



# SOCIALIST TAMIL EELAM

Political Programme of the LTTE



# SOCIALIST TAMIL EELAM

Political Programme  
of the LTTE

Political Committee  
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam



# SOCIALIST TAMIL EELAM

Part I  
Tamil National Struggle  
and the Liberation Tigers

## INTRODUCTION

National liberation struggles of the oppressed people have emerged as a significant historical phenomenon in contemporary times. The oppressive character of imperialism, neo-colonialism and racism gave rise to national upsurge in the oppressed and exploited social formations where organised forms of struggle are being waged for political independence and social emancipation. Each of these liberation struggles has its own historical specificity, its own concrete conditions. Yet, they fall within the dynamic laws of history articulated in the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed. Therefore, these struggles of the oppressed humanity are progressive and revolutionary in essence since they express the historical quest of human beings for freedom, for change in their social conditions of existence.

The right of nations to self-determination is the cardinal principle upon which many struggles for national freedom are being fought today. It is the principle that upholds the sacred right of a nation to decide its own political destiny, a universal principle enshrined in the U.N. Charter that guarantees the right of a people to political independence. **The Tamil national independence struggle is fought on the very basis of our nation's right to self-determination.**

The struggle for self-determination of the Eelam Tamils has an evolutionary history extending to 40 years. It was a historical struggle characterised by State repression and resistance by the Tamils. The Tamil freedom movement was peaceful and non-violent at the early stages and later developed and advanced into an armed revolutionary struggle as State oppression intensified and assumed the character of genocide.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is the national liberation movement of the Eelam Tamils waging a relentless military and political struggle for the total independence of the Tamil homeland. The LTTE is the organised politico-military vanguard representing the wider interests, aspirations and hopes of the oppressed Tamil masses. As a revolutionary liberation movement, the LTTE, symbolises Tamil National sentiments, expresses Tamil national solidarity and firmly committed to the tasks of national liberation and social emancipation.

This document gives a brief outline to the Tamil struggle for self-determination and the historical birth, and the development of our liberation organisation. It specifies our theoretical perspectives and details our political programme.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND :

### STATE OPPRESSION

The Sinhala State oppression against the Tamils began to unfold its ugly forms soon after the Island's independence in 1948 when British imperialism handed over State power to the Sinhalese ruling elite. The oppression was not simply an

expression of racial prejudice, but a well calculated genocidal plan aimed at the gradual and systematic destruction of the basic foundations of the Tamil national formation. The oppression attacked simultaneously on the different structural aspects of the nation, its language, education, culture, economy and territory, which jeopardised the national identity of the Tamil speaking people and threatened their very survival.

The first major onslaught of this genocidal oppression was directed against the Tamil plantation workers. By enacting notorious citizenship laws (Citizenship Acts 1948 and 1949) the Sri Lankan Government disenfranchised a million Tamil Plantation workers. This repressive measure reduced these people to a condition of statelessness and dehumanised them without any basic human or civil rights.

The most vicious form of oppression calculated to destroy the national identity of the Tamils was the State aided aggressive colonisation which began soon after 'independence' and now swallowed nearly two thousand square miles of Tamil Eelam. This planned occupation of Tamil lands by hundreds of thousands of Sinhala people aided and abetted by the State was aimed to annihilate the geographical entity of the Tamil nation.

Sinhala chauvinism struck deeply into the spheres of language, education and employment of the Tamils. The Sinhala Only Act of 1956, put an end to the equality of status enjoyed by the Tamil language and made Sinhala the only State language. This infamous legislation had disastrous consequences. It forced the Tamil public servants to learn Sinhala language or leave employment. In the decades that followed all employment opportunities in the public service were practically closed to the Tamils.

Education was the crucial area in which the onslaught of racism deprived a vast population of Tamil youth from access to higher education. A notorious discriminatory selective device called 'standardisation' was introduced in 1970 which denied thousands of deserving Tamil students the right to higher education and created a huge army of unemployed youth.

