

A FOREWORD

Brian Seneviratne

Consultant

Queen Mary Hospital

Brisbane, Australia.

"The Broken Palmyra" is a very disturbing account of what has gone on, indeed what is still going on, in the North of Sri Lanka. It documents in painful detail what the Sri Lankan government and the Indian "Peace-Keeper" have been doing and, more informatively, what our "heroes" in the various militant movements (and even the non-militant politicians) are really like. Not what they pretend to be, but what they really are. Not what our biases, hopes and imagination make them to be, but what they are. No person or group is spared, and no information suppressed for fear of offending a particular interest. The militant groups, the Indian army and the Sri Lankan army, have a charge to answer to. It is the assassination of one of the authors. We may not know who killed Dr. Rajani Thiranagama, but we must certainly know why she was killed. She was killed because of her human rights work and her contribution to "The Broken Palmyra". It was a warning to the others that the totalitarian regime that has established itself in Jaffna, whatever its changing label may be, is not to be challenged, questioned or exposed. Rajani's murderers were trying to destroy a lot more than an outstanding daughter of Jaffna who has done so much for her people. For this reason alone, as someone concerned with the plight of the Tamil people, I am delighted to see the publication of this book.

A "liberation struggle" is to do with people, with freeing them from oppression, and with decreasing the violation of internationally accepted human rights. If the converse is being established in the name of liberation, then concerned people must question what is going on. "The Broken Palmyra" documents what we have all known, but not had the courage to say - that the civilian population has been cannon fodder in a despicable power struggle. Across the country, the Rule of Law has been replaced by the Rule of the Armed Hoodlum. If Sri Lanka is to return to civilisation, what is going on in the country will have to be exposed. With internationally credible human rights groups such as Amnesty International expelled from the country and the media gagged or intimidated by the State and by armed groups, it takes outstandingly courageous people to publish what really is going on. As a Sinhalese, my only regret is that we in the South have not been able to come up with a group who are prepared to write a similar account of what is going on in the rest of the country.

The first question that must pass through the minds of anyone who reads this incredible book is, "How reliable is it? How accurate is the information?" Those of us who have had the privilege of knowing the authors would have no difficulty in answering this question. The authors, senior members of the academic staff of Jaffna University, are people of indisputable honesty and integrity who have made unbelievable efforts to check their facts. The methods they have used to collect the data underscore their determination to sort out fact from fiction and present the situation as it is, not what people imagine it to be. ".....members of the U.T.H.R. worked both as a team and some times as individuals to visit places where incidents occurred, interview eye witnesses and to check what actually happened." They have presented their findings in a frank and a fearless manner with no bias towards one or other of the pressure groups. If the incidents reported in "The Broken Palmyra" conflict with the versions put out by the militant groups or the State (whether Sri Lankan or Indian), I would personally

have no difficulty in choosing which version to believe. Such is the integrity and credibility of the authors.

No worthwhile contribution to solving the mess in Sri Lanka can be made by those such as the writer of this Foreword and the thousands of other Sri Lankans who have not had the courage to stay in Sri Lanka. It can only be made by those such as the authors of "The Broken Palmyra" who have the courage, determination and patriotism to stay where they are needed and say what is right rather than what is convenient or acceptable to some power base. That is what integrity and true leadership is all about. The "Broken Palmyra" is compulsory reading for anyone who is interested in the future of Sri Lanka. I have no doubt that the authors will be condemned by Tamil fanatics as "traitors to the Tamil cause" for exposing what is going on in Jaffna in the name of "liberation", "peace-keeping" or "national security." It is hoped that when sanity returns, the authors of this exceptional book will be recognised as true patriots (of the non-pseudo variety) and their work an outstanding contribution aimed at preventing the establishment of anarchy in Sri Lanka.

AUTHORS' PREFACE

APRIL 1988

The collection of articles contained in these two volumes was written by us mostly in the three months following November 1987. This period marked the immediate aftermath of the Indian Army's October offensive that had the stated purpose of disarming the Tamil Tigers (or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the L.T.T.E.). The tragic results of this war came as a surprise to most Tamils who had just experienced two months of unprecedented peace. They expected no good from the Sri Lankan forces. From the militants, they had expected little more than to keep the Sri Lankan forces at bay. But from India they had expected much. To add to the effects of the process culminating in the Indian offensive, Tamil society found itself in a state of paralysis, both moral and intellectual. The ordinary civilian is now caught, a helpless pawn, in a game played by a multitude of forces. People were being threatened, robbed, beaten and sometimes even killed. There were few signs of a community response. Amidst all this, the various actors had much to hide as well as their own myths to propagate. All had acquired a vested interest in suppressing the truth.

We felt strongly that the community must revive, and to do so we must face the truth in all its nakedness, both about ourselves and about all those who purported to be our saviours. We are not professional writers or historians. But we started writing in earnest, in response to a deeply felt need, with no idea of how we were going to publish our writings. It will be evident from the collection of articles that we also have our differences. Two of the authors take a Marxist view that the state of a society is determined by its material underpinnings. One of the authors subscribes to the view that the ills of society come from a loss of moral commitment or a failure to obey the voice of God. The remaining author takes the view that evils besetting us come from a preoccupation with material ends. But all are agreed in common that there must be a conscious attempt at change. While each article reflects the presuppositions of the person writing it, the articles also have a collective character resulting from months of consultation and discussion. Also the publication of the book represents an act that will cause unhappiness in several quarters. We hope that this will be only temporary and

that all parties and individuals will be better for having read this. For these reasons we offer this work as a collective effort without individual ascriptions. Besides trying to tell the truth, our purpose is also to challenge those Tamils both at home and abroad who may be in confusion as to what they must do to help their fellows.

On the advice of a senior writer, we decided that the book splits naturally into two parts. This volume, the first part of the book, gives the historical background of the Tamils pertaining to current events. The main purpose of this is to give background information to those not familiar with the troubled island and to serve as a basis for understanding the current situation. Much of this has not been written about before.

The second part of the book, volume 2, contains analytical articles, together with reports of the Indian offensive in Jaffna. The latter are not meant to be exhaustive and serve merely to indicate a pattern to the happenings. We have not touched on the enormous civilian suffering outside the Jaffna peninsula, although there are similarities in the pattern. The chronicling of these, together with the events in the Eastern Province, is a task by itself and is beyond our resources. In terms of civilian suffering, the Eastern Province has suffered enormously, particularly during the Sri Lankan government's dirty war of 1984-87. The destruction by the Sri Lankan forces of entire Tamil villages and townships in the Trincomalee District must be seen to be believed. Again, there is much truth in the widespread feeling amongst Eastern Tamils that their interests and well-being have received little attention in the North. We trust that someone with the ability and the means will take on the task of filling the large gap pertaining to the East that we have left unfilled. While we appreciate the problems of the East, we cannot write something perfunctory to hide our inadequacies.

Finally we thank two persons who kindly typed our manuscripts and a senior editor who patiently edited our work. Besides suggesting modifications, this senior editor supplied us with additional information of great value. We also acknowledge a group of students from the University of Jaffna who contributed a section to the chapter on incidents.

We also thank Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California for their assistance in bringing out a pre-publication issue. This was necessary as routine publication is a long process and the significance of the material will be lost unless it comes out without delay.

A SECOND PREFACE

February, 1990

A second preface was thought necessary because two years have elapsed since the original manuscript was ready, and many things have taken place in the intervening months, including the murder of Dr. Rajani Thiranagama, one of the co-authors. The authors have also had time to reflect on what they wrote nearly two years ago during the heat of the October 1987 war and its immediate aftermath. While preserving the emotional impact of these events, some editing has been done on the material in the pre-publication issue in the interests of greater fairness and objectivity. We have also removed impressions which affected us then, but would now obscure the book's wider significance. Also included is a postscript written by the late Dr. Rajani Thiranagama. Although we privately circulated the pre-publication issue, we delayed mass distribution because of a few revisions we wanted to make. But unfortunately, certain happenings led to the widespread distribution of the copies of the pre-publication issue. To further compound matters, Rajani was killed in September last year. Therefore we decided to publish the book with few changes.

As we have mentioned earlier, countless young men had voluntarily taken up arms and laid down their lives for a cause on behalf of the entire Tamil population, in a war that was being waged against the chauvinist Sri Lankan state. Sometimes they fought in the hope of obtaining their goal of Eelam - a separate state - only in the distant future. The writing of an analysis of the whole period of struggle, of its willing and unwilling participants, and its history, which questions many an assumption and theory, may seem, to many, irresponsible and foolish. Others may say, to indulge in self-criticism in the hey-day of nationalist fervour was adventuristic and suicidal.

Apart from other considerations, we felt that we owed the writing of this book to our young men in their teens who are on the streets carrying some of the most sophisticated weapons in the world. We also owe it to our young men and women to whom we hand down nothing but hypocrisy, dependency and hopelessness. The present drift was destroying the creative capacity of a whole generation of youths, exploiting their aspirations and transforming them into enemies fighting one another.

We also felt the need for the articulation of independent but authentic sentiments of the people. The people generally reacted instinctively to contingencies, without going beyond what is apparent. Nor did they have the will to look at them critically. It was hoped that a space for independent, objective, thinking, keeping the people as its focal point, would evolve.

In the process of writing this book, we have over and over again come to the conclusion that any positive development of our history rests primarily on ourselves. Therefore, while condemning in no uncertain terms all open and covert subversion of the politics of the liberation period by external forces such as the Indian State, and the short-sightedness of its present and erstwhile local allies who had lost sight of original goals, we have stressed the need to study our aspirations, assumptions and susceptibilities. This may well be too great a challenge to those whose exclusive idealism is not sympathetic to criticism. The liberation struggle has always opted for militaristic solutions. Critics and adversaries were killed. Dissidents were killed and branded traitors. Criticism is often termed "an attempt to sully the sublimity of the movement". Politics becomes the prerogative of the militarily strongest group. And even its capitulations to the pressures of discredited forces are interpreted as a furthering of the cause of Eelam.

Thus in this strait-jacketed ethos of ours, there was a strong need to tap the seething but dormant consciousness of the people. It is appropriate at this moment to quote an excerpt from Rajani Thiranagama's writings:

"A state of resignation envelops the community. The long shadow of the gun has not only been the source of power and glory, but also of fear and terror as well. In the menacing shadow play, forces complementing each other, dance in each other's momentum. The paralysing depression is not due to the violence and authority imposed from outside, but rather to the destructive violence emanating from within the womb of our society."

Why was Rajani Thiranagama murdered ? It is a question not answered by her killers who have chosen anonymity. When there were moves to commemorate her life and work, questions were raised by many Tamils from around the world: "Why should she alone be remembered and commemorated amidst so many killed and unremembered?"

She was killed because her sense of responsibility demanded that, in her concern for the meaningless deaths of ordinary people, the dominant political trends of this society ought to be questioned. The accepted practice was to use the statistics of the dead to castigate the villain of the moment from the capitals of the world. It accorded well with the thrust of using people as cannon fodder for the purposes of propaganda. Rajani did what was unacceptable. She asked questions that went deep into the causes of destruction and questioned the politics behind it. She viewed the writing of "The Broken Palmyrah," not as an isolated scholarly socio-historical analysis, but as a democratic treatment of the people. She was never indifferent to the fate of those who had taken up arms for a cause they knew little about. She was often sympathetic to their stated aspirations and tried to begin a dialogue with them, although she did not share their views.

Right from her undergraduate days, Rajani had yearned and fought for social justice and equality. Whether it be student issues, the discrimination against Tamils, the National Question or general strikes, she always aligned herself with the oppressed parties. She stood up in very delicate situations and argued, confronted and negotiated for the rights of the people. During her stay in Britain from 1983 to 1986, she, together with her postgraduate studies, participated in the various political and socio-cultural struggles of the black people. She shared in the striving of blacks for an end to discrimination and their recognition as a political force to be esteemed. She did this with her characteristic enthusiasm. It was particularly in the sphere of black women and feminism that she explored specific issues and concepts concerning women, within the broader framework of class, black struggles and other third world phenomena.

Rajani's involvement with women's groups and issues was part of her broader concern for people, especially oppressed people. She found in women's struggles for survival with dignity and independence, a message for all struggling people. When a group of women in Jaffna came together to establish a home for women in need-"The Poorani Women's Centre" - she gave generously of herself to the task of establishing it and seeing it through its teething problems. Her theoretical undertakings in feminism and her personal relationships with women inside and outside the university are instances of how she yoked theory and practice together.

A peace march to express the people's feelings about the militarisation of the young had been one of Rajani's last wishes. She had also suggested the slogan "We want bread; not bullets". This was taken up by those who had been inspired by her and such a march, quite independent of any political group, was held on 21 November, 1989. It was joined-in by

representatives from the Sinhalese South, Britain, India, Pakistan, Netherlands, South Africa and Tanzania. Tributes were received from persons great and small from around the world.

When a medical student spoke at the meeting held after the peace march to commemorate Rajani, he recalled Rajani in connection with this particular issue of militarisation. Shortly before her death, after her return from England, she had called him up and had asked him gravely, what they were doing about it as a student body. This was during the height of the I.P.K.F. sponsored forced conscription. He further said at the commemoration meeting:

"During the peace march which preceded this meeting, I was struck by what two conscripts from the T.N.A. said as we passed them. They said, 'Had you marched a few months earlier, we would not be here in these uniforms, holding these guns'. On the other hand, in Vadamaratchi where I come from, boys around 13 and 14 years old are induced to carry weapons without any political understanding. Disillusionment sets in fast. All that remains is a thirst for vengeance".

These student leaders knew the risks. They understood the nuances when gunmen came and spoke to them. They knew that business was meant. When they walk the streets after dark or go to their rooms for the night, they are exposed and helpless. The death that threatens them is not instant death in the rush of battle, but death as an ever present possibility. They knew why their friend and mentor, Rajani, was killed. They were keenly aware of the fate of Vimalaswaran, a former student leader

The courage and an unyielding analytical and emotional thrust that Rajani had inspired in this particular student is the kind of influence she had on many around her. Her actions, writings and her passionate concern, stand in stark contrast to those who hold positions in this society without acknowledging the associated responsibility. It is because of the explosive potential of her memory that many are trying to either play it down or suppress it. It also explains why many were uncomfortable with her - some even to the point of wanting her killed.

A chronic fear of violent bodily harm is an ever present feature of Tamil life. Many Tamils fled this country in fear following the anti-Tamil violence of July 1983 and its aftermath. Now they live in London, New York, Toronto, Oslo, Amsterdam and so on. And the fear remains and is more subtle, but it still is very real. This time it comes from within. Speakers billed to speak at meetings suddenly tender excuses. Someone participating in a cultural show receives a call because it is sponsored by persons independent of a powerful group. Those not happy with the main propaganda line talk in hushed tones at public gatherings. Messages are passed on half jokingly that someone whose views were unpalatable, would be kidnapped. Persons organising something like a scheme to help ex-militants abroad, receive a call from Colombo or Madras threatening with death their close relatives back at home. This plague of fear becomes obscene only by being tolerated.

The Tamils have become isolated individuals without a sense of community. Even in conditions where they can appeal for help from the forces of law and order, and where the press could be sympathetic, they find themselves unable to organise in the interests of their self-respect and dignity. With a few exceptions, the Tamil-Associations that dot the world are gatherings where they can conveniently and uncritically misrepresent events at home. They are inextricably linked to the sickness and its cure back at home.

This brings us to hundreds of young men who had once meant well and later left their militant groups, often broken and disillusioned, to live out their existence in India and the capitals of the West, as men in a hangover. Many of them helped to recruit large numbers to their organisation. Others have been well known killers. Some number their murdered victims in the tens. If these persons have any sense of responsibility or any courage left, continued

silence is not the honourable option open to them. For the good of those of their community who can still be saved, they must risk coming out openly and confessing that they were wrong and that what they had advocated is wrong. Rajani had once helped a militant group. It is a measure of her sense of responsibility that she came out and openly repudiated what the group had stood for. In this she was almost an exception. That was why she felt inclined to carry on her shoulders in tears, the responsibility of the community for having brought our young to this.

With the passage of time, and after what happened to Rajani - a supreme act of intolerance- we have felt a greater need to publish this as a collective work. Any reader is bound to come across within these pages, a divergence of views. Much of this will turn out to be complementary. We wish to demonstrate that despite our differences, we are willing to work together, listen to reasoned argument, and remain open to being changed by each other. This is not only the ideal of science, but also of the search for truth. We would also defend each other's right to hold his or her different opinions.

We wish to thank many friends and acquaintances who have been sympathetic to the publication of this book and have helped us by making many suggestions in the interests of fairness, have pointed out errors of fact, and have given much valuable time to going through the contents, paying attention to detail. Finally we thank all those who helped us in the several aspects of publication and distribution.

Chapter 1

Missed Opportunities and the Loss of Democracy

1.1 The Disfranchisement of Indian Tamils: 1948-49

Those who look at the political history of the Tamils since the 1930's cannot help marvelling at the missed opportunities. The first of these came and went before independence. The idea of a Ceylon Federation had come as early as 1929 from S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, who later became Prime Minister of Ceylon. By this time portents of future communal problems had already emerged. But no Tamil leader of importance fought for a federal constitution at independence. The Tamil Congress under G. G. Ponnampalam, which represented Tamil communal interests fought instead for 50-50 representation in parliament, that is half the seats for the minorities who then formed a little over 30% of the population, the Tamils being about a quarter of the population. Perhaps, that was the only way a Tamil politician with a communal electorate could hope to become Prime Minister. Whereas a federal demand would have seemed a reasonable guarantee of Tamil security, the 50-50 demand was seen to be unreasonable to the Sinhalese, as it indeed was, and finally Ceylon received independence on 4 February, 1948 without the Tamils having either.

Mr. Don Stephen Senanayake who was Prime Minister of the then Dominion of Ceylon under the Soulbury constitution had secured the co-operation of key sections of the Tamil leadership through personal guarantees of good intent and the offer of ministries. The first parliament had over 40% of the seats represented by candidates from the minorities or left inclined candidates influenced by the minorities. (The minorities consist of the Ceylon Tamils, Indian Tamils, Muslims and Burghers.) But the Citizenship Act of December 1948 and the Parliamentary Elections Amendment Act of 1949 put an end to that and paved the way to reducing the representation in parliament of minorities to less than 20%. What these Acts did was to make non-citizens of the Tamil plantation labour who formed about 10% of the national population or about a third of the minority population, and deprive them of their vote. Besides having 7 parliamentary representatives, the Indian Tamil vote influenced the decision in 20 other constituencies, generally to the ruling U.N.P.'s disadvantage.

What was surprising, however, was that almost all of the Tamil elite representing the Ceylon Tamils through both Mr. Senanayake's United National Party and the Tamil Congress, either voted for the bills or were not serious about opposing them. Mr. G. G. Ponnampalam, the leader of the Tamil Congress, opposed the first bill and voted for the second, having become a member of the cabinet. This somersault on the unprincipled calculation that, on the goodwill of the U.N.P. depended their personal power and vested interests. The Sinhalese elite discovered very early that they could easily call the bluff of the Tamil elite, especially the Colombo Tamil.

Kumari Jayewardene has pointed out in her writings (see Lanka Guardian June/July 1984) that the vote in a parliament which disenfranchised the Indian Tamils was not simply a communal vote. Strenuous opposition to this bill came from the major left parties - the Trotskyite L.S.S.P. led by Dr. N. M. Perera, the Bolsheviki-Leninist party led by Dr. Colvin R. De Silva, and the Communist party led by Mr. Pieter Keuneman. Most M.P.'s from these

parties were Sinhalese. A prominent Buddhist and doctor, H. Sri Nissanka opposed this piece of Legislation on the grounds that it ignored the first principle of law. Other prominent Sinhalese Independents who voted against the bills were Wilmot Perera, R. S. Pelpola, I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla and Lakshman Rajapakse.

It would be much nearer the truth to say that the vote was along class lines. Again it is probably wrong to say that Mr. D. S. Senanayake was involved in a deep anti-Tamil conspiracy to bring about Sinhalese domination. Nor is it possible to make a case that Mr. Senanayake was hatching a diabolical master plan to colonise Tamil areas with Sinhalese. When work for the Gal Oya settlement scheme in the Eastern province had been completed, first preference was given to people from the province. It was only after about six months, when faced with the paucity of local applicants, that the doors were opened to applicants from other provinces. As regards the Citizenship Act of 1948 and its sequel, what almost certainly motivated D. S. Senanayake was his alarm over the strength in parliament of the working class based parties of the Left, which comprised 20 out of a total of 95 seats in parliament. Against this the U.N.P. obtained only 41 seats in the 1947 elections, 7 short of a simple majority. There was also a distinct possibility of a coalition government of the Left sometime in the future. It was thus natural for the U.N.P. to think of perpetuating its political and class dominance by knocking out a large section of the working class which was the most easily isolated. Subsequently in the 1952 elections the U.N.P. increased its number of seats to 54. (See A. J. Wilson's "*Electoral Politics in an Emergent State*", Cambridge University Press, 1975.)

Thus the first and most grievous blow against democracy was struck by the passage of these bills with Tamil connivance. In poignant words during the course of the parliamentary debates, Dr. N. M. Perera, the leader of the L.S.S.P. said: "I thought racialism of this type died with Houston Chamberlain and Adolph Hitler. I do not believe that anyone claiming to be a Statesman would ask us to accede to a bill of this nature ... We cannot proceed as if we were God's chosen race quite apart from the rest of the world; that we and we alone have the right to be citizens of this country."

S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, then a member of the Tamil Congress, strongly dissented from these bills and left the T.C. to form a new party, the Federal Party, which was 25 years later to absorb other Tamil parties and become the Tamil United Liberation Front (T.U.L.F.). Dr. E. M. V. Naganathan and Mr. C. Vanniasingham were two other eminent figures who left the T.C. to form the Federal Party whose Tamil name read: "The Tamil State Party." The latter was closely associated in the negotiations which led to the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact of 1957, the first attempt to find a political solution to the communal problem. This was not implemented as a result of pressure from extremist Sinhalese and Buddhist opinion. One of the major demonstrations against this pact was the long march from Colombo to Kandy led by J. R. Jayewardene who was trying to use the occasion to revive the fortunes of the U.N.P., which had suffered a debacle in 1956.

While the Left saw in the legislation of 1948/49 a crude expression of class hatred overlaid by a veneer of racialism, Mr. Chelvanayakam stressed the communal aspect of it in his contributions to the debates. He pointed out that this set a very disturbing precedent for the government to shut away the opinion of any section of the population it did not like; that no one could therefore live comfortably with this act; and that it may hit almost anyone some day. Mr. Chelvanayakam said during the course of a speech: "This bill is a piece of legislation not based on the highest principles on which differences and difficulties of inter-communal

problems have to be resolved and I oppose it firstly on that ground." His fears were well founded. The sixth amendment to the Republican constitution of 1978 passed in the middle of the July 1983 race riots unseated all the T.U.L.F. M.P.'s in parliament.

One of democracy's main planks is the impartiality of the law and its agencies for enforcement. When there is a situation in which one can go through the prohibitively expensive process of the law and yet not find justice, it becomes pregnant with violence and anarchy. Soon after the 1952 elections, the Federal Party concentrated its energies on fighting three important and expensive legal battles. Two of these were election petition cases. The most important of these legal battles was the challenging of the Citizenship Act, No. 18 of 1949, and the Parliamentary Elections Amendment act No. 48 of 1949.

Section 29 of the Soulbury Constitution of 1948 provided that Parliament could not enact legislation which 1. prohibits or restricts the free exercise of any religion; 2. makes persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable; 3. gives to persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not given to persons of other communities or religions; and 4. alters the constitution of any religious body except with the consent of the governing authority of that body. It was also provided that parliament could not vary the provisions of the constitution in a manner which infringed these.

It seemed a clear cut case that the act in question was against the spirit of the constitution. Apart from all legal niceties, the legislation was immoral and went against the assurances of good intent and good faith given by the Honourable Prime Minister in persuading others to accept the Independence Constitution.

In challenging the legislation it was argued that the acts discriminated against the Indian community in contravention of section 29. The argument went that these acts disenfranchised Indians resident in Ceylon who had earlier enjoyed the vote. Following the passing of the legislation the vote was to be confined to citizens of Ceylon. The Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act, No. 34, of 1949 permitted only those Indians and Pakistanis resident in Ceylon who satisfied some stringent conditions to obtain Ceylonese Citizenship. It was pointed out then that many prominent Ceylonese of the day, including the Prime Minister, could not have satisfied these conditions -- for they were born in times when there was much laxity in registering births, leave alone those of their immediate forebears.

It was true that there was a genuine human problem here. The Indian plantation labour formed a very deprived class without means of social advancement, kept isolated in line rooms, and alienated from the Kandyan peasantry by the European plantation owners. Outsiders had to seek permission to enter the estates. The formation of the estates too had involved the takeover of some lands from the Kandyan peasantry. The extent of this takeover was exaggerated by propagandists. Much of the planting was done on land where thick jungle was cleared by Indian coolie labour working in conditions of poor health and disease. At the same time the Indian labour had been brought from the middle of the nineteenth century, travelling in conditions resulting in a high death rate in the early days, and many of them now knew of no other country but Ceylon. In the nature of things Kandyan anger tended to be turned against the Indian labour rather than against the European plantation owners and the low country Sinhalese businessmen who made money in the commerce of the hill-country. It is relevant here that during the debates Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, then Minister of Home Affairs, had distanced himself from the U.N.P.'s position by saying that while he supported

the legislation in the interests of statesmanship and wisdom and in the interests of peace, he would have preferred the problem to have been approached from another angle. He said in his speech that Prime Minister Nehru of India had already shown considerable understanding towards the problem. Bandaranaike's approach involved determining in the first instance the number of persons of Indian origin who could be absorbed. Patience, consultation and a commitment to justice could have yielded solutions which would have been acceptable to both the plantation labour and the Kandyans. For instance the Federal Party later suggested that the plantation labour could be encouraged to resettle in the Tamil speaking Northern and Eastern provinces where settlements were being opened up. It may be noted that during the State Council era of the 1930's Dr. N. M. Perera pointed out the danger arising from an influx of Indian labour. It was none other than D. S. Senanayake who argued that it was very beneficial to the plantation industry.

The litigation first went in favour of the plaintiffs when at the Kegalle District Court, the District Judge N. Sivagnanasundaram held the legislation to be invalid on the grounds that the acts sought to deprive the Indian community of the franchise. The Supreme Court in *Mudanayake vs. Sivagnanasundaram* (53 N.L.R. 25, 1952) quashed the decision of the District Court on the grounds that the acts were clear and unambiguous; and that the acts in question applied to all communal groups in a like manner and were thus not discriminatory. When appealed to, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council upheld the Supreme Court's verdict.

Everyone - both sides to the dispute - knew that the series of legislation represented a legal conjuring trick. Everyone knew that the intended victims were the Indians. Racist sentiments expressed during the course of the debate were proof of that. The sting of the legislation was obscured by being distributed in three separate acts. Each act taken by itself may seem fairly respectable. A judge may thus hold them each to be valid without appearing to be too partial. By every accepted universal norm, the legislation was unjust and discriminatory. Many in this country agreed with that. Thus did Great Britain help to strike the first blow against democracy in independent Ceylon. Many felt at that time as later, that the quality of British justice meted out by the Privy Council is not unaffected by Britain's other interests. The tea plantations were largely British owned and Britain had a naval base at Trincomalee.

At that time opponents of the legislation were free to hold demonstrations, protest rallies and satyagrahas in Colombo, which they did. This freedom too was to be taken away. The process which started in 1948 (Kandasamy killing, 1952 rice hartal) culminated 30 years later when strikers and protesters would be stabbed and attacked with bicycle chains by hooligans in the pay of government ministers, while the police stood by. The 1948/49 legislative enactments had set a precedent for the politics of immoral manipulation rather than consultation. With Jayewardene on top, people would watch incredulously the controversies surrounding the appointments of Chief Justices. One of the judges appointed by President Jayewardene to go into the abuses of power by Mrs. Bandaranaike during her period as Prime Minister from 1970 to 1977 and who recommended a deprivation of her civic rights for 7 years, was later found guilty of improper conduct during a previous posting. During the months April/May 1971 and after the passage of emergency regulation 15A in July 1983, every armed uniformed person became a potential Judge Jeffreys in his own right. The law courts became superfluous in a large number of important instances, thus vitiating an important pillar of democracy.

It was then left to Jayewardene, who had in a base manner campaigned against the Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam pact of 1957, to accept under duress, the political solution along the same lines contained in the Indo-Lanka accord of 1987.

There were other ironies too. During the course of the 1947/48 debates, Mr. A. Ratnayake accused Mr. S. Thondaman, the leader of the Ceylon Indian Congress, of having a vision of Ceylon federated with India. Mr. Thondaman would in time become a close ally of the U.N.P. under Jayewardene, helping the latter to win both the presidential elections and the controversial referendum in 1982. The latter, as will be explained later, deprived the entire country of the right to elect representatives for a crucial period of six years. Thus by slipping a few dubious benefits to the plantation labour, Jayewardene was able to secure peace in the plantations together with his unfettered continuation in power. It was ironical that D. S. Senanayake had himself advocated federation of Ceylon with India, of course protecting Ceylon's interests.

Some may feel that Mr. Ratnayake's fears of a Ceylon federated with India came close to being realised with the signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987. But this had much more to do with the manner in which Mr. Ratnayake voted on the bills in question, than with anything Mr. Thondaman did in the intervening years.

1.2. The Left

The performance of the Left in the wake of the General Elections of 1947 had repercussions which strongly influenced the future. With several opportunities before it the Left was hamstrung by differences which were expressed in hyperbole and by an ambiguous attitude to the institution of parliament. The Left opposition at that time was made up of the L.S.S.P., the B.L.P. (Bolshevik Leninist Party) and the Communist Party. They controlled between themselves 20 seats out of 95 for which elections were held, with the U.N.P. controlling 41 and were thus placed in a minority situation. Feverish attempts were made by independents and groups opposed to the U.N.P. to form a united front and offer itself as an alternative government. The grouping which formed the government would have received a bonus of six parliamentary seats which were to be appointed by the Governor General (the King's representative) on the Prime Minister's recommendation. The L.S.S.P. declined to participate in such a government. Its leader Dr. N. M. Perera explained that they were a "revolutionary party" and would therefore not serve in a "capitalist government". They were willing, however, to assist those who may take office in an alternative progressive government. For nearly three years thereafter the Left could not even agree to a Leader of the Opposition. Dr. N. M. Perera was elected leader in June 1950. The communist party argued that the idea of "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition" being part and parcel of the government, implied an acceptance that the present social order must continue.

Having got into parliament, the Left had no clear idea of what it wanted to do with it. In its rhetoric it did not seem to accept the parliament as the arbiter of the nation's destinies. A mixture of both fear and opportunism led the U.N.P. government to adopt an uncompromising attitude to the Left. Instead of taking an enlightened view and trying to persuade the Left that parliament was a place for reason and contained the possibility of the realisation of its social goals, it proceeded to disenfranchise a large section of the Left's support base. Furthermore there was a reluctance to consult and do business with the Left and the needs of the constituencies represented by the Left were ignored. Describing the U.N.P.'s view of the Opposition, Sir John Kotelewala said on 9 June 1950: "Our Opposition today is an Opposition

which does not believe in the democratic system. That is why the government finds its task so difficult. We have to fight the Opposition not as an Opposition but as enemies of the state... once they got in they would not get out. There is no guarantee that you would ever have a chance to go to the ballot again."

The ambivalence of the Left to the institution of parliament was expressed in a statement issued on the decision to boycott the ceremony of 11 January 1949 in which the speaker's mace and chair were presented by the British House of Commons to its progeny. Amongst the reasons advanced was "the consistent failure of the government to consult the Opposition on all such matters on which by parliamentary tradition, it is the duty of the Government to consult the Opposition." This was a complaint that it was not being treated as the King's loyal Opposition. While the British educated learned men of the Left languished in uncertainty, the business of the day was carried on by squires and ex-military officers adept in the ways of the world.

There were attempts from 1947 onwards to forge unity within the Left and these met with limited success. The B.L.P. merged with the L.S.S.P. on 3 June 1950. In early 1951 the L.S.S.P. affirmed that its ultimate objective lay along that of "a direct mass struggle alone and not through parliamentary devices and manoeuvres." (See A. J. Wilson, *Oppositional Politics in Ceylon (1947-68)*," Government and Opposition, Vol. 4 No. 1 Winter 1969).

The Left had thus adopted a course where its practice was different from its rhetoric. Its ambiguities were fully exploited by its opponents. Although the rhetoric of the Left was innocuous in comparison with the racist rhetoric of the Right, the Right used it to raise the bogey of an atheistic dictatorship. The Left leaders received their education in Britain under men like Harold Laski at the London School of Economics during the impressionable period following the Russian revolution. When they spoke of "direct mass struggle" they adopted the rhetoric and imagery of the Russian revolution to mean something vague and undefined. They were by practice and conviction democrats for the most part and certainly on record more so than the U.N.P.. There is no reason why direct mass struggle cannot be democratic. Thus while the Left talked in the imagery of war, the Right talked peace and practised war - through both legislation and police action. The spectre of a Marxist atheistic dictatorship was raised again, more strongly, in the campaign preceding the 1970 elections. The Left's ambivalence in those days prevented it from having a workable program to deliver its goods. It had to keep its constituency of workers in the hope that its program would somehow be realised. Its use of the strike weapon through unions allied to the Left in a largely agrarian country tended to serve more the propaganda of the Right.

In many ways the fate of the parliamentary Left resembled that of the T.U.L.F. in the 1970's and early 1980's. The Left had failed to resolve its ambivalence towards parliament as an instrument of government. On the one hand it had sought representation in parliament and wished to participate fully in its business. Having come this far, it did recognise in parliament a potential source of good. But then from the outset it should have taken the opportunity to form an alternative coalition government and use all available levers to implement a program of reform. This it had declined to do out of deference to ideology and preferred to hint at revolution from the sidelines. But the electorate wanted reform that would improve its lot in terms of something tangible. Moreover, the Left did not attempt to modify its approach in order to appeal to the "middle level of Ceylonese opinion comprising the national minded swabasha¹ -educated intelligentsia" who felt left out by the U.N.P.. It was left to Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's S.L.F.P. to fill this vacuum.

The increasing disparity between what it promised and what it achieved finally led the Left to despair and made them secure participation in coalition governments in the early sixties and in 1970-75 after making abject compromises on principles. When an actual youth uprising came in 1971, the Left then in power, found itself on the defensive, while an elite led army and police massacred 10 to 15 thousand Sinhalese youth particularly educated unemployed rural youth. Moreover, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva presided over the drawing up of the republican constitution of 1972 which did away with section 29 of the Soulbury constitution which was nominally supposed to safeguard minorities. It also enshrined Buddhism as the state religion and Sinhalese as the sole official language, much against what the Left had upheld quite valiantly in the 1950s. At the time the influence of the Left had been such that during the race riots of 1958, it had been able to mobilise its members in Colombo and protect the Tamils in some areas. But when President Jayewardene extended the life of the parliament in December 1982 by a fraudulent referendum, the Left could not even bring out a demonstration.

Though the Left may not have been very conscious of it, it had largely replayed the tragedies of some of the European social democratic parties in the decades leading up to the First World War (1914-18). The Danish Social Democratic Party started with a trade union base, shunned Marxist doctrines, steadily increased its strength by adapting its programme to the needs of agricultural co-operatives and, in 35 years, attained power in a coalition government by 1913. It thus attained a position where it was able to implement social welfare legislation. Socialist parties followed similar courses in Britain and Scandinavia. The German Social Democratic party founded in 1875 and led by August Bebel adopted the Gotha programme. This was a compromise programme which contained the view of its northern faction led by Lassalle that revolutionary Marxism had been rendered out of date by the existence of universal suffrage; in other words that proletarian interests were compatible with parliamentary democracy. It also accepted Marx's view of the class struggle and his materialist interpretation of history. It thus combined resolutely revolutionary pronouncements with an equally determined reformist and revisionist policy. Formal unity was thus preserved at the cost of alienating liberal and middle-class opinion and perpetuating an unresolved contradiction between principle and practice. It resulted in an ineffective combination of challenging absolutist pronouncements and feeble action; for the party did not gain sufficient strength. The party even developed a revisionist faction led by Edward Bernstein who argued that Marxist analysis and predictions were not borne out by events. For the workers were not getting remorselessly poorer and more repressed - they were coming to be better off and freer. Some members of this faction went on to drop the ideal of the international brotherhood of workers and fell in with the rising tide of militarism and nationalism in Germany which led to the World War of 1914-18.

In Ceylon today a reconstituted Left which will recapture the lost ideals of non-sectarian socialism and will communicate them to the masses in simple terms that they could understand and agree with, is still in its birth pangs. The Left recently lost two promising leaders in Sarath Muttetuwegama and Vijaya Kumaranatunge.

1.3 The Tamils

From the 1940's the Tamil leadership had, as we have seen, largely shown a preference for doing what appears clever in the interests of preserving material gains rather than what is principled. This predominance of manipulation over morality produced gains which were only illusory. If Tamils did not show an interest in federalism before independence, there were sound

material reasons for this. Their middle class depended on government jobs outside the Tamil speaking areas. A unitary state is not a moral issue and in Ceylon such a state could have been workable with adequate devolution such as in Britain. The peoples of Ceylon after all have much more in common in terms of origin and culture than do the people of Britain. Conflicts of the past too have been dynastic rather than along lines of language or religion.

Where the Tamil leadership went wrong is that, having failed to obtain the unreasonable 50-50 representation, they agreed to independence under a highly centralised constitution (unlike in Britain) with its brand of communal politics. Having made this mistake, no attempt was made to integrate into a national grouping that would articulate Tamil interests. The pursuit of communal politics, the 50-50 demand, followed by the abject capitulation of most of the Ceylon Tamil leadership in selling out the upcountry [\[3\]](#)¹ Tamils in return for ministerial positions and the assurance that Ceylon Tamils will not be touched - all helped to create a stereotype image of the Ceylon Tamil as an unprincipled person who can be bought over by promises of transient material security. The failure of the Tamils to adopt a form of national level politics, enabled Sinhalese racists to build up stereotype images of Tamils and exploit them to foment racial hatred.

On the other side many Tamils argue that communal politics was forced on them. The F.P.'s attempts at finding legal remedies to the iniquitous citizenship legislation were blocked, indicating that relief through legal and constitutional means was not available to them. After 1960 when the Left adopted a communal line, it became far more difficult for Tamils to enter politics at national level. It can also be pointed out that it was the Tamil Opposition in parliament that helped to keep democracy alive during some crucial periods.

But even from the position of a regional party, the F.P. and the T.U.L.F. could have actively supported national causes and won Sinhalese confidence. This it was prevented from doing by its ideology that was founded on the assumption of Sinhalese perfidy. The general strike of 1980 and the obnoxious manner in which the government handled it, together with the fraudulent referendum of December, 1982 represented burning national issues. But the Tamil leadership under the T.U.L.F., given their narrow nationalist ideology, were able to dismiss these as problems of the South. Here again there was a preference, as in 1948/49, for what may seem clever and opportune as against what was right and fair by the whole country. The government of J. R. Jayewardene was able to buy the silence of the T.U.L.F. on these important national issues by a mixture of threat, vague promises and a few perks. This again helped to isolate the Tamils and lay them at the mercy of Jayewardene's government and its cynicism.

The other matter is the T.U.L.F.'s ambivalence towards parliament during the years 1977-83, to which it was led by a nationalist ideology. Rhetorically it regarded the parliamentary vote it secured in the Tamil areas as a mandate to form a separate state of Tamil Eelam and the police and army in Tamil areas were regarded as occupying forces. It further hinted at a secret plan to make the separate state a reality. Thus in the public mind a certain legitimacy was given to the Tamil youth militancy. But in its actions the T.U.L.F. behaved like a loyal parliamentary opposition. As it turned out, this unresolved ambivalence was a dangerous mix. While the T.U.L.F. hinted at war and practised peace, it was left to others to practise war.

