

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 15 March 2001

The decision by the British Government to ban the LTTE has brought out the expected response from ultra-nationalist groups in Sri Lanka. They have lost no time in claiming full credit for an [exercise](#) which has taken years of planning and patient diplomacy by the Government. Within their ranks, both in Sri Lanka and overseas, there is a feeling of euphoria that all that now remains to be done is to wait for Uncle Sam in the US, Uncle Tony in Britain and Uncle Vajpayee in [India](#) to do the needful for solving all of Sri Lanka's problems.

The reality is far from this as Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadiragamar tried to point out recently. The decision of the British government is only one more step in a long and arduous search for peace in the island. The blocking of LTTE funds used to carry on this murderous war is only one aspect of an exercise which needs statesmanship of the highest order and a genuine commitment to a just and fair solution for all Sri Lankans.

This is a time for cool heads, not for exhibitions of might and war cries. It is time to take [stock](#) of what has been achieved, what steps are needed to bring to an end a horrible chapter in Sri Lanka's [history](#) that has virtually destroyed one part of the country, alienated the Tamil community to a large extent and bred a culture of violence and corruption that would take decades to eradicate.

To believe that countries such as the US, Britain and India has been moved by the plight of Sri Lankans alone to solve the country's ethnic problem is naive indeed. If this is true, the question that must be asked is why they waited so long to do so. The reality is, their decisions are dictated solely by domestic imperatives, not the great love they bear for the Sri Lankan people.

In the final analysis, a solution to the crisis must be arrived at by Sri Lankans themselves. Third [parties](#) could certainly assist the process but not the ultimate outcome.

The vast majority of people have recognised that the Tamil people of Sri Lanka have genuine grievances that needs to be remedied. Even President Kumaranatunge, in an address to the Nation on Independence Day, said the same. To argue then that Tamil people have no special grievances, as we have heard our extremist friends say, is downright foolish. The murderous assaults on Tamil people in 1958, 1972, 1977 and 1983 will forever remain a blot on Sri Lanka's history. To argue that these were isolated incidents beggars belief.

Through their votes at successive elections, the Sri Lankan people have opted for political parties that advocated a peaceful settlement. They have overwhelmingly rejected calls by fly-by-night groups who have advocated a military solution to the problem.

It is the leaders of these political parties however, who have let their people down time and time again. Hopefully, this Government at least will make a

genuine attempt to recognise these realities. Shakthi remains committed to the position that it is only by genuinely respecting the basic human rights of all its citizens that Sri Lanka can once again take its place as a democratic country.