

**TAMIL RESPONSE : 07-11-2008**

**- National Post editorial is a collective obsession and a torrential outpouring of hate, with a markedly fascist and racist character - By: Toronto Thangavelu, Canada [TIS]**

True to form the National Post Editorial Board (NPEB) (Terror friendly Thamils on parade – July 07, 2008 ) has done it again. The editorial is a collective obsession and a torrential outpouring of hate with a markedly fascist and racist character. The NPEB has consistently and relentlessly carried out a campaign of vilification against Tamil Canadians and used the fig leaf of terrorism to cover its own chauvinism. Therefore, the current outburst is nothing surprising given the fact it is a rightwing neo-conservative mouthpiece. NPEB seem to think that they are the exclusive saviours, guardians and godfathers of Canada.

This editorial is further proof, if proof is needed, that one cannot straighten a dog's tail. All the pleadings by Tamil Canadians for a better understanding of their plight have proved nothing but pearls before swine.

To brand Tamil Canadians as “terror friendly supporters” is a mindset like the cliché that “if you are not with us, you are against us!” The editorial failed to identify the root cause of the national conflict and Sri Lanka ‘s long history of racial oppression of Tamil people.

The editorial lacks objectivity and even-handedness in dealing with a complex problem that has defied solution for the last fifty years or more. One should pose to find out the reasons why a docile and peaceful Tamil people took to arms.

The NPEB exhibits an extreme manifestation of the antipathy towards the Liberals. It is Liberal bashing by the National Post at the expense of Tamil Canadian community.

Time and time again the NPEB through editorials and concocted news stories have accused Tamil Canadians of “raising funds through migrant smuggling, passport fraud, organized crime, front organizations and rallies at Toronto area public schools featuring men in camouflage uniforms carrying mock assault rifles” but sans a shred of evidence to prove them. Once it even went to the extent of publishing a story quoting a self-styled terrorism expert of The MacKenzie Institute accusing Canadian Thamils of raising funds for the LTTE through prostitution! Thamils took to the streets to protest this obscene and insane accusation.

By insinuating Thamils as “terror-friendly” the NPED is saying that only Thamils can be terrorists! It does not want to make a distinction between blind terrorists acts based on fanaticism and freedom struggle based on the right to self-determination.

Again this is the same newspaper which made a mountain out of a molehill by berating Mr. Paul Martin, then Minister of Finance and Ms. Maria Minna, MP that they attended a fund raising dinner for the Tamil Tigers! It was a vicious campaign of character assassination of two senior Liberal MPs for the benefit of the Conservatives.

The un-evenhanded editorial of the NPEB left untouched the horrendous human rights abuses and war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan Government (GoSL).

The World Association of Newspapers recently ranked Sri Lanka as the third most dangerous country in the world for media workers in 2007. Twelve journalists have been killed in Sri Lanka since August 2005 for reporting on the war. Opposition MP Joseph Michael Perera told parliament that the recent series of abductions, assaults and other violence against journalists were carried out by a “special team” controlled by Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka. (Lankaeverything – July 09, 2008)

A historical approach shows that it is absurd to speak only about LTTE terrorism when the facts show that it was propelled really by the terrorism of Sinhalese fascists and racists. Sri Lanka's state terrorism that indiscriminately killed defenseless non-combatant Tamils on a genocidal scale is the reason why LTTE took arms as a last resort. More than 3,000 Tamils got killed in the 1983 slaughter of Tamils is a good example. Even today, Sri Lanka state terrorism continues unabated when its air force planes dropped 16 bombs on Chencholai killing 65 girl students on August 14, 2006 .

The notion that the LTTE is purely, and in its very essence, a terrorist movement and nothing else is wrong. Today, LTTE is a military force with conventional warfare capability and holds territory and runs a de facto state. LTTE will cease violence once state violence ends and the Tamil people are left alone to manage their own affairs.

The NPED is free to label Tamil Canadians as "terror friendly Tamils" but it should understand that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter! The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today.

