

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 09 November 2000

Shakthi would like to focus its listeners attention today on the reaction of Sri Lankan political [parties](#) to the talks held this week between LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and the Norwegian delegation. According to reports, the LTTE leader had said he was willing to give up his demand for Eelam and enter into unconditional talks with the Sri Lankan government. Given the LTTE" past performance, there will be many who will view this change of heart by Prabhakaran with some scepticism.

The Tamil political parties and the main opposition United National [Party](#) has called on the government to make use of this offer to arrive at a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict. In contrast, the Army Chief, Major-General Lionel Balagalle believes that a let-up of the armed services military offensive in favour of talks will demoralise his soldiers.

On the Government side, our hawkish Prime Minister, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, who ruled out any talks with the LTTE during the recent election campaign, has taken cover by maintaining that he did not know anything about the Norwegian initiative and he got the [news](#) only through the media. But it is quite apparent that the Government which sounded the war-[drum](#) to attract the Sinhala Buddhist voter, is now bowing to the inevitable need for negotiations.

The less said about the reaction of the extremist Sihala Urumaya the better, we think. Having managed to obtain only about one per cent of the total vote we do not believe they have a right to any say on the future of [Sri Lanka](#). We believe, like millions of ordinary Sinhalese, the Sihala Urumaya should remain a lunatic fringe on the local political scene. Their vote [bank](#) of suburban middle class who are largely spared the real horrors of this war and indeed, choose to ignore it most of the time, will be the eternal whingers and critics you will find in any society. Their disgraceful antics on sharing the one seat they have managed to gain through the proportional representation system displays their true intentions.

But it is the reaction of the third force of Sri Lankan politics, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, which is the most interesting. Describing the Norwegian mediation effort as an interference in Sri Lanka's internal affairs, the JVP says the Norwegians and unnamed Western governments are attempting to destroy Sri Lanka's economy and expand their arms sales. We will leave you to judge how a long-lasting peace can lead to increased arms sales. Also the question of how an economically destroyed country can pay for increased arms purchases!

The Norwegian government, the JVP says, is not an impartial mediator because they are on the side of the LTTE and their real motive is to give more power to the minority Tamils. We at Shakthi believe otherwise. We think the real objection of the JVP to the mediation effort is that despite their so-called socialist policies, they are opposed to a socialist solution to a section of the Sri Lankan people.

The JVP talks vaguely of a solution to the problem but has yet to spell out what that solution is. They have campaigned against the previous PA government's devolution package and says they will continue to protest against any other proposals put forward by the current administration.

The hypocrisy of the JVP stance is that while refusing to accept the just demands for self-determination of a section of its own people, it waxes lyrical about the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people! The JVP's position on this question , as another Left politician, Wickremabahu Karunaratne points out, is simply another manifestation of the Sihala Urumaya's extremism. It is not the stance of a political party which claims it is a genuine Third Force in Sri Lanka.