Reading the Signs in the Diaspora

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By John Thompson President the Mackenzie Institute Entrenched in palm-log bunkers, with a human shield made up of tens of thousands of kidnapped Tamil civilians, the LTTE remains at bay. Worse, Prabhakaran is said to be trapped with them; it seems he didn’t run away after all.

This is not good news. Sociopathic leaders like Hitler in the bunker or Jimmy Jones in his cult compound in Guyana, often try to take much of their world with them when faced with their own destruction. When the objective history of the last days of the Tiger guerrilla force is written, Prabhakaran’s manipulative lack of empathy and willingness to express his willpower with the suffering and deaths of innocents will be clearly evident. Meanwhile, the Tamil Diaspora – so long controlled by the LTTE – is showing signs of desperation too. There has been the frenzied campaign to get Sri Lanka branded as a ‘genocidal’ nation. The Diaspora leadership are hoping for international pressure to give some tiny advantage that might just avert or delay the inevitable. Also, there is the unconscious desire to forever mar any claim of victory by the Sri Lankan military and to permanently define the history of the war in their terms. For the ordinary Tamils living abroad, there is fear for relatives and former neighbors now compelled at gunpoint to join Prabhakaran’s final stand. The problem is, as a few Tiger captives escape and tell their tales, there is a growing realization among the Diaspora that there should be more apprehension about the conduct of the Tigers than of the Army. Toronto, having the largest concentration of Sri Lankan Tamils in the world, has seen more than its fair share of Tiger-sponsored events; particularly in the last few weeks as the "Genocide" protest campaign continues. Protest events are held almost daily, to the exasperation of Toronto’s myriad other citizens – not that they are in the habit of visibly displaying their irritation. Besides, two trends are evident. Torontonians have seen large Tamil protests in the past with over ten thousand marchers. We’ve learned that Tamil organizers will order their community’s shops shut down when they want to maximize attendance and the, ahem, ‘fundraisers’ who collect, er,’ donations will use their characteristic tact and diplomacy to persuade Tamils to show up. We are not seeing those large demonstrations now. What we are seeing are desperate attempts to make the demonstrations look larger than they really are. This is usually done by waving even more placards and flags than usual, and by standing everyone in a single line shoulder to shoulder on major streets. Sometimes, if clustered in a single area, demonstrators adopt a hollow box formation to make their numbers look even larger. When one actually counts noses (as this writer did March 3rd at the protest across the street from the US Consulate), there were only 250 people. This is a clear comedown, from even a month ago when 2,500 came out in -20 C weather. Many of these were either very recent arrivals, or hard-core organizers. It is clear the campaign is fast losing steam – and more and more Tamils are staying away. There are other signs of desperation. The Tigers have long refrained from using lethal violence outside of Sri Lanka and India, particularly against the authorities in any country hosting the Diaspora. Acts of terrorism by the Diaspora community are strictly forbidden. In 20 years in Canada, there were only two planned incidents by former LTTE gangsters against Canadian police – both of which were curtailed by Tamil leaders long before either operation was launched. Yet, in Paris, on March 2nd, it seems a French policeman was fatally shot by an LTTE fundraiser. A long-standing taboo has been broken. The recent air-raid (if such a minor event can be so characterized) on Colombo by two Air Tigers on a one-way trip was also supposed to be celebrated as a major event in Toronto this week. For a ceremony meant to honor the two dead Tiger aviators, attendance was remarkably low – less than 500 were there. What was disturbing, however, was the recital of the suicide notes of the two Air Tigers. One was a clear call for young Canadian Tamils to join the Tigers immediately. The Tiger’s traditional penchant for conscripting children is bad enough in Sri Lanka, but to attempt to do so in Canada? Are the Tigers hoping to recruit and train terrorists to operate internationally? Any game warden knows that an animal is at its most dangerous when cornered and wounded… Let’s hope that Tigers don’t behave this way. John C. Thompson is the President of The Mackenzie Institute in Toronto Canada. The Institute, cited by several major Canadian newspapers as one of Canada’s leading research organizations, prides itself on its objective and independent forays into some of the most contentious issues of the day. Its work often becomes a catalyst for informed debate and major change. He directs its research into issues relating to domestic and international political instability and organized violence (e.g. terrorism, warfare, organized crime, conflict, causes of instability, political extremism, etc.) Former Intelligence Officer of the Canadian Army, Thompson was awarded the Canadian Forces Decoration in 1989. He left the service as a Captain. John is a member of Civitas, the Queen’s York Rangers Regimental Council, the Royal Canadian Military Institute – and its pistol club, Fair Vote Canada, the International Counter-Terrorism Officers Association) Courtesy: Island.lk