Martin McGuinness and his Sinn Fein comrade Gerry Adams who were branded as "terrorists" not so long ago are now honoured as freedom fighters. Today Martin McGuinness is the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland .

Like wise, no fewer than three Israeli prime ministers once branded as terrorists later become heads of governments.

Menachem Begin, who's Irgun blew up the King David Hotel and carried out the massacre of Palestinian villagers in Deir Yassin in April of 1948 was a wanted terrorist by the British who offered 100,000 British pounds for his head.

Yitzhak Shamir, head of the Stern Gang that murdered Edward Lord Moyne in Cairo in 1944 – enraging Churchill, who gave Moyne's eulogy – and assassinated U.N. mediator Count Bernadotte in Jerusalem in 1948 was another wanted terrorist.

Ariel Sharon, as head of Force 101, was accused of massacring scores of Palestinian villagers at Qibya in 1953 in a reprisal raid for the murder of an Israel woman and her children.

Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Prize winner did not get life imprisonment in Robben Island for sitting in at lunch counters, but for plotting terror to overthrow the Apartheid regime. It's very hard now to imagine Nelson Mandela as a terrorist. . He is the international symbol of freedom and most universally admired living human being, almost a secular saint,

Jomo Kenyatta, the "Grand Old Man" of Africa , in the 1960s, was the leader of the Mau Mau in the 1950s. Ahmed Ben Bella led Algeria 's war of independence, in which terror was the insurgents' weapon and torture the counter-weapon of the French.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) - an Albanian-based Islamic mujahideen force - was listed by the State Department as a terrorist organization till recently. Its leader Hashim Thaçi is now the Prime Minister of Government of Republic of Kosovo. Kosovo has been recognized by most of the EU countries, US and Canada.

The Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) leader Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) is the front runner for the next Nepal 's Prime Minister. His party which emerged as the largest party in the general elections held this year is in the US terrorist list. US Ambassador Ms Nancy Powel has opened talks with the leader of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) despite the fact NCP (M) remains in US list of banned foreign terrorist organizations.

Contemporary history is replete with a multitude of such examples of terrorists metamorphosing as heads of state.

Of course, no one has defined the word "terrorism" not even the UNO. All of them explain it, express it emotively and polemically to arouse emotions rather than exercise intelligence.

Bruce Feine, a former US Deputy Attorney General, in a statement released to the media on March 26, 2008 asserted that the rights violations and violent incidents Colombo either allegedly was complicit in, or had direct involvement, and concludes that "GOSL is a terrorist state under any sensible definition of the term.... Under international law and practice, the victims of state sponsored terrorism are regularly entitled to separate statehood. Kosovar Albanians had their Slobodan Milosevic. East Timorese had their Suharto. Eritreans had their Mengistu Haile Mariam. The southern Sudanese had their Hassan al-Turabi. And Tamils have their Rajapakse brothers and General Fonseka."

Haroon Siddiqui, the Toronto Star's editorial page editor emeritus, who was in Colombo recently quoted a Western diplomat who said "Nowhere in Sri Lanka are the Tamils safe. What's happening here is de facto ethnic cleansing," as Tamils flee for India or the Middle East and beyond. "The government doesn't seem to care if they all leave." (Tor Star – May 08, 2008)

Despite several reports by high ranking UN diplomats critical of the human rights record of GoSL little or nothing has been done to arrest the worsening situation. Instead UN diplomats like Allen Rock, Special Advisor to the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, were subject to innuendos by Minister Keheliya Rambukwella who questioned un-ashamedly his personal character. (Transcurrents - November 18th, 2006)

The same fate fell on John Holmes — the U.N. undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs. Jeyaraj Fernandopulle, the government's chief whip in Parliament and a Cabinet minister branded Holmes a "terrorist" who is in the pocket of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebel group. "I think the LTTE has bribed Holmes. Otherwise he would not have done such a wrong thing," Fernandopulle said. (The Associated Press Wednesday, August 15, 2007)

Even peace envoy and the Norwegian International Development Minister, Erik Solheim, was the focus of Colombo 's ire. Dissatisfied with Solheim's approach to peace process, Sinhala nationalists accused him of bias, labelled him a "White Tiger" and called for his ouster. State-run media accused Solheim of joining LTTE rallies in Norway , of accepting money from Tigers and in turn providing material assistance to Tamil Tigers.