After the 1977 elections, the T.U.L.F. and those who voted for them, did want them to participate in the business of parliament. The priority, as the Tamils saw it in the wake of the 1977 race riots, was the resettlement of refugees and the economic development of the Tamil

areas in the North and East. Money was canvassed for this from charitable organisations and from Tamils living abroad. Tamils were encouraged to invest in their areas. These activities were going on and services normally provided by the state, such as banking, transport, communication and even police were utilised. Tamil farmers were benefitting from loan and agricultural services provided for the whole country. Given that the Tamils wanted these, the natural approach should have been to recognise in the parliament a source of potential goodness and press for reform of the existing state machinery so that it would be fairer. Its political activity should have been directed at finding a common cause with a country-wide opposition and to isolate the racist elements. It was not only the Tamils who had problems with the police. There were Sinhalese peasants in Moneragala and elsewhere whose lands were being taken over for the benefit of multi-nationals. There was rampant government corruption. Our forests were being denuded by politicians who wanted a quick buck. But what the T.U.L.F. and the Tamil leadership actually did was to keep silent when police and servicemen carrying out ordinary civil functions were attacked. The moral dilemma was dodged - can we pretend that we had no obligation to those whose services we utilised because our ideology said that they were aliens? As we shall see, the result was to awaken the worst instincts in a government that was already bad enough.

What the Tamil militant groups carried over from the Tamil parliamentary leadership was the world view based on Sinhalese perfidy. Everyone is conscious of past tactical errors of the Tamil leadership. But we have not learnt from our experience and continue the same blunders in different forms, principally because of a lack of moral conviction. The desire for material security reflects itself today in the form of seminars on development and a rejoicing over the departure from the Eastern province of many terror stricken Sinhalese, oblivious of the senseless assassinations and misery that have afflicted all communities -- Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils. The moral perversity reflects itself in casual talk of horse deals -- one day with the government against the IPKF, next with the IPKF against Sinhalese and so on. In a bid to justify terrorist attacks on Sinhalese in the East, some have suggested a parallel with the repatriation of Indian plantation labour to India from the hill country; as if the Kandyan Sinhalese would be justified in bombing and shooting Indian Tamils. It would be to justify the terrible anti-Tamil violence of 1983 for which the Sinhalese are still paying the price. With many members of the Tamil elite, cleverness without a moral commitment is approaching a fever of insanity. If our past should teach us anything, it should be to regain the moral initiative, mend our relations with the Sinhalese, and pursue our interests in a national context, with malice towards none.

The foregoing has dwelt on missed opportunities in the 1940's, and how the behaviour of the actors at the time set the pattern for years to come, leading up to India's direct entry into the affairs of this country. To throw further light on the current crisis the sketch that follows focuses on two other missed opportunities: the referendum of December 1982 and the two months following the July 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord. The events that followed the first led to the July 1983 racial riots. In both instances the Tamil disease that contributed to the crises was the same, with some shift in the actors.

<http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume1/Chapter1.htm> - [ftnref1#](#) [ftnref1](#)² Mother tongue

<http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume1/Chapter1.htm> - [ftnref2#](#) [ftnref2](#)³ Ceylonism for hill-country

Chapter 2

SOME MILESTONES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TAMIL POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

2.1 The Youth Congress

The first great political movement that took root in Jaffna was the Ceylon Youth Congress. This movement came into being around 1926 and had its base amongst the educated middle-class youth, especially young graduates of Jaffna from Indian Universities and the newly founded Ceylon University College, and high school students. It was greatly inspired by the Indian independence movement and looked up to its leading figures such as Mahathma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Like the Congress in India, the causes it advocated were secularism, a non-sectarian Ceylonese nationalism and independence from Britain. For this reason it enjoyed much respect from Sinhalese intellectuals in the South. It drew enthusiasm and morale boosts from visits of leading Indian personalities. Gandhi visited Jaffna in 1927 and Nehru in 1932. Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya who addressed the opening session of the Ceylon Youth Congress in 1931, is said to have taken Jaffna by storm. Not only leading personalities from India, but also eminent Sinhalese from the South, like S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike addressed Youth Congress sessions. It was at the Youth Congress sessions that S.W.R.D. advocated for the first time a federal constitution for Ceylon. Some of the leading personalities of the Youth Congress were Handy Perinpanayagam, J.V. Chelliah, S. Kulendran (who, later, was enthroned as the Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India), Orator Subramaniam, K. Nesiah, N. Sabaratnam, and A. E. Tamber.

The Youth Congress reached its high point when it organised in the Tamil areas a boycott of elections under the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931, for the reason that the constitution did not offer Poorna Swaraj (complete independence). In the succeeding years the Youth Congress fell into decline, unable to resist the pressure of communal politics. Perhaps they were unable to come out with a leadership that could combine idealism with charisma, essential for mass based politics under universal suffrage. Nevertheless many of the Youth Congress figures were great men who left their mark. Consciences had been awakened on the caste issue and the ideals of cosmopolitan, secular democracy had been instilled in many young minds. Several of their leaders such as Handy Perinpanayagam, Orator Subramaniam, N. Sabaratnam and K. Nesiah went on to make a distinct contribution, and, as educationists, remained loyal exponents of their youthful ideals. They also maintained their ties with the leading contemporaries of Mahathma Gandhi into the 1970's. The most important legacy of the Youth Congress from the point of the present, is the position enjoyed by India in the minds of the Tamil People. India for the Tamils, came to represent high standards - virtue, moral edification and ideals of non-violence. Pictures of Mahathma Gandhi and other Indian leaders came to adorn many Tamil homes. This affection was enhanced by already existing ties of religion, education and language.

2.2 The F.P. and the T.U.L.F.

As a result of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's Sinhalese only bill of 1956, the Federal Party (F.P.) under S.J.V. Chelvanayakam became the chief repository of Tamil hopes and interests. Significantly, the Satyagraha campaign launched by the F.P. in 1961 was modelled on Mahathma Gandhi's example. From 1956 to 1983 Tamil political thinking developed under the impact of the anti-Tamil riots of 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981, and 1983 together with mounting discrimination and a series of broken promises by successive governments which promised to settle Tamil grievances. The uprising by the Sinhalese youth of the J.V.P. in 1971 had its impact on Tamil youth. By the early 1970's a section of Tamil youth in the universities and high schools had begun to think in terms of violence. But the F.P. continued to espouse non-violence. The official ideology of its successor, the T.U.L.F., remains non-violence to this day. The other events which had an impact on the Tamil Youth were, a system of standardisation introduced by Mrs. Bandaranaike's government in 1970 which made it more difficult for Tamil students to enter the University, and the birth of Bangladesh. These latter events made a strong impression on their minds. At this point lessons in karate and judo began to be organised in Jaffna. A group of Tamil undergraduates at Peradeniya were in the ideological forefront of this new tendency. They began to think of economic self-sufficiency for the Tamil areas. But a fully fledged rebel movement like the P.L.O. was still only a distant possibility. Many of them thought of a simple plan inspired by Bangladesh. Their plan was to have a limited militant movement, plan for economic self-sufficiency and once U.D.I. was declared India was to come in and finish the job quickly. It may be noted that almost all of these pioneering youths have now left the country, for good.

The effect of all this was to weaken democratic ideals amongst Tamils. A new romanticism developed where political activists thought in terms of military structures, secret societies and undercover work. To have different opinions amounted to treachery. Tolerance and open discussion were no longer welcomed.

The Federal Party was quick to cash in on the new mood of totalitarianism. A senior journalist and a long time observer of Jaffna has this to say:

"In 1972 I was at a meeting where S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, the leader of the F.P. was present on the platform. Mr. Kasi Ananthan, a popular platform speaker, who is now a member of the L.T.T.E., told the audience:

Mr. Duraiappa, Mr. Subramaniam, Mr. Arulampalam and Mr. Anandasangeri are enemies of the Tamil nation. They do not deserve a natural death. Nor do they deserve to die in an accident. The Tamil people, especially the youth, must decide how they should die....

"I knew that this was going to lead to anarchy. I was angry and said so to my colleagues. The only thing my colleagues could say in mitigation was that Mr. Chelvanayakam's hearing was bad and consequently he would not have known what was said. This was no satisfactory excuse for a party leader. This speech was editorially quoted in the Suthanthiran, a paper owned by Mr. Chelvanayakam. Such a speech which apparently had the blessings of the Tamil leadership was a foretaste of things to come. In the succeeding years we were taught unquestioning compliance with political authority. If the F.P. or its successor, the T.U.L.F., announced a three day hartal, we had to comply and stay at home; there was no question of discussion. Anyone who did not comply could have expected some young men to come and beat him up. The seeds were sown for the growth of totalitarian militant groups and for the methods of violence they employed."

It must also be mentioned that Mrs. Bandaranaike's government contributed to these developments by the methods it adopted. It arrested 42 Tamil youths in 1972 and detained them without charges for two years. These youths were mainly involved in protesting against standardisation which restricted the entrance of Tamils to the University. The actual offences were often nothing more than putting up posters. The Federal Party's mild demands for Tamil rights in parliament were treated with contempt. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva's constitution of 1972 had the ring of a deliberate slap on the face. Discrimination against Tamils and corruption became much more open. The one mitigating factor was that the import restriction policies of the government provided opportunities and prosperity for the enterprising Jaffna farmer. An event which had considerable impact on Tamil political thought was the police attack on the International Tamil Research Conference hosted in Jaffna in January 1974. Nine persons died by accidental electrocution during this unprovoked attack, which took place in the presence of international scholars. It was a measure of Mrs. Bandaranaike's arrogance that she refused to order an inquiry. The first shot in the Tamil insurgency was fired when Mr. Alfred Duraiyappa, the Mayor of Jaffna who was close to Mrs. Bandaranaike, was assassinated in 1975. Mr. Duraiyappa was a popular man whose funeral was well attended.

By 1976, the leading Tamil parties including the F.P., the Tamil Congress of Mr. G.G. Ponnampalam and Mr. Thondaman's Ceylon Workers Congress representing plantation Tamils and Prof. C. Suntheralingam, a prominent Tamil nationalist, had combined to form the Tamil United Liberation Front (T.U.L.F.). In this year (1976) was adopted the Vaddukoddai resolution which put forward an independent state of Tamil Eelam as being the solution to the problems of the Tamils. This state was to be won by non-violent means.

It can be safely assumed that there was no viable plan to fight for such a state. In a public debate conducted in Chunnakam in 1975, presided over by Mr. Orator Subramaniam, two of Mr. Subramaniam's eminent students, Mr. N. Shanmugathasan, Communist Party (Peking Wing) and Mr. V. Dharmalingam, M.P. (T.U.L.F.) debated the pros and cons of the separate state. Mr. Shanmugathasan challenged Mr. Dharmalingam to state his plan of action. Mr. Dharmalingam replied that it was a party secret. Several in the audience clamoured for a more definite answer. Orator said later: "I had ties of friendship and respect to both my students and I knew that I was chosen as Chairman because in Chunnakam I was perhaps well qualified to control the crowd. Seeing that things were going too far, I intervened as Chairman and decreed that it was Mr. Dharmalingam's right to keep a party secret. But the simple truth was that there was no such plan." By now Mr. Chelvanayakam was in a state of poor health and Mr. A. Amirthalingam, the T.U.L.F. Secretary, had begun to play a leading role in the party. According to one report, Mr. M. Thiruchelvam, a senior member of the T.U.L.F. and ex-minister who was in Colombo at the time the resolution for a separate state was adopted, sensing danger, asked Mr. Amirthalingam, "What is the meaning of this?" Mr. Amirthalingam replied that this resolution was adopted under pressure from the youth and that when the time comes to negotiate with the government, a compromise can be reached. This, as future events showed, was the true position of the T.U.L.F..

2.3 The Years 1977-81

The new U.N.P. government which came to power in July 1977 raised hopes that it would solve the problems of the Tamils. It did away with standardisation for a time. Time showed that the government was only toying with the problem. The 1977 race riots made the average Tamil feel that the Tamils needed much firmer guarantees concerning their place in the country and an autonomous status for their homelands which would include control over colonisation. The

government was in no way prepared to meet these reasonable claims. Instead ministers such as Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanaike used the resources of their ministries to further Sinhalese colonisation especially in the Eastern province. Cyril Mathew kept on discovering ancient Buddhist shrines in the Trincomalee area. The anger and helplessness of the Tamils provided a natural boost for militant groups.

One cannot deal with the question without looking into the manner in which Sinhalese fears were awakened. Having promised Tamil Eelam, the T.U.L.F. under Mr. Amirthalingam kept on saying that they had a secret plan to bring about this event. Having directly or indirectly aided the growth of the militant movement, the T.U.L.F. had to ride it. The secret plan story with elaborations drew applause from audiences. Rumours abounded to the effect that some foreign powers, overseas Tamils, or both, were to provide military succour for the birth of Tamil Eelam. Even by the end of 1977 many believed that fighter planes had been purchased for that task. The average person listening to speeches given by the T.U.L.F. took them to mean that non-violence was just a facade and that the real thrust was being planned by enhancing the militants' capability. But when pressed for comment by audiences of a different kind, the T.U.L.F. would become a group of urbane Western-educated gentlemen committed to non-violence. All this was not lost on the Sinhalese. When challenged by Sinhalese to condemn the militants' violence, the T.U.L.F. would hedge. There was no doubt, for instance, that the functioning of the banks was essential for the Jaffna economy and that the prosperity of the Jaffna farmer depended crucially on the banks. The police force was in many ways racist and flawed. Yet, it was also performing necessary functions towards the maintenance of order. Subsequently police were deployed to protect banks and vehicles transporting cash. Several of these policemen were killed on duty. Yet the Tamil public treated it as a sad, but necessary part of the Eelam game. The T.U.L.F. was silent.

As a result, a racist picture of the average Tamil as a scheming opportunist came to have a ring of credibility in the eyes of the average Sinhalese man. It then made it easier to arouse Sinhalese fears of being overwhelmed by Tamils and create the kind of feeling: "The Tamils should be taught a lesson". Provoking such distrust made the anti-Tamil riots of 1981 and 1983 more probable. At the same time the T.U.L.F. had no tangible means in its possession to safe-guard the Tamils from such an outcome. Meanwhile the T.U.L.F. neglected party democracy and its grass-roots organisation and had adopted secret negotiations with the government. This resulted in increasing dissatisfaction amongst its supporters.

The T.U.L.F.'s Vaddukottai resolution calling for a separate state of Tamil Eelam made a deep emotional impact on Tamils, both locally and abroad. But it took the 1977 anti-Tamil violence to give it life. Many middle class Tamils who had regarded Colombo as their home had agreed on principle that the Tamils must move back to their traditional homelands for their safety and economic prosperity and the preservation of their national identity and make them economically viable. Even before the 1977 riots, the Tamils had been becoming increasingly anxious because of discrimination in employment and in education. Several Hill Tamils had been displaced during the 1977 violence. A key problem as seen by the Tamils was the protection of border areas such as Trincomalee, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya, where the resources of the state had been used in settling Sinhalese. The 1958 and 1977 violence had shown that it was in these areas that Tamils were the most vulnerable. Although the school leaving Jaffna Tamil was very conscious that these areas were part of his homeland, experience had shown that it was not easy to motivate him to settle and make a living off the land - the earnings from which could be well above white collar government service salaries. Tamil refugees of Indian origin were readily accepted to fill this void. Many of the Tamil elite

advocated this migration because they were cheap labour and would serve as a convenient buffer between the Sinhalese and the Jaffna Tamil. C. Chandrasekaran, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam's son, once made a remark of such import to a foreign journalist. The leadership in settling these areas came from some highly motivated Tamils. Several of them later acquired links with the incipient militant movement. Three leading names amongst these pioneers were Mr. A. David, a senior Architect and the late Dr. Rajasundaram and his wife Shantini (nee Karalasingam) also a doctor. The husband and wife were in Britain when the 1977 riots broke out. They decided to return without delay to take up this pioneering work. While Shantini ran the Vavuniya clinic on a social service basis, Rajasundaram became the moving force behind the movement Gandhiyam. Gandhiyam was a charitable organisation through which agricultural advice, facilities and materials were provided for refugee families wanting to settle in project areas around Vavuniya. Volunteer workers ran schools and day care centres for children while providing advice and assistance to the elders. The U.S. agency C.A.R.E. supplied packets of Triplosa -- balanced cereal food for children. N.O.V.I.B. and O.X.F.A.M. were amongst the charities that helped Gandhiyam. Within two years these former refugees were producing plentiful quantities of nutritious cereals such as Ulunthu, the prices of which reached a record low as a result.

Another organisation which became famous at this time was the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation (T.R.R.O.). Amongst the committed officials of the T.R.R.O. were its founder President Nithyanantha and its founder Secretary K. Kanthasamy. Kanthasamy had been a very successful corporate lawyer and his life was to become one of selfless devotion to the cause of Tamil freedom, and the wider cause of human rights at an international level. His disappearance in mid-1988 was a result of the insidious growth of terror within the Tamil body-politic that was to destroy some of its finest sons.

The T.R.R.O. designed projects for the settlement of displaced persons, canvassed funds and implemented the projects either directly or through organisations such as Gandhiyam. The Kent and Dollar farms owed their origin to the pioneering spirit of some of the youth and elders of this time. Both were integrated agricultural settlements. Several Tamils living overseas became infected with this pioneering spirit when letters of appeal reached them. Groups of people sprang up in places like London, Singapore, and Ibadan (Nigeria), who held discussions on projects that could economically stabilise the Tamil homeland and collected money to send towards existing projects. The Standing Committee of Tamil Speaking Peoples (S.C.O.T.) is an organisation of Tamil professional people that came into being in London during this period. In the Tamil homeland itself there was a sense of buoyancy as several professionals took up residence there and gave their time to designing and implementing economic projects. During these early stages, the militants were known to be present around the settlements, but few from the settlements had any links with them. The thrust was on economic development and rehabilitation. The leadership of the T.U.L.F. was unquestioned. Yet for all the enthusiasm overseas, the actual participation of overseas Tamils in terms of their numbers and resources was small. In Britain where the Ceylon Tamil settlers numbered tens of thousands, the annual income of the S.C.O.T. was only in the region of ,6,000. Those who started rehabilitation work in the field, had hoped for massive support from Tamils living abroad. They got their money. But nearly all of it from Christian charities in the West. Nevertheless Tamils living overseas maintained a keen interest in what was going on at home and the actions of the militants became the subject of much drawing room talk.

During the year 1978 the militant group, the Tamil Tigers, carried out a spate of bank robberies and killings of police officers. The most sensational of these was the killing of

Inspector Bastianpillai and some other police officers who were with him, after the police had successfully apprehended some militants. Other sensational events were the robbing of the banks at Thirunelvely, Neervely and Kilinochchi (by the group P.L.O.T.E.) and the bomb blast which destroyed the Avro passenger aircraft plying between Jaffna and Colombo shortly after it had landed on the tarmac at Ratmalana and everyone had disembarked.

As a purely security problem, the Tamil militancy had gone beyond routine policing. But as a political problem, it was well within control. The T.U.L.F. was willing to settle for a fairly modest grant of autonomy for the Tamil areas that included some compromise on land settlement. The militants at this point of time respected the T.U.L.F. and were not challenging it. But the government decided to play tough, and given the racist attitudes of some of its leading members, every action of the government's began to be seen as punitive. An Act of Parliament in 1978 proscribed the Tamil Tigers.

Two events towards the end of 1978 alienated the Tamils further. Mr. Cyril Mathew, Minister for Industries in the U.N.P. government and a regular Tamil basher, had a press conference with P.P.G.L. Siriwardene, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Colombo. It was announced at this conference that evidence had been found to prove that Tamil examiners had cheated by awarding excessively high marks to Tamil candidates. The matter was debated in parliament. But no inquiry was ordered. The allegation sounded convincing to many Sinhalese. With the Tamils it left a bad taste. Many responsible Tamils who studied the matter were convinced that the allegations would not have stood up to an impartial inquiry. By allowing one of its ministers freely to make irresponsible allegations, the government had increased racial feeling against Tamils. The allegations also served as a smoke screen for the reintroduction of an indirect system of racial quotas for University admissions. It was the new U.N.P. government that had scrapped, as a gesture towards Tamils, the system of standardisation introduced by the previous government to restrict Tamil university admissions. Many Tamils would have agreed to the modification of the principle of pure merit by means of non-racial criteria to help the underprivileged. That would not have needed a drama which subjected Tamils to hurtful public vilification. This represented the same irresponsible streak in the Jayewardene government which made Jayewardene tell the Tamils who were victimised by the 1977 racial violence that they will have war if they want war. Discrimination against Tamils in government jobs continued as repeatedly pointed out in letters to the President by the T.U.L.F. leader, Mr. Amirthalingam

The other event was the cyclone that devastated the Eastern Province in December 1978. Tamil leaders and Members of Parliament complained bitterly about blatant discrimination against Tamil victims in the provision of relief. There were several instances where material assistance provided by foreign governments did not reach the victims. In one instance, it was revealed in parliament that a large quantity of good quality sarees donated for the victims by India had been disposed of through a state trading agency. It was claimed belatedly in reply to a query in parliament that the proceeds from the sale went into the distress fund.

However, government indifference provided an opportunity for strengthening Tamil solidarity which was not missed. Again students from the University of Jaffna played a leading role joined in by social service and religious organisations. Students went from house to house collecting money for relief. A large number of lorries left for the East carrying cadjan¹, food and clothing. It was indeed an exciting period where Tamil national consciousness was riding high. Everyone wanted to be part of it, even the passive U.N.P.-voting Colombo Tamils who had habitually cold shouldered the enthusiasm of their provincial

brethren. These middle class Colombo Tamils had preferred to be known as urbane, cosmopolitan and English speaking and were usually not given to nationalist notions.

An important step in the government's effort at finding a military solution to the Tamil problem was the passing of the P.T.A. (Prevention of Terrorism Act) by parliament in July 1979. All the while the majority of Tamils were hoping that some compromise would be reached between the T.U.L.F. and the government that would settle the problem. But what happened after the passage of the P.T.A., though on a minor scale by today's standards, was to increase Tamil anger against the government and, consequently, support for the militants' cause.

The following extract from Prof. S. J. Tambiah's book, "*Sri Lanka - Ethnic Fratricide and The Dismantling of Democracy*" gives the main features of the P.T.A., together with comparisons with the corresponding British Act.

THE P.T.A.: The main features of the P.T.A. are: "It allows confessions made to the police possibly under duress, as admissible evidence. Moreover, the act declares that any document found in the custody, control, or possession of anyone accused of an offence under the Act, or his agent or representative, can be used in evidence, against him at his trial, without calling its author or maker into account, and the contents of such a document can be construed as evidence of the facts stated in it... The P.T.A. can be retroactive in its implementation... Provides for prison terms for conviction ranging from 5 to 20 years or life. These provisions of the P.T.A. have been interpreted by the police and army as an open door policy that permits arrest without warrant of any person... A person may be detained for periods up to 18 months if the minister had reason to suspect him of being associated with unlawful activity... It defines as unlawful certain acts, including the speaking or writing of words intended to cause religious, social, or communal disharmony, or feelings of ill will or hostility between communities or racial or religious groups."

THE BRITISH ACT: Prof. Tambiah offers a reply to those apologists for Sri Lanka who see the United Kingdom act, enacted in response to the situation in Northern Ireland as setting a precedent for the P.T.A.: "The U.K. legislation bearing the same name (Prevention of Terrorism) was adopted in 1974, repealed, and then re-enacted in 1978 with some amendments, It is much less far-reaching than its Sri Lankan counterpart in its infringement of human rights. For one thing, the U.K. act defines terrorism more narrowly as 'the use of violence for political ends,' and includes under this rubric any use of violence for the purpose of frightening any section of the public or the public as a whole. For another, the same Act limits the maximum period during which a person may be detained without charge at seven days; there is no way a person can be held incommunicado without trial for a prolonged period, as the Sri Lankan act permits. Finally the Act in the U.K. remains in force for 12 months and its continuance must be ratified by Parliament."

According to Virginia Leary ("*Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*", International Commission of Jurists, July to August, 1981): "A number of the objectionable features in the Sri Lankan Act are similar to the provisions widely criticised in the 1967 Terrorism Act of South Africa."

Following the passage of this act, the military was for the first time given an active role in the Tamil areas. The President's nephew, Brigadier Weeratunge, was sent to Jaffna in mid-1979 with an order from the President to wipe out terrorism by the end of the year. Soon afterwards, six Tamil youths disappeared after being taken into custody. The bodies of two of

them, Inpam and Selvam, were found near the beach in Jaffna with gunshot injuries. Reports of torture became widespread.

Amongst Tamils in general, there was a feeling of optimism that they were forging ahead and that the government could not win. Rightly or wrongly, the Tamils were proud of the young and the militant youth. The nickname for a Tamil in the South changed from "Panamkottai" (Palmyrah nut) to "Kottiya" (Tiger). The Tamils no longer cringed, afraid of their identity being known. The Tigers gave them back a sense of identity and dignity. This was also the time that internal killings had started sporadically within the militant movement.

With this euphoria went many unresolved contradictions in attitudes as well as conduct. The economic development of Tamil areas went on at a very slow pace. Little capital was coming this way, whether from the government or from foreign sources. The government itself was part of the cause. Tamils complained bitterly that Colombo-based Tamil entrepreneurs who made large quantities of money from the Tamil man would not re-invest even a small fraction of it in Tamil areas. At the same time, they spent large sums doing favours for politicians. In the meantime dependence on Colombo increased. The pattern of migration was towards employment abroad, especially in the Middle East and was not calculated to increase economic activity in the Tamil areas. The money from overseas that was pouring in was largely spent on building houses, even on agricultural land, the purchase of jewellery and consumer items such as television sets and video-decks. Again profits were reaped by traders in Colombo. Travel between Jaffna and Colombo increased considerably. It was only a few who used their savings to start small industries such as mechanical workshops.

Many Tamils did see that they were treading on dangerous ground. But people were reluctant to speak out. The situation was made worse by the government's natural bent towards thuggery.

It was about this time that several left-wing political groups in the South who had been talking about armed action for years started looking admiringly at what the Tamil militants were doing. The latter had been successful in alarming the state. These were written about for the first time by Dayan Jayatilleke and were published in the Lanka Guardian. Some leftist intellectuals from the South even spoke of Tamil Eelam being the cradle of future revolution. Ideas of Lenin and Stalin on small nations of minorities featured in intellectual discussions dealing with minorities and secession. The traditional Left which had been somewhat discredited by its past performance was being splintered, giving rise to new groups such as the N.S.S.P. (Nava Sama Samaja Party).

To break the stalemate on the political front, the T.U.L.F. commenced discussions with parties of the Left (S.L.F.P., L.S.S.P. and C.P.) with a view to forming an electoral alliance. This was breaking new ground as the T.U.L.F. had been instinctively distrustful of the Left as opposed to the U.N.P.. Many critics maintained that such a bias flew in the face of experience and can be attributed to the natural Right-wing tendencies within the T.U.L.F.. Initial exchanges raised hopes. But the exercise was abruptly broken off by the T.U.L.F.. Sources within the T.U.L.F. confided that they did so on a strong indication that it may give rise to organised race riots against the Tamils. Negotiations commenced instead with the U.N.P. government under the mediation of Prof. A. J. Wilson (Lecturer in political science in Canada and son-in-law of S. J. V. Chelvanayakam) and Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam (American trained lawyer and son of an F.P. minister). Both had good relations with the government, whose open economic policies they agreed with. The result was the District Development Councils

(D.D.C.s) which were meant to give the Tamils some control over their land and ease discrimination in employment by the devolution of certain subjects to the districts.

Moreover, these Councils were ill-fated from the start, when the Council elections in July 1981 resulted in such untoward incidents as the burning of the Jaffna Public Library by government forces. Moreover, this was the first time after the Duraiyappah killing that political terror by Tamil militants against rivals of the T.U.L.F. was displayed. Mr. Thiagarajah, a retired school principal, ex-M.P. and U.N.P. candidate was shot dead. Also killed was Mr. Nadarajah, a U.N.P. organiser.

Despite some disorganised interference by the government machinery, the T.U.L.F. was returned in all Tamil districts. But the District Councils did not work because the government was not genuinely committed to them. This put the T.U.L.F. at a seemingly dead end. The militant leaders became restive about accepting the paramountcy of the T.U.L.F.. Some of the T.U.L.F.'s backers too began to feel that the T.U.L.F. was ineffective. By July 1983 the initiative had passed on to the militants. Many observers felt that the T.U.L.F., whether under threat or not, had made a serious miscalculation in breaking off negotiations with the Left and coming to a deal with the government which the latter had no intention of honouring, whether under threat or not. Dr. A. J. Wilson was initially very positive about the political solution contained in the D.D.C.'s. But the success of the D.D.C.'s depended on willingness and foresight on the part of the government to devolve real power. On nearly all matters where a devolution of responsibility had to evolve, the centre used every hidden mechanism to maintain its hold. As a typical example, the Jaffna D.D.C. which proposed to start a ferry service between K.K.S. and Nagapatanam in order to ease considerably, travel to India which otherwise required an expensive and round about journey through Mannar or Colombo. The Jaffna D.D.C. was told to lay off on this matter. This was a bit of a joke because an unofficial boat service operated by competent mariners had always ferried people from Jaffna to India in less than three hours. As another example, since one of the Tamil fears was security, which was now a virtual monopoly of the Sinhalese state, there was provision in the D.D.C.'s for the creation of Home Guards. The T.U.L.F. had accepted in good faith that the wherewithal to train and maintain them would be forthcoming, for if not such a provision would have been meaningless. But this is how it turned out. A senior official described the position of these Home Guards as being that of a far less exciting version of the Boy Scouts. They would come paying their own bus fare, paying for their uniform and paying for their own cup of tea. It had no chance of getting off the ground. Ultimately the D.D.C.'s were left with a minuscule decentralised budget, not even amounting to one percent of the national budget. When such difficulties arose the T.U.L.F. would have discussions with the President and then announce that the matter had been resolved. These expectations too would be frustrated in due course.

The government inspired violence and attempts at cheating at the elections by themselves spelt a bad omen for the D.D.C.'s. Some people were killed in this violence. The burning of the Jaffna Public Library and the Eelanadu Press were widely regarded as acts of cultural genocide. There were as usual members of the local population who would use public distress for personal gain. Once again university students threw themselves into the task of reconstruction by forming well-organised teams to collect funds and books.

Chapter 3

AUGUST 1981 TO JULY 1983

3.1 Introductions⁵⁶

Going by the advice of the mediators, the T.U.L.F. had staked much on the success of the D.D.C.s. It had also persuaded a large section of the militant movement to back the D.D.C. proposals. The government's failure to deal honestly in this matter and on the other hand its own pursuit of terror against Tamils were to create a rapidly deteriorating situation between November 1982 and July 1983. It is an irony of Ceylonese politics that the T.U.L.F. and the C.W.C., representing Plantation Tamils and under Thondaman, should look upon the main author of present problems, the U.N.P., as offering the best of solutions. In this vain hope the T.U.L.F. remained silent waiting for the goods. The groundswell of Tamil opinion would not have tolerated the T.U.L.F. backing the U.N.P. in the Presidential elections in October 1982 and in the referendum. By calculatedly not taking a stand, the T.U.L.F. helped Jayewardene's U.N.P. to win both the Presidential elections and the referendum which was in any case won by widespread cheating. At the end of a series of broken promises, the U.N.P. pleaded once again that to keep its hitherto unhonoured promises to the Tamils it needed to win both elections and retain its parliamentary majority. The referendum which took place in December 1982 was in effect an undemocratic exercise depriving the people of this country of their right to choose their representatives. The excuse for this was that the government had discovered an undisclosed Naxalite¹ plot. For this service to the U.N.P. in helping it to deprive the people of this country of their right to elect, the T.U.L.F. and the C.W.C. were rewarded with the July 1983 race riots followed by the sixth amendment expelling the T.U.L.F. from parliament. The C.W.C. was saved by its control over labour in a crucial sector of the economy as well as by India's entry into the affairs of this country. For a political party, to lose its combativeness and remain passive amounts to suicide. This was the fate of the T.U.L.F.. In many ways the challenge facing the Sinhalese in the South with the rapid rise of the J.V.P. in 1987 would have close parallels with the experience of the Tamils after 1977 -- particularly during the period under consideration.

While the T.U.L.F. was waiting in vain, every new issue brought forth a spontaneous outpouring of public spirit, led by the university students. These protests were non-violent and were often against actions of the government under the P.T.A.. The spontaneous character of these protests was different in quality from the stage managed affairs of the militant groups after 1985. The militant groups did benefit from the activities of the students before July 1983 and there was widespread public sympathy for the militants as "our boys". But those with a base, such as within the student community, could and did criticise the actions of the militants. The militants too had to take serious note of such criticism. Many observers feel that if this trend had continued, there would have been a militant movement accountable to the public and, therefore, amenable to public control. The July 1983 riots and the adoption by India of the militant groups changed all this. With material help from India, the militant groups became purely military organisations, accountable to the R.A.W. and not to the Tamil public. The latter became everyone's plaything.

There have always been those who argue that to build up resentment by provoking the worse instincts of the state is good for revolutionary fervour. But the misery, suffering, fanaticism and hysteria let loose by such a course on both sides of the division can hardly encourage democracy and freedom for those who survive. This appears to be a lesson ill-digested by the Tamils whose tragedy the South seems set to re-live. The failure of the community to clarify the moral issues would ultimately have a corrupting influence on the young who dedicated themselves to freedom.

3.2 Through the Eyes of the Saturday Review

What follows will be a run through the main events of this period as recorded by the Saturday Review, a weekly published in Jaffna. The title dates refer to the date of publication. It is appropriate to quote this paper, because it reflected the sense of buoyancy felt in Jaffna during this period, punctuated by doubt and foreboding.

May 15, 1982:

"Undergraduates and students in the North and East boycotted lectures and classes yesterday (14 May) to protest the continued detention without trial, of Jaffna University undergraduate Apputhurai Vimalarasa for over a year at the Panagoda Army Camp. The undergraduates in the University of Colombo too joined in the protest by boycotting lectures in the afternoon while telegrams asking for the release of Vimalarasa have been sent to President J. R. Jayewardene by undergraduates of the other Universities."

Students distributing leaflets in connection with this protest were arrested by the police in all Tamil districts. On 17th May the undergraduates organised a massive demonstration in Jaffna defying a police ban.

May 29, 1982:

Under the front page headlines "Jaffna violence takes on a new ugly dimension", the Saturday Review reported the first well-publicised political killings: "Political youth violence which began seven years ago with the killing of the then pro-government Mayor Alfred Duraiyappah on 27 July, 1975, has been following a predictable course ever since, assumed a new dimension on Wednesday 26th May when a popular social worker and a Tamil liberation activist, P. Iraikumaran (27) was gunned down along with his friend T. Umakumaran (28) at Alaveddy, by a gang of seven youths. Alaveddy, a village about ten miles from Jaffna town is in the Kankesanthurai constituency represented by Tamil United Liberation Front leader A. Amirthalingam.

"Iraikumaran, a Cultivation Officer, was the Organising Secretary of the Thamil Ilaingar Peravai Viduthalai Ani (Tamil Youth Front Liberation Wing). He had previously been a member of the youth front aligned with the T.U.L.F. and had edited a pro-T.U.L.F. paper Ilaingar Kural (The Voice of the Youth) in 1976." Iraikumaran had been a critic of the T.U.L.F.'s after breaking away from the party when it accepted the D.D.C.s. Other sources confirmed later that militants aligned with Uma Maheswaran were responsible for the killings. One killing began as a misadventure. The other followed as a cover up. The Saturday Review had neglected to commit itself to its readers on whether or not the "new dimension" was part of the "predictable course". These were still the early days of internecine killings. Press-men

did not yet find themselves writing under duress. The Saturday Review published a powerful editorial in the same issue:

"The political heat, denied an external outlet, is turning inwards now. Violence of course is at all times destructive, but violence is now changing direction. It is becoming self-destructive. In fact there is a new terrifying chill in the political wind. The air is getting hotter with a new political intolerance. Brother is turning against brother; guns taught to shoot at targets, find that the targets are no longer there. A society which learnt to put up with killings, by looking over its shoulder and recognising a goal at a distance thought there was a thing called justifiable homicide, as in law. Now they don't see the goal anymore. It has been politically vitiated...

"The killing of Iraikumaran and Umakumaran, as we see it is more than mere killings: it is more than terrorism. It shows all the portents of a new ugly face in the Tamil man's political life. A society, bereft of a rationale for homicide, is now turning to suicide...

"The truth is that there is a new underground force in the making, an underground force without ideals, which if allowed unchecked could even bring about a state of civil strife in Jaffna, and plunge the whole peninsula into chaos. This has to be nipped in the bud, and if there is one leader who has sufficient weight and authority to do this, it is Mr. Amirthalingam."

There was to be civil strife which reached a feverish height with the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. clash in late April 1986, 47 months later. There was a state of prolonged chaos. When this happened there was no dilemma for the editorial writers of the Saturday Review, or for any other journal in Jaffna. If they did not take a holiday, as they did, they would have been regarded as mad men "turning to suicide". The new forces were not without ideals. In the case of the L.T.T.E. these ideals had the character of religious devotion. But these had little to do with Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality.

The editorial writer quoted above reflects the popular attitude to violence amongst Jaffna men. They would maintain that they did not like violence, except that it was sometimes necessary. They would personally avoid killing. Except for medical men and scientists working on vivisection, those involved with killing, such as butchers and dog catchers, were categorised as being from so called low caste groups, as in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. (Thomas More knew little about India, which makes his ideas all the more remarkable.) They had the authority of the *Mahabharata*, where the men who killed in battle were regarded as a caste group - namely the Kshatriyas. Even as the militant groups grew in strength and despite the talk of "our boys", for the upper reaches of Tamil society they remained essentially an alien caste group. The elite, both locally and abroad, who provided material and moral support for the militants, could frequently be heard saying unashamedly, sometimes referring to the *Mahabharata*, that it may be the business of the fighters to obtain freedom; but the business of ruling, however, must be in the hands of those who are wise and educated. The latter often meant the sons of the elite who were abroad. The militants of course were aware of this and for many of those who had sacrificed successful careers at school, this was hard to bear. Thus the Jaffna man's ambivalence towards violence also extended to an ambivalence towards the militants, who in turn felt that others were trying to use them. This may partly explain the cynicism and hatred of the L.T.T.E. towards the civilian population which reached new heights in 1987. The editorial writer, like everyone else, was moved to questioning and doubting over the two killings in May 1982. Yet, like others, he avoided answering the

question whether there was a rationale for homicide that does not lead to suicide. Note also the hope reposed on Amirthalingam in a dark moment.

The Saturday Review of 5 June, 1982 said that following the mass protests, Vimalarasa who was not tried for over a year, was brought before the Court of Appeal by the army authorities on Monday, 31 May. A bench consisting of Justices Seneviratne and Abeyawardene gave time till 19 July for the State to file affidavits and fixed the trial for 26 July.

The issue of 12 June announced that Vimalarasa and nine other detainees had been released on 7 June, two days before the T.U.L.F. leader Mr. Amirthalingam was to meet President Jayewardene on the matter. The paper speculated that this move to steal the wind from Amirthalingam's sails may have been in order to woo the Tamils directly before the President's first official visit to Jaffna. Another probable reason was that having been pressurised into going to Court, the government may have discovered that its case was weak. This was often the case with arrests under the P.T.A.. This victory gave the students a new prestige.

5 June, 1982:

Under the heading Tiger File, The Saturday Review reported the incident which heralded India's role in this country's affairs. It quoted the Indian Express of 21 May, which reported the incident of the 19th at Pondi Bazaar on its front page: "According to the police, there was a confrontation between two groups, and in the process, Prabhakaran (28) alias Karikalan and Sivakumar (24) alias Raghavan opened fire with unlicensed revolvers on Mukundan (Uma Maheswaran) and Jotheeswaran (22). Jotheeswaran sustained four bullet injuries in his leg and was admitted to the Rayapettah hospital. Mukundan escaped in the melee. On hearing gunshots, Deputy Inspector Nandakumar of the Pandy Bazaar Crime Detachment rushed to the spot with his staff and arrested the culprits."