The thrust of national oppression that penetrated into the spheres of language, education and employment had far reaching consequences on the economic life of the Tamil speaking people as a whole. For nearly four decades all successive Sri Lankan Governments pursued a deliberate policy of totally isolating Tamil areas from all the national development projects. While the State poured all the economic aid into the South, while the Sinhala nation flourished with massive development programmes, the nation of Tamil Eelam was isolated as an unwanted colony and left to suffer the worst form of economic deprivation.

#### NAKED FORM OF GENOCIDE

The oppression practised against the Tamils by the Sri Lankan regimes can only be characterised as a blatant form of genocide. This genocide has two aspects. One is

motivated to destroy the national structure and the identity of the Tamils by attacking the crucial elements that constitute a nation - i.e. language, culture, economy, territory etc. The other aspect was the physical extermination of people. As a part of this genocidal programme formed the State organised racial pogroms . All major racial conflagrations that erupted violently against the Tamil speaking people were inspired and master-minded by the Sinhala ruling regimes as a part of the grand genocidal programme. Violent anti-Tamil racial riots exploded in the island in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1981 and in July 1983

In these holocausts thousands of Tamils, including women and children were mercilessly massacred, billions worth of Tamil property destroyed and hundreds of thousands made refugees. Since July '83 till now, the pattern of genocidal attacks on Tamils assumed a new horrifying dimension in which the armed forces directly involved in the physical liquidation of people. The army adopted the notorious method of collective punishment as a response to the armed resistance killing innocent civilians in large numbers in a series of planned massacres. Since July '83 till now over 20,000 innocent Tamil civilians have perished in these barbaric military brutalities

#### THE EMERGENCE OF ARMED RESISTANCE

The history of the freedom struggles of the oppressed people of world shows that revolutionary armed resistance as a radical mode of political struggle arises when non-violent, peaceful forms of political agitations are violently repressed. When constitutional paths are blocked, when the oppressor shows callous disregard to the legitimate aspirations of the oppressed and to the spiritual and human values underlying non-violent struggles. The Tamil national independence struggle underwent a similar historical course.

For decades, our people pursued a peaceful path of political struggle. Following Gandhiji's principles of 'ahimsa' they launched non-violent campaigns seeking the restoration of their basic human rights. For a quarter of a century they pleaded for Federal autonomy for a Tamil homeland within united Sri Lanka. They made every attempt to co-exist with the Sinhala majority in peace and harmony. Yet their fair, legitimate, civilized demands found no sympathetic hearing. The satyagraha (peaceful picketing) campaigns of 1961 was a great event in the history of the Tamil freedom struggle. The civil disobedience campaign unfolded into a massive national uprising, participated by hundreds of thousands of Tamil people, symbolising the collective resentment of the whole nation against the oppressive policies of the Sinhala rulers. Instead of looking into the genuine grievances of the oppressed Tamil people, the racist Sinhala regime unleashed military violence brutally crushing the non-violent campaign. Because of the ever unfolding oppression, of the continuous military terror, of the mounting genocidal onslaught, of the constant deceit and betrayals of the Sinhala leadership, of the broken pacts and agreements, the Tamils lost all hopes of

non-violent campaigns, of a peaceful negotiated settlement. It was during the specific historical juncture, when the Tamil people were presented with no alternative other than to defend themselves against a savage form of genocidal oppression that gave rise to the phenomenon of armed resistance. The armed resistance of the Tamils is therefore the historical product of national conflict that emerged as a primary contradiction between the Sinhala and Tamil nations. Thus, the Tamil struggle for self-determination took a monumental turn, from a pacifist Gandhian non-violent agitation - the moral power of which proved impotent against the military power of the racist State - into a radical revolutionary armed campaign that became an effective form of resistance.

The revolutionary sphere from which the resistance movement took birth was the radical Tamil youth. The determinant element that forced the Tamil youth to revolutionary resistance was the repressive racist policies of successive Sinhala regimes that had profound socio-economic effects on the new generation. The Government's discriminatory education programme of 'standardisation' and the racist 'Sinhala only' policy practically closed the doors to higher education and employment. Despair, disillusionment and a bleak future confronted the educated young Tamils.

Furthermore, the instruments of State repression - the police and the armed forces - turned violently against the Tamil youth and subjected them to indiscriminate arrests, barbaric torture and murder. Tamil youth became the selected target of State terrorism and suffered the most ruthless form of inhuman brutality.