Tamil people continue to face aerial bombardments, artillery shelling, economic sanctions and other horrors and indignities of the war.

We are not amused that the Conservative Party which called Nelson Mandela a terrorist right inside the Parliament chose to ban the LTTE and WTM as terrorists. The NPEB is delighted that "Mr. Harper is cut from different cloth" - more accurately from the same cloth as George Bush. Only last week Bush signed a decree that removed Nelson Mandela's name from the terrorist list! Nelson Mandela's is a great statesman who has left so indelible an imprint on the world stage.

Stephen Harper is a disappointment since we Tamils trusted him to have a slightly more nuanced approach than the "bomb them all into the stone age" mentality of George Bush. Many Tamils in the GTA campaigned and voted for the Conservative Party candidates, with one contesting on the Conservative Party platform.

We must be excused, if we do not understand why the NPEB is calling "Thamils terror friendly" but not the Sinhalese who are raising funds to fill Sri Lanka 's official war chest! Sri Lankan armed forces have bombed the Thamils from their homes, tortured them, denied them food and clothing and raped their women folk, yet are not called 'terrorists' by the National Post. What is worse Western countries are providing military hardware, weapon training and intelligence to the Sinhala armed forces in spite of the unspeakable human rights abuses against not only the Thamils but Sinhalese as well. GoSL uses or rather misuses a myriad of draconian laws in its armoury to harass, bully and incarcerate Thamils merely on grounds of ethnicity. The price the nation is paying at the altar of political expedience, ethnic fanaticism, and religious and language frenzy is colossal.

On January, 2006 5 students at Trincomalee were shot and killed by Special Task Force.

On August 04, 2008 Sinhala soldiers and Home Guards shot and killed 17 aid workers (16 Thamils and one Muslim) employed by French based INGO Action Against Hunger(ACF) at Muthur. These killings of aid workers sent shock waves through the global humanitarian community.

A total of 4 Thamils Members of Parliament have been killed since Mahinda Rajapakse came to power in November, 2005.

What distinguishes a terrorist organization and a national liberation movement is mass support and LTTE enjoys mass support as evidenced by the Pongu Thamils (Upsurge) rally in Toronto. To deny this is to deny the truth.

By banning the LTTE and WTM Stephen Harper's Conservative government is wasting tax payers' money. Instead of cutting violent crime or fighting drug and arms trafficking the RCMP and CSIS have been asked to hunt down "Terror-friendly Thamils." Suffice to say that Canadian Thamils have the eerie feeling of living under Stalin's Soviet state and the feared KGB. CSIS is the local KGB which is shadowing, photographing and videographing individual Thamils and Thamils cultural events.

The Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day has claimed that "The listing of the WTM is meant to support the Thamils Community of Canada , which consists of law-abiding and hard working people who have left their country of origin to build a better life for themselves and their families in Canada . The government is taking this step to help ensure that Canadians, including the Thamils community, are protected from the activities of this organisation." But the fact remains that no Thamils Canadian sought protection from the Conservative government. Therefore, the Minister's statement is devoid of truth! Over 100.000 that rallied on Saturday proved that beyond any reasonable doubt.

The NPEB has been making a song and dance about child recruitment. Suffice to say that it is the symptom of the military violence unleashed against a national minority by a theofascist Sinhala -Buddhist state!

Not everybody agrees with Canadian government's definition of terrorism. The two Democratic presidential candidates who fought the primaries have a different perception about national liberation fought by the Thamils Tigers. Let us quote some for the benefit of the NPEB.

Senator Clinton made her comments to Michael Tomasky of Britain 's 'The Guardian' newspaper in an interview which covered Iraq , the legacy of the Cold War and ceding executive powers.