The Saturday Review further added that Uma Maheswaran who had got away on his motorcycle was captured after a massive police search at a railway station on 25 May. Two revolvers and a vial of cyanide were found on his person. The incident represented the bitter split between the Liberation Tigers and P.L.O.T.E. that was now surfacing openly. Many Tamil Nadu politicians and lawyers got into the act trying to patch up the split. The militants went along expressing regret over the incident together with a desire for unity. The PTI quoted both parties as feeling that continued disunity between them could only jeopardise their real object of achieving Tamil Eelam. Uma Maheswaran who had been a surveyor by profession, expressed appreciation for the way the Tamil Nadu police had treated them. When he required some books on surveying, the Tamil Nadu police had brought them to him after a prolonged search in several bookshops. It all looked homely enough. "Boys will be boys. They will shake hands and be friendly in the interests of a higher cause," was the general feeling around. The Saturday Review reflected the public view in expressing a hint of satisfaction that powerful attempts at obtaining extradition by the Sri Lankan government were failing. It quoted the SUN's front page headline: "TAMIL NADU POLITICOS GIVE PATRONAGE TO TIGERS: TREMENDOUS FINANCIAL BACKING AND 'SAFE HOUSE': M.G.R.'s life too threatened by terrorists". That was six years ago. The naive belief that the central government in India was bowing to Tamil Nadu pressure seemed a satisfactory explanation to both sides in Ceylon. We all lived in a cynical world where everyone thought he could cleverly use the other to get his own ends. Many Tamils thought

they could use India to get Eelam. Who was master of the game would emerge much later. But for the moment all eyes were on the two boys - both makers and victims of history. We could thumb our noses at the Sinhalese. It was a time for some rejoicing. Tomorrow would take care of itself.

12 June, 1982:

An excerpt from an appreciation to the late Bishop Leo Nanayakkara by P. Arulanantham reads thus: "In 1973-75 there were many destitutes on the streets of Badulle, most of whom were persons displaced from the tea estates. Bishop Leo was the organiser behind the organisation of the Beggar Rehabilitation Camp, with the help of official and private bodies who were willing to help. He was a practical man. Bishop Leo was a champion of the oppressed. He studied the problem of insurgents taken into captivity in 1971 and took practical measures to help them. He consistently expressed the view that the Tamils and the Tamil language should enjoy equal rights in this country."

3 July, 1982:

"Three policemen and a Police driver were shot to death by unknown gunmen who ambushed a Police jeep at Nelliady junction in the Point Pedro area, Jaffna, at about 7:30 p.m. on Friday the night of July 2. The dead policemen were Gunapala, Arunthavarajah, Mallawaratchi and Ariyaratne (driver). The O.I.C., Point Pedro, Inspector I. Thiruchittampalam and Constables Sivrajah and Ananda were admitted to Jaffna hospital with injuries. The assailants are believed to have escaped in a passing car."

The editorial commented: "If the killed are those who become victims of circumstances, the killers are themselves victims of circumstances. If a government cannot find ways to stop creating and fostering these circumstances, that government had failed in its duty by *all* its citizens."

That was obviously true. Most Tamils then thought that such sentiments represented the end of the matter as far as they were concerned. Then again they were depending on a provenly undependable government to wake up and deliver the goods, thus being party to the drift.

The issue of 18 September in its lead story stated that the General Council of the T.U.L.F. was likely to take a decision that would enable the Tamils to keep away from the Presidential elections altogether. The issue of 25 September gave an instance of the kind of interference with the process of the law by the government that increasingly made Tamils sympathise with militants.

25 September, 1982:

"The Mallakam Magistrate, Mr. C. V. Wigneswaran, discharged Lieutenant Mandukodi de Saram and Privates K. J. Silva and R. T. Silva on 22 September, on the instructions of the Attorney General Mr. Shiva Pasupati. The three army men were earlier remanded and then bailed out in connection with the shooting of a lame youth Kandiah Navaratnam at Atchuvvely on the night of 20 February."

16 October, 1982:

The following is an excerpt from an article by Dayan Jayatilke on the J.V.P.'s stand on the National Question (the Tamil - Sinhalese division). The J.V.P. (Peoples' Liberation Front) leader Rohana Wijeweera was one of the contestants of the Presidential Elections: "He (Wijeweera in a public speech) accused the U.N.P. government of sending 'innocent' police and military men to their deaths. He also accuses the S.L.F.P. of promising Swaraj (Own Rule) through its spokesman K. B. Ratnayake, to the Tamils... Comrade Wijeweera also proceeds in the course of his masterly analysis of the National Question, to provide his audience with the doubtless useful and very relevant data that five top police officers are Tamils. In fact he is kind enough to provide his young Sinhalese audience with their names in what he fondly supposes is a Tamil accent. Rohana's boast that his is the only party to hold meetings in the North, is in the same spirit as that of a gangster who boasts that he and his boys were tough enough to go into the North side of the town, i.e. territory controlled by another gang, and return in one piece. In other words he is telling his constituency that it is he and his party, rather than the U.N.P. and S.L.F.P., that are tough enough to deal with the Eelam threat."

23 October, 1982:

The Saturday Review reported an attack by a militant group on a police station. The group was later identified as the L.T.T.E. (Tigers): "Three policemen on duty at Chavakachcheri Police Station were shot dead in a lightning dawn attack by a party of armed youth on Wednesday, October 27th. About 12 hours later the Police imposed an instant 12 hour curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the Jaffna district creating panic and confusion among the public. Guns and ammunition were also stolen at the Police Station along with some files. The weapons consisted of two sub-machine guns, nine rifles, 19 repeater guns and two shot guns. The dead men are P.C. Kandiah of Mirusuvil, P. C. Karunanadan of Uduvil and P. C. Tillekeratne of Kegalle. A remand suspect in a murder case who happened to be under lock-up at the Police Station, Kandiah Selvam, also died in the cross fire.

"P. C. Jayatilke who had jumped down from the upper storey of the Police Station was injured by the fall. He had been admitted to the Jaffna General Hospital along with Sergeant Kandiah who suffered gunshot injuries. Two more remand prisoners, Karthigesu and Aiyathurai were also wounded. It is believed that there was an exchange of fire for about 15 minutes... It is believed that two of the youths have been injured and that one of them could have died. Army personnel who went to Chavakachcheri after the attack discovered spent cartridges and unexploded bullets."

Papers in the South added that the attackers had to leave abruptly as one of the policemen took up a hidden position and started sniping at the attackers.

The security forces in the North had not yet been brutalised to a point where their reflex action would be to go about on a rampage killing prisoners and civilians at random.

The same issue of the Saturday Review announced in its lead story that, having won the presidential elections (J. R. Jayewardene, U.N.P., 52.91%; Hector Kobbekaduwa, S.L.F.P., 39.07%. Mrs. Bandaranaike was prevented from appearing or canvassing for the SLFP because of a questionable suspension of her civic rights.), the government was planning to hold a referendum in order to extend the life of the parliament by six years. The referendum to be held before Christmas would seek a simple yes or no from the voters. This surprise move

came at a time when the country at large was expecting general elections to elect a new parliament. The move was deceitfully packaged to attract the support of Tamils who had been repeatedly tricked. The story went: "Speculation is rife in Jaffna that the T.U.L.F. leader, Mr. Appapillai Amirthalingam, may be offered high office in the Government that would eventually lead to the formation of a National Government in the country... Certain constitutional changes that require a two-thirds majority are believed to be under contemplation that would facilitate this process. The holding of a referendum seeking the extension of the life of the parliament by six years from August 1983 and a complete revamping of the Cabinet and Parliamentary Group are believed to be steps that will help in this direction... It is believed that such a government that will cut through party differences and draw in talent from non-U.N.P. sources could not only help in the continuity of the government's economic programme but solve the vexing 'TAMIL PROBLEM' as well."

Thus the government which had repeatedly dishonoured its word to the Tamils was now inviting the Tamils to trust it once more in order to cheat the entire country of their right to elect.

The paper was soon undeceived as it started publishing protests from all over the country. The Civil Rights Movement (C.R.M.) in three statements referred to the "dangerous and unprecedented nature of this step which threatened the very basis of democratic parliamentary government founded on periodic elections of the people's representatives." It pointed out that "the move was in breach of Sri Lanka's obligations under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights." Ceylon had only the previous year celebrated 50 years of universal adult franchise.

R. P. Wijeratne writing from Colombo said: "The bizarre spectacle of honourable ministers and M.P.'s of the governing party being submitted *en masse* to the indignity of handing over undated letters of resignation to their leader is further evidence of this kind of cynicism. Apart from the mutual distrust revealed by these arrangements, the complete surrender of wills and independence by representatives elected by the people, to a leader however estimable, will certainly not enhance their prestige and standing in the eyes of the people."

In a telegram to the President, the C.R.M. pointed out that the referendum was neither free nor fair, because an emergency was in force, under which several opposition newspapers (including Aththa) had been prevented from publication and had had their presses sealed.

In a letter signed on behalf of the M.I.R.J.E. (Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality) by its president Fr. Paul Caspersz, a doughty fighter for minority rights, an appeal was made to the T.U.L.F.. It was asked to refrain from being drawn into discussions with the government on the national question until the conclusion of the referendum and to participate actively in a campaign for the preservation of the fundamental rights of the people to elect their own M.P.'s. It further deplored efforts at that juncture by the government to place before Tamil-speaking people, token concessions as solutions to their problems and considered such overtones opportunistic and intended to compel the T.U.L.F. to soft-pedal its campaign against the Government's proposal at the referendum.

This provided an opportune moment for the T.U.L.F. to take up a principled stand and resume its combative role. A principled stand could have meant only one thing - totally to oppose the fraud the government was trying to inflict on the entire country. This would have

given both the Tamils and the T.U.L.F. a new prestige countrywide. Mr. Amirthalingam could be combative when he wished to. But since the late 1970's the party organisation had been in a deeply frozen state, with the younger elements slipping away into militant ranks. When the matter of the referendum was brought before parliament, the T.U.L.F. showed its lukewarmness by speaking against it while at the same time not registering a single protest vote. The same puzzling attitude was displayed by the T.U.L.F. during the general strike of mid-1980, which the government put down with large-scale repression. In support of the strikers, university members, teachers and trade unionists organised a one-day hartal and march in Jaffna. The T.U.L.F. declined to join. When questioned, a very senior T.U.L.F. member replied that the matter was a "Southern problem". Here was a classic instance of divide and rule. The T.U.L.F. had voluntarily submitted the Tamils to ghetto politics, when with a little vision it could have enhanced respect for the Tamils. The government kept the T.U.L.F. quiet by means of a few perks for parliamentarians and the promise of "jam tomorrow" for the Tamils. But as in that famous song "Tomorrow never comes", the result was a dangerous isolation of the Tamils, putting them entirely at the mercy of the government. The T.U.L.F. is a product of Tamil society. The preoccupation of its elite has not been with doing the right thing or the principled thing, but with doing what seems clever and convenient. Thus at that time (1988) when people should have been trying to restore democracy by forging links with all democratic sections in the South and by improving Sinhalese-Tamil relations, they seem to have been holding onto another will-o-the-wisp. The only idea coming from the Tamil elite today was a plea to India to negotiate with the L.T.T.E. - meaning, give them (the L.T.T.E.) something so that they would be left alone. As an eminent public man put it in words that cannot mean anything: "The Tigers and the Indian Army are our two precious eyes. We cannot be without either one of them." This is the counterpart of the T.U.L.F.'s stand in the early 1980's.

13 November 1982:

The Saturday Review quoted a press report, according to which President Jayewardene told his District Ministers that he had an assurance from the T.U.L.F. leadership that it would not actively canvass against the referendum. The Saturday Review further said: "An interview the Secretary General of the T.U.L.F. (Tamil United Liberation Front) and Leader of the Opposition, Mr. A. Amirthalingam, gave a Colombo week-end paper recently fuelled speculation that the T.U.L.F. leader may be offered high office in a "National Government" as forecast by the Saturday Review in its issue of 23 October.

"Mr. Amirthalingam made it quite clear, in the course of the interview, that the T.U.L.F. will not boycott Parliament nor join any so called 'common front' in campaigning against the referendum." Mr. Amirthalingam further added: "Even if the Government carries the referendum through, we will remain in Parliament until August 3, 1983 when this term runs out. At this point the General Council will decide as to who should represent the T.U.L.F. in parliament for the extended period."

Thus it appeared to the T.U.L.F. leadership that it could imitate the undemocratic example set by President Jayewardene, who had obtained undated letters of resignation from his parliamentary group to set up a tame parliament after the referendum. It seemed a bargain to the T.U.L.F. -- the price was for it to remain non-committal. To be doubly sure, the government did some arm twisting as well. The same issue reported that the Government had ordered its officers in the North and East to turn down all requests by T.U.L.F. M.P.s - the small mercies afforded to keep them in hope: "Education authorities in the North and East

were summoned to Colombo to be told bluntly not to oblige the T.U.L.F. M.P.'s requests for transfers and appointments... Meanwhile the appointments of 15 bank employees recommended by the T.U.L.F. M.P. for Vavuniya, Mr. T. Sivasithamparam, have been cancelled." All requests to the Education authorities were to be reported to the head office in Colombo, so that M.P.s wanting favours would have to go to the government directly.

Looking back one can hardly understand why the T.U.L.F. subjected itself and the Tamils to this loss of self-respect and humiliation on the basis of promises that were not likely to be honoured. A dedication to principle could have saved the Tamils from the calamity that was to come. The betrayal of democracy by the T.U.L.F. at this point may be compared with that by well-heeled Tamil gentlemen in Parliament voting for the bills of 1948 which made plantation workers of Indian origin, also fellow Tamils, non-citizens. At that time Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, the founder of the T.U.L.F., did the honourable thing in passionately opposing that bill. But the old habit of the Tamil elite being voluntary slaves to the Sinhalese ruling class, from whom they received patronage, had not changed.

27 November, 1982:

In the meantime things were taking a different turn, involving spontaneous mass protests over the detention of several prominent Tamils on suspicion of being involved with militants: "Tamil politics entered a new mass agitational phase in Jaffna this week, following the arrests and questioning of several Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican priests in connection with terrorism and the Neervely Bank robbery of 1981 and the peremptory ascribing of guilt to the members of the clergy by the State-controlled and other media in Colombo.

"Whole-day protest fasts and sit-ins are being held throughout the peninsula with the Tamil United Liberation Front itself actively mounting a chorus of protests. On Tuesday 30th, there will be a collective one-day fast in both the North and the East, demanding an end to the arbitrary detention of the priests and University Assistant Lecturer Nithyananthan and his wife Nirmala, the abolition of the prevention of Terrorism Act and an end to State terrorism."

The arrested priests were of course the Rev. Fr. Singarayar, the Rev. Fr. Sinnarasa (both Roman Catholic), Rev. Jeyatilakarajah (Methodist) and the Rev. Donald Kanagaratnam (Anglican, Vavuniya). Dr. Jeyakularajah (Puttur Mission Hospital), brother of the Rev. Jeyatilekarajah was also arrested. The Rev. Kanagaratnam, formerly principal of the Pilimatalawa Theological seminary, was released shortly afterwards. He had resigned his principalship at the seminary after some Sinhalese members made an issue of his refusal to raise the national flag on Independence Day 1978 on the grounds that the Tamil speaking part of the nation had suffered grievous oppression during the 1977 race riots. He had then gone on to found Unity House in the border area of Vavuniya to work for Sinhalese-Tamil amity. He had good personal relations with the Sinhalese of that area. Rev. Singarayar was finally released after the July 1987 Accord. The rest had escaped to India from Batticaloa prison. They and Fr. Singarayar had narrowly escaped during the two prison massacres in July 1983.

On the lighter side, soldiers who had been sent to search the home of the Nithyanandans, in the same compound as that of Nirmala's parents, Mr. & Mrs. Rajasingam, were asked to wait there. The soldiers felt bored, having nothing to do. They went about plucking flowers and made a large garland, which was then presented to the cow tied in the compound.

Previously, in the issue of 20 November, 1982, the Saturday Review had strongly protested the slanderous allegations being made with impunity against those arrested, in the Southern press, with a lead piece titled "STOP THIS PEN AND DAGGER JOURNALISM."

11 December, 1982:

Writing in the section "Political Causerie," the Colombo based columnist Gamini Navaratne, dealt with President Jayewardene's allegation of a "Naxalite Plot," as the excuse for holding the referendum in place of the General Elections. The alleged Naxalites were a group of Mrs. Bandaranaike's S.L.F.P., which led the presidential campaign of its candidate Mr. Hector Kobbekaduwa. According to President Jayewardene's information, this group had planned to assassinate him, a few other Ministers, Mrs. Bandaranaike's son Anura and the Armed Services Chiefs, among others. According to him, they would thereupon do away with the constitution and imprison Mrs. Bandaranaike. Except for farcical dramas like the questioning of Mr. Kobbekaduwa, nothing was ever proved then or in later years.

Gamini Navaratne referred to several instances where members of the U.N.P. had openly indulged in violence and where no action had been taken: after the 1977 elections, in June 1981 during the D.D.C. elections, in August 1981 when communal violence had been unleashed in many places including the plantations and after the Presidential elections. The persons who attacked the meeting of the Sinhala Balamandalaya had no action taken against them, even after they had been identified by others. Navaratne added: "Unless action is taken against them, could sections of the opposition be blamed if they regard the latest coup allegation as a cover for the Government, while keeping the S.L.F.P. machinery effectively strangled, to distract people's attention from the looming economic crisis, instil fear in their minds about a "Naxalite", (that is Communist) threat and stampede them into saying "Yes" at the Referendum by clever manipulation of the state-monopolised mass media?"

Protest against the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the recent arrests reached a high point in Vavuniya when steel helmeted police used batons and tear gas inside St. Anthony's Church at Rambaikulam on 15 December.

18 December, 1982:

"Hundreds of girls, women, children and men - including Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians - began a protest fast on Wednesday on the church premises. As scheduled, a silent march headed by school-girls with mouths gagged and wearing black badges had just come to the road when police pounced upon them, dragged the girls by their hair, and kicked and baton-charged them when they defied police orders to disperse. The baton charge took place when the girls sat on the ground refusing to move. Then the police stormed into the church and baton charged protestors who sought refuge there.

"Nine people were arrested including the Gandhiyam's Dr. Rajasundaram, Mr. M.S. Kandiah (Social Worker, 75 years old), T.E.L.F. Secretary M. K. Eelaventhan, Dr. K.S.N. Fernando and David Naganathan. Tension was high in Vavuniya following the Police rampage and all shops put up their shutters."

Dr. K.S.N. Fernando was a Sinhalese doctor attached to Vavuniya hospital and a dedicated human rights activist. He was subject to much abuse by Sub-Inspector Gunasinghe for being an alleged traitor and was badly assaulted by the policeman who also took revenge on him for having earlier filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court. After his arrest Dr. Fernando was at one point beaten unconscious. The Sub-Inspector who indiscriminately assaulted participants, also threatened to kill a Kumarasinghe if he was there. Kumarasinghe was a Sinhalese activist for the Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality (M.I.R.J.E.) in Vavuniya.

The government's handling of these protests was fuelling Tamil anger without in any way reducing the momentum of the protests. The spate of public protests continued. The students of the University of Jaffna organised a large demonstration on 26 January, 1983, followed by a 4 day fast starting on 1 February, 1983.

The results of the referendum were announced on 23 December, 1982 the day after polling. The "Yes" vote to extend the term of the government came to 54.66% of the valid votes, with the "No" vote amounting to 45.34%. Of registered voters, 70.7% voted as opposed to 80% in the Presidential elections. But that was not the whole story. The Government had used its machinery, both official and unofficial, to perpetrate election fraud on an unprecedented scale. This was a country where elections had traditionally been reasonably clean. It was some time before the details came out.

In his book, *"Sri Lanka: The Holocaust and After"*, (Marram Books, London, 1984), L. Piyadasa rightly argues that, in a country where voter participation has been traditionally high, as much as 86.7% in 1977, the natural instinct of the people would have been to say that they wanted elections to elect their own representatives, even if only to return the U.N.P. with a massive majority. This consideration itself made the result of the referendum highly improbable. All indications are that there were many untoward happenings starting with the partiality of the police. Piyadasa rightly argues:

"Moreover, opposition polling observers were, in a large number of carefully checked cases, prevented by threats of murder or of having their homes burnt, by false arrest, assault and robbery of documents, (e.g.: identification) from functioning as polling observers. Officially appointed presiding officers were intimidated and manhandled when they challenged impersonators or tried to stop thuggery within polling booths by legally unauthorized persons. Many voters were prevented from voting freely or voting at all. This was done openly, with police connivance or collaboration, by U.N.P. thugs in many ways, including compelling voters to show how they had marked their papers and preventing people known to be members of "Vote NO" groups and parties from leaving their homes. Very prominent in the organising and carrying out of the violence and intimidation were Paul Perera (who was not long afterwards nominated to be an M.P.), and a gun wielding M.P., Anura Bastian, whom the President appointed Deputy Minister in charge of the Home Guards soon afterwards! There was impersonation on a scale never before attempted in Sri Lanka. In one polling booth, the Presiding Officer had counted one person voting 72 times, and had officially reported this to his superior. In most of the country it required real courage to vote "No" in these conditions."

There were other minor miracles too. In Mrs. Bandaranaike's electorate Attanagala, she as the leader of the S.L.F.P. decided to withdraw all her observers and party agents from her electorate. This was after her agents were brutally and repeatedly beaten up and threatened with death. In this electorate where she had received a massive majority in 1977, the "Yes"

votes counted after the polling were 35,747, as against 22,531 for Jayewardene at the presidential election!

In the Jaffna district, the voter turn out was 290,849 - 60% of registered voters - of whom 91.3% voted "No," no that is, to extending the life of the parliament. The voter turn out was 46% for the presidential elections. The voter turn out would certainly have been much higher if the T.U.L.F. had actively campaigned for the "No" vote. The registered voters in Jaffna numbered 493,705. The voting population in Ceylon was 8,148,015. The majority claimed by the government was 535,240. All Tamil districts voted for having General Elections: Vanni - 64.9%, Trincomalee - 56.4%, and Batticaloa - 60.1%; so did, in general, the districts of the deep South, despite the intimidation: Kalutara - 50.4%, Galle -52.6%, Hambantota - 55% and Matara -49.2%. It is these last named districts that form the base for the J.V.P.'s current (1988) insurgency against the government. The government's proposal to continue the present parliament for another term received its highest support, with the malpractices, in the areas with a high estate Tamil population whose leader Mr. S. Thondaman was a minister in the government: Nuwara Eliya - 72.7%, Badulla - 69.9%, Kandy - 62.2%, and Matale - 73.5%. This was an irony, in view of the legislation against this community in 1948/49 by a U.N.P. government of the time.

It may be mentioned that the vote in the Laggala electorate in the Matale district was challenged. The Sun had reported on 23 December, that the voters had been cut off from their polling stations as a result of floods and earthslips. But out of an electorate of 35,129, 26,115 registered their votes at the referendum, as compared with 17,354 at the presidential polls!

In the Tamil districts, the low voter turn out (60-70%), together with the somewhat indecisive vote (except in Jaffna), can be attributed to the failure of the T.U.L.F. to form a common front with the parties wanting general elections and mounting a campaign to underline a sense of urgency. The excuse normally offered by the T.U.L.F. and Mr. Thondaman's C.W.C. (Ceylon Workers Congress representing Tamil Plantation Workers) for neither campaigning against nor supporting the government, is that the former coalition government of Mrs. Bandaranaike which included the two major Left parties, the L.S.S.P. and the C.P., had completely ignored them. This was true. But at the same time the present U.N.P. government only listened to them nominally. It had already showed a tendency to use race riots as a political weapon in August 1981 in which many of the victims were plantation Tamils supporting the C.W.C.. President Jayewardene, while blaming some of his own party in moving words, did nothing to discipline them. The unkindest cut of all was to come in July 1983. The only real option that had been open to the T.U.L.F. and the C.W.C. was to take a principled stand on behalf of the democratic rights of the whole country and oppose the government. This would have increased their prestige throughout the country and possibly brought them out of marginal patronage politics into national politics. The position of the Tamils too would have been rendered more secure in the long run.

To many it would seem unbelievable that the T.U.L.F. under a once combative leader like Amirthalingam, should sit back and allow things to drift waiting for the promised jam. The T.U.L.F. too had reflected the general lack of conviction about democracy amongst the Tamil elite, whose public conduct was for the most part based on patronage. Although not very evident at that time, the T.U.L.F.'s inactivity during the referendum had cut it adrift from its political base. The Jaffna voter had shown that he had a mind of his own by registering a 91.3% vote against the government's proposal. Despite the T.U.L.F.'s lukewarmness, 60% (14% more than in the Presidential elections) had taken the trouble to go and register their

opinion. For a political party to indulge in secret talks without actively articulating the feelings in its own constituency, spelt political suicide.

President Jayewardene could now afford to treat the Tamils and their representatives with contempt. As far as his immediate ambitions were concerned, he had the Tamils in his pocket, as he did his party's M.P.s. The Tamils were now subject to his whims and his irresponsibility. He was not going to give them jam. He was going to give them cake in the sense in which Marie Antoniette meant it, when the Parisians asked for bread.

1 January, 1983:

Little attention was paid to the vote in the deep South at this time. In a *post-mortem* of the referendum by Staff Writer Suresh in the Saturday Review, it was pointed out that the electorates of 5 Cabinet Ministers, 5 Deputy Ministers and 19 U.N.P. M.P.s "voted clearly for a dissolution of the present government." Most of those were in the deep South.

But in early 1983, with the Tamils in the President's pocket and the South under the heel of the Police and the U.N.P. goon squads, the fraud was accepted meekly. Given the situation of burning anger and humiliation below the surface in the South, a mounting insurgency in the North and the government's control over the media, the government with its characteristic irresponsibility and cynicism, found it very natural to direct Sinhalese feelings to find release in an orgy of anti-Tamil violence.

8 January, 1983:

The Saturday Review sensed the new mood of repression. In its lead piece titled "WE SMELL DANGER," it had this to say: "We have been tipped off by friends from various quarters, some of them surprising quarters close to government decision making processes, that we are now under very close surveillance and scrutiny and the axe might fall on us any time."

In a climate of increasing repression in the South, which began with the break up of the 1980 general strike and the advent of the multi-nationals which began to disrupt life even in remote villages, the Left felt helpless. The only Sinhalese area where there was some active opposition to the state was in the Moneragala District, where some Leftist groups were helping the villagers to resist the takeover of common lands by sugar multinationals, through protest campaigns. For this reason, many Left leaning persons and organisations in the South were looking to the North for inspiration, where there was popular resistance to the government. The Ceylon Teachers' Union (with 47,000 members) and the Revolutionary Marxist Party, had in June 1982 issued statements opposing the extradition from India to Ceylon of Mr. Prabhakaran and Mr. Uma Maheswaran, arrested in India a few weeks earlier.

22 January, 1983:

The Saturday Review carried an interview with Bala Tampoe, General Secretary of the C.M.U. (Ceylon Mercantile Union) which contained this extract:

But he said he could already see young men who had neither names nor labels, but only lessons and experience, who were converging to form a new radical opposition to the oppressive government. "It is such earlier unheard of people like Kuttimani and Thevan who have the stuff in them to form a truly revolutionary force." Though most of the Leftists are demoralised after

the debacle in the Presidential and Referendum polls, Mr. Bala Tampoe is very optimistic. He said: "I see history as waves. So far we have been in the receding wave. But even in the gloomy oppressive atmosphere of Jayewardene's rule, I can now see an advancing wave that will soon shatter all tyrannical forces ahead of it."

19 February, 1983:

The following appeared in a Saturday Review article by a Southern Leftist, Kusal Perera:

The Left would have to fight for a broad unity among the working class at factory level on transitional demands, where the right of self-determination of the Tamil people would be included. The Tamil Trade Union Federation will have to come out of hibernation and join actively any such working class unity.

In short, the Left and the Tamil militants will have to forge a massive anti-government mass-movement with the working class at the head of it. That would be the only process of achieving an Eelam, for separation to be possible under this crisis ridden, capitalist, semi-dictatorship.

Another left party, the N.S.S.P., a break away group of the old L.S.S.P., led by Vasudeva Nanayakkara and Vikramabahu Karunaratne, made a considerable impact in Jaffna and even acquired a following amongst students. It advocated self-determination for the Tamils. Its base in the South too was small, but was concentrated in certain areas. Its leader, Mr. Nanayakkara, later fought a remarkable by-election after the July 1983 violence, which got the government truly worried. Unlike the old ways of fighting elections, the N.S.S.P. laid down its policy towards Tamils clearly before the Sinhalese constituency. The threat was taken so seriously that President Jayewardene himself made a campaign appearance. There was a high incidence of state thuggery. Many believe that Mr. Nanayakkara actually won the by-election.

However the Left was too divided at this time to make an impact. It could not decide on a single candidate for the Presidential elections. It was mainly romanticising about future possibilities, often put forward as certainties, as in Bala Tampoe's case, cited above. However the interest shown by the Left in the South helped to give the Tamil militants a Leftist image.

The Saturday Review's issue of 19 February, 1983, also reported a court-room drama which made a powerful impact in this country as well as amongst Tamils living abroad:

This happened on Thursday when Senior Defence Counsel N. Satyendra, concluding his *voire dire* proceedings of the Neervely Bank Cash Robbery told court: "As regards my clients, the accused, I wish to state publicly from this Court of record, that in the presence of those individuals who belong to my community and who have been prepared to sacrifice what is perhaps the most precious possession of any individual - his very life - for the cause of liberation of their people, I feel humble."

The accused in this case are: Navaratnarajah, Thangavelu (Thangadurai), Selvarajah Yogachandran (Kuttimani), Siva Subramaniam Sri Sabaratnam (Thevan), Nadarajah (Sivapalan Master), Sundaram Sri Sabaratnam, who is absconding and Vaithilingam Nadesadasan."

It was this group from which the T.E.L.O. claimed its antecedents and was led by the third named Sri Sabaratnam. Kuttimani and Thangadurai died during the prison massacre of 25 July, 1983. What would not have been dreamed of by the public at this time was that the T.E.L.O. leader would be killed 39 months later on the orders of the leadership of Mr. Prabhakaran's Tigers.

5 March, 1983:

The unprecedented court drama had its second act on 24 February, 1983 when the first accused, Thangathurai, made a moving statement before the court. Subsequently the six accused were sentenced to life imprisonment on two counts and 15 years of rigorous imprisonment each on two other counts. The presiding High Court Judge was Mr. C. L. T. Moonemale. Thangathurai's speech may have been a historic speech had his political heirs become successful. At that time it had an effect on the Tamils from which all militant factions benefited. The third anniversary of the Welikade prison massacre took place shortly after the decimation of the T.E.L.O. by the Tigers which rekindled some of the scenes of the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom. In several places attempts to distribute leaflets commemorating the prison massacre in which Kuttimani and Thangathurai died were stopped by the Tigers.

Thangathurai's moving speech in Tamil eloquently recalled the historic experience of the Tamils and contained these lines: "We are not lovers of violence nor victims of mental disorders. We are fighters belonging to an organisation that is struggling to liberate our people. To those noble souls who keep prating terrorism, we have something to say. Did you not get frightened of terrorism when hundreds of Tamils got massacred in cold blood, when racist hate spread like fire in this country of yours? Did terrorism mean nothing to you when Tamil women were raped? When cultural treasures were set on fire? When hundreds of Tamil homes were looted? Why, in 1977 alone 400 Tamils lost their lives reddening the sky above with their splattered blood. Did you not see any terrorism then? It is only when a few policemen are killed in Tamil Eelam and a few million rupees bank money robbed that terrorism strikes you in the face... But my fervent prayer is that innocent Sinhalese people should not have to reap what power hungry Sinhalese politicians have sown. These tribulations are a boon bestowed by God to purify us. The final victory is ours."

At this point student unrest in all of Ceylon's Universities was taking shape. What must have disturbed the government was the co-ordination between the student bodies of the different universities. This was sundered in the climate of racism following the July 1983 disturbances. However this did not bring peace to the Universities in the South which came to be known as more closed than open. The mood of racism fostered by the government, accompanied by frustration with the government itself, provided fresh opportunities for the J.V.P. in the coming years. However, the mood at that time was captured in a report in the Saturday Review: "Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act". This was one of the main demands of undergraduates of all universities and university campuses in Sri Lanka who carried out a one-day token boycott of lectures on 24 February. The undergraduates have also demanded that the government keep its hands off the Universities. This demand refers specifically to the statement made recently by University Grants Commission (U.G.C.), Chairman Dr. Stanley Kalpage, that legislation is on the way to take over the administration of the universities and his threat that the U.G.C. would cancel the scholarships and loan facilities of students who go on strike... The third demand of the undergraduates was that students of the Kotelawala Defence Academy should not be admitted to the University of Colombo.

12 March, 1983:

This issue reported mounting unrest in Jaffna over the detention of three students. It went on: "Meanwhile a wave of discontent is sweeping the University Campuses throughout the country. The Colombo University strike went into the second week while undergraduates at Peradeniya, Kelaniya, Ruhuna and Batticaloa began boycotting all classes on Monday protesting the 'Police brutality' unleashed on the strikers at Colombo and Sri Jayewardenepura Universities."

Around this time events were gaining a new momentum. On 4 March two Army vehicles were ambushed near Kilinochchi injuring five soldiers. On 14 March Government Officers wielding clubs and batons, claiming to act on the orders of the Assistant Government Agent set fire to 16 huts belonging to hill country Tamils in a refugee settlement at Pankulam, Trincomalee District. The refugees were supported by Gandhiyam. This was a sign that the state was preparing to use an iron fist against communities, as opposed to individuals as in the past.

On 5 April 1983, a march organised by students protesting the P.T.A. was beaten and broken up by a Police tear-gas attack. The marchers had initially avoided a Police cordon by starting from the Cathedral grounds instead of the grounds of St. James' Church, Main Street, as earlier announced. (The news that was immediately alarming was the government crackdown on Gandhiyam.)

9 April 9, 1983:

"Gandhiyam Society, the only major voluntary service organisation engaged in community development projects in Tamil areas in Sri Lanka and the only active body looking after Tamil refugee resettlements, was raided by a combined team of Sri Lankan Army, Police and Criminal Investigation Department officials on Wednesday, 6th April at 10:00 a.m. The Organising Secretary of Gandhiyam, Dr. S. Rajasundaram, was himself taken away to an unspecified destination. Since there was no warrant for his arrest and since no reasons were given, it is believed that he was taken into custody under the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act."

30 April, 1983:

The death of Navaratnarajah in Army custody further aroused Tamil indignation over the treatment of prisoners under the P.T.A.. The lead story in the Saturday Review read: "There were twenty-five external injuries and ten internal injuries in the deceased Navaratnarajah's body. The contusions in his lungs could have been caused by blows. I am of the opinion that death was due to cardio-respiratory failure, due to multiple muscle injuries and contusions of the lungs. In my opinion, adequate treatment from an institution would have saved his life." So said Dr. N. Saravanapavanathan, A.J.M.O., submitting his medical report in the inquest of 28-year old Navaratnarajah of Trincomalee who died in Army custody at the Gurunagar Army Camp, Jaffna, on the 10th of April. Navaratnarajah was arrested two weeks previously on suspicion under the P.T.A.."

N. Saravanapavananthan, Professor of Forensic Medicine, Jaffna, is one of those souls as unbending as his native palmyrah. He can be trusted never to compromise his professional judgement. After the inquest on Navaratnarajah was completed, the police searched the documents in the mortuary for the file. But Prof. Sara had taken the precaution of keeping the file in a safe place. He was an old hand at this work. In 1971 as Judicial Medical Officer in Galle during the Sinhalese youth insurgency, he could not be prevented from exhuming a whole heap of bodies near Giniganga - bodies of youngsters massacred *en masse* by security forces. The I.P.K.F. was compelled to treat him with respect, even when on an occasion he reversed the opinion of another doctor in the case of a rape complaint. The same issue of the Saturday Review reflected the feeling of alienation felt by the Tamils in a hard hitting editorial, titled "AWAY WITH THIS ABOMINABLE ACT". It contained these words:

"The first of such laws was promulgated in the very year of 'freedom' - the Citizenship Act No. 18 of 1948, which effectively excluded a section of the Tamils from citizenship. Then came the Indian and Pakistan Residents (Citizenship) Act No. 3 of 1949 and the Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act No. 48 of 1949 which disenfranchised a large section of Tamils. Then came the Sinhalese Only law in 1956, making every Tamil in this country, irrespective of what doctorates some of them held, virtual illiterates in their land of birth. The Prevention of Terrorism Act is now over three years old. What has the government achieved by it up to now?"

30 April 30, 1983

This issue highlighted the detention and torture of senior Architect, Arulanandam David, President of Gandhiyam, at Panagoda military barracks. In a telegram sent to the president, Lawyer Kumaralingam stated that detainee Rajendran was passing blood and was suffering from frequency of micturation. Lawyers gained access to David through a court order after David had been forced to sign a confession under torture.

The same issue also drew attention to countrywide repression. A meeting of the Civil Rights Movement held on 15 April 1983 and presided over by its Chairman Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe expressed concern at the growing indications of police misconduct. It listed in particular: assaults against journalists at Kotmale; assault and unlawful detention of a 17-year-old boy at the Kandy police station; assaults against women strikers at Ekala; assaults against students at Jayewardenepura; death of a suspect held in police custody at Matale; assault against pavement hawkers in Colombo; and assault against former M.P. Mrs. Vivienne Gunawardene.

Following the announcement of local government elections three U.N.P. men in the North were shot dead (Ratnasingam, Rajaratnam and Muttiah). This brought to five the number of U.N.P. men killed (with Thiagarajah in 1981, and Thambapillai in November 1982). In a leaflet by the L.T.T.E. claiming responsibility for these killings the T.U.L.F. was branded as an evil force which was Eelamist only in connection with elections. The L.T.T.E. called for a boycott of the elections scheduled for 18th May, causing some leading T.U.L.F. candidates to withdraw and U.N.P. members to leave the party. At one meeting (8 May) when militant youths fired into the air, everyone, including the speakers on the platform, ran away except for the T.U.L.F. Secretary General and Leader of the Opposition, Mr. A. Amirthalingam.

14 May 1983:

This issue of the Saturday Review had this to say: "Tamil Undergraduates and a few Tamil lecturers fled the University of Peradeniya on Thursday and Friday following assaults by some Sinhalese undergraduates. Some Tamil students have been admitted to Kandy hospital with injuries. A few days back a student group had staged a Tamil translation of Jean-Paul Satre's "Men Without Shadows". The torture and cruelty by the Nazi soldiers of French resistance fighters was suspected of being portrayed in a way as to resemble local conditions. Later pamphlets issued by the L.T.T.E. were found pasted on the Science Faculty walls".

Another provocation for the violence seems to be the tarring of the English and Sinhalese lettering at the entrance to the University. This incident was suspected of having been engineered. A long standing tradition at the Faculty of Engineering held when Sinhalese students protected fellow Tamil students. Elsewhere Tamil students were told: "No campus and no Eelam for you bastards."

The turn out for the local polls on 18 May was low for reasons varying from support for the L.T.T.E. to fear. The L.T.T.E. went beyond the boycott call and attacked a polling booth: "About 64 houses, three mini-buses, nine cars, three motor-cycles and 36 bicycles were set on fire by Army men on a rampage at Kantharmadam in Jaffna on Wednesday the 18th evening and night as soon as a state of emergency came into force a 5:00 p.m.. This is believed to be the Army's "reply" to the killing of Corporal Jayewardene by militant youths at a polling centre in the vicinity an hour earlier."

21 May, 1983:

The army had now accepted collective reprisals as a weapon. In two months the army would take on unarmed civilians. The Saturday Review contained a report by Dr. M. S. L. Salgado, J.M.O., Colombo, indicating that the Gandhiyam secretary Dr. Rajasundaram had almost certainly been badly assaulted and tortured.

The incidents at Pankulam and Kantharmadam marked a conscious new trend in the government's thinking. What took place at Kantharmadam was not a spontaneous action. It was systematically done after a senior officer arrived and gave an order. With the exception of one goat there was no loss of life. The crossing of the Rubicon which set the stage for indiscriminate mass killing came with the announcement by a Defence Ministry spokesman that: "The armed forces and the police in the North are to be given legal immunity from judicial proceedings and wide ranging powers of search and destroy". The University students in Jaffna came to the fore in collecting money and materials and providing relief for the victims at Kantharmadam.

4 June, 1983:

The lead story in the Saturday Review quoted the statement published in the Sun: "Under such circumstances soldiers were compelled to react as during a war particularly in their role of fighting armed terrorists who had no compunction about killing servicemen or members of the public. In view of this it has been felt that police and service-men in the North should be given the freedom of the battlefield rather than having their morale sapped through conflicts with legal niceties. This is not a peacetime situation and the police and services must be provided with adequate safeguards when attempting to control the problem".