Plunged into the despair of unemployed existence, frustrated without the possibility of higher education, angered by constant police and military brutality, the radical Tamil Youth realised that the redemption to their plight lay in a revolutionary socialist struggle, a struggle that should pave the way for a radical and fundamental transformation of their miserable conditions of existence. The only alternative left to the Tamil nation under the conditions of mounting national oppression, the younger generation rightly perceived, was none other than popular armed resistance directed towards the goals of national liberation and socialist social transformation

#### THE BIRTH OF THE TIGER MOVEMENT : THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE

The revolutionary aspirations of the radical Tamil youth, which manifested in the form of unorganised, indiscriminate outbursts of political violence in the early seventies sought concrete political expression in an organisational structure founded on a revolutionary political theory and practice. Neither the traditional Tamil parties nor the left movement offered any concrete political venue. The Tamil movement parties, though they raised emotive nationalist slogans, have failed to formulate any practical programme of political action towards the



emancipation of the oppressed Tamils. The traditional Left parties turned a blind eye to the stark reality of racist oppression perpetrated against Tamils and pursued a disastrous policy of collaborating with the Sinhala chauvinistic capitalist class. Therefore, the objective conditions of the Tamils struggle necessitated a revolutionary liberation organisation to advance the task of national freedom. It was in this specific political conjuncture the **Tiger movement took its birth in 1972** to fulfil the historical need. The movement was formed by its present leader and military commander **VELUPILLAI PIRABAKARAN**. At the time of its birth, the movement called itself **'The Tamil New Tigers'** and later on the 5th May 1976 the organisation renamed itself as the **LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM (LTTE)**.

At its inception, the Tiger movement was clandestine guerrilla group but in the course of time, it emerged as a well organised armed resistance movement of the Tamils posing a serious challenge to the repressive apparatus of the State. Because of the genocidal nature of the oppression and the harsh and ruthless counter-revolutionary methods adopted by the State, the LTTE was compelled to strengthen and widen the guerrilla infra-structure and put up a relentless armed campaign against the enemy forces. The history of the armed struggle of the LTTE extends to a period of thirteen years, an illustrious history chartered with heroic deeds, with legends of supreme sacrifices, with remarkable achievements in guerrilla strategy and tactics. In its long and arduous struggle, the LTTE was able to take roots among the broad masses and established itself as the national liberation movement of our oppressed people.

The emergence of the Tiger movement marked a new historical epoch in the Tamil national freedom struggle, extending and advancing the mode of political struggle to popular armed struggle. Our commitment to armed struggle as the form of popular mass struggle was undertaken after a careful and cautious appraisal of the objective historical conditions specific to our case, with the fullest comprehension of the concrete situation in which the Tamil masses were presented with no alternative other than to resort to revolutionary resistance to advance their national cause. Guerrilla warfare, the mode of armed struggle we chose, is the most effective, viable form of struggle suited to national resistance. We chartered the path of prolonged guerrilla war since it was the classic method for the weak and unarmed Tamil people to resist and fight back the organised military power of the Sinhala racist State. Our armed struggle began as a defensive measure against State repression. As a people who are subjected to savage forms of oppression, we have the right of armed defence. In the course of time our armed campaign turned into a revolutionary offensive since we were forced to contain the senseless outbursts of State terrorism directed against the civilian masses.

#### **THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LTTE**

With the intensification of our offensive operations in the mid eighties and after,



our armed struggle reached the stage of semi-conventional warfare. As a consequence of intensified armed campaign and following a series of successful military operations, the Sri Lankan armed forces were placed under military siege in their barracks and large territories of our homeland, including the Jaffna peninsula became liberated under the administrative control of the LTTE.

The armed struggle of our organisation is only a means to achieve our political ends – the total liberation of our homeland and the socialist transition of our social formation. Therefore, the LTTE gives primacy to politics and upholds the dictum that politics guides the gun.

Our movement, from its inception, did not separate the military from politics instead, both were integrated into a politico-military project in which armed struggle was conceived as a highest expression of political practice.