When asked "do you think that the terrorists hate us for our freedoms, or do you think they

have specific geopolitical objectives?" she replied:

"Well, I believe that terrorism is a tool that has been utilized throughout history to achieve certain objectives. Some have been ideological, others territorial. There are personality-driven terroristic objectives."

"The bottom line is you can't lump all terrorists together. And I think we've got to do a much better job of clarifying what are the motivations, the *raison d'être* of terrorists."

"I mean, what the Tamil Tigers are fighting for in Sri Lanka, or the Basque separatists in Spain, or the insurgents in al-Anbar province may only be connected by tactics. They may not share all that much in terms of what is the philosophical or ideological underpinning."

"And I think one of our mistakes has been painting with such a broad brush, which has not been particularly helpful in understanding what it is we were up against when it comes to those who pursue terrorism for whichever ends they're seeking."

Jaffna peninsula is an open prison for Tamils now. More than 60,000 strong Sinhala army has imposed military rule over 500,000 Tamils denying them freedom of movement. On an average 5 civilians are killed daily by the Sinhala army and the Para-military squads operating along with it. Three hundred Tamils volunteered to be locked up in prisons to escape assassination of government backed death squads!

The Sinhala armed forces have mounted attacks from several fronts to capture Vanni before the year is out. Aerial bombardment and artillery shelling have escalated causing loss of lives and destruction of property. Several thousand families have been displaced.

More than 150,000 Tamils displaced in the East during army military operations are still waiting re-settlement. Tamil families in Sampur and adjoining villages have been driven out permanently from their homes to create HSZ.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) has indicted Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa as "once a rights advocate," has now led his government to become "one of the world's worst perpetrators of enforced disappearances." (HRW Press Release "Recurring Nightmare: State Responsibility for 'Disappearances' and Abductions in Sri Lanka, ..... " March 06, 2008 )

According to Red Cross (ICRC) the number of civilians killed and injured in Sri Lanka has reached "appalling levels". A total of 180 civilians died in the first six weeks of 2008 and nearly 270 more were injured. More than 1,000 people have been killed since the government withdrew from the ceasefire according to the military. (BBC - March 06, 2008 )

The International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP) invited by President Mahinda Rajapakse to monitor a government commission investigating human rights abuses has resigned on Thursday ( March 06, 2008 ) in frustration over the government's lack of support.

GoSL is refusing to investigate, prosecute and punish human rights violators. The many ad hoc commissions of inquiry of the past two years have accomplished nothing, while disappearances and political killings continue, especially in the Jaffna peninsula. The military offensives launched by the government have caused heavy loss of lives, social oppression, political subjugation and economic deprivation. (AP - March 06, 2008 )

Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe told a media briefing on Wednesday ( March 05, 2008 ) " that armed Tamil groups Pillaiyan group, EPDP, and a Muslim group mobilised by the government are in operation in the East". Last month (June) alone 48 Tamils have

been killed, 29 abducted and 253 arrested by the armed forces.

Sri Lanka is being perennially ruled under Emergency Regulations that vests sweeping powers to the armed forces to detain without charge anyone suspected of terror activity. These Regulations have been used almost exclusively against Tamils. Tamils have to register their names at the nearest police stations and hang the family photo in front of their houses!

Sri Lanka has been branded as a "failed state" by the Washington-based Fund for Peace and the prestigious Foreign Policy magazine. It ranked number 25 out of 177 countries with Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and Iraq occupying the first four places. Sri Lanka has been included in the "in-danger" category while the first 20 nations on the list have been grouped together into a "critical" category.

The World Association of Newspapers has ranked Sri Lanka as the third most dangerous country in the world for media workers in 2007.

Global Peace Index – produced by Vision of Humanity, based on peacefulness determined by 24 qualitative and quantitative indicators ranging from a nation's level of military expenditure to its relations with neighbouring countries and the level of respect for human rights has ranked Sri Lanka 125th among 140 countries (2008) Rankings: (Zimbabwe 124 and Myanmar 126)

Freedom of Press Index – produced by Reporters without Borders ranked Sri Lanka at 156 out of 169 countries (2007). (Afghanistan 142, Rwanda 147, Pakistan 152, Syria 154, Iraq 157....)