The new immunity was Emergency Regulation 15A of 3 July 1983 which allowed the security forces to bury or cremate bodies of people shot by them without revealing their identities or carrying out inquests. It was widely believed that these new powers were a direct reaction to the evidence proffered by A.J.M.O. Dr. Saravanapavanandan at the inquest of Navaratnarajah who died in army custody. This was not an issue connected with the "freedom of the battlefield." It was murder of a helpless captive. In general Tamils became both angry and frightened. They rightly believed that the government was arming itself with powers for some course of action that went beyond dealing with an admittedly deteriorating law and order situation.

Almost 12 hours after the government's announcement of tough new measures under the Public Security Act, Mr. Thilagar, a hospital employee and U.N.P. candidate for the municipal elections was shot at 6:15 a.m. on 4 June, at the Jaffna hospital. If the government was heading towards lighting the tinder, the militants were determined to help things along.

The same issue of the Saturday Review also carried news of an army rampage in Vavuniya: "Service personnel destroyed the Gandhiyam farm at Kovilkulam, about one and a half miles away from Vavuniya town on Wednesday 1st June. The rampaging servicemen who came in trucks destroyed the crops and huts and set fire to the farm buildings and vehicles. Three tractors and a van were burnt."

This happened after a four man guerrilla group flung bombs at an airforce jeep and then opened fire, killing airmen U. L. M. Perera and W. A. Gunasekera. This happened at the vegetable market where the airmen were shopping. It may be noted that this incident took place before the announcement of new measures and there was no loss of civilian life. The guerrillas were later identified with a group within the P.L.O.T.E..

The 4 June issue further reported that on 30 May, Sabaratnam Palanivel, a young van driver of Valvettithurai was dragged into the Valvettithurai army camp and shot dead by Corporal M. Wimalaratne. This happened around 4:30 a.m. when Palanivel was driving home after taking some relatives who wanted to catch the Trincomalee bus. Later an army truck ran over the dead body. This was the last time army offenders were brought before a Magistrate. Hence forward the situation in the country was to be qualitatively different. During the course of the Tamil insurgency, every death up to this time was an issue that aroused keen concern. Over the next five years, both freedom and value of life would continue to decline, not only in the North, but also in the South.

11 June, 1983:

A last plea for sanity was contained in a telegram sent to President Jayewardene on behalf of the Civil Rights Movement, by its secretary Desmond Fernando. The subject was the new powers being granted to the security forces. Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe, the president of the C.R.M. was to die a broken man on 23 October, the same year - broken by the blood letting that was to envelope the whole country. The C.R.M. felt a frequent need to refer to the events of 1971 involving the Sinhalese youth insurgency, which led to its formation when the Left government of Mrs. Bandaranaike was in power. This was because Jayewardene's chosen tactics to dismiss the counsels of the C.R.M. was to brand it a Communist or Communist inspired (and hence subversive) organisation. That was how the destructive mind of the government worked. Quoted below is an extract from the telegram, published in the Saturday Review of 11 June, 1963:

"The granting of such powers will create again the excesses of 1971 when similar powers resulted in deaths under torture, indiscriminate killings and execution without trial by security forces, which usurp functions of courts in determining who is a terrorist and who is not; and leading to slaughter of many never established to have been involved in insurgent activities. Revocation of this horrifying regulation was one of the main demands of the CRM at its inception in 1971.

"... It must guarantee that all such persons are dealt with by due process of the law and in keeping with the fundamental principles of justice... *for otherwise a government would be flouting the principles of justice that are vital to democracy in the very act of claiming to defend democratic institutions.*

"The Working Committee of the C.R.M. also points out that the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights which Your Excellency's Government has signed specifically provides that the right to life and the right to protection from torture cannot be derogated from even at a time of emergency threatening the life of the nation."

This plea came against a background of racist attacks throughout the country. The situation in Trincomalee was particularly grim, where the Saturday Review of 11 June reported one killing and several bomb attacks. The fact that these racist attacks were taking place while there was a curfew on, strongly suggested the connivance of the armed forces.

The situation there was to get worse in the weeks to come. In one incident several Tamil passengers travelling in a van were attacked and burnt with the van. Several Tamils who experienced these harrowing days in Trincomalee said that during curfew, racist hoodlums would attack them at home, and if they tried to flee, the security forces would shoot them as curfew breakers. It was clear that the government had decided to use brazen force to drive away Tamils from several areas of the North and East where they felt relatively safe. Especially targeted were the Trincomalee District and the settlements where Tamil refugees from the 1977 violence had after several years of hard work become economically stable. There was the chilly nip of unreason in the air.

On 2 July, 1983, the Saturday Review was sealed by the state just before its front and back pages could be printed. With all its shortcomings it had been a voice of humanity. Before the referendum fraud of December 1982, it had done for the whole country a courageous service, which the press in the South was constrained from doing, by giving articulation to a wide spectrum of voices from around the country protesting at the deception. It had done much to secure an impressive vote in Jaffna against the government, despite the T.U.L.F.'s silence. Henceforward to stand up for reason and humanity in Ceylon, was to become several times more dangerous - in the South as well as in the North. Shortly after the July 1983 violence, Mr. S. Sivanayagam, the paper's editor, would seek exile in India.

When the paper resumed publication several months later, its role would be very different, one of its main tasks being to catalogue a seemingly endless series of gory happenings. Constraints on press freedom would come from unexpected quarters. The old interest in political debate and development issues would be vastly reduced. One would miss contributions from readers on the importance of the Palmyrah Palm, heritage matters, problems of the Vanni farmer etc.. The optimism and the sense of forward movement were gone. Many of the lights had gone out. The sins of omission and commission had much to do with this. Even as the paper was being sealed, it was preparing for a future that was

qualitatively different. The unpublished issue of 2 July, 1983 had the following lines from its future editor, Gamini Navaratne, B.Sc. (Econ.) London, author of "The Chinese Connexion," and for 30 years a Westminster style lobby correspondent: "If I have my own way, I will send most of the present politicians to the moon. That's where they really belong." That was saying a lot about the future.

We see that during the years 1977-83 there were two main currents in the Tamil community outside the scope of parliamentary politics. One was to build up village level organisations of communities, economically viable and conscious of their dignity and rights as persons and communities. Their main weapon was to express, nonviolently, a feeling of public anger and outrage when this dignity was violated. Such a tendency was represented in Jaffna by the activities of the students.

The other tendency was represented by the L.T.T.E. and sections of the P.L.O.T.E.. Their hit and run attacks against the state, especially the police and the armed services, were creating a momentum of their own. This tendency underwent rapid expansion after July 1983, marginalising the people. Groups such as the E.R.O.S. and the E.P.R.L.F. concentrated mainly on grass-roots work amongst the masses before July 1983, and did continue with this for a time afterwards. But with India's entry and its adoption of the militant groups, all of them became primarily military organisations.

The failure of the Tamil leadership during this period was its lack of determination to move decisively to resolve both intellectually and in practice its ambivalent attitude towards violence. The murder of Dr. Rajasundaram during the second Welikade prison massacre of 27 July 1983 marked the end of an era. Much imaginative and dedicated work by individuals who gave all they had was forgotten. By 1988 few lips would utter the name of Dr. Rajasundaram. We are without a sense of history or a sense of gratitude. That explains what became of us. There is something fatally sick in a community that expends inordinate emotion on every passing scene, forgetting the last and unable to make the connections with the events that had gone before. A return to sanity will also involve a sober evaluation of our past. Many believe that if the July 1983 violence had not intervened, the first tendency would have overcome the second.

Chapter 4

THE JULY 1983 VIOLENCE AGAINST TAMILS

The mood of the government was reflected in a pronouncement President Jayewardene made during the course of an interview he gave Graham Ward of the Daily Telegraph, published in the issue of 18 July 1983. He said: "I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna people now... Now we cannot think of them. Not about their lives or of their opinion about us." India had been diplomatically voicing its concern about the worsening situation to the government. The Sri Lankan government had been working up anti-Indian remarks by the President. Significantly, the first public statement of concern for the Tamils in Ceylon from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, came between the publication of Jayewardene's remarks in the Daily Telegraph and the commencement of the racial violence six days later.

We have seen that in the weeks leading up to the 23rd of July 1983, the government had been building up for a use of massive force against Tamils. Regulations had also been framed which empowered state officials to break up refugee settlements of victims of the 1977 violence painstakingly built up in the North and East. Under cover of the July 1983 violence, there was forced transport on a large scale of Indian Tamil refugees from the North and East back to the hill country which they had fled in fear six years previously. They were simply dumped in the hill country while around them Tamils were again being killed and rendered refugees. July 1983 saw the publication of a report by Amnesty International detailing the large scale practice of torture against detainees. This was dismissed by President Jayewardene as communist inspired.

The course of the violence had such a planned character that the ambush of Sri Lankan soldiers rather than being the cause would have represented simply a convenient starting point. Militant activities in Jaffna had been on the increase. The army too had some successes. On one occasion two militants were ambushed and killed. On 23 July the L.T.T.E. killed 13 soldiers when the truck in which they were travelling hit a landmine on Palaly road in Thirunelvely. A senior L.T.T.E. man, Sellakilli, who had turned the tables on Inspector Bastianpillai was also killed. According to one source there had been a mix up of signals and Sellakilli had stood up. The following day the army went on a spree in Jaffna killing 41 people - some in their homes, some while they were waiting for buses at Manipay, and so on. The violence in Colombo started in the early hours of 25 July. 53 Tamil detainees at Welikade prison were killed in two successive attacks by armed fellow prisoners on the 25th and 27th of July. There was no impartial inquiry into this incident. It is believed that the prison massacre was planned at the highest levels and in the circumstances it could hardly have been otherwise.

The excerpts given below are taken from "*Sri Lanka: The Holocaust and After*," by L. Piyadasa, Maram Books, London (1984). These describe the course of violence:

In Kelaniya, Industries Minister Cyril Mathew's gangs were identified as the ones at work. The General Secretary of the government "union" the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (J.S.S.) was identified as the leader of gangs which wrought destruction and death all over Colombo and especially in Wellawatte, where as many as ten houses a street were destroyed. A particular U.N.P. municipal councillor of the Dehiwela-Mount Lavinia Municipality led gangs in Mount Lavinia. In the Pettah (the bazaar area, where 442 shops were destroyed and murders were committed) the commander was the son of Aloysius Mudalali, the Prime

Minister's right-hand man. And so on. Thugs who worked regularly for the leaders of the U.N.P., the Ministers of State and Party Headquarters, and in some cases uniformed military personnel and police, were seen leading the attack. They used vehicles of the Sri Lanka Transport Board (Minister in charge, M. H. Mohammed) and other government departments and state corporations. Trucks of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation's Oil Refinery came from many miles away bringing the men who destroyed so much of Wellawatte. There is much other evidence of this sort. In view of the quasi-governmental nature of the "action," the killings that took place may have been difficult for the eye-witnesses to resist ... But in the neighbourhoods, after the initial shock, Sinhalese and Burghers organised themselves and kept off the gangs who had been sent to burn and kill.

We have talked to people who were eye-witnesses of the killings - the beatings-to-death and burnings-alive in cold blood of individual Tamils seized, with never a case of police opposition, on the streets and in vehicles. Most people have read or heard the account, which we are convinced is authentic, of the Norwegian tourist who saw twenty people burnt alive in a minibus by one of these gangs. One of the most remarkable exploits of the "heroes" was the massacre, that day, in Welikade Prison (Sri Lanka's most important) of 35 people including some convicted men, and most either on remand or arbitrarily detained by the military. All were Sri Lankan Tamils. We are convinced that this massacre could not have been carried out without government and National Security Council authorisation and preparation at a level which would have guaranteed immunity from prosecution and public investigation. The men and women responsible for the conspiracy to commit this atrocity were never named, nor were those who organised and directed it. Fellow-prisoners of the murdered persons who were set up to commit some of the killings, and provided with weapons (and what else?), were collectively but not individually identified, but no one was charged!

The pogrom continued less intensely in Greater Colombo for three more days, in spite of the curfew. On Tuesday, July 26th, some of the action squads were transported to Kandy, some 70 miles away, and that afternoon there was a similar sharp and quick action there before the curfew was declared at 6 p.m. It then moved further up-country, past towns like Matale (devastated) and Nawalapitiya towards Badulla and Nuwara Eliya. Hindu temples had been added to the hit list. Army action had resulted in over 60 per cent of Badulla's city centre being reduced to rubble. On the 27th, incredibly, the second massacre of Tamil political detainees and remand prisoners was successfully carried out. This time 18 were killed. There was more to come. For, as some of the Tamils began to trickle back to work towards the end of the week, their fellow-countryman, J. R. Jayewardene, spoke publicly for the first time on Thursday evening, justifying what had been done to the Tamils in South and central Sri Lanka, and uttering not a word of sympathy. On Friday, this provocative speech, and other actions, led to further arson and many more killings.

The second extract describes the peculiar conduct of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, M.P. for Nuwara Eliya and Minister of Lands and Land Development. Nuwara Eliya erupted following his visit, after the city had been brought under control by persons acting with foresight:

The town was closely guarded by the army. All vehicles were checked. Bus conductors had orders not to transport Tamils. Minister Gamini Dissanayake came from Colombo to Nuwara Eliya to hold a meeting with party members. The day before, M.P. Herath Ranasinghe had arrested precariously (sic) some well-known rowdies. Soon after the end of Gamini Dissanayake's party meeting they were released. These people went out immediately, well-equipped with petrol, iron rods and other kinds of weapons, and tried to attack two Tamil priests in town. They managed to escape. Without having succeeded they moved on - another mob joined up with the first one. They laid a ring of petrol around a Tamil shop which was then burnt. They were supported in this by the army who supplied them with gallons of petrol. During the day nearly all Tamil-owned shops were burnt. Mrs. Herath Ranasinghe ordered the army to disperse the looters - but it was already too late. The Member of Parliament was banished from town under a hail of insults. Tamil people who walked the streets were beaten by soldiers. The fire brigade which stood waiting was hindered by the army and the Sinhalese mob in doing its job... Shops which had not been burnt by the mob were set fire to by the army. Around noon Nuwara Eliya was like a sea of flames... (*"Sri Lanka - 'Paradise' in Ruins,"* Sri Lanka Co-ordination Centre, Kassel, 1983).

Addressing a meeting of the L.J.E.W.U. (Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union), a union sponsored by Mr. Dissanayake as a rival to Mr. Thondaman's C.W.C., shortly after the July 1983 violence; Dissanayake said: "If India invades this country, the Tamils will be killed within 24 hours." There was much talk at that time about Indian troops being sent to protect Tamils. Dissanayake was, in the best street thug tradition, doing more than his share of Tamil baiting.

With the march of modern Sinhalese nationalism, Duttugemunu, a prince from the second century B.C. had been brought out of the mists of time and elevated to the position of the archetypal Sinhalese hero. The most celebrated of Duttugemunu's acts was to defeat in single combat, Elara, the aging King of Anuradhapura for 40 years. Elara had in his youth led an army into Ceylon from South India, and according to the chronicle Mahavamsa which contains the incident, had been a just and popular ruler. Duttugemunu had built a tomb for his dead foe and had decreed that all passers by should treat it with respect. To call Elara a Tamil and Duttugemunu a Sinhalese is to load modern ethnic consciousness with meanings it did not possess in ancient times. Indeed even as late as the first half of the 19th century, it was natural for members of the Kandyan upper class whom the British wished to apprehend, to seek refuge in Jaffna without feeling in any way aliens there. An older generation of the Kandyan upper class was quite happy with its children seeking spouses of the right caste in Jaffna, rather than in the low-country. There are many anecdotal stories which illustrate this. Once Mrs. Bandaranaike's brother, Senator Barnes Ratwatte, was heard speaking to someone in fluent Tamil. When a Tamil person expressed surprise, Mr. Ratwatte had replied lightly: "The higher you go up Kandyan society, the Tamil improves." This suggests a Ceylonese society divided on caste lines rather than on linguistic lines. This is confirmed by recent scholarship (See "*Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka*", published by the Social Scientists Association, 1979).

Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism as it is known today was spearheaded by the emergence of a low-country based commercial class under the opportunities provided by British ruled Ceylon. Kumari Jayewardene has pointed out that the anti-Indianism of this class had to do with current business rivalries with Indian merchants who were also making it good, rather than with anything in the hazy past. A leading role in the development of this nationalism was played by the Karawe caste, descended from Tamil speaking mercenaries who were brought from South India in service of local kings shortly before the coming of the Portuguese in 1505. Modern Sinhalese nationalism thus propagated a series of myths through the teaching of history in schools; whence the obscure prince Duttugemunu came to be the archetypal anti-Indian and anti-Tamil hero. History has no justification for this if one looks at the continual migration of peoples from India and their co-mingling over the centuries.

The latter part of the seventies saw an incident made sillier by the involvement in it of two highly educated ministers. A monument in Anuradhapura long known as Elara's tomb was proclaimed as being the tomb of Duttugemunu. Claims to this effect in the last three decades died down when it was found that the opposition from professional scholars was too much. This time some remains from the tomb were sent to the Government Analyst, to prove that the remains were those of Duttugemunu. How that was to be done in the case of a person dead for over two millennia with no medical history, one does not know. Two of the ministers who took a prominent interest in the ceremonial fanfare were Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali. Acquiring for themselves the Duttugemunu image was important for their politics and their personal vanity. This may go some way to explain their heroics. (For more on the subject of the tomb, see "*The Tomb of Elara*," by Dr. James Rutnam.)

Such histrionics were almost exclusively part of the gimmickry of the Right. The Sinhalese masses were increasingly fed on such opium to alleviate their burgeoning misery. Theatrical gestures of this kind are likely to cut little ice today. Indian troops are within a few miles of the tomb. As an Indian General put it: "We are not here to play marbles". Dissanayake was prominent amongst the protagonists of the Accord which 'invited' in the Indian troops. Mr. Dissanayake commands a ministry with a very large flow of money, next perhaps only to defence expenditure. He is also tipped to be a possible successor to President Jayewardene. With such interests at stake, it is understandable for Duttugemunu to turn Ettappan or Pilime Talawe, who connived with the British conquest of Pandya and Kandy respectively, thus betraying the trust of their Lords.

The July 1983 race riots marked an outbreak of irrational frenzy. The reasons given are many: widespread corruption at the top accompanied by impoverishment below; the increasing resort to ecstatic religion by the common people whose worldly horizons were hopelessly restricted, thus making them more vulnerable to emotive suggestions; the failure of economic life in rural areas swelling the ranks of a discontented urban proletariat; frustration resulting from the violent break up of the 1980 strike and the deprivation of the safety valve of general elections through an almost certainly rigged referendum, etc. The government succeeded in directing all this frustration at the Tamils through its propaganda, thus providing sacrificial victims for a Bacchanalian orgy. One may compare this with the periodic pogroms against Jews in Tsarist Russia.

The collective Sinhalese hysteria had the character of a religious ritual. The Cabinet which one way or the other sanctioned it, seemed to share in the hysteria. Hardly a minister came out clean. S. J. Tambiah (*Ethnic Fratricide in Sri Lanka*, Chicago University Press, 1985) records the conduct of some key ministers thus:

In the wake of the July 1983 violence, perhaps out of a "feeling of being crushed and pressured by a massive tide of collective aggression" by the Sinhalese, it took the President 24 hours to impose a curfew on Colombo, and four days to say anything at all. Then referring to the mobs as a "mass movement by the generality of the Sinhalese people," the President averred: "The time has come to accede to the clamour and national respect of the Sinhalese people." This tide of appeasement was carried on by other ministers. On the same television programme, Mr. Athulathmudali, who was later to become Minister of National Security, nearly wept with ponderous histrionics over a sight he had never dreamed he would see - lines of Sinhalese people waiting to buy food as the result of riots! He had not a word to say in sympathy for frightened Tamils crowded in indescribable conditions in refugee camps... neither the President, the Cabinet, nor even a single Sinhalese politician visited them to commiserate even briefly, or to promise relief and rehabilitation... The same President who admitted that some of his armed forces had participated in the riots wagged his finger at India for its alleged expansionist and interfering ambitions... Minister Cyril Mathew declared in Parliament on 4th August 1983: "If the Sinhala¹ are the majority race, why can't they be the majority?" Even Ronnie de Mel who later tried to distance himself from the government's Tamil policy did not come out untarnished.

Piyadase puts it thus: "The economic interests represented by Esmond Wickremasinghe, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake can be furthered only at considerable cost to the people of Sri Lanka."

One thing was clear after the riots. For the first time a government had connived in violence against a section of its own people on such a large scale. Wild passions had been

unleashed. It was an invitation to all and sundry to fish in troubled waters. The country was not going to be the same again. (For a detailed exposition of the subject, see L. Piyadasa's "*Sri Lanka: The Holocaust and After*," Marram Books, London, 1984)

<http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume1/Chapter4.htm> - [ftnref1# ftnref1](#)¹ A popular main course from steamed flour and coconut

Chapter 5

THE GROWTH OF THE TAMIL MILITANCY

5.1 Post 1983

The aftermath of the 1983 race riots brought a flood of recruits into the militant groups. The militant movements had become fractured in 1980 with the split between Prabhakaran and Uma Maheswaran. The latter went on to found P.L.O.T.E. (Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam) and the former the L.T.T.E. (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). India's role in Sri Lanka's internal affairs assumed a new phase in 1981 when it refused to deport to Sri Lanka Prabhakaran and Uma Maheswaran who had got themselves locked up in police custody over a gun fight at Pondi Bazaar. The Sri Lankan government claimed that they were wanted as criminal suspects. After the 1983 riots all militant groups based themselves in Tamil Nadu. The other significant militant groups are the T.E.L.O., the E.P.R.L.F. and the E.R.O.S.. All of them received succour from India and were monitored by the Indian intelligence organisation R.A.W. (Research and Analysis Wing). By unofficial estimates 3,000 Tamils had been killed and the stock of the Sri Lankan government in international opinion reached an all time low. India had also offered its offices to reach a political settlement. Instead of cutting its losses and reaching a settlement with the Tamils, the government first agreed to proposals put forward by the Indian Special Envoy Mr. G. Parthasarathy, and then dragged its feet. A Minister for National Security was appointed in January 1984 it became evident that Mr. Parthasarathy's proposals had been rejected in all but words. Many Sinhalese critics of the government felt that it was fatally idiotic to trifle with India in this manner. The government repeatedly claimed that India was going to invade Sri Lanka. But to more perceptive observers at that time, the possibility of invasion seemed very remote. While the international press claimed that Tamil militants were receiving training in India, India stated that there were only Tamil refugees on Indian soil. The true situation became one of the open secrets of the day. In consequence of all these, the result in Ceylon was a mounting military campaign by the government which increasingly became a campaign of indiscriminate terror. This was paralleled by an increasingly effective Tamil insurgency.

5.2 The Militants in Politics

By the time of the cease-fire of 18 June 1985, the militants had reached a dominant position in the Jaffna peninsula. Sri Lankan troops there were confined to barracks. Militarily the T.E.L.O. had come to rival the L.T.T.E.. The P.L.O.T.E. was well trained and armed, but claimed that it was building up for military action rather than for a guerrilla campaign. When the L.T.T.E., T.E.L.O., E.P.R.L.F. and E.R.O.S. formally united a short time before in April 1985 to form the E.N.L.F. (Eelam National Liberation Front), this gave a considerable morale boost to the Tamil population. Up to this time the Tamil population had hardly differentiated between rival groups. They were all referred to as boys and even Tigers. A short time after the cease fire the people began to realise that there were several disturbing trends. The formal unity of the E.N.L.F. was a facade and the boys were not going to listen to the people. About this time a novel, titled Puthiyathor Ulakam (A New World), was published by a dissident group of the P.L.O.T.E.. The book was about how young men with high ideals and a desire to sacrifice themselves for the good of their people, were drawn into a militant group which tried to pervert their original good intentions into a bizarre totalitarian conformism. Those who would not fall in line were tortured and brutally destroyed. Sources from this dissident group known as the "spark" group, claimed that about 90 members of P.L.O.T.E. had been so killed. There have also been a considerable number of authenticated internal killings within the L.T.T.E. and T.E.L.O. organisations. A large number of these killings took place on Indian soil. People began to wonder if India was indeed committed to democracy, justice and the well being of the Tamils. For what then had the police in Tamil Nadu been doing all these days?

Another reason why these groups were not accountable to the people was that their dependence on the people was minimal. The people were mainly demonstration fodder. During 1984 and in the first half of 1985 the Citizens' Committees had filled the gap left

behind by the self-exiled M.P.s. The committees were made up mainly of people of standing and were independent of the militant groups. To them fell the task of collecting information on army atrocities and making representations to the army and the government. One of the tasks performed by them was to make representations on behalf of the numerous youths who were being detained. The Citizens' Committees earned for themselves considerable credibility in the eyes of foreign journalists and in those of several embassies. The first blow to the mood of optimism which followed the ceasefire resulted from the murder by the L.T.T.E. of Mr. C. Anandarajan, Principal of St. John's College, and a leading member of the Jaffna Citizens' Committee. Many people acted in the belief that they still had certain democratic rights. Senior students at St. John's College went around putting up condolence posters. One editor who editorially questioned the killing was taken away and warned. The members of the Jaffna Citizens' Committee which asked the schools to observe a day of mourning received visits where the threatening undertone was clear. The main charge against Mr. Anandarajan, was the trivial one of his having organised a cricket match of Jaffna Schools versus the Sri Lankan Army, in the belief that it was in the spirit of the cease fire. It may be noted that about 15 months later in the middle of war leaders of the L.T.T.E. would fraternise on T.V. screens with Sri Lankan army officers, of whom Captain Kotelawela became well known.

A little earlier Mr. Gnanachandran, A.G.A. (Assistant Government Agent), Mullaitivu, had been assassinated and sixteen charges against him were issued in a leaflet. A highly educated man who was close to the L.T.T.E. gave the following extraordinary tale in justification of the assassination: In 1985 the people of Mullaitivu went through a difficult period due to Sri Lankan army action. The story went that Rajiv Gandhi telephoned President J. R. Jayewardene to protest about problems in Mullaitivu. President Jayewardene denied that such problems existed and in support of his claim asked Rajiv Gandhi to talk directly to the man on the spot and connected him on to A.G.A. Gnanachandran in Mullaitivu. A.G.A. Gnanachandran is said to have backed the President's claim. When asked how the militants got to know of this, the narrator of this story was sure that the conversation must have been overheard by an office employee at the switchboard who in turn would have informed the L.T.T.E.. Jaffna had now descended to trial by leaflet, gun, speculation and theatrics. The feeling of being besieged made the man in Jaffna accept all rumours and innuendoes that furthered the "Tamil cause," without examination. A few felt that things had gone fatally wrong. But most felt that the boys understandably made some small mistakes and that they would come around.

In another incident the army wanted all men in an area of Navaly to report at their camp the following day. A militant group came later and ordered that no one should go. Gunaratnam was a strong Jehovah's witness who felt that not to go after agreeing to do so was to have told a deliberate lie. He maintained that since he had done nothing wrong he should go and perhaps expound his religious convictions to the soldiers. He did go. He was later interrogated by the militant group who could not appreciate his point of view. He was then executed. His agonised sister believes to this day that her brother is somewhere alive.

An example of trial by theatrics was the murder of a man popularly known as Rajanikanth by the T.E.L.O.. A resident of Kalviyankadu, he was an ironsmith who sometimes did some favours for the T.E.L.O.. It is said that once he had seen some members of the T.E.L.O. indulging in some unseemly behaviour with some girls. Rajanikanth proceeded to scold them as boys would be scolded by an older man. Later he was abducted by a faction of the T.E.L.O. and displayed on a stage at Nelliady Junction. A T.E.L.O. member dressed up as a woman came on stage and accused Rajanikanth of having raped her. The

woman was given a knife and was asked to mete out an appropriate punishment. Rajanikanth was stabbed to death in a gruesome manner in public view. This happened during the second quarter of 1986.

Another phenomenon which came to Jaffna after the June 1985 cease fire was the prevalence of extortion and often very brutal robberies. People's houses were broken into by armed men, and after beating and sometimes torturing, their jewellery and other valuables were taken away. Appeals were made editorially and by posters to the militant groups to fulfil their obligation of policing, now that the Sri Lankan army was confined to barracks. But no militant group came forward to condemn these robberies or to do anything about them. Privately many of them expressed the feeling that these things have to be done in a liberation struggle to acquire resources. By several accounts, all militant groups indulged in robberies. Different militant groups became notorious in different areas. The game seemed to be to rob and try to put the blame on another group. The T.E.L.O. was the most noted in Jaffna town where the people were most articulate. This turned out to be useful for the L.T.T.E.. It may be mentioned that the robbery at Perumaal Temple in the heart of Jaffna, took place while an L.T.T.E. sentry was at hand. People once more lived in terror.

Although there was formal unity in the E.N.L.F. in response to popular demand, they made no attempt to work together. It was well known that Prabhakaran, the L.T.T.E. leader, and Sri Sabaratnam, the T.E.L.O. leader hated each other. The assassination of T.U.L.F. M.P.s Mr. Dharmalingam and Mr. Alalasunderam of 2 August, 1985, is an example of the methods by which one militant group tried to score over the others. Mr. Dharmalingam and Mr. Alalasunderam were amongst the T.U.L.F. M.P.s who continued to reside in Jaffna. On the basis of testimonies given by several persons who had talked to T.E.L.O. exiles in India, it is believed that this is how it happened: The L.T.T.E. leader Prabhakaran reportedly made a strong threatening speech against the T.U.L.F.. Sri Sabaratnam the T.E.L.O. leader then gave secret instructions to his men to assassinate the two M.P.s expecting that Prabhakaran would get the blame and the discredit.

As expected the L.T.T.E. was largely blamed. In an independent testimony, a P.L.O.T.E. sentry near Mr. Dharmalingam's residence identified a vehicle in which the assassins came as belonging to the T.E.L.O.. Another example of how the militant leaders functioned was given by T.E.L.O. exiles. Sri Sabaratnam was a leader whose presence gave a sense of awe to his men. Sometimes some members would complain to him about difficulties such as conditions in the camp. Sri Sabaratnam would listen with fatherly concern and go away promising redress. Later others would come and beat up the person who complained and nothing would change. Evidently the militant leaders had learnt a good deal from the methods of their predecessors in parliamentary politics. Only their adaptations were more frightening.

5.3 The Changing Character of the

Militants

The 1977 riots together with the lack of progress on the parliamentary front motivated many impressionable and able young men to look towards the militant movement by the late 1970's. It was inevitable that the University of Jaffna should become a focal point for leadership as well as ideological direction. Many students became involved and several members of the staff became active sympathisers. The risks involved were considerable. In 1980 the University students put out a paper called the Unarvu (Sensation) which was backed by the L.T.T.E.. The paper put forward several Marxist slogans. The involvement of certain university persons gave a mistaken impression that the L.T.T.E. was a Marxist organisation. About the same time the faction of the Tigers which the following year adopted the name of the P.L.O.T.E. started a paper with the name Puthiya Paathai (New Path). This paper took a political line critical of traditional parliamentary politics as well as of the hit and run tactics of the

L.T.T.E.. After two issues of the latter, Mr. Sunderam, a prominent person in the P.L.O.T.E., was assassinated by the L.T.T.E. while at the printers to bring out an issue of the paper. The official reason given by the L.T.T.E. was that the members of the organisation were signatories to a pledge not to leave the organisation and join or start another - which Sunderam had breached. But other observers say that Sunderam was a very able organiser and military man; and Prabhakaran felt that allowing him to work outside his organisation may create another rival to his own. This was the first internal killing to surface publicly, although there had been several others before. Following this two L.T.T.E. sympathisers Irai Kumaran and Umair Kumaran were killed by the P.L.O.T.E.. Though people were alarmed, these incidents were not taken to be a sign of a deeper malaise. By 1986 these internal killings were to reach epidemic proportions.

The students of the University contributed considerably to the groups of the militant movement. The dedication of many of the students was such that they left their academic careers and went to rural areas and the Eastern Province to work for their organisations. Such persons were by nature intelligent, sensitive and bound to insist on democratic accountability from their leaders. With the rise of internal killings and autocratic leadership, these students became disillusioned. By 1985 many of them started quitting their organisations to lead quiet lives. According to the testimony of their friends, several of those students who died, ended their lives in a state of utter disillusionment. The last three student union leaders up to 1985 had deep seated problems with the L.T.T.E.. Two of them left the organisation and one died while doing refugee work. Of the University students who joined the organisation in the early 1980's, only one remains within. By the latter part of 1985 the role of the students in the militant movement underwent a radical change. The students on the whole felt that the militant groups had gone very much astray and were locked in a war of attrition with each other. This, they felt had brought the community to a dangerous brink. The main thrust of student action now was to reform the militant movement through criticism and persuasion, to provide relief for refugees, to mediate between the public and the militants and to foster unity among the militant groups. Usually the students did not go for confrontation with the militant groups. But they raised specific questions regarding their conduct. They questioned the killing of Mr. Anandarajan and called for an explanation. They publicly questioned the T.E.L.O. over the killing of Rajanikanth. In April 1986 a demonstration from Vadamaratchi protesting the killing by the T.E.L.O. of T.E.L.O. members Das and four of his colleagues was fired upon. The students negotiated with the E.P.R.L.F. and P.L.O.T.E. to protect and shelter the demonstrators. The bodies of three demonstrators killed were taken to the University. In doing refugee work the students involved took considerable risks in going to difficult areas. In 1984 eight students died while transporting relief supplies to Mullaitivu.

In this role the students were respected and also feared. Until the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. clash, the L.T.T.E. found the students movement useful. Though it no longer provided recruits, its criticisms were mainly directed against the T.E.L.O.. One reason for this was that the L.T.T.E.'s actions were more secretive, and could not be directly ascribed. Following the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. clash the L.T.T.E. moved to suppress the students. With the Vijitharan affair in November 1986, the break was complete. Henceforth, the students were scared and silent spectators. This virtually ended the University's role in the militancy. Students of the past who had helped the growth of the militancy with dedication felt that they had been meanly used. The intellectual polish of the students had been useful. The leadership of the L.T.T.E., which was dominant by the end of 1986, proved that it had a mind of its own -- a totalitarian mind.

The July 1983 riots saw many new recruits pour into the militant movements. The trouble fomented by the government in the Eastern Province in 1984 found a large number of eastern province youths joining the militancy. The motivation of these youths was very different from that of their more intellectual and reflective predecessors from the University. Revenge, anger and utter helplessness were now leading motives. But the ground work had

already been laid by the articulate students who had roamed the villages holding meetings. This suited the militant leadership. The new recruits would do what they were told, and not ask awkward questions. The L.T.T.E. could now drop its pretences concerning internationalism and socialism and show itself as a tightly controlled military organisation. The T.E.L.O. never had any pretences about intellectual leanings. By September 1985 a large number of refugees from the Trincomalee district were flooding into Jaffna, and these refugees who were very desperate were widely used in demonstrations. Many boys in their early teens from the refugee population joined mainly the E.P.R.L.F. and the T.E.L.O.. The E.P.R.L.F. was the first to recruit girls. The L.T.T.E. was however more discriminating in its recruitment. By December 1986 the L.T.T.E. was the dominant militant group having alienated and disbanded the other militant groups. Its military task was now much heavier, and it faced a severe man power shortage. Under these circumstances the L.T.T.E. was encouraging recruits even in their early teens. Jaffna's Old Park had now become a show case for the L.T.T.E., where children watched the drilling going on after school and would sometimes run away from home to join. Others might first join their friends who were on sentry duty and later join fully for the thrill of it. By mid-1987 girls too were being trained for a military role. Distraught parents became a regular sight around L.T.T.E. camps crying and begging for their children who had run away and joined the movement. One would sometimes see comical scenes of mothers chasing their daughters from an L.T.T.E. camp and dragging them home, with both daughters and mothers in tears. One lady teacher who observed some of the teenage L.T.T.E. boys at Old Park coming after a bath, wondered sadly, how the community can allow such innocent ones, who hardly knew what they were doing to throw their lives away for an obscure cause. The wife of a specialist doctor said, that she actually saw the young boys in the L.T.T.E. camp next door play the children's game called "hide and seek". The militant movement had come a long way from its origins amongst the undergraduates of Peradeniya, who talked, theorised and then went abroad. Death, disillusionment and assassination had removed most of the able and mature leaders from amongst the militants. Their average age dropped perhaps from 22 to 14 or 16. The few leaders who remained enjoyed absolute authority over their unquestioning ranks.

The following two conversations give some insight into the minds of the younger militants.

1. A T.E.L.O. refugee in London: "I feel bad about seeing all these posh cars in London. That was one thing I did not lack in Jaffna. Whenever we saw a new kind of car, we would stop it and drive around for a bit."

2. From ex-members of the T.E.A. (Tamil Eelam Army) in Tamil Nadu: "Our camp was at Vetharianiam. Every afternoon we would drive in a van at a particular time. We used to have a bit of fun by cutting into the school girls who were returning home. One day, by accident we knocked three of them and two died. Anyway, we went to our camp, had lunch and slept. We were awakened by stones falling on our roof. We went out, saw an angry crowd and we fired into the air and dispersed the crowd... When we were in Karainagar and wanted a good meal, we would drive our truck with the L.M.G. (Light Machine Gun) at the ready at full speed towards the beach and would fire some volleys into the sea. On our way back, the villagers would ask what happened. We would reply the the Sri Lankan navy tried to attack the island and that we repulsed them. We would then be invited to a meal of mutton curry and pittu¹."

The T.E.A. was a marginal group under "Panagoda Maheswaran," who was an engineering student at the University of London. Though an able military man, his group had no political outlook. Maheswaran's greatest asset was his improvisation. After leaving Jaffna, he reportedly set up a workshop in Tamil Nadu to fashion shotguns. When an intrigued person asked him for an explanation, Maheswaran replied: "I choose the battlefield according to my equipment." The L.T.T.E. on the other hand would take the same kind of recruit and motivate him to take the L.T.T.E.'s cause as a religion for which he would give his life. But the immaturity, cynicism, and unconcern for civilian life shows through.

A point to be noted is the manner in which individuals were affected by the nature of the organisation they joined and the frustrations it engendered. A medical student, who was known as a pleasant young man to his friends, later became a notorious torturer within the T.E.L.O.. After July 1983, almost a whole class of senior boys at Hartley College, Pt. Pedro, joined the T.E.L.O.. Most of them were bright students from an elite school with good G.C.E. A. Level grades (from the government conducted common high school exam in the island). They made the sacrifice in the belief that within two years Eelam will be won, enabling them to get back to their careers. An observer who knew several of them, had this to say: "As time went by they realised that the struggle would be on for much longer than two years. They developed a grievance against those of their erstwhile colleagues who had gone for careers and studies abroad and had prospered. While having come to realise the shortcomings and limitations of their organisation, they were too proud to leave it and join another. They would rather work to bring the T.E.L.O. into prominence as against other groups, for their personal ambitions and prospects of power now hinged on the success of the organisation to which they were committed. Their grievance extended to a contempt for those who pursued ordinary civilian interests. They regarded themselves as superior to civilians who were obliged to accept their idea of what was good for them." It would surprise many who knew the Tamils as an intelligent and highly educated community, that a combination of moral and intellectual lethargy, together with a misguided pragmatism, enabled them to build such high fantasies about the boys. On to their slender and fragile shoulders were thrust, all the responsibility for the moral and physical well-being of the community, trusting that barring a few 'small mistakes', all would be well.

5.4 The rise of the L.T.T.E.

In early 1985, the P.L.O.T.E., L.T.T.E. and T.E.L.O. were considered fairly evenly balanced. At the time when 7 L.T.T.E. men were killed in a quarrel with the P.L.O.T.E. at Chullipuram, the L.T.T.E. preferred discretion to valour. When quarrels developed between the L.T.T.E. and the T.E.L.O., neither seldom did anything more than go out on motor bikes and take pot shots at "sentry boys" in the rival group. These sentry boys, who were youngsters with no military training and in their early teens, were usually deployed with hand grenades to throw and run if the alarm had to be raised.

