicitly defend such action based on the premise that peace is the prerogative of the Sinhalese and not the Tamils

The Tamils having already lost confidence in the racist state will become more resolute. The "Them and us" attitude has come into the Sinhala polity to stay. This will usher another new phase in the Tamil struggle. The LTTE currently engaged in a conventional war will transform to melt back into a guerilla movement with renewed vigour. Tamil Diasporas the world over are more organized, more streamlined and more sophisticated to provide international support to the Tamil struggle learning from the mistakes of the past. There will be greater coordination and more concerted action especially among the youth taking up leadership. Notwithstanding Karunanidhi the overwhelming support in South India, not only from Tamil Nadu to the Sri Lankan Tamil liberation as a major issue both in state and national politics has come to stay. With the all Tamils branded as terrorists it was irresponsible and dangerous for the Sri Lankan government to attempt to link the recent carnage at Bombay to the Tamil militants to the detriment of the safety of Tamil civilians. This is just an example of the vulnerability of the Tamil people within the Sri Lankan state. Delhi must take serious concern of the motives for such speculation. Delhi which hitherto had given a blank cheque to Sri Lanka to go ahead against the Tamils regardless, now should know who their true enemies are.

The Tamil question in Sri Lanka has henceforth become a global question challenging Sri Lankan sovereignty. It is altogether a new ball game.

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