

LTTE's international network under threat. (1994, May 8). *The Island.*

LTTE's international network under threat

The LTTE's international network which sustains LTTE's militant campaign has come under threat, both internally and externally.

Meanwhile, the activities of the LTTE's plush office in London has come under fire. This has been not due to any external pressure, but to an internal conflict. A battle has erupted between two factions of the LTTE in London. Two of LTTE's most powerful leaders, Seghar and Shanthan have declared war against each other.

Shanthan, an engineer, who studied at a leading British University is in-charge of the LTTE office since Kittu was expelled from London by the British authorities in late 1992. Shanthan is relatively a new recruit, but his PR and organizational capability has been rated outstanding.

Seghar, a confidant of Prabhakaran, who has been in the LTTE in Lon-

don for over ten years, has been involved in day to day activities of the LTTE in London. Shanthan and Seghar has clashed over individual responsibilities.

Paris connection

Lawrence Tilagar, LTTE's International Representative, operating from his office in Paris, has warned both Shanthan and Seghar to resolve their differences.

Interestingly Shanthan is more popular in the pro LTTE Tamil community in London even though Seghar is more powerful in the LTTE. This is because Seghar has developed a personal friendship with Prabhakaran after a one to one meeting and with Anton Balasingham after having worked with him in London. On the contrary, Shanthan has no special friendship either with Prabhakaran or with Balasingham.

Insiders in the LTTE's international network in Paris states that even though Tilagar appears

to be supporting Seghar, simply because of Seghar's strong ties with Prabhakaran and Balasingham, heart to heart Tilagar prefers Shanthan. Tilagar had confided to a friend that it is easier to work with Shanthan than with Seghar.

Meanwhile, other influential members in London, have decided to extend their support to Shanthan. A senior member, who did not wish to be identified, had confided in a close friend who has connections with the Paris office that Seghar will not be allowed to continue working in the LTTE office in London. This has been a major blow to Seghar.

Seghar who was once in charge of the Student Wing of the LTTE in London, has once again expressed his preference to operate independently.

As reported recently in a Tamil newspaper, these internal disputes within the LTTE, from

the Prabhakaran — Mahattaya clash to the Seghar — Shanthan clash, had badly dented the overseas image of the LTTE. The large support base which Mahattaya had from expatriates, particularly from those in the Wannai area, has decided not to support the LTTE further. Some have gone a step beyond and expressed protest at Prabhakaran's dictatorial qualities. Democracy

Intercinal warfare or in fighting within the groups have been a common feature. In fact over 30 groups have perished this way. Even PLOTE was created when Uma Maheswaran fought with Prabhakaran, and they decided to part ways in the early 1980s. EPRLF was created when Padmanabha and Varadarajah Perumal broke away from GUES and EROS. ENDLF and EPDP were created when EPRLF split in the late 1980s. The latest is the EROS

split creating a Balakumar and a Raji faction.

Many question whether the death of the LTTE is near. Concerned Tamils have prophesied that Prabhakaran will never be killed by the Sri Lanka army or the Sri Lanka Air Force

but by one his own lieutenants. Looking at history, this may be a possibility. Almost all the Tamil leaders, both political and militant have been killed by Tamil themselves.

The LTTE predominates in this list. Amirhalingam (TULF), Yogeswaran (TULF), Thambi-muthu (TULF), Dharmalingam (TULF), Alalasingam (TULF), Bobby/Das (TELO), Arulampalam (SLFP), Kanagaratnam (SLFP), Kirubhakaran (EPRLF), Padmanabha (EPRLF), Sabaratnam (TELO), Oberoi Devan (TELA) etc.

Today, many Tamils in London fear, whether the Pondibazzar shoot out between Prabha and Uma will be re-enacted in the streets of London?

This is the major impediment towards the struggle of the Tamils

by a Special Correspondent

towards an independent Tamil Eelam. This will remain the impediment until inner party democracy is restored within these militant groups.

But the nature of militancy is such that, this will not work. This is because to project terror, the base must be secured, consolidated and tightly held by terror. The Tamil militants are a victim of their own terror. So much of blood has been shed in inter-cinl warfare that the Tamil militant groups will never unite as long as Prabhakaran is the leader of the LTTE. This is the belief of many moderate Tamils today.

In many ways, this phenomena — the inter group rivalry — can be interpreted as an extension of inner party conflicts. This is because, there is no democracy within these groups. Tamil youth have joined these groups, with the intention of securing liberation and freedom for their people but there is neither liberation nor freedom even within these groups.

Thousands of youth, particularly the educated and free thinking, have left these movements after fighting with their leaders. The unfortunate have been killed by their own cadres and leaders for dissenting or trying to adopt a softer approach. The clash between Prabhakaran and Mahattaya and Shanthan and Seghar cannot be very different from this.

Parallel rift
Meanwhile, LTTE sources in London have drawn a parallel between Mahattaya's

capitulation and Shanthan's fall. Mahattaya has been perceived as a progressive leader amenable to a settlement compared to Prabhakaran who has been a hardliner and a man with totalitarian views. Shanthan too has been a broadminded and a tolerant leader compared to Seghar who is known for his ruthless and arrogant qualities.

In many ways, the LTTE is splitting. Even if one cannot see it happening physically, it is happening psychologically. Hard liners like Prabhakaran and Seghar are beginning to clash with the more liberated Mahattayas and Shanthans.

It is likely that Seghar will survive in the LTTE in London because of his Prabhakaran connection. This will mean a slowing down of LTTE activities and an impediment to their progress in London. This will also mean that the LTTE

office in London will continue to be stormy in the next few weeks ahead. This will add to the weakening of the LTTE support base not only in London but all over Europe.

External pressure

Last week the European Parliament in Strasberg, firmly expressed their displeasure to a number of Governments, for allowing the LTTE to run offices in their capitals. This is the first time a body of such high standing has moved a resolution of this nature against the LTTE.

Informally, members and officials of the Parliament are expected to pressurize their colleagues to review their policy of allowing the LTTE to operate from their countries. This stand had been adopted following a visit of an European Parliamentary delegation to Sri Lanka. LTTE's latest designs

to cripple Sri Lanka's economy by directly targeting its investors as well as the recent bomb blasts in Colombo by the LTTE is expected to strengthen their position.

Some western nations are seriously considering either bringing about legislative measures to prevent organizations like the LTTE from exploiting the loopholes of democracy by establishing their offices in their countries.

The input made by the Government of Sri Lanka to pressurize the Governments of the West to act in this direction has been inadequate. Even after the statement of the European parliament, it is unfortunate that the Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs have made use of this opportunity to protest to the Governments in Europe, particularly France and London, where the LTTE operates in full swing.