In reprisal for the killing by the Sri Lankan forces of 70 civilians in Valvettithurai and the damage to the homes of Prabhakaran and several other L.T.T.E. leaders, the L.T.T.E. on 14 May 1985 conducted what came to be known as the Anuradhapura massacre. A few L.T.T.E. men drove into Anuradhapura and gunned down about 150 persons with ruthless efficiency and got away. In the ancient Sinhalese capital, the government forces were caught off guard. This gave the L.T.T.E. the reputation of being an efficient "killer machine," that was to be both feared and respected. The many who approved of the Anuradhapura massacre little realised that such readiness to play around with lives of Sinhalese would result in making Tamil lives more insecure.

However, around January 1986, it was a general belief among Tamils that no single group could proceed alone against the might of the Sri Lankan army. Attempts by the Sri Lankan Army in early 1986 on an L.T.T.E. camp at Suthumalai and a subsequent thrust into Tellipallai, were repulsed by all the groups acting together, including the T.E.A.. The T.E.L.O. provided critical help in saving the day when troops landed by helicopter and attacked the L.T.T.E.'s camp at Suthumalai. This was publicly acknowledged by the L.T.T.E.. It had been rumoured for some time that the "Das faction" of the T.E.L.O. in Vadamaratchi had some differences with the leader Sri Sabaratnam. Das was an able military man -- and this faction was said to form the military backbone of the T.E.L.O.. The L.T.T.E.'s opportunity came when in April 1986 the Bobby faction of the T.E.L.O. treacherously shot dead Das and 4 of his colleagues. They were shot dead while visiting a colleague in the Jaffna Hospital. This resulted in the Das faction leaving the T.E.L.O. and going into exile, considerably weakening the T.E.L.O.. Towards the end of the month the T.E.L.O. moved several of its men outside Jaffna, ostensibly for operations against the Sri Lankan army. At the same time the L.T.T.E. moved many of its men into Jaffna and the word was put out that it was going to attack one of the Sri Lankan encampments. A crucial advantage possessed by the L.T.T.E. was a modern communications system with wireless sets. The L.T.T.E. took on the T.E.L.O. at the end of that month. The pretext was a minor tiff arising from both groups calling a hartal for the men they had lost at sea, about the same time. After one week of fighting the L.T.T.E. was supreme in Jaffna. The T.E.L.O. leader Sri Sabaratnam was killed on 7 May. The methods used by the L.T.T.E. were reminiscent of the shock tactics used against Sinhalese -- during the Anuradhapura massacre. In a way the Anuradhapura massacre had come home and the ghosts of the dead were to haunt us for years to come.

The manner in which the T.E.L.O. members were killed, shocked Tamil people everywhere. Many died without knowing what hit them. Twelve were killed near Manipay while they were asleep. Several were caught unawares, shot and burnt at junctions at Thirunelvely, Mallakam, and Tellipallai. Eight persons were killed at the camp behind the St. John's principal's bungalow. One person was thrust into a car, which was then exploded, leaving severed limbs strewn around. On hearing this the St. John's College principal, Mr. Gunaseelan, who was in hospital, had a relapse which forced him into an early retirement. Many of the T.E.L.O. members who were from areas outside Jaffna had to flee in fear without knowing the streets or where they were going. The people were so terrified, that few found the courage to give shelter to the fugitives. While this unprecedented display was on, people stood mutely at junctions and watched, as persons hardly dead, were doused and burnt. Hardly anyone protested, which is understandable. Some went home saying things such as: "We have produced our own Hitlers." Others gave a display of that opportunism that had become a characteristic feature of Jaffna. Some shop keepers offered aerated waters to those who had exhausted themselves putting on the show. Some students at the University attempted to take out a procession to stop the fighting but had to abandon it. The fighting was over in less than a week and Sri Sabaratnam was killed in circumstances which are not clear. Most sources agree that he was wounded in the shoot out, while his two companions escaped. Sri Sabaratnam then stood up and requested an opportunity to talk to Kittu, the Jaffna L.T.T.E. leader. He was then gunned down. Whether he was killed personally by Kittu and whether the order to kill him came from Prabhakaran himself, or from Kittu, are matters on which the various reports disagree. All this time the Sri Lankan army had remained quiet except for a bit of helicopter firing here and there. Outsiders saw the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. clash as fatally weakening the militant cause. Kautiliya, a columnist for the Sunday Island asked satirically whether the L.T.T.E. had taken a sub-contract with the Ministry for National Security to take on the T.E.L.O..

Subsequently the L.T.T.E. launched a propaganda campaign where two reasons were given for its action: 1. The T.E.L.O. were a group of criminals who had harassed the people and had robbed them. and 2. The T.E.L.O. was acting as the agent of Indian imperialism.

To substantiate these accusations, the L.T.T.E. announced that all recovered stolen items, jewellery, electrical goods and cars were being returned. In fact several cars taken over and used by the T.E.L.O. and allegedly stolen television sets and video-recorders were put on display near Windsor Theatre and were claimed by members of the public. But little or no jewellery was returned. However the jewellery robbed from Thurkai Amman Kovil [\[2\]](#)¹ at Tellipallai mysteriously reappeared and the wrath of the god was averted. Most people came to terms with what had happened and thought it was good. The first reason given by the L.T.T.E. had a strong influence in Jaffna town. The E.P.R.L.F. too returned several television sets and vehicles saying they were no longer needed. Several people who wanted the E.P.R.L.F. to keep these things found themselves left with no choice but to accept them. Amongst the E.N.L.F. partners only the E.P.R.L.F. found the courage to organise a protest rally for the killing of Sri Sabaratnam and the betrayal of the alliance. The E.R.O.S. remained quiet and began to be patted on the back by the L.T.T.E. as a good organisation, suitable for those who were not good enough for the L.T.T.E.. The press and the Church too came to terms with the new dispensation. The Roman Catholic Church under Bishop Deogupillai, who had been an outspoken critic of Sri Lankan army action did not use its strong base and its moral authority to protest against the fatal trend of cowardice and moral torpor within the Tamil community. The Morning Star, the journal of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (C.S.I.) commented editorially in a piece under the title, The Merry Month of May, that it had been held that the militant cause had been weakened by what had happened. It went on to allude that this was not necessarily the case as was proved by the militants' success in repulsing the subsequent Sri Lankan offensive. Moreover it said that the people had stood shoulder to shoulder with the militants during the subsequent bombing of Jaffna. The Jaffna man was a very wise man who made a virtue of following the path of least resistance. That the path had to change direction frequently was of no consequence.

Claims have been made by the apologists for the action against the T.E.L.O. that India had ordered the T.E.L.O. to destroy the L.T.T.E., thus giving the L.T.T.E. no choice. The reason given for such an order, it is said, is that the L.T.T.E. refused to toe India's line. Even assuming that India had expressed such a wish, whether the T.E.L.O. took it seriously is another matter. Granting a certain amount of cockiness on the T.E.L.O.'s part, it is hard for an observer then in Jaffna to believe that they had seriously entertained such an ambition for the near future. They were disorganised and divided as well as lacking in a communication network. Looking at the circumstances and Sri Sabaratnam's remarks at Kalviankadu, it does not appear that the T.E.L.O. was looking for a clash. It has also been mentioned that the T.E.L.O. had at that time moved a large number of trained men out of Jaffna while the L.T.T.E. did the opposite amidst rumours that they were to take on a Sri Lankan army encampment.

A significant circumstance was a serious division within the T.E.L.O. made worse a month earlier by killing by the Bobby faction of 5 leading members of the Das faction. A similar circumstance minus the assassinations was to precede the L.T.T.E.'s taking on the E.P.R.L.F., 7 months later - namely, the split arising from differences between Padmanabha, the E.P.R.L.F.'s political leader and Douglas Devananda, the leader of its military wing.

A short time after the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. incident, an E.P.R.L.F. leader told a leading citizen that his leadership had asked the L.T.T.E. leadership what they really wanted and to state the terms on which they could work together. He further added that no reply had been forthcoming.

On the question of India, most Tamils had unreal expectations of altruism on India's part, while they revelled in thinking how smart they were in using India to get Eelam. They knew the nature of Indian politics and thought they could manipulate it for their ends. The two aspects of altruism and baseness that governed the Tamil man's perception of India corresponded to the sentimental and the real. Equally, talk of any militant group being independent of India was meaningless after the initial surrender in exchange for arms, training, base facilities and recognition. This would be sharpened later after September 1987 by the L.T.T.E.'s successive contradictory positions involving considerable amnesia. The real sufferers would be the Tamil people. The thought that India could have interests, legitimate as big power politics goes, weighed little on people's minds.

Following the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. clash, the L.T.T.E. understood the feelings of ordinary people. Loudspeaker vehicles went about telling people not to talk about or analyse what had happened. This was the first publicly announced act of censorship. Previously the L.T.T.E. and the T.E.L.O. especially had visited newspapers to tell them not to write about certain incidents.

About 20 May, 1986, the Sri Lankan government launched a limited offensive to test the strength of the militant movement after the excision of the T.E.L.O.. The column that advanced from Elephant Pass turned back at Pallai. One group broke out of the Jaffna Fort and established a beach-head at Mandaitivu, providing a safe means of supplying troops at Jaffna Fort, for, helicopters landing inside the fort were subject to fire from nearby. The Sri Lankan army also succeeded in widening the perimeters of its camps at Thondamanaru and Valvettithurai. Until May the question amongst civilians was, when would the militants make an attempt on one of the army camps. The question now was when would the Sri Lankan army make an all out attempt to recapture Jaffna. It was well understood that the L.T.T.E. would make a formidable foe.

An aspect of L.T.T.E. dominance that made it acceptable to the general public was that robberies virtually ceased. The poor and the middle classes were left alone. The L.T.T.E. made mutually beneficial arrangements with wholesale merchants and big businessmen to the satisfaction of the latter. They could now enjoy their profits without the nuisance of being occasionally kidnapped for ransom. Before May 1986, if a man allegedly committed a fraud, the first militant group to discover it would descend on him, most likely in the night, to carry out an investigation. Occasionally, the victim would be lamp-posted (shot after being tied to an lamp post), or would be let off after negotiating an appropriate fee. After May 1986, several goods, aerated waters and cigarettes went up in price. In the best of times petrol sold at Rs. 19 per litre as against Rs. 13.50 per litre south of Vavuniya. Huge profits were made by dealers. Transport bottlenecks in a way proved a blessing to many peasants and labourers who were thrown out of work by the war. Many turned to transporting petrol to Jaffna on a small scale by bicycles and selling it by the bottle on the roadside. In this at least, the Sinhalese and Tamils on the border of the Northern province co-operated for their mutual prosperity. Another example of how the Jaffna economy worked was given by a head teacher from Chavakachcheri. Soon after the commencement of Operation Liberation on 26 May 1987, refugees from Vadamaratchi flooded into Thenmaratchi and the demand for rice was great.

The normal price of a bag was Rs. 230/. A mill owner who had a very large quantity of rice paid Rs. 50,000 tax money and sold his stock at the rate of Rs. 400 per bag, making an astronomical profit.

It was now expected that the L.T.T.E. would soon make a bid for sole dominance. Only the E.P.R.L.F. (Eelam Peoples' Revolutionary Liberation Front) seemed to be in a mood to challenge the L.T.T.E.. The E.R.O.S. (Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students) and the T.E.A. accepted L.T.T.E.'s dominance. The E.R.O.S. was a much smaller group which one time acquired for itself in the popular mind a reputation for intelligence and discipline. But its allegiance to Marxism was more doubtful, together with its concern for Sinhalese civilians. The talk of some of its leadership and its ranks gave the impression that it appealed to gut feelings of narrow nationalism. Its killing of Mr. Kathiramalai, a Sarvodaya worker, left strong doubts about its commitment to fairplay.

The middle of 1986 saw a series of sensational bombings carried out in the South. The main incidents were the explosion which destroyed an Airlanka Tristar passenger airliner which was being loaded for take-off at the Katunayake airport; the explosion in the C.T.O. (Central Telecommunications Office) building in the heart of Colombo Fort; the explosion at the Elephant House aerated water factory; and the explosion at the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (C.P.C.) depot at Anuradhapura. The civilian dead numbered several tens. Like the Anuradhapura massacre it was an adoption by the oppressed of the methods of the oppressor, and hence also the disease of the oppressor. The explosion at the C.P.C. depot at Anuradhapura also represented a move away from impersonal terror. An explosive charge was placed inside a petrol bowser from the Puloly Multipurpose Cooperative Stores (M.P.C.S.) that had gone to collect fuel from Anuradhapura. Several bowsers from Jaffna were in the petrol queue. It was reported that two persons who went in the bowser were amongst those killed. It was widely claimed in the international media that the parties responsible for these bombings were connected with the L.T.T.E., or the E.R.O.S. or both. The T.E.A. was also mentioned because of its association with the bomb meant for the Airlanka flight, which exploded instead at the Madras, Meenambakam airport in 1984.

No group claimed responsibility for these attacks. But according to Tamil sources living abroad, responsibility was claimed privately by senior persons in a militant group that ostensibly valued above all, intelligence, research and scholarship. There were also explosions in public transport buses carrying mainly Sinhalese passengers near Vavuniya. Two of the victims were an elderly Sinhalese gentleman and his son, who had been unswerving in their hospitality towards Tamil public transport workers.

Besides blurring in the minds abroad of the distinction between terror by the Sri Lankan state and that by Tamil militant groups, another consequence of this incident was to make petroleum fuels, aerated waters and gas more expensive and scarce in Jaffna.

It has been said by many that such acts against the Sinhalese population made the Sinhalese think seriously about the Tamil problem. It did make them think, but only in a perverse sort of way. One could see, for instance in editorials, the pressure mounting for peace talks when terror is seen as being too close for comfort. Equally, there was pressure for a final military thrust, during transient spells of seeming military successes, such as during Operation Liberation. This made the whole affair a destructive game involving extensive media manipulation in the absence of any change of heart and any democratic resurgence.

For the time being, life in Jaffna was relatively peaceful, barring occasional shelling by the Sri Lankan army. The L.T.T.E. concentrated on bringing all key institutions under its control. The Citizens' Committees caused no problems. Except at the University, this operation needed neither force nor intimidation. The L.T.T.E. was subtle and discerning in this matter. In the hospitals and in the administration, doctors and officials were left with enough discretion to protect their self respect. Dissent from individuals was tolerated provided this was not articulated through mass movements or other militant groups. An attempt at an L.T.T.E. sponsored Journalists' Union through some journalists who had come over to its side foundered, because the majority of the journalists found it too hard to swallow. The pretext given by the L.T.T.E. for summoning a meeting of journalists was that it was concerned that journalists in Jaffna were not being paid the salaries stipulated by the government in a gazette notification. The editor of the Uthayan, together with others, spoke to the effect: "The question of salaries is a matter for the journalists themselves, and not for a militant organisation. No one is going to control what we think or write." These brave words however, were not reflected in practice. Everyone knew that he would be a brave man to go beyond certain limits. The Eelanadu management dismissed a journalist, whose presence it apparently thought was embarrassing under the new dispensation. (This journalist, Mr. Shanmugalingam, has not been seen after being abducted by the L.T.T.E. on 6 November, 1989.) The L.T.T.E. went ahead with organising rural courts, vigilante committees and bodies such as cultural and development committees. The L.T.T.E. was privately cynical and disrespectful of persons who served on these bodies. A top L.T.T.E. leader once asked an old friend and senior journalist: "Those who were with us in the days when the going was dangerous and we were hounded by the Sri Lankan forces now refuse to touch us with a broomstick. But those who are joining us in large numbers now are persons whom we would have once classed as anti-social elements. Why is this?" The friend replied: "You should have no difficulty in finding out yourself."

The population of Jaffna fell in line. People who had once shown the spirit to resist the oppression of the Sri Lankan state now enjoyed the peace of the animals in George Orwell's Animal Farm. People would now get about unconcerned if a neighbour mysteriously taken away then disappeared. Some who were not prepared to do this were students of the University of Jaffna. In the circumstances they acted bravely during the Vijitharan and Rajaharan affairs. It is a comforting thought that the idealism of youth cannot be quelled.

The two incidents took place in quick succession around early November 1986 and gave rise to what became the last mass protest in Jaffna against the violation of basic freedoms. It did not, like the mass protests against the Prevention of Terrorism Act in the early 1980's, exude a sense of buoyancy and forward movement. This was more a rearguard action. When it ended, many of its leaders had to go into hiding or seek exile. Many of the leaders and hundreds of ordinary women from the lower reaches of society had displayed rare courage in doing something that was both essential and at the same time was shirked by their so called betters. The two incidents concerned had independent origins.

Arunagirinathan Vijitharan was a third year commerce student from the University of Jaffna who was generally unknown until he was missing from his boarding house on 4 November 1986. The question was, why Vijitharan? He was by all accounts an ordinary fun loving student with no political affiliations. It was this aspect of it that left some doubts about the cause. Had he said something mildly offensive to a person of some importance as students are wont to do? One may never know.

An action committee was formed by the students. They did not accuse anyone. They simply maintained that the four functioning militant groups were responsible for the security of persons in Jaffna. Further, they had sentries everywhere, making it unlikely that persons could disappear without their knowledge. The militant groups were called upon to do their acknowledged duty and restore Vijitharan. Privately, the students admitted that they were afraid and were in no mood to confront any militant group. A senior University official who was talking to the militant groups on the matter, expressed the feeling that the students had acted too hastily in making the matter public. On the other hand, the students felt that if they kept quiet, the chances of students disappearing one by one was greater. Not having received a satisfying response, the students commenced a campaign of fasting on 19 November in which six persons, both boys and girls began a fast in a temporary cadjan shed in front of the administration block.

For the next ten days the University became the centre of attraction for all those who had been suppressing their feelings about what was going on. An important group of people who joined the students were residents, especially women, from Passaiyoor. That had to do with a separate incident, concerning the death of Edward.

Passaiyoor is a fishing village three miles East along the coast from Jaffna town. These people were Roman Catholics and were by nature spontaneous in their collective response to perceived aggression against them. Edward had returned from Saudi Arabia and the family was said to be sympathetic towards the L.T.T.E.. They had consulted the parish priest on the matter of a land dispute with a neighbour, and not being satisfied, had invited Malaravan, the Ariyalai leader of the L.T.T.E.. During the hearing, Edward's mother reportedly said something offensive to Malaravan, who in turn is said to have raised his hand against her. Edward then slapped Malaravan. Edward was later asked to call at the Ariyalai camp for an inquiry. Fearing what may happen, Edward contacted the parish priest. The latter went to the camp and got an assurance that Edward would be released after a short inquiry and that no harm would befall him. The parish priest accompanied Edward to the camp and waited. Edward was taken in. Twenty minutes later the priest was told that Edward was dead. The priest fainted and was admitted to hospital. Those who went to see the body said that hardly a bone was left unbroken. Then things took a turn that was unusual for Jaffna. A large group of women gathered at the local church and protested for several days, displaying hand written posters. The middle-class based women's organisations, including the Mothers' Front, had lost their voice in the face of internal oppression.

The university students went out and addressed students from the higher forms in schools, who in turn came out and joined by sitting on roads and joining processions. An element of irony was added to the proceedings when the L.T.T.E. leader V. Prabhakaran commenced a Gandhi style fast in Madras when the Indian police confiscated his arms and communications equipment. A non-violent protest was on for the return of instruments of violence. Rival processions for the student cause and Prabhakaran's cause sometimes crossed each other.

At this point many diverse opinions came to be expressed, most of them agreeing that the students should give up their fast. Some felt that the students were excellently performing a very necessary task; but the community did not deserve the deaths of those who were fasting. If they died, six prospective leaders would be lost while people would shrug their shoulders and go on as before. Then little would be achieved. Many were hostile. They thought that the Tamils were being divided in the face of the main enemy, the Sri Lankan state, when they

should be uniting behind the L.T.T.E.. Students were made heart broken and angry by an opinion expressed by a member of the staff who said that the students were making an absurd issue over one missing person when several L.T.T.E. men were dying fighting the Sri Lankan army. They were dismayed that such persons could not see the issues at stake and that one could in time come to mean hundreds. Besides, passive acquiescence by the community in such developments during a fight for freedom, would lead to its opposite, thus negating all sacrifice, including the militants' sacrifice.

The Jaffna press played it diplomatically by giving equal prominence to statements by all parties. The E.P.R.L.F. backed the students. The E.R.O.S. characteristically sat on the fence. The students were painfully aware that their protest could become interpreted as anti-L.T.T.E. and backed by rival militant groups who did not wish to confront the L.T.T.E. directly. A speech delivered by an E.P.R.L.F. leader at the university, the contents of which did not receive prior approval from the students, gave further room for this impression.

Two of the student leaders were former members of the P.L.O.T.E. and the E.P.R.L.F.. However, available information strongly suggests that they were not principally anti-L.T.T.E., but had rather become disillusioned with the anti-democratic militarism of all the groups, now enjoying Indian patronage. There was strong pressure on the students to give up the protest, and the L.T.T.E. too was embarrassed by it. But the problem was how to end it. A mutually acceptable formula had to be found. Even admirers of the protest felt that it had gone on long enough and that no further purpose would be served by its prolongation. A number of persons and organisations came to patch up a settlement, including the University Teachers' Association (U.T.A.). Some wanted to do some good. Others had reasons which were more complex.

The L.T.T.E.'s conduct was puzzling. They could have in the first instance said that they sympathised with the students and would make every effort to trace Vijitharan. Then there would have been no protest. But they took an aggressive line. School children who joined the protests were threatened by leading L.T.T.E. men at both Mahajana College, Tellipallai, and near Jaffna Hindu College. In the latter instance a student's name was singled out. The U.T.A. invited Kittu for a meeting in the Senior Common Room, where he was introduced as "our General." The session was marked by the silence of the staff, making one wonder why the meeting was called. Kittu took the line that if a militant group had abducted Vijitharan, they are not going to admit it amidst all this protest. He may be released, he said, far away at some distant time. He also made the point that traitors like Selvabala cannot be given amnesty on the grounds that they were students or on any other pretext. He was referring to a student from the Jaffna College Technical Institute who was said by the L.T.T.E. to have been armed and paid by the Sri Lankan army to assassinate Kittu and other key L.T.T.E. leaders. Selvabala was killed after he made a Singapore style T.V. confession on the L.T.T.E.'s station Niedharshanam.

Eventually a formula for ending the fast was reached. The L.T.T.E. gave a pledge to look for Vijitharan. Like many of the tales of intrigue, the truth about Vijitharan may not surface for years to come. For the University students, it ended for the time being their role in public affairs. With all their weaknesses and drawbacks, their role had been a noble one. They had been forced into tasks where others more mature and experienced than they ought to have given the lead. For the Tamil people, another light had gone out. Vimalaswaran, the student leader who led the protest fast, paid a heavy price for his defiance of the new order. He was assassinated in July, 1988.

The natural defiance of the women from the lower classes remained a remarkable feature as opposed to the pliability of upper class women. Village women in the East went out with rice pounders to stop the internecine fighting during the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. clash. When the L.T.T.E. took on the E.P.R.L.F. on 14 December 1986, women from some low class villages in Jaffna near Keerimalai and Mallakam defied the L.T.T.E. by sitting on the roads armed with kitchen knives and chillie powder. The same women were to prove a nightmare to the Indians when they arrived. After October 1987 some of these women in the Pt. Pedro fish market decided that they would charge the Indians higher prices. This was noticed by a customer who took his turn after an Indian soldier. When asked, the fisher lady replied, "They came here to eat, did they?"

One newspaper editor who came out well during the affair was Mr. S. M. Gopalaratnam of the Eelamurasu. He had once served as editor of the Eelandu and was made editor of the Eelamurasu a short while before the protest. During the crisis he wrote several bold editorials and articles. The need for unity amongst Tamils was something he felt strongly about. When the L.T.T.E. took on the E.P.R.L.F. he wrote an editorial expressing his concern for the hundreds of youths who had died in disillusionment with a feeling of being abandoned. He said that the Tamils' failure to unite had left them exposed before their enemies. Barely two months after he took over, the paper passed under L.T.T.E. management. However the L.T.T.E. treated him with respect and quite often he had his way. An unsolicited tribute was paid to S.M.G., as he was fondly called, by the management of the University Senior Common Room: During the time S.M.G. wrote his independent editorials the Eelamurasu was the only paper to be kept out of the Common Room. With the new L.T.T.E. management of the paper from 1 January 1987, the paper reappeared in the Common Room after a month. As regards S.M.G., the L.T.T.E. may have shown higher standards than that citadel of intellectual freedom. The L.T.T.E. often respected those who dealt with them honestly.

5.5 Differences among the Militants

The public had up to now thought of the L.T.T.E. as a monolith. But in the second half of 1986 differences, rivalries and personal ambitions within the L.T.T.E. which had a politics of its own began to surface and were talked about. Sources with good connections talked of differences between the Jaffna leader, Kittu and the then Vavuniya leader Mahattaya. The latter is said to have felt that those in Jaffna were being spoilt by glamour and a relatively easy life. Following the events of May 1986 several senior L.T.T.E. men left the group. One of them was Kandeepan who was in charge of the Islands. After leaving the organisation he simply stayed in his home at Ariyalai without wanting to see any of his former colleagues. The L.T.T.E. apparently wished to talk to him in order to persuade him to rejoin. Kandeepan was a competent military man who had pioneered the use of sea-mines. The lower ranks had been reportedly disoriented by the departure of several senior men. After refusing to see Kittu on two occasions the third time he was surrounded in order to force a meeting. But Kandeepan ran into his house and swallowed cyanide. The L.T.T.E. delayed the confirmation of his death and forced the family to perform the last rites in the early hours of the morning. Before his death Kandeepan had complained to one of his old friends that during the clash with the T.E.L.O., his organisation had promptly sent reinforcements to the Islands. But when the Sri Lankan government made an attempt on Mandaitivu, Kandeepan had submitted a plan which only required a modest quantity of arms. The organisation had not, he had complained, responded to this request. Mandaitivu was lost and Kandeepan was heart broken.

The Mannar leader Victor was killed in Adampan during a skirmish with the Sri Lankan army during October 1986. Thirteen Sri Lankan army personnel were killed during this skirmish and two were captured. Victor's body was brought to Jaffna with the two prisoners and nine Sri Lankan corpses. In the first exhibition of this kind, the two prisoners and the corpses were exhibited at Nallur Kanthasamy Kovil, while thousands filed past. Victor's body was taken in state to several parts of Jaffna to be viewed by milling crowds. Kittu considerably boosted his image by speaking at these meetings. His statement that Victor like all the L.T.T.E. leaders was in the battle front with his men, was reported in the press and seen as a direct challenge to Prabhakaran. Prabhakaran had been in Madras for the previous few years. The feeling was also around that Prabhakaran would make an attempt to cut Kittu down

to size. It is believed the Prabhakaran's coming in January 1987 to Jaffna had something to do with Kittu's ambitions.

On 14 December, 1986, the E.P.R.L.F., the P.L.O.T.E. and the T.E.A. were disbanded by the L.T.T.E.. In the Northern Province the E.P.R.L.F. fled its camps without a fight. Several E.P.R.L.F. leaders were arrested and many of them were tortured in order to make them disclose locations of hidden arms. At this point one may point to what seems a qualitative difference in outlook between the L.T.T.E. and other groups. The L.T.T.E. men were trained to carry out orders from the top blindly. There is no doubt that the other groups have displayed the same kind of courage in confronting the Sri Lankan army. But when it came to an open confrontation with a fellow militant group, the other groups seem to have been handicapped by a certain amount of reluctance and confusion. There was a certain amount of inhibition about killing fellow Tamils. An observer living close to the E.P.R.L.F. camp at Uduvil said that there was a split amongst the ranks as to whether they should go in for a bloody fratricidal confrontation with the L.T.T.E. or simply go into hiding. Before this could be resolved, the L.T.T.E. came and caught them unprepared. This left them with no option but to disperse. Like the split in the T.E.L.O. which the L.T.T.E. took advantage of, this time a split in the E.P.R.L.F. between Douglas Devananda, the leader of its military wing, and the leadership under Padmanabha was a chance the L.T.T.E. had been waiting for. In the middle of this confusion the E.P.R.L.F. had challenged the L.T.T.E. politically over the Vijitharan affair. While the E.P.R.L.F. had expected a military response from the L.T.T.E., it was undecided as to what it should do.

The P.L.O.T.E. in Jaffna had a strong base amongst the high caste, middle-class Tamils in Valigamam North and Central. They also had a political programme which emphasised work amongst the masses. These combined to give it an image in certain quarters as a disciplined organisation in dealings with the people. However P.L.O.T.E. members have been used by the high castes, on several occasions in disputes with the lower castes. P.L.O.T.E. had suffered discredit as a result of internal killings in Tamil Nadu and from at least two gruesome incidents in Jaffna. Five of its own women cadres were killed by members of the P.L.O.T.E. at Maniamthoddam, Jaffna, in 1985. Also in early 1985, seven L.T.T.E. sympathisers who were putting up posters in Chullipuram, were badly tortured and killed by P.L.O.T.E. men under Kandasamy (Chankili). By mid-1986 the organisation had suffered from neglect from the leadership in India and was poorly armed. With the dissolution of the T.E.L.O. there was a very real threat that the Sri Lankan army may overrun Jaffna at any time. Here the P.L.O.T.E. cadre in Jaffna earned the respect of the population for the sentry work it did around army encampments. It used its training to advance towards Jaffna Fort, along K.K.S. Road behind a barrier of advancing sand bags. Its men crawled through drains and other cover to install land mines fairly close to Jaffna Fort. When hints were given that the P.L.O.T.E. was to be disbanded the P.L.O.T.E. sentries withdrew from Jaffna town exploding their land mines. Thereupon, the Sri Lankan forces fired back thinking that they were being attacked and a senior prefect at Central College was killed. The disbandment of the P.L.O.T.E. and the E.P.R.L.F. created a crisis in the manning of sentry points, making it even more likely that the Sri Lankan army would attempt to break out if the current negotiations failed.

By this time the L.T.T.E. in Jaffna, under Kittu, had established friendly personal relations with Captain Kotelawela of the Sri Lankan army and leading personalities amongst the Sinhalese, such as Vijaya Kumaranatunga, Vincent Perera and the Rev. Fr. Yohan Devananda. Kittu and his deputy Raheem became celebrated personalities in the South. The L.T.T.E. and the government gave the impression that a move for a negotiated settlement was

on. A set of proposals, called the December 19th proposals, which had been drafted with India's help were announced by the Sri Lankan government on the 26th of December for discussion. The L.T.T.E. announced that it was taking over the civil administration of Jaffna from 1 January 1987, although in practice this could have made little difference. The government in turn announced a fuel and firewood blockade on Jaffna. Prabhakaran moved to Jaffna in early January 1987 after several years in India. The crisis had entered a new phase.

5.6 The Eastern Question

By 1985 youths from districts in the Northern Province outside Jaffna and from the Eastern Province which had been ravaged by Sri Lankan military action which included massacres, were playing a numerically dominant role in the militant groups. Unlike the articulate youth of Jaffna who had joined in the early 1980's because of ideals of national liberation and a feeling of collective humiliation, these rural youths had been subject to some harrowing experiences at first hand. By the end of 1985, those of the Tamil residents of Trincomalee district outside the city who were alive, had become refugees. The L.T.T.E. leader Pulendran, who came to be feared by Sinhalese, is said to have seen most of his family killed by Sri Lankan forces before his eyes. In such a situation the killing and counter-killing of Tamil and Sinhalese civilians became the order of the day. Yet the leadership of the militant movement was mainly Jaffna-dominated. After mid-1985, Jaffna enjoyed relative peace whilst the other Tamil areas continued to be at the receiving end. The majority amongst the T.E.L.O. youths killed in May 1986 were from the rural areas. The E.P.R.L.F. continued to be active in the Batticaloa district after it was wound down in Jaffna in December 1986.

One factor which distinguished the militant movement in the East was that ideological and group differences were over-ridden by a feeling that they were all Eastern Province Tamils united through the experience of common suffering, who must stand together or perish. Group differences mattered far less than in Jaffna. Often they shared camps and meals. When the L.T.T.E. was given orders by radio to go for the T.E.L.O. in May 1986, the killings in the East were far fewer than in Jaffna. At Sambur, according to a T.E.L.O. source in Trincomalee, T.E.L.O. members who were having a meal were called out by members of the L.T.T.E. who had been erstwhile friends. The T.E.L.O. men were unaware of such orders having been given and went out as if to meet friends, when their leader and two others were killed. At Sambaltivu, according to a Trincomalee resident, women went out with rice pounders to ensure that there was no killing. This was in contrast to suburban Jaffna where people watched mutely during the killings. However, during December 1986 when the L.T.T.E. went after the E.P.R.L.F., some villagers in rural Jaffna protected the E.P.R.L.F. cadre by blocking the roads, armed with knives and chillie powder.

When the L.T.T.E.-T.E.L.O. clash started in Jaffna, Kadavul, the Batticaloa leader of the L.T.T.E. and former agriculture student, promptly summoned a meeting of leaders of all militant groups in Batticaloa. They issued a joint statement that the problems of the East were different and should be handled differently. Kadavul, a native of the East, gave a personal assurance that all militants in Batticaloa would be protected. The L.T.T.E. command in Jaffna then radioed two of its commanders Kumarappa and Pottu, both of Jaffna origin, who were in Batticaloa, to carry out the assault on the T.E.L.O.. Several T.E.L.O. members were killed. Kadavul left the L.T.T.E. and went abroad.

An academic from the Batticaloa University and a close follower of events also told us that the L.T.T.E. taking on the E.P.R.L.F. in December 1986 worked very much to the detriment of the Tamils in the East. The E.P.R.L.F. had begun to prove itself effective against the dreaded S.T.F. (Special Task Force). It had just carried out a series of successful landmine attacks against the S.T.F., thus restricting its movement. The L.T.T.E.'s protracted battle with the E.P.R.L.F. opened the field to the S.T.F.. The S.T.F. started the new year in 1987 with the Kokkadichcholai massacre in which scores of Tamil civilians were murdered. The L.T.T.E. was forced to withdraw from one of its strongholds.

A consequence of these developments and the desperate plight of Tamils of the East, was that leaders of the Eastern Tamils were generally amenable to a settlement on the basis of the December 19th proposals which envisaged separate provincial councils for the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The powers devolved in policing and land settlement were generally deemed inadequate, but were the subject of negotiation. In Jaffna which was relatively secure, a more hawkish mood prevailed, backed by L.T.T.E. propaganda, an enfeebled press and a section of the articulate intelligentsia. Those in Jaffna who felt that the Tamils, now dangerously weakened, must in the common interest use India's good offices to negotiate the best possible settlement, sometimes found through experience that they should not express themselves too loudly. Inevitably there arose a widespread feeling amongst Eastern Tamils, that the Jaffna based Tamil leadership had failed them. The Eastern Province Tamils will in the years to come have to resolve the question of their dealings with Northern Tamils and their relations with Muslims and Sinhalese in the East, whom they have for neighbours. The question is proving a thorny one today.

<http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume1/Chapter5.htm> - [ftnref1# ftnref1](#)¹ Temple

<http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume1/Chapter5.htm> - [ftnref2# ftnref2](#)¹ Lakh = 100,000

Chapter 6

1987: THE BUBBLE BURSTS

6.1 Retreat to Jaffna

The L.T.T.E. showed little interest in negotiating on the basis of the December 19th proposals. With Prabhakaran's arrival, the public felt that Kittu as Jaffna leader would in due course be eclipsed.

As the year commenced the Special Task Force (S.T.F.) made rapid gains in the East forcing the L.T.T.E. out of several of its strongholds and establishing new camps. Describing the terror of civilians, a member of the Batticaloa citizens committee said: "The S.T.F. was given a blank cheque to kill, assault, torture and imprison civilians. This was used with terrifying effect. Foreign correspondents were kept out."

In the North, outside Jaffna, all areas populated by civilians were overrun by late February and several new camps were established by the Sri Lankan army. The recently built up air power had been used to good effect. India had apparently placed restrictions on the L.T.T.E. acquiring an effective counter to the government's air power. It is noteworthy that the Sri Lankan army's attempt nearly a year earlier, to establish control over the Kilinochchi district had failed when all militant groups were active. A worried L.T.T.E., withdrew most of its men from other areas and concentrated them in Jaffna. Significantly, key L.T.T.E. leaders from other areas, including Mahattaya from Vavuniya, and Radha from Mannar, made their appearance in Jaffna. This meant that the threat to Jaffna was indeed taken seriously.

This brings us to certain aspects of the L.T.T.E.. From 1985 it had been a common feature of all militant groups to attract a following by successfully bringing off sensational military operations. The T.E.L.O. which was considered a marginal group rose to prominence after its colourful attacks on the Chavakachcheri Police Station and on a troop train at Murukandy in December 1984 and January 1985, respectively. What a particular group stood for became, if anything, of marginal interest. As a corollary, the people accepted the role of spectators and often admirers. This reciprocal development went in the direction of the militant groups confining the people rigidly to this role. Advice was seldom taken. The L.T.T.E. went a step further and confined the

people to the role of devotees. Those who sensed danger and wished to offer their counsel were silenced with varying degrees of politeness. The reduction of the people to devotees of the political religion of the L.T.T.E. was the culmination of a process begun by the T.U.L.F. in the early 1970's. The F.P. and later the T.U.L.F. had demanded allegiance to one party as embodying the destiny of the Tamil nation. All others were branded as traitors of various shades.

Its own following which the T.U.L.F. could keep in tow with rousing speeches, the L.T.T.E. now had to manipulate by deeds of valour which testified to its virility. The religion of the L.T.T.E. also provided for its devotees the emotional excitement of blood sacrifice. The sacrificial victims were those chosen by chance and sometimes by choice, to die in operations.

It became a regular routine that when some L.T.T.E. member died, wailing music would be broadcast over loud speakers. The roads would be decorated with coconut and plantain trees. Loudspeaker vehicles would go around announcing the deaths in melodramatic tones. Then crowds would file past the coffins by the thousands. Such occasions were used to generate hysterical emotions. This may explain Thileepan's death by fasting two months after the Accord. The L.T.T.E. felt a need to prove that its members were still willing to die and that it had not lost its grip.

Unlike the higher religions which tended towards equality of men and even living creatures, the L.T.T.E.'s religion was hierarchical. The common people counted for little except as devotees. Militants from other groups, whatever their contribution, were counted as criminals or anti-social elements. Only L.T.T.E. members could make sacrifices, be counted as martyrs, and become gods in a heavenly place reserved for them. Such a creed was expressed in one of Thileepan's last statements.

One should not under-rate such a religion which has a resemblance to the official religion of the Third Reich. The power of such a religion to captivate men's minds, make them forget all norms of civilisation and morality and weld them together as a hysterical and destructive force, is enormous. But most Tamil civilians were looking for security. Little did they realise that what the L.T.T.E. was offering them was permanent conflict, destruction and suicide, for accepting which they were not going to be thanked. Events of the coming months were to make this abundantly clear.

Following the Sri Lankan army's rapid advances in January 1987, the L.T.T.E. felt a pressing need to hit back. On the 14th of February an ingenious attempt was made on the Navatkuli army camp. The Andreisz Company which was located next to the Navatkuli camp used to supply drinking water to the Sri Lankan army. The L.T.T.E. took over the company's water bowser and placed charges in its tank, which would explode when the water dropped to a certain level. According to reports the water tank by some freak developed a leak. The bowser was taken into a lane at Kaithady. According to one report a welder was brought to repair the leak. By some accident the bowser exploded. Amongst the ten L.T.T.E. persons killed were three senior leaders, Kugan, Curdles and Vasu. The presence of Kugan who was second in command to Prabhakaran and close to him, suggests that Prabhakaran was in direct command of the operation. Forty civilians were reportedly killed. The operation had to be abandoned. The L.T.T.E. announced the deaths through loud speakers and its notice boards. A disturbing aspect of this announcement was that the civilian deaths were not mentioned.

Even the newspapers gave very little publicity to the civilian deaths. This set the precedent for developments to come. Not surprisingly it may be noted that both the Sri Lankan government and the L.T.T.E. were superstitious. The digits in dates normally chosen by the L.T.T.E. for major operations would add up to five, whereas for the government it

would add up to eight. People would normally expect L.T.T.E.'s initiatives on the 5th, 14th and 23rd of a month and government initiatives on the 8th, 17th or 26th of a month.

The government resumed aerial bombing of Jaffna on the 7th of March. A massive barrage of shelling from Jaffna Fort killed 17 civilians at Windsor Theatre junction and injured 50. A shell also fell on the hospital for the first time.