From the earlier stages, our liberation movement was confronted with the formidable task of organising, politicising and mobilizing the broad masses for the national cause. Though, the Government of Sri Lanka took the harsh measure of proscribing our organisation in 1978, our political cadres were able to build up clandestine political cells all over Tamil Eelam and recruited into our ranks workers, peasants, students and other patriotic elements and laid the foundation for a mass national movement. Our intensified political and armed struggle over the years have earned us the indisputable status as the authentic representatives of our people, and given us the vanguard role to advance the cause of national freedom.

The achievements of the LTTE can be thus summarised in the following.

- \* The LTTE has emerged as the National Liberation movement of the people of Tamil Eelam
- \* The LTTE has become the organised Political vanguard representing the problems, aspirations and hopes of the oppressed Tamil speaking people.
- \* The LTTE has inspired and awakened the Eelam National consciousness and organised and United all Freedom loving, patriotic sons and daughters of Tamil Eelam to fight for the cause of National Liberation and social emancipation.
- \* The LTTE, through its relentless and determined struggle, has brought to the focus of the International Community, the fight for self-determination of the oppressed people of Tamil Eelam.



# SOCIALIST TAMIL EELAM

Part II

Political Programme of the LTTE  
Aims, objectives and  
Theoretical Position.

## **FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL OBJECTIVES**

**National liberation and social revolution** constitutes two basic political objectives of the LTTE.

**1. By National Liberation we mean the total Liberation of our homeland and the winning of political Independence for our oppressed people and the establishment of an Independent sovereign socialist State of Tamil Eelam.**

The LTTE holds the view that Eelam Tamils possess all the basic elements that define a concrete characterisation of a unique nation. We have a homeland, a historically constituted habitation with a well defined territory embracing the Northern and Eastern provinces, distinct language, a rich culture and tradition, a unique economic life and a lengthy history extending to over three thousand years. As a nation, we have the inalienable right to self-determination. This right to self-determination is none other than the right to choose our own political destiny, the right to secede and form an independent State. In affirmation of this right to the people of Tamil Eelam have resolved, (in the general elections of 1977, which was in essence a referendum) to secede and form an independent State. The LTTE's commitment to fight for an independent State is firmly based on this people's mandate affirming their right to self-determination.

The independent State of Tamil Eelam as envisioned by the LTTE shall be a people's State, a secular, democratic, socialist State created by the will of the people, administered by the people; a State that will guarantee all democratic liberties and freedoms of its citizens.

**2. By social revolution we mean the socialist transformation of our social formation and the creation of a radical new society free from all structures of oppression and exploitation.**

Ours is not an advanced capitalist society nor a pre-capitalist feudal formation. Eelam social formation is a unique socio-economic organisation structured by combined modes of production with capitalist and feudal elements interwoven with caste system to form the foundation of this complex society. The nature and the structure of the economic organisation underlying our social system is oppressive and based on social injustice.

The LTTE is committed to the abolition of all forms of social oppression and exploitation and to the establishment of a classless society. We hold the view that an authentic socialist social system can only be constructed by effecting a fundamental transformation in the economic structure, by the transformation of the economic relations of production, by the abolition of the relations of production based on social injustice and the exploitation of man by man.

The caste system is another social evil that perpetuates inequality and inhumanity. It is an oppressive system inextricably linked to class structure and based on exploitative economic practice with ideology playing a crucial role in its

origin and in the legitimisation of the system. **The LTTE is committed to the total eradication of the caste system.** The institution of an equalitarian socialist economy, and the introduction of revolutionary system of education will pave the way for eradication of casteism.

Our fundamental political objectives - national liberation and social revolution - integrate both national struggle and class struggle, inter-link both national emancipation and socialist transition of our social formation into a revolutionary project aimed at liberating our people both from national oppression and social tyranny. To achieve these political objectives our organisation has resolved to :

- \* **Organise and unite all the people of Tamil Eelam into a collective national force committed to the common goal of national and social liberation.**
- \* **Foster and develop the spirit of national patriotism along with proletarian class consciousness to accelerate the process of revolution.**
- \* **Intensify and strengthen the politico-military struggle allowing for fuller and active participation of the popular masses in the national liberation struggle.**

#### **LTTE'S FOREIGN POLICY**

Our struggle for freedom is an integral part of the international struggle of the oppressed humanity fighting against the reactionary forces of domination, oppression, and exploitation. **Our liberation organisation has firmly resolved to fight against the forces of Imperialism, Colonialism, new-Colonialism and Racism.**

In pursuance of its anti-imperialist stance, the LTTE whole-heartedly supports the national liberation struggles of the oppressed people's and nations of the world. The LTTE will foster and strengthen friendly relations with the world national liberation organisations, progressive States, revolutionary movements, workers organisations and other peace-loving forces.