At the heart of the Sri Lankan conflict is racism and religion that the whole island belongs to Sinhala – Buddhists only and they are its chosen people.

The Buddhist chronicle Mahavamsa (Great Chronicle) covers events from the supposed arrival of prince Vijaya up to 300 AD. It was written in Pali in the fifth century AD by a Buddhist Monk named Mahanama for the "serene joy and emotion of the pious" whose aim was to glorify Buddhism and the Buddhist kings who ruled Anuradhapura. According to Mahavamsa Buddha just before his death, summoned Sakra the king of gods and the divine protector of Sasana (the dhamma doctrine as taught by Buddha) and instructed him "Vijaya son of Sinhabahu has come to Lanka .... together with 700 of his followers.... In Lanka O Lord of Gods will my religion be established, therefore, Do thou, O lotus-hued One, protect with zeal Prince Vijaya and his followers, and the Doctrine that is to endure in Lanka for full five thousand years." Thus following Mahavamsa's effort to eulogize Sinhala – Buddhist kings, the Tamils came to be presented as invaders, vandals, non-believers, marauders and destroyers of Sinhalese civilization. It is this Mahavamsa mind-set. - A lethal cocktail mix of race and religion - that has defied any just and reasonable resolution of the conflict!

Buddhist monks frequently visit battle fronts to recite pirith (Buddhist sermon) and invoke the Triple Gem to guide the soldiers and their weapons in warfare. But the spirit of non-violence permeates Buddhism and the first of the five precepts that all Buddhists should follow is "Avoid killing, or harming any living thing." Nothing in Buddhist scripture gives any support to the use of violence as a way to resolve conflict. Buddha says "In times of war Give rise in yourself to the mind of compassion, Helping living beings, and Abandon the will to fight."

Finally, it is said the sting is in the tail. The NPEB gives gratuitous lecture on good behaviour to Tamil Canadians stating "Canada has always been a nation of immigrants, one that welcomes newcomers from all over the world. But traditionally, the price of

admission was that newcomers left their murderous old-world disputes at the door. In recent years, we have forgotten to charge this fee. The result: disgraceful displays such as last weekend's rally — in which a group of Canadians unashamedly shouted slogans in support of a terrorist group."

Is NPEB serious that Canadian Jews, Palestinians, Tibetans, Irish and Afghans who came to Canada have left their "murderous old-world disputes" at the door? Don't Jewish Canadians raise funds to build Jewish settlements in occupied Palestinian Territory ? And what is this non-sensical and arrogant talk about "we have forgotten to charge this fee" as though the NPEB is ruling this country?

May we also ask the NPEB whether they and their forefathers came to this country after leaving their guns and horses behind or they came with guns and horses and killed the Canadian Indians in their thousands and stripping the culture of the remaining Indians? Did not the British fearing that the American Indians would fight for independence, which would throw the British out of North America, gave the Indians blankets contaminated with small pox. During the 1770's, smallpox killed at least 30% of the West Coast Native Americans. This bio warfare overnight gave the British the advantage in numbers over the Aborigines and quickly ended any thoughts of independence.

The history of the Indian people for the last century has been the history of the impingement of white civilization upon the Indian: the Indian was virtually powerless to resist the white civilization; the white community adopted a policy of apartheid of a particularly cruel and degrading kind. Did they not begin by taking the Indians' land without any fee, without any surrender and without their consent? Did the Indian people not herded onto Indian reserves? This was nothing more or less than apartheid and that is what it still is today? And Apartheid has become synonymous with oppression, injustice and racism? We hope the NPEB will give us honest answers!

Unfortunately for the NPEB and fortunately for the Tamil Canadians we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guarantee our fundamental rights of free speech and freedom of assembly. Little Hitlers cannot rob us of those rights and freedoms under the pretext of fighting terrorism. We shall fight back using all democratic means available to us. [\[THE END\]](#)