In the early hours of the morning on Monday, 30 March, shells again fell on the Jaffna hospital. Eight patients were killed in Ward 19/20. Two nurses and an attendant were injured. It may be noted that the ward affected was a medical ward having elderly heart patients. It should also be noted here that this shelling was strongly condemned by India. When the National Security Minister suggested that the shell was fired by the L.T.T.E., noting the fact that the shells came from the direction of the Fort, the Indian ambassador J. N. Dixit is said to have remarked sarcastically that the L.T.T.E. has a special shell which goes forward and then turns back.

On the night of 30 March, a bomb was thrown at the L.T.T.E.'s Jaffna leader Mr. Kittu, while he was visiting a friend living on 2nd Cross Street, Jaffna. One of his body guards, a youth from Mannar, was killed. Kittu himself was admitted to the hospital and had one of his legs amputated. The news came out that some prisoners had died on the evening of the following day at the L.T.T.E.'s Brown Road camp. The B.B.C. broadcast a news item which claimed shortly afterwards that a large number of prisoners held by the L.T.T.E. had been killed, following the attempt on Kittu. Some sources put the number at 70. In an atmosphere of mounting rumours, the L.T.T.E. issued a press statement on the 6th of April claiming that prisoners grabbed some weapons and tried to escape and that in the ensuing battle, two L.T.T.E. guards and 18 prisoners were killed. A member of the E.P.R.L.F. who escaped during the incident and later went to Batticaloa submitted an affidavit to the following effect: "Several of us prisoners were kept in a room at the L.T.T.E.'s Brown Road camp. In the evening Aruna (L.T.T.E.'s former Batticaloa leader) burst into the room and opened fire at us with an automatic weapon. Three of us managed to escape through another door and get away. Eighteen were killed during that incident."

Aruna is known to have been close to Kittu. In publishing the L.T.T.E.'s statement on the incident, the Jaffna daily *Murasoli*, of 6 April, 1987 announced in banner headlines: "18 Criminals killed." This represented new levels of opportunism in journalism. The L.T.T.E. statement had not claimed that the dead were criminals. The L.T.T.E. is believed to have killed several other E.P.R.L.F. members in other camps at the same time. One whose death was widely talked about at that time was E.P.R.L.F.'s Dr. Benjamin, who had worked with refugees. The *Saturday Review* after consulting a senior member of the L.T.T.E. reported that in all about 50 prisoners were killed. The identities and affiliations of Kittu's would-be-assassins were never revealed.

On 2 April, the attack by the L.T.T.E. on a mini-camp at Valvettithurai was repulsed with the L.T.T.E. suffering five dead. An ambulance carrying five persons injured by shelling from Pt. Pedro hospital to Jaffna was shelled by helicopter at Vallai-veli, killing the patients and the ambulance driver.

A senior figure in Jaffna put across to Minister Thondaman the idea of a cease-fire over the traditional Sinhalese-Tamil new year, to be used to set the scene for negotiations in order to restore peace. Mr. Thondaman asked the cabinet for a fortnight's cease fire. The

cabinet agreed to a unilateral cease fire of nine days from 11th - 19th April. This was rejected by V. Prabhakaran who stated that he would consider a cease fire after the 20th of April. It was to be expected that such a response from the L.T.T.E. would have been seen by the outside world as puerile diplomacy bordering on intransigence. Though the senior figure in Jaffna felt that the government's announcement of the cease fire was sincerely intended, Prabhakaran's stand had widespread sympathy from a people who had come to believe that all the blame for the situation lay with the government. The aerial bombing and shelling of the civilian population had made the people deeply distrustful of the government. Reports of government breaches of the cease fire started appearing in the Jaffna press. Given the situation, whenever government forces shelled, it became difficult to determine who provoked and who retaliated.

On 16 April 1987, 150 Sinhalese, many of them civilians returning to Trincomalee after new year festivities at Anuradhapura, were off-loaded from their buses and massacred at Kituluttuwa. The L.T.T.E. was widely blamed and the government claimed that the massacre was led by L.T.T.E.'s Pulendran. Shortly afterwards, on 21 April, a car bomb exploded at the Pettah bus stand in Colombo, killing over 100 civilians. The attack was widely attributed to a Tamil militant group, believed to be either the E.R.O.S. or the L.T.T.E.. International opinion drifted away from sympathy for Tamils, towards approving a Sri Lankan government crack down on Tamil militants.

In the early hours of 22nd April, an L.T.T.E. party under Radha's command attacked the jetty at K.K.S. where cement bags from Lanka Cement Ltd. (L.C.L.) were being loaded into a waiting ship. This is again an example of the L.T.T.E.'s daring and capacity to improvise in order to stage sensational suicidal attacks. These attacks were usually accompanied by a heavy civilian toll and made the government more brutal and intransigent. It put the civilian population in further jeopardy while providing grist for the L.T.T.E. to further its religious appeal. The security precautions at the entrance to the jetty were elaborate. Lorries loaded with cement went North from the L.C.L. plant and had to queue up as they reached the K.K.S. - Keerimalai Road before crossing into the premises of the harbour which were under Sri Lankan army control. As the lorry that had just unloaded came out, the first lorry in the waiting queue crossed the road into the harbour premises. During the crossing a security officer from L.C.L. walked some distance with the lorry. The L.T.T.E.'s plan was a high risk, ingenious strategy and hence unexpected by the army. According to sources within the L.T.T.E., its members compete with each other to volunteer for such suicidal missions.

L.T.T.E. men were hidden in a lorry with a wall of cement bags to disguise it as one going to unload. The lorry was parked in a lane towards the land side, a few yards from the crossing point, but hidden from the army. Calculating that the concentration of the army sentries will be at a low ebb in the early hours of the morning, as a lorry which had finished unloading came out of the harbour, the L.T.T.E. lorry made a dash and got in front of the one which was to enter. This went unnoticed by the army sentries who were poised on the water tank. The L.C.L. security guard was too shocked to react and followed on foot the L.T.T.E. lorry which had been allowed inside.

Once in, the L.T.T.E. men opened fire killing 18 soldiers, and were soon out again. The army was angry. They got hold of five L.C.L. security guards and killed them. One of those killed was Sergeant Mylvaganam, who had earlier been a police sergeant. Another L.C.L. foreman was dragged out of the bathroom and shot. At the time of the attack 70 labourers were employed in loading cement bags at the jetty. Fortunately for them, the

Sinhalese ship's captain, fearing reprisals against them, took them aboard and put out to sea. These workers were put ashore several hours later after the captain obtained the assurance that the workers would not be molested. The Sri Lankan government overplayed its propaganda card when it wrapped bullet bands around the bodies of the L.C.L. security officers killed and displayed them on the state television Rupavahini as terrorists killed. Any intelligent viewer would have found the body of 55-year-old Sergeant Mylvaganam with greying hair, appearing as that of a youthful terrorist, too much to swallow. A more intelligent way of lying would have been to avoid the extras and blame the killing of Tamil security officers on the L.T.T.E.. This again indicates how the government treated the whole question as a military problem and was not interested in making overtures to Tamil opinion. This worked to the L.T.T.E.'s benefit.. If the government troops had been disciplined to avoid reprisals against civilians, it could have exposed the futility of the L.T.T.E.'s action. But the government had very different ideas. The next six weeks were to see an unleashing of random impersonal terror against Tamil civilians.

The people of K.K.S. and the workers at the two cement plants had been dismayed by the L.T.T.E.'s action. The L.T.T.E. had given the workers at the cement plants an assurance that it would not interfere with their work. Working relations between the army and the cement plants had been fairly good. The citizens' committees in the area had worked out an unwritten agreement between the L.T.T.E. and the army, allowing the latter free use of the K.K.S. - Palaly Road. This enabled the civilians to stay on in that area. Now all this came to an end. With an increasing number of landmine attacks by the L.T.T.E., the army took to shooting at civilians. Several civilians were shot dead, including Dr. Viswaranjan who was returning home to K.K.S. on 25 April, after working at the Jaffna hospital. This led to the total exodus of civilians from K.K.S., Myliddy and Maviddapuram. On the meaningless suffering of all these people, aided by the Sri Lankan government's intransigent brutality, was built the expanding edifice of the L.T.T.E. religion. The random shelling and aerial bombing of the Tamil civilian population commenced on 22 April. Emotional support for the L.T.T.E. increased. People asked what India was doing. A senior Indian official told a newspaper editor, that after the Pettah bomb blast and the Kituluttuwa massacre, India had lost the moral right to protest. The destructive policies of the L.T.T.E. and the Sri Lankan government received mutual sustenance from each other.

The people around K.K.S. had for a year tried a policy of live and let live with both the L.T.T.E. and the Sri Lankan army. Through its supporters within the cement plants the L.T.T.E. had enjoyed some privileges there. A workshop engineer had resigned and gone abroad in January 1987 after an L.T.T.E. party gave him their "first warning." The engineer's professional pride did not allow him to give in to certain demands. He had also been alarmed by the readiness with which people played with the safety of their colleagues for the sake of power and influence. The policy of live and let live without a principled stand was doomed to failure. The cement plants were closed on 22 April.

Another incident which influenced the local mind was the landmine attack by the L.T.T.E. on an army patrol on 25 March 1987. Subsequently the severed foot of a Sri Lankan soldier with a boot on it was exhibited successively at the Maviddapuram temple and Tellipallai junction. For its part the Sri Lankan army shelled these two places on successive nights. On the first night a temple priest lost his leg. At Tellipallai junction, Mr. Venugopal was killed. On the 31 March, the L.T.T.E.'s Jaffna leader Mr. Kittu lost a leg in a grenade attack. Many of the Hindu folk at Maviddapuram, steeped in a belief in karma, formed their own conclusions. Nevertheless, the exhibition of gore had attracted sizeable crowds. This

followed the exhibition of the dead bodies of nine Sri Lankan soldiers at Kandasamy Kovil four months before. There was taking place a transformation of sensibilities. Many Hindus were disgusted, but silent.

The Sri Lankan government commenced random shelling of the civilian population in Jaffna, together with aerial bombing on 22 April. One could hear shells falling in quick succession in widely separated places, usually around 6:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Most would quickly take their families into the house or into a trench if they had one, and say their prayers. The aerial bombing was often off the mark. The Sri Lankan air force tried four times to bomb an L.T.T.E. camp in Pt. Pedro situated in the crowded market area, and finally finished the job with a bulldozer a month later, after taking over Vadamaratchi at the end of May. About a hundred civilians were killed up to 26 May as a result of the bombing and shelling.

On the 1st of May, the L.T.T.E. defied the government ban on May day processions countrywide, and organised a massive rally commencing at Urumpirai junction, and ending with a public meeting at Kandasamy Kovil. Vans, buses and lorries were commandeered and were used to ferry people from distant places. L.T.T.E. cadres knocked on doors and asked people to come. Some flatly refused. Others went with varying combinations of consent and fear. The majority who went, did so willingly or out of curiosity.

At the meeting, the L.T.T.E.'s rising star and Kugan's brother, Yogi, gave a rousing speech. It was a frank statement of what the L.T.T.E. was offering its subjects. Yogi said: "Even if 35 lakhs ¹ should die, we will not be deterred from our goal of Tamil Eelam." He went on to indicate that a small fraction of the present population of Tamils is enough to people the state of Tamil Eelam. Few were alarmed by such frankness. The Tamil man was far from being suicidal, although the L.T.T.E.'s critics had come to term its brand of politics, cyanide or suicide politics. The Tamil man very much loved material security. (Curiously, the L.T.T.E. again and again stressed the need to safeguard territory. There was no corresponding stress on safeguarding life.) The fact that nearly every household in Jaffna had constructed an air raid shelter at an average cost of Rs. 1000/- showed that they were unlikely candidates for suicide. For sometime, disenchantment with the manner of the L.T.T.E.'s campaign and its indifference to the fate of civilians had been expressed by affected people from Mannar, the Eastern Province and parts of Jaffna. These had fallen on deaf ears amongst articulate folk in suburban Jaffna. For many, the manner in which the L.T.T.E. had ruled Jaffna was acceptable. There were disappearances -- a minor problem. But people could make money unmolested. Travel agents, employment agencies, those who ran coach services to Colombo, and contractors continued to make their money. The coach operators and the L.T.T.E. found it mutually advantageous to cut train services to Colombo. (Coach fares came down from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 65/- when train services resumed after the Accord. The Sri Lankan army too had good relations with the operators.) But now was approaching a time when all this might have to change and misery was going to be the common lot. When the L.T.T.E. started proceeding alone in May 1986, it had offered the people of Jaffna, "order within and security from attacks by the Sri Lankan forces." This worked well for a while, but had crumbled with time.

The Sri Lankan army had been tightening its noose by the establishment of new camps at Vasavilan, Kattuvan and Mandaitivu over the months. The Sri Lankan strategy was simple. It would create diversions from various points, such as Jaffna, Pt. Pedro, Kayts, V.V.T., Elephant Pass and Palaly. One of these would be the real column that would advance under air cover and establish a new camp. Even in the latter half of 1986, support from the E.P.R.L.F., E.R.O.S., P.L.O.T.E. and T.E.A. had been crucial in countering the Sri Lankan advance, though the L.T.T.E. hated to admit it. The counter-strategy developed by the militant groups was to have sentries posted with walkie-talkies. When an advance was sighted, the main body of fighting men, who would be mobile in pickups and mini-vans, would be summoned. This was effective up to a point. But in 1987, the L.T.T.E. was clearly over-stretched. When the Sri Lankan army advanced to Kattuvan on 28 February with just one covering helicopter, hardly any resistance was offered. According to a resident of that area, the sentry had radioed Kittu for reinforcements. He was aghast when Kittu simply ordered him to chase the army back.

On an earlier occasion, the army had attacked Kattuvan by land and air, causing the L.T.T.E. sentry to flee. The army then withdrew. In the evening Kittu arrived on the scene in his car. He left his men and walked alone into the dusk. The short and balding figure sat down by himself to reflect, his brow furrowed. He had dispatched tens of C.I.A., Mossad and C.I.D. agents in his time, without giving it any more thought than he would in deciding to have a cup of tea. Here was the man, who during the Vijitharan affair kept the University dons awestruck, while he poured out his contradictions. Their silence was as if to say, "Yes, General." The highest in Jaffna had waited on him. He had played with the lives of others and had gambled with his own. Mendis, his own friend and Jaffna leader of the P.L.O.T.E., had died in his custody. Friendship did not stand in the way of such things. Amongst his men, there were those who resented his flamboyance. But in battle, they trusted his leadership as few others' was trusted. We may never know what passed through his mind. For the first time, perhaps, he was a worried man. Did he have a premonition that his rising star would soon have its setting?

Perhaps, the development of the L.T.T.E. leadership is related to something deeply ingrained in the human psyche appearing in the evolution myths of ancient lore. Many of the L.T.T.E. leaders had lived like the ancient gods. Like Wotan in Niebelung's Ring and Keat's Hyperion, gods who reach their limits of action must wish for self annihilation. This is probably just a fancy that may explain one aspect of their development. Motives are complex things and the L.T.T.E. leadership was moving in several directions at the same time. Many of its leaders, Mahattaya, Kittu and Kumarappa, were either married or were on the verge of it. Their leader Prabhakaran was the father of two. The leadership had also demonstrated on several occasions that it was interested in an arrangement where it would have settled power. In late 1986 Kittu had made overtures to leading personalities and the media in the South. There had been a good deal of comings and goings and much secret talk. After the Accord of July 1987 much of the L.T.T.E.'s performance had been a bid for power. The agreement reached with India during secret negotiations at the the time of the fast, talked almost exclusively of power. In fact, they wanted exclusive power, and to this end, they pushed their gambler's luck to the brink. But the five demands put forward during Thileepan's fast to death, of September 1987 had nothing about demands for power. When the L.T.T.E. wanted something, it was prepared to play with the lives of its own men and with those of civilians. The impasse resulting from the suicide in custody of 12 L.T.T.E. members on 5 October 1987 and the subsequent massacre of Sinhalese, was part of a pattern. By provoking a crisis the L.T.T.E. seemed to hope for a decisive outcome, with perhaps help from Tamil Nadu. Their message seemed to say: "Accept our terms, for if you try anything else, we can sour things for you."

When India took on the L.T.T.E., Prabhakaran said in a message: "We have been forced into fighting to protect ourselves. India must assume full responsibility for harm resulting to the people." This was indeed, a most queer stand for someone who claimed leadership and on whom it fell to protect the people. The war dragged on. After the worst killing was over, the L.T.T.E.'s deputy leader Mahattaya, in a letter to the Indian authorities, sued for an end to the fighting. A key demand was a return to the *status quo* of 28 September which offered 7 out of 12 places on the interim council for the L.T.T.E.. Behind all the gore and the Homeric drama, there was a bid for something tangible -- namely power. There were the usual somersaults of traditional politics. For this reason it will be wrong to romanticise the L.T.T.E.. Every human being is ridiculous most of the time. Lord Byron, the most romanticised poet, confesses this frankly in his work Don Juan.

At the same time, the leaders of the L.T.T.E. were proud men. They were proud of what they had achieved and did not like being trifled with. India recognised this up to a point. The Tigers were prepared to risk all they had in pursuit of a goal, in addition to risking everyone else. The religious element in the L.T.T.E. has already been mentioned. They also invoked other gods. Kittu was a pious Hindu, who was also given to lighting candles at Christian shrines. The element of calculation increased, the higher one went up the hierarchy. At the bottom, there was an unquestioning religious zeal facilitated by the impressionable boyishness of the new recruits.

In May 1986, the L.T.T.E.'s admirers in Jaffna viewed them as a military force which offered them physical and material security. Between January and May 1987, a series of military reverses ensured that this offer was no longer good. The L.T.T.E. had compensated for this by substituting a religious appeal. When Yogi announced on 1 May 1987 that even if 35 lakhs die, they would stay their course until Eelam is achieved, people took it as the metaphorical expression of a religious sentiment. This was after all common enough in these parts. Politicians in the South had sworn to fight India down to the last drop of their blood. Even those members of the public who were the L.T.T.E.'s most ardent supporters did not relish the thought of departing this world. Yet they applauded. That the prospect of mass suicide was being seriously held out by the L.T.T.E. did not really sink in. The L.T.T.E.'s saying one thing and the public hoping for and understanding something else, was to have several more repetitions. No one looking back can complain that the L.T.T.E. had not made itself clear. The May day rally was held in the precincts of the Nallur Kanthasamy temple. The choice of venue itself was a sign of things to come. A massive crowd, numbering several tens of thousands had been brought to Kanthasamy Kovil in defiance of a government ban. The possibility of a shell attack from the Fort or firing from a helicopter was very real. Had this happened the scene of disaster would have made good propaganda. The fortunate fact that sanity prevailed and such an attack did not take place was again publicised as a victory for the L.T.T.E.. It had successfully defied a ban which was observed in the rest of the country. Either way the L.T.T.E. would have won. Yogi's words literally meant that the human cost was immaterial. Civilian casualties were used for propaganda abroad. But inside, L.T.T.E. casualties were announced with religious fanfare, while civilian casualties received scant attention.

6.2 The Navaratne episode

It was now clear to many that the Sri Lankan government was preparing to launch an offensive to recapture the entire peninsula. Few doubted that they would succeed. The prospect of the entire Jaffna peninsula being turned into a refugee camp, like the Eastern Province, was very real. Several persons felt that a group of leading citizens should talk to the L.T.T.E., with a view to persuading them of at least talking to the government on the basis of the December 19th proposals. There were at this time several channels of communication between the government and the L.T.T.E.. One of these was the editor of the Saturday Review, Mr. Gamini Navaratne. He had been the editor of the English Weekly published from Jaffna during the crucial period which followed the 1983 riots. Being Sinhalese, his role was a delicate one in which he was often misunderstood. Having been a lobby correspondent he knew the senior parliamentarians well. He had the ability and guts, to push his luck to the edge in publishing news of human rights violations by the government. Unlike editors in the West, Mr. Navaratne was aware that restrictions were placed on journalism by the contending parties to the conflict, all of whom had much to hide. He was keen that the truth should somehow be brought out, and in this his performance was well above the standards in this country. While being critical of Jayewardene's handling of the ethnic crisis, Mr. Navaratne did have an affectionate regard for him. He did look upon certain of the militant leaders with a paternal affection. Among them were Kittu and Raheem of the L.T.T.E., the E.R.O.S. leader, Balakumar, and the late Dr. Benjamin of the E.P.R.L.F.. He often expressed the feeling that the boys had done a great job in standing up to the Sri Lankan forces, and yet they were just boys who needed help in the form of mature counsel. The December 19th proposals, he felt, were a reasonable basis for negotiations, and that unless a settlement was reached fast, Jaffna would collapse under the strain. No doubt, events proved him right. He was forthright in expressing these views, which were accepted by a section of the public. But another uncharitable section of the public were deeply suspicious of him. In the highest circles in Jaffna he was accused of being an agent of one kind or the other including being J. R.'s agent. Now that Kittu and Raheem were under a cloud the leadership of the L.T.T.E. was suspicious of him. Mr. Navaratne's recent attempts to talk to the

L.T.T.E., regarding the December 19th proposals had met with rebuffs. Where others had taken the hint, Navaratne was not so easily put off.

On 11 May, a group of persons met independently at the university to discuss an approach to the L.T.T.E. with a view to averting the looming prospect. Navaratne heard of this meeting and arrived at the university. He spent a few minutes giving his views on the subject and went away after wishing them luck. It was on this occasion that the full extent of the L.T.T.E.'s spy network at the University was revealed. A highly fanciful rumour was sent out by some senior persons to the effect that Mr. Navaratne was at the University to organise a petition against the L.T.T.E., that was to be presented at the S.A.A.R.C. Editors' Conference. It was a shocking revelation that both amongst the staff and students, colleagues were spying on colleagues, with little thought of the possibility that they might put their colleagues in grave danger. Navaratne was followed and placed under arrest by a medical student. The manner of his arrest was disrespectful and gave no consideration to his invaluable services. After an investigation led by Mahattaya himself, the L.T.T.E. was convinced that they had been fed with bad information, by some of their so-called senior advisors. Mr. Navaratne was released four days later. It was a sign of the wretched state of Jaffna that in the face of disaster, some of its elites could do no better than to cast speculative aspersions on a man who, after all, believed that he was doing something for the people. Several months later, after the L.T.T.E. had lost its position of control in the wake of the Indian offensive, some in the L.T.T.E. recognised the value of independent journalism. A high ranker in the L.T.T.E. told a senior citizen that they would like Mr. Navaratne to continue his editorial work in Jaffna. The senior citizen replied: "Had Mr. Navaratne been here on the night of 5th October, you would have made a bonfire of him in the Jaffna Hindu College grounds." The 5th of October was the night when the L.T.T.E. launched a manhunt against Sinhalese residents in Jaffna.

6.3 The closing of Jaffna Hospital

Another episode pertaining to this period was the government's attempt to close down Jaffna hospital. A letter from the Ministry of teaching hospitals dated 27 April reached the hands of the Medical Superintendent, Jaffna, on 3 May. This letter contained an order for him to close the Jaffna hospital by the 8th of May. This was a sign that the government was getting ready for an offensive. The government had received bad publicity on account of shells falling on Jaffna hospital and the casualties resulting from it. Many of the doctors admitted that given the army's order to fire back when fired upon, it was inevitable that even if the army commanders were careful, shells fired from the Jaffna Fort would fall on Jaffna hospital. The army had the unenviable task of maintaining a mere presence in Jaffna. For the rest, the soldiers were cooped up and vulnerable to missiles fired from outside. In January 1986, the army was ordered to retaliate with cannon, up to a radius of 1 kilometre from the Jaffna fort. The commercial hub of Jaffna and the hospital fell within this distance. This marked an escalation of the conflict in terms of civilian cost. By the middle of 1986, shells had been aimed at targets 3 miles from the Fort. One aimed apparently at an L.T.T.E. camp killed the bridegroom and the bride's father when it exploded amidst a wedding party. As time went by the shelling acquired a more indiscriminate character. Snipers too were brought in later. Several ordinary citizens getting about Bankshall Street and K.K.S. Road fell victim to snipers. One army officer, regarded as a considerate man, told a Tamil friend that they would sometimes watch from the fort in the night in a state of fear. When they sometimes observed fire directed at the Fort, it could easily appear to come from the hospital. At the same time the staff at the hospital had obtained from the militants a guarantee that their premises would not be used to fire at the army and were certain that the guarantee had been honoured. But in such a volatile environment, the danger to the hospital was there. A rational way out of it would have been a truce in the Fort area. But when lethal means are available, rationality tends to go out of the window. Cannon came in handy when the army was in a bad temper and wished to take it out on the civilians.

The press in Jaffna mentioned only the shelling by the army. But many journalists would admit that there was also constant provocation by firing things into the Fort. If the L.T.T.E.'s conduct during the hospital crisis of May 1987 did anything at all, it added weight to the suspicion that its attitude towards civilians was basically cynical.

Cynicism was widespread in this conflict and was in the long run destructive to all who employed it. If a landmine went off in a remote village, the army would hit the civilians hard in the hope that it would destroy the militants' support base. One way or the other the militants would welcome the government action as bringing in additional support for their cause. It was an extension of July 1983. A case of how this cynicism deepened enmity between groups was that of a young member of the E.P.R.L.F. from Batticaloa. He was travelling along Hospital Road, when he got a bullet in the back. This would normally have been associated with a sniper in the Fort. This boy later said in hospital, that he had looked back as he lost consciousness and fell down. He had only seen L.T.T.E. sentries. He claimed that the bullet extracted from his body was not from a sniper rifle but was fired from an M-16. Rightly or wrongly he had formed his conclusions and was extremely bitter.

The order to close Jaffna hospital gave rise to widespread shock and panic. This came at the height of indiscriminate shelling resulting in casualties, who but for Jaffna hospital would have faced death. The Tellipallai and Pt. Pedro hospitals too had been hit by shells, and after the shelling of an ambulance from Pt. Pedro on 4 April, the transport of patients became a precarious activity. The short supply of petrol added to the complications. By 6 May, Jaffna had virtually become a ghost town. Shops shifted their goods and residents fled their homes. This too was a tricky affair. Those lucky enough to rent a house in the interior had to move again on discovering that the house had once been a militant camp. Such places were considered fair game for Sri Lankan bombers. The hospital started discharging most of its patients from Monday the 4th of May. It is a tribute to the grit of the common man that most services kept functioning during this fearsome period. The banks remained open for a few hours in the mornings. Life went on against a background of shell blasts and firing from L.T.T.E. sentries.

Mrs. Sivapakiam Nadarajah, a long term resident in front of Jaffna hospital, was on 5 May, packing her things to send them away to Chavakachcheri. One then witnessed the amazing spectacle of a milkman, who calmly dismounted from his bicycle and rang his bell for someone to fetch the milk. He then lazily looked up at the sky and at the twittering birds on the trees. His whistling could be heard between shell blasts. Three shells fell only 90 minutes later on a building opposite the new Out-Patients' Department (O.P.D.) in the hospital, about 40 yards to the West of Commercial bank. This demonstrated the kind of risk involved. That the thought of death was writ large on people's minds was evident. Asked how he came to terms with coming to work given the risk involved; Mr. Arul Gnanaseelan, an employee of the Commercial Bank said: "I trust in God and come to work. If He has a purpose in keeping me alive, I will live. If it is time for me to go, it is in His hands." Mr. Mohanachandran, another milkman, said, covering his anxiety with a smile, that distributing milk had become a cumbersome business. When he went to the homes of some of his customers, he had to ring his bell for a long time and wait on the road listening to the music of the shells. This was because many of his customers were inside trenches. During a slight pause, the customer would cautiously emerge, make a dash for the gate, collect his milk in a pan and then beat an unceremonious retreat. He added: "I too spend the nights in a trench with my family in Kopay. One must understand the feelings of those soldiers too. They must be feeling pretty rotten after the Pettah bomb blast and the Kitul-uttuwa massacre." The people of Jaffna can be proud, that amongst the humble ranks of its milkmen, can be found the right material for the world's most intrepid war correspondents.

In the meantime, representatives from amongst the hospital authorities and the G.M.O.A. (Government Medical Officers Association) went to Colombo to make

representations concerning the case for Jaffna hospital. Even before the closure threat, the region's largest hospital with 1150 beds, was down to having 550 patients. The main body of the G.M.O.A. in Colombo was sympathetic to the need to keep Jaffna hospital open. So was the Ministry for Teaching Hospitals, which had even earlier argued against the closure. In consequence of their discussions with the L.T.T.E., the doctors from Jaffna felt that the L.T.T.E. would go along with any reasonable arrangement to keep the hospital open. The L.T.T.E. did have sound military reasons for keeping the hospital open. If the hospital was to be closed, the town would be abandoned. For, this would remove all restrictions placed on Sri Lankan military activity. The L.T.T.E. would thus lose the civilian cover which made it possible for it to maintain a presence around Jaffna Fort. When the news of the closure order came, the L.T.T.E. backed a demonstration in which a large number of medical students took part. The demonstrators demanded that the hospital staff should defy the closure order and stay put. Some suggested that if the hospital was shelled and some doctors got killed, it would so much the more embarrass the Sri Lankan authorities. The doctors pointed out that things may not work that way. A shell for instance could fall at a harmless distance away from a ward, causing a patient a minor cut. The patients would then promptly desert the hospital, effectively closing it. The hospital staff would then have nothing to show for defying their ministry. The L.T.T.E. by all accounts was worried.

In Colombo, the Jaffna Hospital doctors received crucial support for their cause from the Indian High Commission. Given the wide ranging pressure, the President and the National Security Minister agreed to lift the closure order if a fire-free zone could be negotiated around the hospital between the L.T.T.E. and the Sri Lankan army. For while the G.M.O.A. accepted the word of the Jaffna doctors that the hospital to the best of their knowledge had not been used to fire at the Jaffna Fort, the National Security ministry stood by the contrary. It was then felt that such an agreement of a fire free zone would solve the problem. This was a victory for common humanity. In their enthusiasm, the doctors took it upon themselves to arrange such negotiations. It was agreed that the telephone link between the fort and the hospital would be restored and that Captain Kotelawela who had previously developed a rapport with Kittu, Rahim and some other L.T.T.E. leaders would be available at the Jaffna Fort on the afternoon of 10 May. Hopes rose high. One of the Jaffna newspapers got wind of this from what was thought of as a private talk and stated that the planned negotiations were announced at a press conference at the hospital.

At this point the L.T.T.E. pounced on the doctors. They were found fault with for arranging meetings for the L.T.T.E. without their authority. Further, they said, it was through the press that they were being informed of this meeting. Apart from a possible technical blunder involving the press, the doctors felt that they were acting for the common good. No commitment at this time was forthcoming from the L.T.T.E.. Later the doctors learnt from Captain Kotelawela that he had contacted the L.T.T.E. independently and had arranged to meet with them the following morning. Captain Kotelawela further added that he had come on "multiple missions" and had not sounded as if the hospital matter was amongst the key subjects. It was learnt the following morning that the L.T.T.E. had not kept its appointment, assuming there was one, with the Captain who had been kept impatiently waiting. Subsequently the L.T.T.E. put forward a demand that since it could not trust the government, it was willing to talk if 5 persons nominated by them would be present. These included Dr. Ratnapriya, National Secretary of the G.M.O.A., and the Rev. Fr. Yohan Devananda. The L.T.T.E. should have known that its demand that a representative of the International Red Cross, the I.R.C., should be present would not be met. The government agreed to 4 of the delegates and added that while it cannot admit an I.R.C. representative, the L.T.T.E. could

choose anyone else from this country it could trust. The doctors suggested that the L.T.T.E. could as a compromise, suggest an employee of the Indian High Commission.

The L.T.T.E.'s effective rejection was protracted. In the meantime, the matter had received so much publicity that the government found itself unable to go ahead with the closure of the hospital. The L.T.T.E. had played its characteristic game, abusing the good intentions of the Jaffna doctors, the goodwill of the G.M.O.A., and the residual decency in the government to gain its own ends. For the moment the L.T.T.E. had won. It was to try the same gamble during Thilepan's fast in September, win for a start, and then lose by overplaying its hand. For the Sri Lankan government, it was the end of the road for negotiations which it had tried perhaps half-heartedly in deference to international opinion and some members of its cabinet. It had strengthened its drive for a military solution to its Tamil problem by silencing critics within and showing up the L.T.T.E. as implacable and irresponsible in the eyes of the world. In this sense the Sri Lankan government had not lost. For its part, the government had not behaved as though it was dealing with human beings over whom it claimed sovereignty. Even the Geneva convention provided for far better treatment during war for the population on the opposing side. A senior citizen with personal contacts at the Indian High Commission, said at this time that India was not more than nominally interested in pushing the December 19th proposals. It would appear that India was building up a case for direct intervention of some kind. The decision was taken perhaps, sometime between January and May 1987. When the Sri Lankan government had launched an offensive earlier in the year, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India had warned that if a political solution is not reached, the level of violence in Sri Lanka "will" increase. The message was not lost in Colombo. The L.T.T.E.'s actions, together with the government reprisals against the Tamils, had served to build up India's case.

In one respect, the support received by the Jaffna doctors for their cause from the Indian High Commission was fateful, as events proved. During the Indian offensive on Jaffna later in October that year, the Jaffna hospital authorities assumed that because India had in the past been a friend of the hospital, she would exercise extreme consideration for the hospital during the offensive. As it turned out, the need for the hospital had been as great in October as it had been in May. Several hundred persons, ordinary men, women and children, who were victims of Indian shelling were in need of urgent medical care. When the Indians took Jaffna town on 21st October, there were no signs that they had given any thought to the hospital.

A medical Consultant, reflecting on the events of May in light of October's harrowing experiences, said: "One can now appreciate the National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali's wanting to close Jaffna Hospital. He knew that if an attempt was to be made to take Jaffna, while advancing from the Fort, something embarrassing was bound to happen at the hospital. Having faced bad publicity over the years, the Sri Lankan government was used to thinking along these lines. The Indians did not seem to have a clue." Another Consultant-Professor on the same subject said: "We should have closed the hospital on 11 October. But people are concerned about patients and they are used to cutting it fine. By their past concern, the Indians had encouraged us to do this."

On the other hand, the Sri Lankan government had learnt much from this experience of May. When they launched Operation Liberation three weeks' later, they took extreme care over Pt. Pedro hospital. The Sri Lankan army was helped in this by the fact that the L.T.T.E. had withdrawn from the area around Pt. Pedro hospital a day before the army advanced from Nelliady. The Indian army did not have this advantage. One should be careful not to make

comparisons from this. A few months earlier the Sri Lankan air force had bombed the hospital at Adampan. Adampan was a remote area in the Mannar district. The operation in Jaffna, thanks in part to India, had to be done under the spotlight of international publicity. The difference between Adampan and Jaffna was well understood by the Sri Lankan government. If the L.T.T.E. had learnt anything, it was the value of bad publicity for the other side. During the Indian offensive of October, the L.T.T.E. would itself commission lawyers to obtain affidavits from victims, for whose misfortune, the L.T.T.E. must itself share the responsibility.

<http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume1/Chapter6.htm> - [ftnref1#](#) [ftnref1](#)¹ Indian soldier

Chapter 7

OPERATION LIBERATION

7.1 Was there an Alternative ?

It was now clear that a military offensive to recapture the Jaffna peninsula was imminent. Various experts put the anticipated civilian casualties at 10 to 40 thousand and the army casualties at one to four thousand. Internationally there was no opposition to such a venture. It was generally felt that such action had been made necessary by the L.T.T.E.'s proven intransigence while an apparently reasonable set of proposals were on the table. Such a view would not have been entirely unjust. At the same time the scope for action by the government had been restricted by past choices. Sections of the government and the security forces had connived at racist killings of Tamils in 1983. The government's subsequent policy towards Tamils was one that owed little to moral considerations. Tamils of the North and East became victims of unchecked state terror. All Tamil villages in Trincomalee District outside the town had been systematically destroyed. The Special Task Force (S.T.F.) was deployed in Batticaloa with what was described as a licence to kill, with the foreign press kept out. Apart from killings during operations, killing in the East had a casual character. A senior church official described his experience of travelling in a convoy, where passenger vehicles had been joined in by S.T.F. vehicles. At one point three peasants were crossing the road. The next moment they were simply mown down with gun fire. The convoy went on as if nothing had happened. There was no question of stopping to ask who they were or what they were doing. If an S.T.F. official happened to remember that incident before lunch, he may have telephoned the news agency Lanka Puwath to let them know that three terrorists had been killed in an engagement. Lankapuwath would oblige by adding the frills. According to information continually documented by the Saturday Review, by January 1987, over 10,000 Tamil had become victims of government action. Perhaps about 1000 Sinhalese civilians died as the result of Tamil militant action. The number of soldiers killed was 689 at the end of July 1987 according to official sources. The militant dead is believed to be lower. The L.T.T.E. claims to have lost 631 by August 1987. Perhaps a comparable number of militants died because of internal killings. These figures have been given as a pointer to the state of passions in the country. The character of the Tamil insurgency cannot be isolated from the dehumanising effect of state terror. The government had much to do with creating the problems it was up against.

Even at this point a bold new initiative to win over the Tamils would have given the government the best chance of averting the humiliation that was to come. It could have used the media to make a clean breast of its past errors and explain to the Sinhalese the hard reality

facing the country and the difficult choices involved. If as it was widely claimed, the sticking point for the Tamils was a North-East merger, it could have accepted this in principle and challenged the Tamils to offer terms acceptable to the Muslims and Sinhalese in the East. This was after all going to be a far cry from separation. If the L.T.T.E. still rejected them, the government could have proceeded to expose its desultory course by the disciplined conduct of its forces and by making the Tamils feel it was concerned for them. The 11,000 or so persons on whom the envisaged operation was going to pass a death sentence were after all citizens of this country. But the government's moral faculties and imagination had atrophied through misuse. It was incapable of thinking on these lines, and making an original departure from the past. Courage too was in short supply.

What the L.T.T.E. was hoping for is hard to fathom. It had alienated international and Indian opinion. It had divided the Tamils. It could not count on the civilian population for anything tangible. It could only count on the unswerving obedience of a few thousand armed men, a large number of them in their teens. Its strength was of the negative kind. Except that the government troops were possessed of such discipline as to avoid reprisals against civilians, the L.T.T.E. could sour any attempts at imposing a solution. It was perhaps this strength that it was counting on. An alarmed group of civilians had earlier sought an interview with a prominent L.T.T.E. leader, requesting him to reconsider his approach to India. For there seemed a likelihood that India would do nothing as the Sri Lankan government launched its final offensive. This leader had reportedly replied: "I will make India fall at my feet." Nor did the L.T.T.E. consider it necessary to make overtures to other militant groups, whose trained men had been disarmed, or to sections of the population alienated from it.

As for the civilian population, death had been raining on them slowly but surely. Normal lives and education had been severely disrupted. Those who could go abroad were slowly slipping out.

On the information available, the problem as seen by the National Security Ministry was like this: The government had dismissed any thought of the Tamils of the North and East being a potential electoral asset. This meant that the feelings of Tamils were of no account. (The President had said as much to the Daily Telegraph in July 1983.) The civilian casualties resulting from the action to take over Jaffna must be of such an order as could be sold to international opinion. Speed was of the essence in such an operation. For at the time, international opinion was on the side of the government. But if the operation was protracted and stories of civilian suffering began to come out, international opinion might change, giving India an opportunity to capitalise on it.

Put this way it was a problem for a technocratic approach devoid of moral content. The government was thinking in terms of a three-day operation, which would keep the L.T.T.E. disorganised for months to come. Riding on the popularity resulting from a successful military outcome, the government would call snap elections, thus strengthening its hand domestically and internationally. To this end the army had been receiving training from specialised foreign agencies (See section 2.1 of Volume 2). Air and naval support had also been boosted with the annual defence expenditure running at U.S. \$500 million or 20% of the national budget. There was something to be said for the technocratic approach. The killing rate during the army's recapture of Vadamaratchi was of a low order compared with when an unprepared army took on Sinhalese insurgents of the J.V.P. in 1971.

In contrast one finds a very different attitude towards counter-insurgency against a resurgent J.V.P. in the Sinhalese South. Iqbal Athas in his "Situation Report" in the Weekend of 20 December 1987, writes about the counter-insurgency operation in the South: "In the North where the security forces once battled separatist terrorists before the advent of the I.P.K.F., an encounter between the troops and their adversaries would have meant death for whoever was not quick on the gun. But that is the North. In the South the gun has given way to persuasive tactics."