In international relations, the LTTE is committed to the policy of non-alignment. In so far as our regional political scene is concerned, the LTTE will support the policy of declaring the Indian ocean as a zone of peace.

#### **TOWARDS THE SINHALESE PEOPLE**

The Sri Lankan fascist state is the enemy of the oppressed and exploited Sinhalese and Tamil people. The chauvinistic ruling class who manages this State system perpetuates their political power by propagating and practising racism thereby preventing class unity between the Sinhalese and Tamils. The LTTE is opposed to this State system and the racist ruling class but a friend of the Sinhala masses. The LTTE is a revolutionary ally of the oppressed and exploited Sinhala working class and our struggle against the State system is

also a struggle for the emancipation of the Sinhalese proletariat.

National oppression is the enemy of the class struggle, of class unity, of the class consciousness and without the liberation of the oppressed nation, the proletarian unity of the working classes of the oppressor and oppressed nation is unattainable. Therefore, the progressive forces among the Sinhalese people should fight against racism and recognise the right to Self-determination of the oppressed Tamils. The Liberation of the oppressed Tamil nation will enable the working masses of the oppressor nation to free themselves from the myth of racist ideology and to mobilise them against the State power.

The LTTE is opposed to State organised colonisation of the Tamil areas, the objective of which is to deprive the Tamils their right to a homeland. Our legitimate struggle to protect our homeland should not be misconstrued as anti-Sinhalese. We pledge to guarantee all democratic rights and liberties to our Sinhala brethren who wish to live with the Tamils in the liberated Eelam State.

#### **TOWARDS THE MUSLIM PEOPLE**

The LTTE acknowledges that the Tamil speaking Muslim people constitute themselves as a unique ethnic group with distinct religio-cultural identity, forming an integral part of the Tamil national formation. We also acknowledge that Tamil Eelam, constituting northern and eastern provinces, is also the homeland of the Muslim people.

The Muslims and the Tamils living in the northern and eastern provinces have a commoneconomic life, a common homeland, a common language and common interests. Because of this mutual inter-dependence and integrated socio-economic existence, it is of utmost importance that the Muslims and Tamils should be united as a single people and fight for their rights. It is through unified existence with the Tamils and through a unified struggle the Muslim people would be able to win their political rights, promote their interests and well-being and above all, protect and enhance their ethnic and religio-cultural identity.

In order to destroy the unity and national cohesiveness of the Tamil speaking people, the Sri Lankan racist State has been devouring the common homeland of the Tamils and Muslims and has attempted several times through devious means, to incite violence to divide us. Faced with a common enemy, and driven by a sense of common purpose, the Tamils and Muslims have no alternative other than to unite and fight for their collective identity.

The LTTE is firmly convinced that total liberation of our homeland and the establishment of an independent State is the only solution to the problems of the Tamils and Muslims. In the envisaged Eelam State, the LTTE guarantees the safety, well-being and economic prosperity of the Muslim people and pledges to safe-guard and promote their religio-cultural identity.

## TOWARDS THE PLANTATION TAMILS

The LTTE acknowledges that the Tamil people in the plantations have specific problems the most important of which is the problem of statelessness.

The Tamil working class in the plantation sector is the most oppressed and exploited population deprived of fundamental political and civic rights and living in dehumanised, degraded conditions. The LTTE is firmly committed to fight for the restoration of the basic rights of the plantation Tamils. Our organisation has been demanding that citizenship and other civic rights should be granted to all the plantation workers who consider the Island as the mother country.

The LTTE is vehemently opposed to forceful repatriation of the plantation Tamils to India, which, we consider, constitutes a serious breach of human rights.