The same article quotes Colonel Lakshman Algama, Military Co-ordinating Officer in Embilipitiya: "When an operation is conducted and I have taken in 100 people, only five turn out to be miscreants. When the other 95 are released, they must go without any hard feelings." The writer adds: "This is an unenviable task. Despite all the good intentions of this dedicated soldier who has undergone specialised training in the United States, the vast majority of those who are released as innocents depart with strained feelings... the security

forces and the police have a limited role... the answer to the problem is not in their hands... they are economic and political. The longer the delay, the bigger the problem."

This is again a technocratic approach, morally indifferent and as cynical of the Sinhalese as was the approach to the Tamils. The difference is that the Sinhalese are not regarded as a dispensable electoral asset.

7.2 Operation Liberation Commences

Probing and diversionary action for the operation to recapture the peninsula had begun by 18 May. Operation Liberation, as the operation came to be called, was planned and executed with commendable efficiency. Being a small country with limited resources, the manner of deployment of resources and timing was of crucial importance. To this end the capacity to gather and analyse intelligence had been strengthened with foreign, and particularly Israeli, help to an admirable degree. As far as this approach went, the government had in Mr. Athulathmudali, the National Security Minister, a competent man.

Following the advances made earlier in the year, the entire Jaffna peninsula was within easy shelling range. Several houses in places like Urumpirai had stacked up sand bags against their walls. Providing such services had given rise to lucrative employment. Constant punitive shelling and rising casualties had made life for civilians a terror.

On 18 May, a diversionary column of troops had marched Northwest from Elephant Pass. On seeing a log placed across the road most of the passengers in a Colombo bound bus of the Safety Bus Company, alighted. A few removed the log and went on. The bus received one burst of gunfire and came to a stop. Several of the passengers had been injured. It took a long time before the soldiers could be contacted and apprised of what had taken place. The bus proceeded to Elephant pass with deflated tires. It was when a North-bound doctor went back to Kilinochchi and contacted the army commander that an ambulance was provided and some of the injured were flown by helicopter for medical attention at Anuradhapura. Three of the injured died, including Mr. Jegathesan, an engineer attached to Lanka Cement Limited, who had been unsparing in his efforts at helping injured fellow passengers.

Around 20 May, diversionary actions were also launched in Navatkuli and Palaly. Colonel Radha, the L.T.T.E. commander for the Mannar district was killed in action at Navatkuli. Radha, a mild-looking ex-bank officer, was noted for his daring. The Ceylon army made a rapid advance towards Atchuvely through Iddaikkadu from Palaly. When the advance commenced, the L.T.T.E. is said to have had 15 men in the area. More men were then ferried in by vehicles and the advance was fiercely resisted. The Tamil daily Uthayan reported that about nine civilians were killed by the army during the action, including some members of a family who were sheltering in a trench. This thrust too turned out to be diversionary as the army withdrew on the 23rd. Throughout the whole operation, the Sri Lankan forces enjoyed unchallenged freedom of the air. India had seemingly decided that the L.T.T.E. should at best be able to do no more than an arduous holding operation. It did not possess anti-aircraft weapons.

One incident demonstrated a new, conscious, utilitarian outlook on the part of the Sri Lankan army. On 20 May, three soldiers had lost their way at Iddaikkadu and had run out of ammunition when they ran into an L.T.T.E. party. On their expressing their willingness to surrender, Lieutenant Kones of the L.T.T.E. went forward to accept their surrender. The four men who were in the open were spotted by a Sri Lankan helicopter, which promptly shelled them. All four died. Those in the helicopter could hardly have been mistaken about their

target or their own uniforms. The incident was corroborated in the situation report in the Weekend of 24 May. Here those killed were all claimed to have been members of the L.T.T.E.. The L.T.T.E. were never sitting ducks for helicopter gunners. Lt. Kones must have come into the open in the confidence that the helicopter would not fire at its own side. The authorities must have decided that they were no longer going to be encumbered or embarrassed by soldiers being held prisoners of war. Prisoners would mean distractive appeals by relatives appearing in the press. The National Security Ministry had had enough trouble with the relatives of the 11 prisoners already held. One father from Galle appealed to a Roman Catholic clergyman after several failed attempts at an interview with the National Security Minister. This new aspect of the dirty war was one the sentimentally minded Sinhalese would have found hard to accept. It was all part of the technocratic approach. To those in seats of power, what was after all the semi-educated son of a peasant from the Galle district to the great matters in hand?

Operation Liberation proper, commenced on 26 May with the transformation of the radio of the Tamil Eelam Communist Party (T.E.C.P.) into Radio Jaffna. The radio of the T.E.C.P. had mysteriously appeared on the air towards the end of 1986, with news bulletins in both English and Tamil. Until 26 May, when the same voice signed in as Radio Jaffna, it was hardly known that the broadcasters were none other than the Sri Lankan forces at Palaly. People generally listened because it gave a great deal of inside information on what was happening within and between militant groups. The accents were disguised and unplaceable. It may sometimes sound pro-L.T.T.E. or pro-E.P.R.L.F. and sometimes anti-L.T.T.E.. For the first time, it made public the impending marriages of Mahattaya and Kittu. There had been wild speculation as to the source and origin of the broadcasts. Whatever it was, it seemed a good lark. The announcer on Radio Jaffna would sometimes slip and use the old signature. On the morning of 26 May, Radio Jaffna meant business. People in the peninsula were asked to leave their homes and go to various temples and schools which were announced as places of refuge. Such an arrangement was no more than nominal, since the distances to such places were often impracticably large. Besides, the sum total of the accommodation provided would only have served a small fraction of Jaffna's population. People simply decided that if things got hot, they would move into the nearest church, temple or school.

The L.T.T.E. meted out harsh punishments to those who were allegedly informers. They probably would have been surprised at the amount of information the security forces gleaned by monitoring the L.T.T.E.'s radio communications and its public television network, the Niedharshanam. According to Weekend's situation report column, by listening in over a long period, code words had been broken and signatures had been identified with particular leaders. Spies too had certainly been around. Again a large number of civilians had made it a pastime to listen in on FM communications between hovering bomber pilots. Some had taping devices and FM aerials installed inside trenches for air-raid entertainment.

The opportune moment to commence the operation came when the security forces learnt from intelligence reports that the L.T.T.E. leader Prabhakaran was in Valvettithurai. The populated area of Vadamaratchi is in the form of clusters towards the Northern sea coast. A wide open space which extends from Thodamanaru lagoon geographically separates Vadamaratchi from the rest of peninsular Jaffna. Movement across this open space is relatively easy to monitor. Mr. Prabhakaran's presence together with this geographical factor gave military sense to an attempt on Vadamaratchi. The control of Vadamaratchi and the rest of the northern coastline would leave the remainder of the Jaffna peninsula exposed along a broad front, stretching the L.T.T.E.'s resources to impossible limits. Although Prabhakaran's

presence at Valvettithurai was then denied by the L.T.T.E., it was later admitted by L.T.T.E. men in a conversation with Colonel Wimalaratne of the Sri Lankan army. The conversation took place in Palaly shortly after the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987 and was reported in the Situation Report Column in the Weekend of 27 September, 87. The operation was executed by Colonel Wimalaratne and Brigadier Kobbekaduwa. One infers from this conversation that not only were the Sri Lankan forces aware of Prabhakaran's presence in Valvettithurai, but also had pretty good intelligence of his location. To the question why the Ceylon army failed to seal off Prabhakaran's escape, the Colonel replied that the army had lost some time in negotiating booby traps. Here is an extract from the report:

Kumarappa, one time L.T.T.E. "commander" for Batticaloa and now in the Tiger hierarchy and his colleagues last week talked over coffee to one of Sri Lanka's top military men in the anti-terrorist battle, Colonel Vijaya Wimalaratne at the I.P.K.F. headquarters in Palaly. The conversation, interestingly enough centred on some of the battles the two sides fought. A Tiger militant asked Colonel Wimalaratne who led one brigade through Vadamaratchi during Operation Liberation, why he did not overrun a sector in Valvettithurai where Tiger leader Prabhakaran and area leader Soosai were trapped. "I wish we knew that," replied Colonel Wimalaratne, "When troops began surrounding Valvettithurai, a section of soldiers, who encountered booby traps, delayed to reach their areas to seal off that spot. That is where the Tiger leader slipped out from."

Independent sources have said that both houses belonging to a businessman in Valvettithurai who had entertained Prabhakaran were bombed a short time after the latter had left. An unspecified number of the L.T.T.E. cadre reportedly lost their lives in the gruelling process of getting Prabhakaran to safety by moving Eastwards and then through Mulliveli, Southwards. Preoccupation with this had alone created considerable disarray in L.T.T.E. ranks.

The army moved out of Thondamanaru on the 26th. This was accompanied by heavy aerial bombing and shelling, particularly in Valvettithurai. There was also military activity, bombing and shelling near the Jaffna Fort. The Government later claimed that this was diversionary. By the 28th Udupiddy and Valvettithurai had been taken. This was the difficult part, involving several landmine barriers. After this the L.T.T.E. resistance petered out and Vadamaratchi was taken by 1 June. One group of soldiers were heli-dropped at Mulli. One column took Nelliady and advanced northwards to Pt. Pedro. Another group of soldiers advanced eastwards towards Pt. Pedro by running in three lines. The L.T.T.E. was not given the time to regroup or to put up fresh land mine barriers. The L.T.T.E. made a quick withdrawal abandoning its vehicles and a large quantity of arms. About 8000 troops from the Gemunu Watch and Gajaba Regiments were involved in the recapture of Vadamaratchi. The L.T.T.E. was taken by surprise by what had happened. The Ceylon army had over the past three years been motivated and trained to make a steady disciplined advance under fire. It was not the so-called rabble army of 1983.

Surprise and initiative continued to be on the side of the Sri Lankan army. It had the northern coast under its control from K.K.S. eastwards. It now moved Westwards along the coast and advanced Southwards towards Tellipallai meeting with next to no resistance. Atchuvvely was again taken after a barrage of shelling. The B.B.C.'s Mark Tully quoted the army command at Palaly as having hopes of taking Jaffna within the next 48 hours. The L.T.T.E. was in a bad way. Though rhetoric abounded, the fleeing southwards into Sri Lankan held territory or to India of even the L.T.T.E.'s most ardent supporters was a reflection of current expectations. Then came the well publicised convoy of fishing vessels from India with relief supplies on the 3rd June, their being refused entry and then the Indian air drop of 25 tons of relief supplies on Jaffna the following day. This marked the end of the Sri Lankan offensive. The L.T.T.E. knew that its image had taken a beating. The initiative was now firmly lodged across the Palk Straits. Prabhakaran issued a statement welcoming what was termed India's humanitarian concern. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, whose government was reeling from extensive press exposure, particularly by the Indian Express, of corruption in high places and payment of kickbacks in arms deals (estimated at ,20,000,000 from Bofors of

Sweden and ,15,000,000 from the West German submarine deal), now became the instant hero of the Tamils of Ceylon.

7.3 Some aspects of Operation Liberation

The operation was based on a utilitarian framework which regarded the Tamils as an expendable mass. The problem was to pacify the Tamil areas in a manner that could be sold to international opinion. Within this framework the technical planning and execution were creditable in military terms. But if one regarded Tamils as equal citizens of this country, or even as human beings whose lives and feelings should be respected, and who should be encouraged to reassert their lost dignity, then the operation had several objectionable features. There was much shelling into civilian areas which had no actual conflict. A subsequent radio announcement asked people to take refuge in places of worship and in schools, which modified an earlier announcement designating a limited number of such places. Three places of worship which functioned as refugee centres were shelled. One shell falling on Mariamman Temple, Alvai, claimed over 35 lives. People discovered sheltering in trenches were summarily shot, as were several curfew breakers even when they were evidently harmless. The soldiers seem to have been told that those building trenches to protect themselves from air raids and shelling must be L.T.T.E. supporters. In certain areas designated pro-L.T.T.E., such as Vathiri and Kottawattai, several young men were murdered without questions being asked; sometimes after they were taken away from their parents with a pledge to release them after questioning. At Kamparmalai soldiers went on a rampage every time they saw posters commemorating dead militants. There was widespread looting by troops, especially of jewellery. Such incidents were repeated in Pt. Pedro where the army surrounded Puttalai Pillayar Kovil, a designated refugee camp on 1 June, and took away several young men from their parents on suspicion.

An engineering student was killed in front of his mother and other refugees simply because he had a Valvettithurai identity card. About five were shot and thrown into a well as they were being marched from the temple towards waiting trucks. Mr. Ragutheswaran, an Assistant Lecturer in Mathematics, and some others who were detained at the Murugan temple refugee camp Nelliady, were briefly interviewed at Nelliady junction by Brigadier Kobbekaduwa on 31 May. They were then marched off in handcuffs towards Nelliady Central College. On the way four of them were asked to run and were fired at. Three died. Mr. Ragutheswaran was left for dead and later escaped with a hand injury. Worse than the ordinary aerial bombing was the use of so-called barrel bombs which were pushed out of Avro transports. These were crude devices which could not be aimed at specific targets, and consisted of a barrel of fuel padded with a rubber like inflammable substance. On hitting the ground the fuel would explode. The molten padding would fly in all directions and stick to the skin of a victim and burn itself out. A large number of these were dropped on Valvettithurai (48 according to one count). Barrel bombs were also dropped at random in several other parts of the peninsula. One falling on Sivan Kovil on K.K.S. Road, Jaffna town claimed 17 victims. This seemed a sadistic extra without military purpose.

As far as the people in Vadamaratchi were concerned, there was much material damage in and around Valvettithurai. But in terms of loss of life the operation had been less severe than expected. As the bombing and shelling commenced in and around Valvettithurai, most of the able bodied persons had gone eastwards and many of them went as refugees to Thenmaratchi. The fact that the L.T.T.E. had withdrawn after about the third day and had no opportunity or desire to take up new permanent positions did help to reduce civilian losses as the army moved towards Pt. Pedro. There was some grudging admiration for the Sri Lankan army. Many were scathing about the Tigers. "They left us in the lurch and ran away without even telling us they were going," they said. Others such as Mr. Tharmar from Kamparmalai took a more charitable view: "I will not say that the boys did not try hard. Once the land mine barrier was breached, and the army was out of Thondamanaru, there was nothing but to run for it. The boys could not face shells with AK 47's. They asked us to run and we too ran. The army kept coming like devils. If some fell, the others did not seem to notice. We, nor the boys had expected that." Vadamaratchi had been regarded an L.T.T.E. stronghold as it was the home of several of its leaders including Prabhakaran. To this day, the L.T.T.E. has not regained in Vadamaratchi the credibility it then lost. Many people were so tired and war

weary that they were prepared to come to terms with the occupation by the Sri Lankan army. "The Sinhalese are quick tempered when they are provoked. When they cool down they are all right," they would say. People were hoping against hope that the L.T.T.E. would keep away from Vadamaratchi. When the Tigers reappeared about two weeks later and attempted to lay landmines, the army was usually given a tip. The most common feeling amongst people was that they had had enough and needed a rest.

A notable incident related by a senior doctor at Point Pedro hospital was to have several parallels in the South of the peninsula as the Indian forces launched an offensive against the L.T.T.E. in October that same year. On 30 May, about 2500 refugees were gathered at Pt. Pedro hospital at Manthikai as the Ceylon army was poised to advance from Nelliady. A group of leading citizens from amongst those present appealed to the doctors to approach the L.T.T.E., explain to them the plight of the people and request them not to resist the army from within half a mile of the hospital. The doctor said: "These persons were prominent supporters of the L.T.T.E.. This brings us to an unresolved moral dilemma facing the community. When landmines went off in far away Trincomalee and Batticaloa killing government troops, we used to applaud. We ignored what happened to innocent people around afterwards. When the landmines are closer to home, the very people normally given to applause think differently. In the event, the L.T.T.E. decided on its own to withdraw without offering resistance. Non-violence is the best policy for our community." There were several instances during the Indian offensive when refugees were not so fortunate.

7.4 Sinhalese and Tamils during Operation Liberation

We put down on record, some curious instances during Operation Liberation, when Sinhalese and Tamils behaved, with their foibles perhaps, but simply as human beings. There was no communal hatred or malice. The old Sinhalese habit of making jokes at their own expense was not entirely dead. During all the time when the killing was going on, several government departments attempted to carry out their functions without regarding the Tamils as enemies. A Sinhalese railway station master at Anuradhapura is known to have gone beyond the call of duty to ensure that Jaffna Hospital had its oxygen supplies at a time when transport had been dislocated. No responsible official of the health services, the electricity board, or the K.K.S. cement works in Jaffna, had complained that their departments acted unfairly by them. The managements of the two cement works took unprecedented steps to ensure that even their casual employees were paid during a prolonged closure lasting four months. This is far from absolving the Sri Lankan government of abandoning its Tamil subjects to the tender mercies of the military, the S.T.F. and the home guards.

On 20 May, a doctor travelling in an ambulance reached the Elephant Pass check point. The Ceylonese soldiers then told him that he may not proceed. The doctor pleaded and asked: "Why can I not proceed?" At this point shells fired by the L.T.T.E. started falling nearby. The soldiers promptly ran for cover. The doctor who was suddenly left alone in the middle of the road, went and stood at the back of the ambulance. At length when things had quietened down, the soldiers re-emerged. They pointed in the direction from which the firing came and exclaimed: "Mahattaya, mahattaya (Sir, Sir), look! See what those boys are doing! That is why you cannot go."

When Operation Liberation commenced on 26 May, soldiers walked into the switch room of the C.E.B. (Ceylon Electricity Board) at Anuradhapura and ordered the power to Jaffna to be switched off. When the C.E.B. employees in the switchroom at Chunnakam (Jaffna) discovered the loss of supply, they got through to Anuradhapura by means of the carrier telephone. The Sinhalese C.E.B. employees at Anuradhapura merely confirmed that the line was switched off and put the phone down. The army remained in the Anuradhapura switchroom and left at 6:00 in the evening after ordering the Jaffna line to be switched on. This routine was to be followed for the remaining days of the operation. After the army had left, the C.E.B. personnel at Anuradhapura telephoned their colleagues in Jaffna and told

them: "Sorry we cut you off that time. The army was here, so we could not speak. If the line is switched off again you may assume that it is on the army's orders. Do not 'phone us when the line is switched off. But call us after it is all over. Then we will tell you everything that happened." It is remarkable that ordinary human contact remained during those days and that the army did not want to black out Jaffna totally.

On 28 May, at the height of Operation Liberation, a group of weary travellers arrived at Elephant Pass in a van and requested the army for permission to proceed. This was refused. The travellers then asked when they could go. A soldier replied: "A party of our boys have gone down the road. They will get a beating and come back. Then you can go." The travellers later arrived in Jaffna through Puneryn. The army at Puneryn used to check travellers, but never closed the route.

On 4 June, a group of travellers to Jaffna were being checked at Omanthai. A lorry carrying Elephant House aerated waters was also parked at the check-point. A Sinhalese soldier bought several bottles of aerated water and started offering them to the Tamil passengers. He said: "Do not worry, I get paid plenty. My parents were settled as farmers in Omanthai and I was born here. This is my hometown and so it is my duty to do the honours in welcoming people here."

The closure of the two cement plants at K.K.S .following the L.T.T.E.'s attack on 22 April, 1987 and the reprisal killing by the army of factory personnel was described earlier. A few weeks later on the initiative of Lanka Cement Ltd.'s General Manager, Mr. Jayamanne, to reopen the plants, the Harbour Engineer went with a maintenance crew to repair the damage. They did not like the manner in which the Sri Lankan soldiers were staring at them. Later the engineer asked the Commander of the K.K.S. Harbourview camp whether it was really safe for them to work there. The Commander replied: "We are both servants in this game. Our lives do not really matter. My advice to you is to resign and leave this country." Plans to reopen the plants were then abandoned.

Chapter 8

JUNE - JULY: INDIA ENTERS

8.1 The Airdrop and the L.T.T.E.'s Dilemma

With the Indian airdrop of relief supplies on 4 June, the Sri Lankan army was forced to call off its offensive in Jaffna after scenting victory. The L.T.T.E. had been administered an unpleasant shock and was reeling. India had demonstrated to the Tamils that it was ultimately India on whom the Tamils must depend. India now wanted a presence in Jaffna and there was much talk between Colombo and Delhi. It was agreed that Indian relief supplies would be distributed to the people of Jaffna, jointly by a team of Indian and Ceylonese Red Cross personnel. India underlined the allegedly humanitarian nature of its mission. During Operation Liberation and earlier All India Radio had given publicity to the L.T.T.E.'s version of civilian casualties. The figure went up to 2000 dead, while later estimates of the figure were between 400 and 700. India had also alleged carpet bombing of Vadamaratchi. The Sri Lankan government tried to make much of this. When foreign journalists were flown later in by the government, they could see few signs of carpet bombing. All this was to irk the Tamil people later when All India Radio would switch from the exaggerations of May (with which the Tamils were happy) to obvious untruths in the wake of India's own offensive in Jaffna later in October. One consequence of India's vocal criticism of the Sri Lankan government's use of air power, was that India was slow to admit its use of air power during its offensive in October.

During 1987, the Sri Lankan use of air power had a deliberate vindictive purpose. Civilians were expected to get killed. Its main effect was to keep the L.T.T.E. shifting houses. Still most of the time, as FM conversations between airmen showed, its use was usually restrained. The nature of the target was generally verified before action was taken. By restraint, one means that those lucky enough not to live within 100 yards of an L.T.T.E. camp could consider themselves reasonably safe during air raids. This did not apply to shelling. The element of discrimination was even more vitiated when fertile minds in the national security ministry introduced the Avro-dropped barrel bomb.

The L.T.T.E. was now facing a crisis of prestige, as India was set to become top dog. After casting about for an issue on which to build up support, it picked on G.C.E. A. Level examinations. Its student wing, the S.A.L.T. wanted a boycott of A.Level examinations in July for the reason that Vadamaratchi was in a bad way, with its education disrupted, so that it was considered wrong for other Tamils to do their examinations unless a postponement was granted. The S.A.L.T. leaders went about schools canvassing the boycott. The response from boys' schools was of a noticeably low order in comparison with that from girls' schools. Young men with a military bearing led by Major Murali of the L.T.T.E. canvassing in schools brought about a flutter of response in the girls' schools. Middle class girls were quite prominent in the boycott movement.

But the boycott move was unpopular with the parents and a silent majority of the affected students. Many influential persons with children who were A.Level candidates busily ran around canvassing opinion and getting through to key L.T.T.E. leaders. Pressure was

brought about even from within the ranks of prominent L.T.T.E. supporters. The L.T.T.E. thought it wise to backtrack.

The boycott was ceremonially called off. The L.T.T.E. was praised for its show of wisdom. Tamils from devastated areas outside Jaffna wondered why there was no call to boycott when they had been affected. Many girls had become enamoured of the L.T.T.E.. This remained true. The role of girls in the L.T.T.E. had by now become significant. Several were to die in action against the I.P.K.F. in October, including at least one girl from Chundikuli Girls' College.

One often finds amongst intelligent middle class girls from English speaking homes, a reckless emotional drive to serve a cause like that of the L.T.T.E.'s. Being very articulate speakers, they bring in many village girls who are anxious to imitate them. But the middle class girls soon get frustrated by fascist tendencies in the organisation. Many of them develop problems of conscience and are unable to conform their independence and initiative to the tastes of the organisation. Once the honeymoon is over, many of these girls wish to leave. The parents quickly get into the act and pack off the girl to stay with an aunt in Colombo so as to get over the trauma. An S.O.S. would then be sent to a relative abroad to get her out. The girl would then continue with her studies abroad and get over the past. But for the village girls who get into the organisation under the influence of their middle class peers, things work out tragically. They too may want to leave the organisation for very much the same reasons. But they have nowhere to go. Their parents may not have the means to help them. For them it requires a great deal of courage.

On 25 June, the Indian ship Srivastava, bringing relief supplies docked at K.K.S.. Crowds lined the route taken by the Indian embassy officials Mr. Puri and Captain Gupta together with the Indian Red Cross team, on their way to Jaffna. This resembled something of a triumphal march. The L.T.T.E.'s position was a difficult one as the Indians aimed directly for the people's affections. It tried to give the event a different colour, by trying to behave as though it was the power in charge and was welcoming Indian efforts as helping the L.T.T.E. to achieve its aims. It urged the crowd to shout amongst other slogans, a request for arms. But the real feelings of the crowd came out as people again and again broke down in front of the Indian officials, saying simply, "India save us."

On 5 July, the L.T.T.E. launched a suicide attack against the Sri-Lankan army camp at Nelliady Central College. The Sri Lankan army had reduced its strength in Vadamaratchi from 8000 to 3000 men. No one was expecting a major outbreak of violence. The government had agreed to a ceasefire to facilitate the distribution of Indian relief supplies. The L.T.T.E. was also understood to be a party to this. But as in the past both sides could find excuses for not honouring ceasefires. The Sri Lankan S.T.F. action in Batticaloa was as good as any. Earlier that day, armed L.T.T.E. men were spotted at Nelliady and something had been expected. The entrance to Nelliady Central College was located in a narrow road connecting Nelliady town with Vathiri junction. Civilians were living just opposite the school and the army encouraged the use of the road as a public relations exercise. Miller, a member of the L.T.T.E.'s new black Tigers drove a van packed with explosives through the school gates into the front building. The government claimed that 20 of its soldiers died. Publicising its action through notice boards as a "great achievement," the L.T.T.E. claimed 100 soldiers killed. Other sources said that the government figure was much nearer the truth. The army had been expecting something of this nature, and what took place was not a major setback. Troops took up positions and the Nelliady camp held out. What was surprising was the manner in which

the army reacted. The government had been keen to revive confidence in the people and make Vadamaratchi a success. An elaborate public relations exercise was going on. All this was shattered as the army let loose with a barrage of cannon fire. Perhaps up to 20 civilians died in the shelling. Several others were shot as they fled. In one incident at Navindil, a group of 12 elderly persons were moving towards Udupidy. When a round of shelling commenced they took shelter in the porch of a house, which the owners had apparently fled. A group of soldiers who arrived peeped through the window and observed that cooking had been going on for a large party. The 12 persons were accused of feeding the L.T.T.E.. Despite their denials, they were shot and pushed into the trench by soldiers of the 4th Division of the Gajaba Regiment. Only the wife of a Singer company agent escaped by feigning death. In another incident a shell falling on the Karaveddy Roman Catholic Church killed 5 refugees. People were not taking chances this time. An estimated 90% of the population fled Southwards as refugees. A few remained close to the towns of Pt. Pedro, Udupidy and Valvettithurai. Vadamaratchi was described as a place for goats and stray dogs. The lack of clear policy and army discipline demonstrated to India's advantage the Sri Lankan government's limitations in making headway with solving the problem.

With many people, the L.T.T.E. had redeemed its reputation after running away in the face of Operation Liberation. This again pointed to the fickleness of public opinion in Jaffna. In the rest of Jaffna things went on as if nothing had happened. Refugee woes in newspapers were part of the fare. To the L.T.T.E. it was a desultory achievement which once again underlined its dependence on civilian cover. Once the civilians fled, the L.T.T.E. found it difficult to stay on in Vadamaratchi. The L.T.T.E. withdrew from Vadamaratchi on 13 July. On the same day a group of the notorious Black Shirts, a unit of the Sri Lankan Army trained in Pakistan, moved from Polikandy towards Navindil looking into houses and killing the aged who were left behind. According to an engineer from that area, at least 20 persons, nearly all above 70, were shot dead.

It may be assumed that India had no foreknowledge of the L.T.T.E.'s attack on the night of 5th July. Indian officials were critical. Members of the Indian Red Cross team were amongst those trapped in Vadamaratchi. Reports at that time spoke of a heated argument within the L.T.T.E. over whether its members in Vadamaratchi should be ordered to stay or be withdrawn. With hardly any civilians left, it had become difficult to remain there. If the event worked to the advantage of India, it was an unintended consequence of the L.T.T.E.'s action, and the Sri Lankan army's ineptness in dealing with civilians.

8.2 The Accord, Colonisation and

Human Rights

The process which began with the Indian airdrop on 4 June resulted in the Indo-Sri Lanka accord of 29th July. The ideas contained in the deal envisaged for the Tamils were similar to those put forward by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's special envoy G. Parthasarathy. The Northern and Eastern Provinces were to be linked for a year with the permanency of the link to be decided by a referendum in the East a year later. In the Eastern Province, the population was divided into Tamils 42%, Muslims (also Tamil speaking) 34% and Sinhalese 24%. The last group had come in mainly through colonisation over the last 40 years. According to a senior official who worked for the first such scheme, the Gal Oya project, in the 1940's, when the houses in the scheme were ready for occupation the first offer was made to people in the locality. The official had gone about contacting District Revenue Officers (or D.R.O.s) in and around Batticaloa calling for volunteers. The response from the Tamils had been poor. Offers were then made elsewhere and large

numbers of Sinhalese came from areas such as Kegalle. Within 18 years they started paying income tax. At this point, the government of Ceylon could not be blamed. But this set a pattern. Alarm bells started ringing when politics acquired an increasingly chauvinistic note. Some of the worst violence against Tamils, during the 1958 race riots, came from Sinhalese in the colonisation schemes at Gal Oya and Padaviya. In the meantime movements to defend the Tamil homeland had come into existence. Prominent amongst the early leaders was the late Prof. C. Suntheralingam, former Mathematics teacher at the Ceylon University, ex-Minister and M.P. for the frontier electorate of Vavuniya. Together with the ideology that Ceylon was for the majority Sinhalese had also arisen crusaders amongst leading Sinhalese wanting to populate Tamil areas with Sinhalese. Government policy too naturally veered in this direction. Attempts to settle the matter through the Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam pact of 1957 and the Dudley Senanayake - Chelvanayakam pact of 1965 failed because of a lack of decision amongst the two Prime Ministers resulting from pressure invoking the Sinhalese-Buddhist ideology.

The Buddhist clergy propagated the ideology that Ceylon was a land sacred to the Buddha and the chosen repository of his teachings. The chosen guardians were of course the Sinhalese people. Professor Leslie Goonewardene (in "*Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka*," Social Scientists Association, 1979) argues that the term Sinhala in the ancient chronicle Mahavamsa, actually referred to a particular dynasty that was then favoured by the Buddhist clergy. The priestly chroniclers of the 4th century A.D. presented a version of history that attempted to justify through reference to antiquity, a symbiotic relationship between themselves and a particular dynasty. Over the coming centuries of migration from India, assimilation, comings, goings, and transformation of both language and religion; the group of persons referred to as Sinhala underwent changes according to the political ends to which it was put to use. These ends were usually determined by the need to preserve and advance the interests represented by the Buddhist Sangha. Ironically, the allegedly chosen and exclusive group represented today by the term Sinhala is made up to the extent of 40% by caste groups (Karawe, Durawe, Navandanno, and Salagama) who trace their origins in South India to about 450 - 800 years back. Although current popular Buddhism has assimilated and legitimised the religious practices and cults of waves of migrants, the Sinhalese-Buddhist combination today represents something aggressive and unpleasant. It seeks to drive minorities to the wall. It was natural that the Buddhist clergy should form the vanguard in the cause of populating Tamil areas with Sinhalese. Such activities had as little to do with Buddhism as the Crusades with Christianity.

By the early 1970's the Sinhalese squatter townships of Sirimapura, Abhayapura, Mihindapura, and Pattispura had come into existence in Trincomalee. These became a major irritant to the Tamils during the race riots of 1977 and during and after July 1983. From 1977 government ministries used their facilities to provide employment for Sinhalese in Trincomalee. Prominent amongst such ministers were Cyril Mathew (Scientific Affairs and Industries) and Gamini Dissanayake (Lands, Irrigation and Power). From 1983, colonisation acquired a more terrifying aspect. Many shops in Trincomalee town were taken over after the Tamil owners had been driven out. The same thing was being done to houses and lands. The law and order machinery for redress was spiked as far as the Tamils went. From 1985, the army was used in large scale evictions of Tamils. Scenes of unbelievable devastation are still evident as one drives into Trincomalee through Pankulam, Anuradhapura junction and Uppuveli. Things were not helped when Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, the National Security Minister, announced in Parliament in December 1984 that the government was hoping, in a move towards finding a solution to the ethnic problem, to settle a large number of Sinhalese in the Tamil areas. Many of the prospective settlers were to be drawn from fishermen and ex-convicts. To this period may be traced the first attacks on Sinhalese settlers by Tamil militants.

Tamil - Muslim relations in the Batticaloa district had been fairly good. The evidence of many Western journalists describes how the government fomented trouble between Tamils and Muslims in Batticaloa as a measure to contain the Tamil insurgency.

The foregoing digression briefly describes how complex and anarchic the problems of the East had become. The Tamils felt cheated. There were now many Sinhalese who regarded the East as their home. The Muslims were confused and in a quandary. The actions of the government had made it easier for the Tamils, in their minds, to condone attacks on the Sinhalese civilian population which was regarded as an ultra-military arm of government policy. The bitter experience through which some of the Tamil militant leaders were born has been alluded to earlier. The East had changed qualitatively from the time of Parthasarathy's visits in 1983.

The East was the weak link in the Accord of July 1987. On the surface, the position on the North-East linkage seemed a compromise between Tamil and Sinhalese positions, aimed at providing the L.T.T.E. with a face saving formula to accept the Accord. Though perhaps well meaning, the Indian negotiators do not seem to have paid much attention to the complexities of the East. Many leading Tamils would have preferred the North and East to have separate provincial councils. They felt that the Tamils, Sinhalese, and the Muslims of the East had to live with each other and left to themselves, would find the most rational basis on which to co-exist. The Muslims of the East had already expressed a desire to go a separate way from the Muslims of the Western seaboard. They recognised that they had different interests. One senior Tamil civil servant pointed out that for reasons of economic self-interest at least, the Sinhalese in the East will have a vested interest in stopping further Sinhalese colonisation. But if the Tamils of the North, particularly from Jaffna, were to have a commanding voice in the East, the Eastern Tamils may tend to gang up with them against the Muslims, who in turn would tend to gang up with the Sinhalese against the Tamils. The resulting instability may then provide the centre with room to interfere.

Substantive issues such as colonisation were left as a matter for further talks. There was also a referendum hanging over the East which would decide the fate of the linkage in a year's time. If all parties were to act cynically in terms of their perceived interests, the government would try to push Sinhalese colonisation in the East surreptitiously using its machinery and would try to sour relations between Muslims and Tamils; and the Tamil militants would try to create conditions which would pave the way for a mass exodus of Sinhalese. To some extent all these happened. The Accord provided for the presence in the North and East of an Indian Peace Keeping Force (I.P.K.F.) to ensure its implementation. Some role for such a force was necessary.

There were two key factors that placed the Accord on a weak footing. First, it did not provide for a mechanism to correct human rights violations. Thus it also ignored the primacy of reaching a democratic consensus. In time, the Accord tended to look more and more like a strait-jacket imposed on the people of the island. In the months that followed the Accord, the Indian Army in the Tamil areas and the Sri Lankan forces in the South, would be led to seeking political solutions through military means that involved gross violations of human rights, making a political solution even more unattainable. (See sections 8, 9 and 10.4 of Volume 2).

The second factor that weakened the Accord, is related to the first. It is the question of whether President Jayewardene enjoyed the legitimacy to negotiate with India on such an

important matter. In answering this, one is left with little doubt, if one looks at the growing repression over the past ten years, and the methods used to perpetuate power, such as regular constitutional changes and the 1982 referendum.

8.3 The end of a Long Road to Nowhere

As for the Sinhalese people, it finally began to dawn on them that they had been on a long road to nowhere. With their doubts gave way to euphoria with the successful launching of Operation Liberation. This reached a peak when the fishing vessels carrying the Indian Red Cross meekly turned back. Sabre rattling statements by senior politicians and newspaper columnists were the order of the day. With the Indian airdrop of relief supplies, euphoria gave way to indignation, followed by a long hangover during which doubts re-emerged. It was perhaps easier for a Sinhalese living outside Ceylon to see the unreality of the government's approach in the light of how dangerously out of tune they were with the rest of the world. In contrast the Tamils generally felt that it was a great thing to gain international sympathy by hook or by crook, without themselves doing anything positive in the meantime.

We quote below an extract from an article which appeared in the Weekend of 19 July 1987 giving some reflections on the 4th anniversary of the 1983 race riots. The article "Still at square one four years after?" by Kumudini Hettiaratchchi is made all the more remarkable by its having appeared in the Weekend:

Mea culpas during the last four years have been of no avail. What positive action has been taken to redeem this country's image to what it was before the debacle? The Sri Lankans had been thought of as a nation of peaceful and tolerant people comprising a multiracial and multi-religious community. The recent developments, not only in the regional scene but also in the international sphere regarding the ethnic crisis, create serious doubts as to whether we have been successful in retrieving our lost image.

What does the world think of Sri Lanka today? Has the government campaign to propagate the truth of the real position been a success? Have we been able to impress the world that in the stand taken by the majority community in the country we have held up the ideal that in the relationships between the various communities, particularly the Tamils, the virtue of justice and not that of charity should be the foundation and the norm?

"Recently, I had the opportunity of meeting and discussing our ethnic problem with a number of persons in the United Kingdom. Those who made observations belonged to different nationalities. The general opinion was vacillating between a military solution and a political settlement. On several occasions I was asked whether Sri Lanka was interested in settling the ethnic conflict once and for all.

"In fact there is a very serious misconception among some of the people there that we are thinking of ourselves as a chosen people. It was tragic that some experienced and senior journalists there too had formed the impression that the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka would never be settled because of diehard attitudes. It is a tragedy that even though the world community was initially shocked by the Pettah bomb blast, which killed over 100 innocent persons and injured several hundred others, the inexcusable slaying of 30 Buddhist monks and the brutal murders of numbers of harmless villagers in Arantalawa and other areas in the North and the East, every country in the world had reiterated that the Sri Lanka should go in only for a political solution to the ethnic problem.

"In the present perspective Operation Liberation was regarded by them as an 'ill-advised move.' Instead of helping the country regain some of its lost reputation for loving peaceful

methods of settling disputes, it seemed to have created the impression that Sri Lanka was only paying lip service to a 'political solution.'

"The offensive, it appears, had pushed this country further into the abyss of isolation among the comity of nations. Several journalists and others in the United Kingdom were generally "cold" towards even the violation of Sri Lanka's airspace by India dropping food aid from in planes escorted by Mirage Fighters. The "mercy mission" violation of Sri Lankan territorial integrity by India was not condemned as it should have been by the West. It was only mildly deplored as it were by the European Parliament. A family that I knew in Oxford expressed horror at what they had seen on a programme on British television three weeks previously. "How could the Sinhalese be so brutal?," the mother-in-law asked me. The man of the house was adamant that there had been "firebombings" in the North. "What of the children shown with severe burns?" he asked. "Who is responsible for ordering Vietnam tactics in your country?" he asked me in the presence of several journalists from a number of countries, he had invited for supper.

"A journalist listening in on our conversation laughingly quoted, "Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile" about Sri Lanka. In Britain it was also difficult to explain the "arbitrary arrests" and the alleged "disappearances" of some of those arrested.

When one compares the protest from the international community in the case of Afghanistan, Grenada and earlier Kampuchea, not to mention the Nicaraguan crisis, with our own ethnic debacle, one comes to the inescapable conclusion that there had to be serious rethinking on the absolute necessity for an early settlement.

But the most important and essential ingredient for peace, is honesty and sincerity."

Chapter 9

POST ACCORD: THE INDIAN SUMMER

9.1 The arrival of the I.P.K.F.

The response to the Accord from the Tamils of Ceylon was one of relief and jubilation. In Batticaloa and Trincomalee where government oppression had been the most far-reaching, this jubilation found public expression. In Batticaloa where the S.T.F. once had a license to kill, the STF watched sullenly while the people celebrated. Sensing an explosive situation, some community leaders telephoned the Indian Embassy and asked them to send in the I.P.K.F. early.