The LTTE will advise and encourage Tamil people in the plantations to migrate to Tamil Eelam once an independent State is established and provide them with all democratic rights and civil liberties so that they could live in freedom and dignity. Those Tamil people who have already migrated to the Tamil homeland would be integrated with the rest of the society as equal citizens and our organisation will implement programmes for their socio-economic upliftment.

## ON THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

Tamil women who constitute the majority of the population of Tamil Eelam are subjected to dual modes of oppression national and social. Tamil women bore the brunt of national oppression and have suffered immensely at the hands of State terrorists. The silent suffering endured and the supreme sacrifices made by the daughters of Eelam illustrate the most remarkable feature of our national struggle. At the sametime, Tamil women are also victims of social oppression, oppression generating from their own social structure. The notorious practice of dowry system, the male chauvinistic domination and other forms of socio-cultural practices that degrade women and deprive them of human dignity and equality are typical features of our repressive social system. Our Liberation Movement is committed to the emancipation of women from national and social oppression.

The LTTE assures that the dowry system will be legally proscribed, and the equality of status and opportunity for women will be constitutionally guaranteed. The LTTE will provide every opportunity for women to participate in national life, in the shaping of the national destiny, in the orientation of the new socio-economic order. Education will be made compulsory for all girls and the practice of sexual division of labour will be abolished. Our organisation will encourage the formation of a radical women's movement to organise women on a national level to agitate for the improvement of their conditions.

Tamil women are already participating in the armed struggle as well as in the political struggle advanced by our movement. Total participation of women in the national liberation struggle, will enhance the struggle and further the road to victory.

## **ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION**

The thrust of State oppression has far-reaching consequences on the economic life of the Tamil speaking people. For nearly four decades all successive Sri Lankan Governments pursued a deliberate policy of totally isolating the Tamil homeland from all the national development projects. While the State poured all the economic aid into the South, while the Sinhala nation flourished with massive economic development projects, the Tamil nation was alienated as an unwanted colony and left to suffer the worst form of economic deprivation. Apart from isolating the Tamil areas from economic development, the racist State unleashed terror, in the form of organised riots inflicting colossal damage to Tamil property. The Sinhala armed forces too plundered and ravaged Tamil areas causing incalculable damage to the economic resources of our people. In view of this organised wanton destruction, the task of economic reconstruction of Tamil Eelam is formidable. The LTTE holds the view that this task can be carried out successfully in a truly liberated Eelam in which the people will have the necessary political power to shape their economic future. We are convinced beyond doubt that Tamil Eelam can be an economically viable State and that we have the necessary potential to construct a self-sustaining prosperous economy in terms of agricultural and industrial production.

The socialist economic programme of the LTTE aims towards the establishment of an equalitarian society, a society free from the oppressive and exploitative economic relations. As a firm step towards the socialist transition, the LTTE pledges that all major means of production of our country becomes the ownership of our people, the ownership of the direct producers.

While giving primacy to agricultural development to make the country self-sufficient in food production, industrial development projects will be chartered to cater to the needs of the people and to exploit and utilise the resources of the nation. Our organisation will undertake radical agrarian programmes to distribute land to the landless and establish people's co-operatives.

The LTTE will not adopt a rigid centralised planning but opt for liberalisation and democratisation in the framing and implementing national economic programmes. LTTE will encourage people's participation at all levels in the socio economic transformation of the nation. Concepts of self-management and self-reliance will be governing principles in shaping policies towards economic progress. While ensuring equal distribution of national wealth, the LTTE will provide incentives for expatriate Tamil patriots to contribute to the development of the national economy.

## **ON EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

The LTTE will give top priority to develop and expand the education system. Universities, technical colleges and research institutes will be opened up in

different parts of Tamil Eelam to impart scientific, technical and professional education to the younger generation. Education will be free and compulsory to all children.

The revolutionary education system envisaged by the LTTE will be oriented towards developing skills and knowledges that are vital for national economic growth and progress.

The LTTE is committed to the promotion of national culture. Our organisation will encourage, promote and develop the cultural creativity and artistic expressions of our people.

Though the LTTE is an ardent advocate of the principle of secularism, it guarantees, the freedom of religious worship and will promote religio-cultural aspirations of the people of Tamil Eelam.