Some days before the signing of the Accord, the L.T.T.E. had talks with Mr. Puri of the Indian Embassy in Jaffna. The L.T.T.E. then issued a statement that India had agreed to recognise the L.T.T.E. as the sole legitimate representatives of the Tamil people. On 24 July Prabhakaran left Jaffna for Delhi by Indian air force helicopter. In New Delhi he was to meet with Rajiv Gandhi and have talks with Indian officials. Apparently these did not go happily. It was clear that agreement on the Accord had been reached between Delhi and Colombo. Some details were leaked to the Sunday papers in Colombo which published them on 26 July. It was also said that the Accord was going to be signed in the next few days and that New Delhi was confident of securing the L.T.T.E.'s compliance. The government made important concessions to India, especially concerning the non-use of Trincomalee harbour by parties hostile to India. The government had failed in its goals, even false ones, which it set before the Sinhalese people. Its main gains from the Accord were that a sharp drop in the defence budget would provide funds for development projects and for salary increases to public servants, and hopefully put an end to the bloodletting and instability resulting from the war. It had to sell this to the Sinhalese with judicious packaging. The riots which broke out in Colombo with the signing of the Accord indicated that the task would not be easy. The ceremonial aspect was marked by a Sinhalese sailor in the guard of honour swinging the butt of his gun at the Indian Prime Minister, who narrowly escaped serious injury. The government's salesmanship was not without effect. A Colombo based journalist related the story of how a taxi driver let loose at the President with expletives when the Accord was signed. One week later his tone was different. He had said: "Our President is a wise man. He has shrewdly left it to the Indians to handle the Kottiyas (Tigers)." On the other hand, the Sinhalese extremist group, the J.V.P., has been becoming increasingly deadly since the Accord. At the time the Accord was signed, the MP for Tangalle was killed. The J.V.P. has since then followed it up with attacks on

leading government personalities, including an attack on the U.N.P. parliamentary group inside the parliamentary complex on 8 August and the murder of the U.N.P. chairman Harsha Abhayawardene on 23 December, 1987. The J.V.P. thrived on soil watered by the government's racist propaganda. Its elimination has now called forth the deployment in Sinhalese territory of the same mental and military apparatus once used against Tamils.

The L.T.T.E. was now downcast. Little had been heard from New Delhi, from their leader Prabhakaran. From 30 July, Indian forces had been flown into Palaly, while Sri Lankan forces were flown South for riot control duties. The L.T.T.E.'s first task was to secure the return of Prabhakaran. To this end crowds were made to sit down and block the roads leading out of Palaly. The crowds appeared to be more curious than angry. For two days the Indian army came out, stood before the crowds, made polite conversation and got back to base. The Accord envisaged a surrender of arms within 72 hours. The L.T.T.E. maintained that it could not take a decision without its leader. The Indians then made an announcement that Prabhakaran would be flown back on 2 August and deposited at Suthumalai from where he had earlier been flown to India. From Palaly to Suthumalai, Prabhakaran was escorted by Indian troops. The L.T.T.E. imposed a curfew for the first time in places straddling the envisaged route. People watching from their houses were strongly discouraged, with little effect, from waving at Indian troops. The L.T.T.E. announced a public meeting at which Mr. Prabhakaran would announce the movement's decision on the surrender of arms. The meeting was held at Suthumalai on 4 August. Tens of thousands attended, including Indian military officials, embassy attaches and local and foreign journalists. Mr. Prabhakaran's speech was commended as having been masterly delivered. He played the role of a chieftain, who had struggled for his people and had been ill-used by India who purported to be a friend. He was now bowing to fate and yet kept his independence and self respect. It was a moving performance, and yet there were discordant notes. The main anxiety for the people was now that the L.T.T.E. should surrender its arms and secure the peace -- peace which had so often turned out to be an elusive phantom. The speech was heading for a tragic climax when Prabhakaran said that their armaments had been used in defence of the people of Tamil Eelam and in defence of their rights. Now, he said, they were parting with these same arms and had decided under pressure to surrender them. A crowd which was in tune with him would have wept aloud. But instead, they applauded. The television broadcast showed a momentary spasm of annoyance passing over Prabhakaran's face. This was a continuation of the communication gap between the L.T.T.E. and the people, which was alluded to in describing the events of 1 May.

At the same meeting, the L.T.T.E.'s Trincomalee leader, Mr. Pulendran expressed his unhappiness about surrendering their arms in the context of the unresolved problems of Trincomalee. In surrendering the L.T.T.E.'s arms Prabhakaran had commended the Tamils to India's care and had also declined to accept the Chief Ministership in the interim administration.

With the L.T.T.E.'s decision to surrender arms, it was thought that the peace was here to stay. There was relief all round. It may be mentioned that this period saw the rise of Yogi, the brother of the late Mr. Kugan, the previous second-in-command, to the position of Chief of Propaganda. Subsequently a quantity of arms was ceremonially surrendered by Yogi to the Sri Lankan army at Palaly under I.P.K.F. supervision. Such ceremonies took place throughout the North and East. The arms surrenders by the L.T.T.E., E.R.O.S., E.P.R.L.F., E.N.D.L.F., P.L.O.T.E., and T.E.L.O. were telecast for the benefit of the Sinhalese. The latter three militant groups were exiled in India. The E.N.D.L.F. (Eelam National Democratic Liberation

Front, popularly known as Three Star) was made up of a breakaway group of the P.L.O.T.E. under Rajan and a breakaway group of the T.E.L.O.. Under the Accord, it was envisaged that all militant groups would be brought to Ceylon, surrender their arms and take part in democratic politics.

The rest of the story is about how the failings of all parties to the conflict, the Sri Lankan and Indian governments, the militant groups and the Tamil people, wove themselves into an explosive fabric which ignited in October 1987.

Each party could pick facts selectively to fuel righteous indignation. Each party could maintain with some justice that it had acted rightly whilst others had ill-used and wounded it. Charity, patience and a sense of give and take were missing. The Accord envisaged a surrender of arms by militants within 72 hours. Even a week after that, arms were still trickling in. President Jayewardene for his part had undertaken to grant amnesty to all militants and to release all prisoners detained. Charges had been framed only against a fraction of those detained. General Sepala Attygalle read out the President's amnesty when Yogi made the first surrender of arms on 6 August. The process of releasing political prisoners also commenced at this time. The Sri Lankan government was convinced that only a small fraction of the arms had been surrendered. In this they had the concurrence of most observers.

At the joint press conference with the Indian Defence Minister K. C. Pant on 8 October, the President was asked why he went beyond his side of the bargain to grant the amnesty and release prisoners before the L.T.T.E. had hardly begun to move on its part. The President replied that the Indians had persuaded him to honour his part in advance, while the Indians undertook to unearth the arms. Justifying what he had done, the President summed up his argument with impeccable eloquence: "It was an Accord for peace and not for war." He pointed out that venturing out on the Accord would have been pointless if the war was to go on. With considerable justice, the President could maintain that he had taken commendable risks to make the Accord work.

On the other hand, the government was in an indecent hurry to resettle displaced Sinhalese persons in the East without a parallel initiative being taken over displaced Tamil persons. Sinhalese were being settled on schemes in the Trincomalee and Amparai districts. The one on the Trincomalee-Habarana Road was in the area where stretches of jungle had been cleared on both sides of the road after the massacre of Sinhalese passengers during the new-year. When questioned by the Trincomalee citizens' committee, minister Gamini Dissanayake replied that this settlement was meant to put a stop to various nefarious activities. The settlement on the Allai-Kantalai Road was more subtle. The Kantalai dam had been breached in April 1986 causing widespread destruction in the adjoining agricultural scheme which was about 30 years old. There had been 70 allotments each to the Tamils and Muslims and 260 to the Sinhalese. The Trincomalee G.A. told the citizens' committee in the presence of the visiting British Minister that after the disaster of April 1986, the Sinhalese settlers had agreed to be relocated elsewhere, while the Tamils and Muslims wished to go back to their old allotments. He explained that since each Sinhalese family which held an allotment had now become 3 by natural increase, the Sinhalese settlers were now being given about 600 allotments on the Allai-Kantalai Road. There was evidently some cheating involved here. For one thing it is not the common rule that every family can claim additional crown land for its natural increase. Nor is it likely that the Tamils and Muslims were told that they could claim extra land for their natural increase if agreeable to relocation. The fact that the

government was prepared to use its machinery to cheat in the matter of colonisation before the interim council to administer the North and East came into existence, was bound to arouse Tamil suspicions concerning the Accord. If the government wanted to make the Accord work and to restore Tamil confidence, it should have held off acting in controversial areas until the Tamils could be carried along. The extent of colonisation in question was small and the government had little to gain by flexing its muscles.

Colonisation touched a tender spot in the Tamil psyche. A Tamil grievance could also be aired against the Accord with a modicum of substance by saying: "The provincial councils envisaged under the Accord are an eyewash. The government is doing the bad old thing in colonisation, with the Indians doing nothing to stop it. The provincial councils will be a ceremonial farce like the ill-fated District Councils of 1981."

It has been mentioned that L.T.T.E. leaders such as Mr. Pulendran, who had had a bitter personal experience of the Sinhalese army and in turn caused bitter experiences amongst Sinhalese, had strong feelings on colonisation. To this could be added other complaints, again not entirely lacking in justice. Supporters of the L.T.T.E. could say: "All right, the government and the Indians are complaining about the slow surrender of arms by the L.T.T.E.. But everyone knows that some of the other militant groups were trained and armed by the Indian government just before the Accord. Does that not amount to a plan to destroy the L.T.T.E.? They have hidden arms. Can the L.T.T.E. really afford to surrender all its arms? How will they defend themselves? Moreover the government is hedging on the release of prisoners"

Suggestions within government ranks surfaced in the press to the effect that the release of prisoners should be linked to the surrender of arms. Many Tamils found common cause with the L.T.T.E. on the issue of prisoners and on colonisation. It could after all be maintained on legal and moral grounds that the overwhelming bulk of prisoners had no specific charges against them. Thus the government had no business to hold them even for a minute. And then holding them to ransom for arms is an inexcusable absurdity for a government to impose on its Tamil citizens who were in law equal to Sinhalese citizens.

On the other hand, the other militant groups could say: "We too made a contribution towards Tamil liberation. Hundreds of our comrades gave their lives fighting the Sinhalese army. Not only did the L.T.T.E. murder our comrades in cold blood and torture and humiliate many others, they are also striving to wipe away our contribution from the annals of the Ceylon Tamils. Do not we at least deserve to live?"

The Indians could say: "Are not the Tamils moving much more freely and breathing much more easily because of us? Detained Tamils are being steadily released. People should not jump to hasty conclusions about us. We cannot simply go around asking Sinhalese to pack up and go. Our officers have gone about making a careful study of colonisation. Did we not suspend work on a colonisation scheme in the Batticaloa district? The return of all militant groups to the island is a necessary part of the Accord. Our position is that all Tamils have a right to live here and participate in democratic politics. We do not carry a brief for any person or party. The L.T.T.E. must appreciate that."

Everyone had a case as well as complaints. These will be strengthened by the failings of others. Most significant were the failings of India, because she was supposed to be by far the

most superior in wisdom, strength and experience; on her mature dexterity hinged the success of the Accord.

Getting back to the early days of August, it looked for a time that the L.T.T.E. would go in for electoral politics with some quaint touches of its own. To this end the Eelamurasu, which was controlled by the L.T.T.E. started a very traditional attack on the T.U.L.F.. The T.U.L.F. was perceived as the main rival to the L.T.T.E. in the event of elections. The Eelamurasu started a column called Somersaults aimed at discomfiting the T.U.L.F.. For example, it published an old photograph of the veteran T.U.L.F. politician, Mr. V. Navaratnam driving President Jayewardene, then leader of the Opposition, in his automobile. It promoted elements of the L.T.T.E.'s religious creed - that there were precisely 631 martyrs for the cause of Tamil Eelam. 631 was the number of its dead claimed by the L.T.T.E.. Around this time Mr. Shankar, an E.R.O.S. leader, stated in an interview with the Colombo based Sunday Island that his group had lost 150 men and said in an aside that none of them had taken cyanide. The L.T.T.E. men carried cyanide capsules around their necks and many of those who died did so taking cyanide after being cornered. The Eelamurasu responded with a polemical piece against Shankar. All this had the flavour of election-time politics which people were comfortable with. The L.T.T.E.'s deputy leader, Mr. Sri Mahattaya, uncharacteristically started giving interviews to foreign and Colombo papers. He told the Weekend that Sinhalese were welcome to Jaffna and would not be harmed. Sinhalese flocked to see the lost land of Jaffna. This too augured well.

However, there were elements of instability evident at this time. One was the L.T.T.E.'s insistence that its 631 dead were the only ones who died in the cause of the liberation of Tamils. The dead from other militant groups and from amongst civilians were demoted to useless chaff. Such intolerance was bound to lead towards angry violence. The other was that many of the members of the P.L.O.T.E., E.N.D.L.F. and T.E.L.O. now lodged in Mannar, Vavuniya and Kilinochchi were strongly motivated by a desire to take revenge on the L.T.T.E.. Prominent amongst these were Sankili (Kandasamy), a leading member of the P.L.O.T.E., and Rajan.

Many felt uncomfortable that India had chosen such a volatile arrangement. India could argue that the peace accord had in it a package deal for all the militants. If participation in murder was to be a criterion, all militant groups, including the L.T.T.E., should be sent to the Andaman Islands. This would not be feasible and perhaps not what people wanted.

Another aspect of the L.T.T.E.'s political thrust came to light in early August. A little known affair which concerned the students of the University of Jaffna was the kidnapping by the L.T.T.E. of the student Rajakaran. The student had been active in matters of common interest and had taken part as a member of the action committee during the affair in November 1986 of the missing student Vijitharan. It later came to light that the actual reason for kidnapping the student was to do with the L.T.T.E.'s suspicion that Rajakaran had connections with the N.L.F.T., a small Marxist group. Its leader Mr. Viswanandadevan, an Engineer and pungent critic of the L.T.T.E.'s, had been missing for two years. It was suspected that he had been killed during a crossing from India. The L.T.T.E. had detained and harassed other members of the N.L.F.T., but had been unable to get at the group's cash and weaponry. It was hoped by the L.T.T.E. that Rajakaran may be able to help. At the time of Rajakaran's kidnapping, Viswanandadevan's 70 year old father in Nelliady had also been arrested and beaten. His compound had also been dug up. Rajakaran's detention was denied by the L.T.T.E.. For this reason, the worst was suspected. But the versatile Rajakaran escaped

L.T.T.E. custody in early July. In a letter dated 17 July 1987, Rajakaran appealed to the Jaffna University Teachers' Association (J.U.T.A.) to speak to the L.T.T.E. and seek a guarantee that he would not be harmed. It was subsequently left to the students themselves to raise the matter with the L.T.T.E.. Here again the students had acted with commendable boldness where others had been held back by unwarranted fear. The discussion was cordial. Mr. Sri Mahattaya himself admitted that the students had been tackled the wrong way and assured them that no harm will befall Rajakaran. The students put it diplomatically that such an assurance should be made publicly. Mahattaya agreed. On a subsequent day he made an appearance at the Kailasapathy auditorium and gave such an assurance. He said during his statement that Rajakaran was investigated for links with a criminal organisation. It is interesting that other militant groups came to be branded as criminal (anarchic) only because the L.T.T.E. was the most successful in the employment of similar methods.

The surprising development was that Rajakaran was present and took the stage on request. The L.T.T.E. walked out. Rajakaran described his experiences under detention, including physical hurt. A revealing piece of information he gave was that Mr. Kailasapillai, a T.U.L.F. stalwart from Illuppaikkadavai in the Mannar district, had been a co-detainee with him at a camp in Tellipallai. A few days before the Eelamurasu had featured Mr. Kailasapillai with his photograph in its lead story. In an interview he had reportedly said that the T.U.L.F. was no longer needed and praised the armed youth. An attorney in the K.K.S. electorate who was close to the T.U.L.F. leader, A. Amirthalingam, made a similar recantation. It cannot be said that election politics in Ceylon was strange to such methods. Only, the degree was new. Fear had replaced bribery.

The I.P.K.F. had promised that all militant groups were entitled to its protection. In Mannar the L.T.T.E. had sought an I.P.K.F. escort. The E.N.D.L.F. under its leader, Rajan, made its appearance in Jaffna under I.P.K.F. escort. It addressed a meeting in the University. It made an attempt to set up an office on Beach Road. An L.T.T.E. instigated crowd sat on the road in front of the house, shouted slogans and threw stones. An E.N.D.L.F. man who went out to peep was caught and was being badly mauled. One of his comrades after appealing to I.P.K.F. men who were present, and not finding an immediate response, grabbed a gun from one of them and fired it into the air. The crowd dispersed. The not so independent press in Jaffna reported the matter as a case of the people not wanting the E.N.D.L.F.. The first reported internecine killings were those of 3 L.T.T.E. men in the Mannar district. In another incident an armed party of the L.T.T.E. that was sent to avenge these killings was reportedly surrounded and shot. During this latter half of August, there was little to worry in Jaffna itself, but killings and counter killings amongst militants started occurring in Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, Mannar and Trincomalee. The mood of optimism in Jaffna was however heightened by the resumption of the train service to Colombo on 31 August. Jaffna's Tamil language Uthayan daily carried a report that the Indians were to build the much longed for rail link from Jaffna to Batticaloa. Although Jaffna, Trincomalee and Batticaloa were linked by Tamil territory comprising the Eastern seaboard, travel between them was cumbersome and of late, hazardous. This too was something to smile about. The train with a repair crew appeared in Jaffna on the evening of 30 August after an absence of 18 months, and stopped near the Kachcheri to replace some missing sleepers. A happy crowd gathered as if to welcome visiting Royalty. The job was quickly done. The I.P.W. (Inspector of Permanent Ways) looked at his watch and said in the homely, but not quite Queen's English that one has long associated with that tribe: "It is getting bloody late. Let's move on." He then signalled to the gangs of navvies to get on board. A whole host of children clambered up as the train pulled off, to enjoy a free ride up to the station six hundred yards away.

Then things began to move in Jaffna. On 1 September, an L.T.T.E. sentry at Kulapitty junction in Kokkuvil was abducted by persons travelling in a van, assaulted and later released. On the night of 7 September, four Assembly of God (A.O.G.) churchmen who were travelling in a van were gunned down at Uduvil junction. Two of the dead were Sinhalese clergy from the South. The motive for the killing was unclear and was put down to misadventure. The incident happened around 10:00 p.m. The van was to go inside Church Lane to pick up another A.O.G. clergyman. L.T.T.E. sources claimed that they were the intended victims. So did the E.N.D.L.F.. All that is known is that prior to the shooting, masked gunmen with walkie-talkies detained two A.O.G. members in that area. They heard orders being issued to fire at a white van that was coming. The two A.O.G. members tried telling the gunmen without success that their own pastors were expected in a van.

The following day an L.T.T.E. loudspeaker car went around announcing in the Chunnakam area: "Not only are these criminal groups now killing our members. They have now taken to murdering Christian clergy." On 3 September, the Assistant Government Agent of Mutur Mr. Habib Mohammed was shot dead in the early hours of the morning as he was returning from the mosque. Mutur lies South across Kottiar Bay from Trincomalee harbour. The same day angry Muslim demonstrators smashed up the L.T.T.E. office in Mutur town. The L.T.T.E. denied responsibility for the killing. The effect of the killing was to reawaken suspicions between the Muslims and Tamils of the East.

Organising hartals (or work stoppages) to stir up political feeling was commonplace in the North and East. First the T.U.L.F. did it. Then each militant group had its independent hartals. The L.T.T.E. claimed to be against hartals but nevertheless had them. The difference was that "the people" organised them, and the L.T.T.E. generally left people who went to work alone until lately. Earlier they were organised to protest against the government. More recently their purpose was to mark the deaths in battle of leading militants. From the time of the T.U.L.F., the success of hartals required implicit force. For this reason it was also an act of self deception by which the organisers would claim high popularity ratings. If all shops and offices were closed, and transport stopped even to deter the sick from being taken for treatment, the organisers would claim a hundred percent success. The way they said it would betray the feeling that they, the sponsors, were also hundred percent popular.

On 9 September, the Muslims of Kalmunai organised a hartal to protest the murder of Mr. Habib Mohammed. This went off peacefully. The L.T.T.E. announced its own hartal for the identical cause to be observed on the following day.

In the morning hoodlums looted and burnt Muslim shops in Kalmunai as armed men stood by. Muslim residents associated the gunmen with the L.T.T.E.. Telephone messages were sent by the Muslim leaders in Kalmunai to the I.P.K.F. at Akkaraipattu, asking them to come to their aid. According to a Muslim academic from Kalmunai, the I.P.K.F. came late around 2 o'clock in the afternoon after pressure was applied by Muslims at Akkaraipattu. They came with one Velmurugan master who was again said by Muslim to be close to the L.T.T.E.. The I.P.K.F. then proceeded to remove roadblocks put there by Muslims to block traffic as a sign of protest. One Tamil school-teacher who was there observed that the I.P.K.F. had acted ill-advisedly in removing those road blocks. For if a militant group had organised a stoppage, a hint from them would stop traffic on the roads. Everyone was afraid of guns. The I.P.K.F. had never interfered with these. But the Muslims are not known for possessing gun-power. Road blocks are for them the only means of enforcing a hartal and saving face. Above the I.P.K.F.'s perceived tardiness in responding to the call by Muslims for protection, the

removal of road blocks was also seen as discriminatory. As an overwhelmingly Hindu body, to play the role of peacekeepers, the I.P.K.F. should have been prepared to show greater sensibility to Muslims. Qadri Ismail, writing in the Colombo based Sunday Times, gave another angle to the events in Kalmunai. He pointed out that the role of Tamil gunmen need not be blamed on the high level policy of any particular militant group. The Kalmunai Mosque stood on premises on which once stood a colony of low caste Tamils who had been driven out by Muslims 20 years ago. There was an element of settling old scores by descendants of the disinherited. The end result was to heighten tension and distrust towards the Accord within the Muslim community.

On the night of 13 September, the L.T.T.E. launched a surprise strike against members of other militant groups in the Batticaloa district. Most of the victims were unarmed and had thought themselves to be safe. According to press reports, about 70 of them were killed. Several others sought shelter even with the once dreaded S.T.F.. The attack was denied publicly by the L.T.T.E.. The L.T.T.E. had launched on a new reckless course, pregnant with catastrophic consequences for everyone in the North and East. The L.T.T.E. had committed an outrage which was an open secret buzzing about the airwaves of the international news media. Those who defend the L.T.T.E. would blame India, maintaining that India had plans to use the other groups to destroy the L.T.T.E. while for the L.T.T.E. it was a case of do now or die later. This would hardly justify a massacre of unarmed militants who would not have known what hit them. Our experience with members of other militant groups suggests that they were certainly angry with the L.T.T.E.. They wished to re-assert their dignity and wanted the community to give them a place of respect. But to suggest that they were incognate tools of India's would be an unfair overstatement. A large number of them would have chosen reconciliation with the L.T.T.E. on honourable terms if that course had been open. It would be more true to say that the other groups were driven into India's hands by the position taken by the L.T.T.E. and because of increasing rejection by the community. The two processes were interdependent.

Politically, the L.T.T.E. had been dissatisfied with the way things were developing. It had been offered 3 seats in an interim administrative council of 8. Two places went to the T.U.L.F., 1 to another militant group and 2 were to be government employees. The interim body was to administer the North and East until provincial council elections could be held. That was expected to take anything from 6 months to a year. Whether the interim council was going to administer or advise, and whether elections would be held on a first past the post or on a proportional representation basis were questions on which no clear answer had emerged. The L.T.T.E. had apparently pitched its ambitions much higher than what the Indian and Sri Lankan governments would allow or what the majority of Tamils considered prudent. The L.T.T.E. was angling for sole control of the North and East, as evidenced in its past conduct. They had displayed a capacity for astounding turns that had made headlines and for the most incorrigible conduct which confounded whoever had dealings with them. And their strength was a readiness to gamble with their own lives, and incidentally with those of many others, in pursuit of their aims. The last was symbolised by cyanide capsules. They had been gods. Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood, Friends and Enemies and even solemn pacts had little meaning for them. Like the gods of ancient Hellas, they dwelt in an existentialist world; in their own Mount Olympus, presided over by their own Zeus. What was on offer for them now was the tame respectability of provincial dignitaries. They were tempted as events would show, and yet uncomfortable and undecided. Just as they had agreed to surrender their arms, they seemed amenable to agreeing to something as a means of buying time.

Life had been relatively unexciting after the Accord. Several of the L.T.T.E. leaders such as Kumarappa and Pulendran had got married. They enjoyed the respectability of social life with senior Indian army officers who joined in the nuptial festivities. There were beach outings. Yet their self-image of virility was being sapped. They were being treated increasingly like a Tiger whose claws had been blunted. Dignitaries from the South, journalists, both local and foreign, were flocking in to see them, as they would go to a zoo to see a caged animal. Should they be tamed, they had nothing to fall back on. The people did not really love them. They simply admired and obeyed them. But who would honour and obey a senile animal that had lost its teeth and claws? This was worrying. What would an ancient god do in a world that had been his domain, and which was now so changed as to exclude him? Like the legendary Wotan in Niebelung's Ring, it was time for a suicidal leap; to create some of the most obscene scenes in an effort to do or die. They were once more going to revive their capacity to shock. They were prepared to throw away all they had worked for - friendships cultivated assiduously over months as well as numerous of lives. But, did the parties concerned have other choices?

The fact that the Indians were talking almost exclusively to the L.T.T.E. was an indication that they had accepted the L.T.T.E. as a power that counted, and that to attempt to exclude them would be taking too much trouble on themselves. This indication was strengthened by later events. Behind all the Indian rhetoric during the October war, feelers to the L.T.T.E. were being constantly made. Doubts continued to remain in the public mind as to whether India was really serious about crushing the L.T.T.E..

Even if the L.T.T.E. had really believed that its destruction was being sought, it could have moved to strengthen its ties with the people. It could have admitted and apologised for past errors. Terms for reconciliation with dignity could have been offered to other militant groups. It could have moved to tolerate dissent and democratise its organisation. Such moves would have made it difficult for any outside force to weaken it. The L.T.T.E. enjoyed enough prestige to carry these through. Students at the University of Jaffna and several intellectuals had been entreating the L.T.T.E. for such gestures for over a year, only to be given the short shrift. Except for the diehards, most militants from other groups would have been extremely happy with such an offer. Under these conditions, few Tamils would have actively worked against the L.T.T.E., other than those whose drive for vengeance was very strong. But the L.T.T.E. chose rather a sensational use of violence in a bid to demonstrate their immense potential to sour things.

The other militant groups felt that they deserved a place of honour and that the L.T.T.E. was systematically conspiring to disinherit them. In this most Tamils would have sympathised with them. Their presence in certain areas was guaranteed by the Indian army. They could have used this to their advantage. They could have made and stuck to a public pledge that even if the L.T.T.E. did not wish to work with them, they were against taking revenge on either the L.T.T.E. or its supporters. They could have got actively involved in projects to help the local people. Instead of harassing travellers, they could have printed and distributed leaflets through them, appealing to the Tamil people to recognise their contribution and criticising the L.T.T.E.'s stand. But many of them chose differently. In their frustration they developed an antipathy towards the common Tamil people, especially those from Jaffna, who were accused of being pro-L.T.T.E.. Bus passengers were regularly harassed and frequently robbed. Extortion and robbery once again reappeared in parts they inhabited. Vehicles were hijacked. As internecine killings increased, they were driven to depend more and more on the

Indian and Sri Lankan forces. All this led to the strengthening of the stereotype image that the L.T.T.E. was trying to pin on them.

The arrival of the Indian Peace Keeping Force was widely welcomed by the Tamils of Ceylon. They had come to preside over peace and not over war. They started by doing the right things. Their conduct was disciplined even in a state of provocation. They defused landmines left behind by the former antagonists. When Major Dilip Singh, Lieutenant Vickram and Mohinder Rao from the Eighth Battalion (Engineers) died in a mine clearing accident, there was universal grief in Jaffna. These men had given their lives for the people of Jaffna. The mother of the last on being given the heart breaking news of her son's death had reportedly remarked: "I am happy that he died this way." How did it happen that by mid-September, the image of the I.P.K.F. was looking tattered; and by the second week of October it had blundered itself into killing Tamil civilians by the hundreds? Aspects of this question have been dealt with in different parts of the volume.

By the middle of September, developments stretching back over a month brought about a situation that was anything but peaceful. Yet the Indian Peace Keeping Force had remained seemingly inert. At first it looked as if the I.P.K.F. was offering protection to all militant groups when they were escorted on request. Then internecine killings started, people started to disappear and four clergymen were killed in Jaffna. The position of the I.P.K.F. seemed to be that its brief was to retrieve arms from militant groups and not to maintain law and order. The L.T.T.E. claimed that it had trusted the I.P.K.F. to protect Tamils from the Sri Lankan army. But instead, while the Sri Lankan army was still here, the I.P.K.F. was establishing camps in places where the Sri Lankan army was nowhere about. Sinister motives were hinted at. The Indian High Commissioner Mr. J. N. Dixit in an interview with D. B. S. Jeyaraj published in the Sunday Island of 30 August, 1987, stated that the I.P.K.F. was establishing the new camps to contain internecine fighting between militant groups. He also stated that 65% of the arms including 85% of the heavy weapons had been surrendered. Elsewhere he had said that 80% of the arms had been surrendered.

It was the surrender of arms that was of the greatest concern to the Sinhalese. The putsch by the L.T.T.E. on the night of 13 September in Batticaloa and the continuing killings elsewhere seemed to make these claims far less convincing. Not only did the L.T.T.E. seem to possess plenty of arms, they seemed also to be able to move about freely over a wide area notwithstanding the I.P.K.F., and use the arms against other militants. As the L.T.T.E. became increasingly vocal and demonstrative in Jaffna, especially after Thileepan's fast, passengers to and from Jaffna were increasingly harassed by other militant groups between Kilinochchi and Jaffna while Indian and Sri Lankan forces looked on.

On all counts the I.P.K.F. was acquiring a sorry image. For the Sinhalese it was not retrieving arms. And for the Tamils it was not maintaining peace. The L.T.T.E. propaganda machine went to town on what was appearing to be a contradictory role of the I.P.K.F., spicing it up with colonisation, the slow release of prisoners and the increase of crime.

Even more surprising was the complacency of the I.P.K.F. in not going to the people to defend its role. It had much to take credit for. The threat to civilian life through military action had virtually ended. Freedom of movement for all Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese had been restored. In the Trincomalee district, Tamils could get back to lands they were driven out of. There was a likelihood that town property that was forcibly taken over by Sinhalese thugs with government blessing would be restored to their owners. People were able to regain their

homes in other Tamil areas which had now been de-mined and made safe from shelling. Train services had been restored. There was every prospect that rehabilitation work would commence and that aid money would help those who had been ruined.

Furthermore, Tamil prisoners were in fact being released. The delay could have been explained as coming from technicalities. The problem of colonisation was being studied and particular allegations were being investigated by I.P.K.F. officers. At least in one instance in Batticaloa district, the I.P.K.F. had halted work on a scheme. The L.T.T.E.'s actions could have been rationally attacked. The adequacy of powers given to Tamil areas under the Accord could have been patiently explained and the L.T.T.E. could have been asked to trust the people to decide when elections are held. Further, the Indian authorities could have addressed regular press conferences and seminars in the Tamil areas and could have had consultations with independent sections of Tamil opinion. The latter would have provided the means of correcting errors, avoiding blunders and understanding their unfamiliar environment.

If the Indians had attempted to use the press, that would have been understood. But when the I.P.K.F. on 10 October, 1987, detained newspapermen from two newspapers and reportedly damaged the machinery, that was seen by the public as a rowdy and unjustifiable act. Newspapers in Jaffna had got used to bending in the face of authority while fancying themselves not to break. It was said that some newspapers which respected independence, avoided trouble by reserving the front and back pages for obligatory material, while publishing independent material in the inner pages. But the people apparently came so low down the list of Indian concerns, that they were freely given over to the L.T.T.E. to play with their emotions. Anyone who witnessed the highly volatile scenes which followed, could not but help feeling that we had blundered on to the edge of a volcano.

The I.P.K.F. stuck to dealing with the L.T.T.E. exclusively with increasing exasperation. The L.T.T.E. had no particular obligation to stick to one position. It was free to play with the Indian authorities on one hand and the people on the other as long as no tangible link (except the L.T.T.E. itself) existed between the Indian authorities and the Tamil people. When dealings with the L.T.T.E. yielded little more than exasperation, the framework in which the Indians operated led them into a war for which they were ill prepared.

All actors were imprisoned in mental frames into which they had been led by past choices. Sorely lacking were individuals with the strength of character to leap out of the incubus of history to turn the tide. All were being sucked into a chasm where they would lose control of events.

The L.T.T.E. was now set on a desperate course. It was prepared to offend the minimal norms of human communication. In an interview given by Mahattaya and the L.T.T.E. spokesman Anton Balasingam to Jehan Haniff of the Sunday Island, the L.T.T.E. was questioned about the killings of 70 militants in the Batticaloa district and about the surrender of arms. In reply Balasingam said that the L.T.T.E. had surrendered all its arms and that the killings in Batticaloa had resulted from fighting between dissident militant groups. Interestingly, Balasingam made reference to Mahattaya before answering these questions. Balasingam's position within the organisation was something of an enigma. He was known to refer to the L.T.T.E. as a mafia-type organisation. On one occasion he was quoted widely to this effect in the press including that in Jaffna. No attempt was made by the L.T.T.E. to contradict this. It is known from sources close to the organisation that despite a stormy relationship, he and Prabhakaran needed each other.

9.2 The Fast

On 15 September, Mr. Thileepan, the Jaffna chief of the L.T.T.E.'s political wing started his death fast near Nallur Kandasamy temple. A platform was set up and Thileepan and his helpers were on it. Five demands were put forward, two of which dealt with colonisation and the release of prisoners. The fast was at first not taken seriously. The Indians calculated that it would end as fasts normally do, and hoped to ride it out by ignoring it. It took some time before it sank in that Thileepan was not taking even water. All India Radio broadcast a statement by the government spokesman which said that as a leader with a cause, Mahatma Gandhi undertook fasts to death himself; he did not send in one of his assistants to undergo the ordeal and sit back. But the emotional climate was being stirred up so much that it had little impact. When things were looking like they were getting out of hand, the Indians started talks with the L.T.T.E.. Tamil Nadu politicians Pandruti Ramachandran and Nedumaran arrived on the scene. Indian officers too started visiting Thileepan. Shortly before Thileepan began his fast he made a remarkable speech in front of Jaffna fort, giving a singular twist to Tamil nationalist history. "Accords," he said, "have been brought about by our enemies to dampen national fervour whenever this shows signs of boiling over. Today, the Indo-Lanka accord is meant to suppress the thirst of the people for liberation." He then pointed his finger histrionically at the Jaffna Fort and continued: "The first inhabitants of this were the Dutch and they enslaved us anew. Then came likewise the Sinhalese and now the Indians with new accords and new promises. Our aim is to chase away the Indians and fly our own flag of freedom in this Fort." This rousing speech may have gone down in history if not for the utter disillusionment which followed in October.

At first Thileepan's fast looked like a gimmick meant to divert attention from the killings in the East. The L.T.T.E. quickly used its organisational capacity to build up the emotional momentum. Loudspeaker vehicles went about broadcasting maudlin sentiments. Public transport vehicles were used to ferry in crowds. Long distance marchers converged on Kandasamy Kovil. Heart-rending cries over loudspeakers and sobbing noises had their effect. The cry "Thileepan anna (elder brother)," rising to a high pitch became familiar around Jaffna. The feeling was drummed up that such a fine man as Thileepan was going to die only because the Indians had cheated the Tamils and were only here to help the Jayewardene government.

The hartals or stoppages called for in Jaffna during Thileepan's fast disrupted public transport and made train services irregular. The other militant groups interpreted the press coverage and the rallies in Jaffna as a pro-L.T.T.E. gesture, unmindful of what the L.T.T.E. had done to them. Their attitude assumed an abusive anti-Jaffna stance. They decided that if people in Jaffna were going to travel just when it suited the L.T.T.E., then they too were going to allow people to travel only when it suited them. Train services stopped at Kilinochchi and passengers were stranded without a bus service to complete the rest of the journey. Hiring cars charged as much as Rs.500/- per passenger to complete the remaining 40 miles to Jaffna. To many travellers the harassment by the E.N.D.L.F. seemed Indian instigated, as a way of hitting back for the anti-Indian hysteria being created by the L.T.T.E. in Jaffna.

Clearly the difficulties of travellers owed much to the capriciousness of the L.T.T.E.. The Indians could have exposed this by trying to be helpful to those in difficulty. But they instead appeared in vindictive light by identifying the Jaffna people with the L.T.T.E.. This further incensed feelings in Jaffna and played into the hands of the L.T.T.E..

Emotional crowds at road junctions were once more in vogue. These were the same crowds that welcomed with tears the Indian Red Cross team less than 3 months before. Jaffna had been rendered even more unprincipled and volatile by liberation politics. But to call the crowds anti-Indian would have been a misrepresentation. India was still the holy mother. The people were an angry child hitting and screaming at the mother to have its way. The L.T.T.E. instigated crowds to humiliate the Indian army. At Manthikai crowds of women threw stones at the Indian army. Personal insults were flung at Indian soldiers -- like stroking the beard of a Sikh soldiers and calling him a half-beedi man (beedi is a cheaper form of cigarette) The Indian soldiers were highly restrained. The only shooting took place in Manner.

In Mannar a crowd marched towards an I.P.K.F. camp along the road from Mannar to Talai Mannar, urged on by an L.T.T.E. loudspeaker from a car. Once the crowd was highly strung with shouting slogans, the loudspeaker car instigated the crowd to march on the camp. An Indian officer came out and begged the crowd with folded hands not to advance beyond a certain point. The loudspeaker kept up its harangue and the men behind fired and killed one man in the vanguard of the crowd. The crowd quickly dispersed.

At this time a group of Sinhalese visited Jaffna on a peace mission. The party included Mr. Shelton Ranaraja, Deputy Minister for Justice, the Rev. Fr. Yohan Devananda and several doctors including the G.M.O.A. Secretary Dr. Ratnapriya. Shelton Ranarajah, though holding a junior ministerial position in the ruling United National Party, held publicly expressed independent and liberal views on the ethnic question. For him it was a pilgrimage of reconciliation with a view to seeing and understanding. He came despite the risk to himself as an unprotected member of the government, coming during a highly strung period. The doctors had brought medical supplies to hold clinics. Many Sinhalese with a left wing bent had come to admire the L.T.T.E. as an effective revolutionary force. These Sinhalese had campaigned against the government without major success. The government had found means of neutralising their influence while allowing them a respectable existence. For them the remarkable success of the L.T.T.E. was a revelation. That the success followed in the wake of risks taken by no other leaders in this country, was to be admired. The deceit, murder and inhumanity involved in that success was taken to be of no account. A Sinhalese clergyman, who was an admirer of the L.T.T.E.'s, once told a Tamil clergyman: "They are doing the fighting. You have no moral right to criticise them." Even as a clergyman, he little realised that in the political climate of the times, much courage was needed to preserve our sense of values as a community. This kind of moral fight too involved risks as the hundreds of internal killings within and without the militant groups had testified.

Some of the most provocative incidents in Jaffna took place on Friday, 18 September. At Manthikai, the Pt. Pedro police station which was manned by the Ceylon Police was attacked by crowds egged on by agent provocateurs. The police station was burnt and the policemen were humiliated. The I.P.K.F. nearby did nothing to stop it. The policemen were made to march towards the army camp in Pt. Pedro carrying their belongings on their heads. A crowd shouting abuse followed behind. The vast majority of people were silent spectators. Many who saw the sorry looking policemen were alarmed and saddened. The policemen had done nothing since assuming duties in Pt. Pedro to deserve such treatment. Many common people observed that we as a community were going to pay for this.

The peace mission from the South had come as guests of the L.T.T.E. leader. A hartal was declared on 18 September. Members of the peace mission obtained a special pass from Sri Mahattaya to drive their vehicle into Vadamaratchi. They witnessed some of the worst scenes on that day. They saw a police vehicle burning at Pt. Pedro. At Valvettithurai they saw a crowd in front of the police station shouting abuse. The peace mission was manoeuvred in front of the crowd to face angry policemen who were armed. The scene was very provoking to the police. A smashed chair belonging to the police station lay before them. On learning that those now standing in front of the crowd were Sinhalese, the policemen shouted angrily at them: "You are the ones who brought them here." Members of the peace mission felt that the police may open fire any time and that they would then be the first victims. As they went away, they met an L.T.T.E. man loading a magazine into his automatic. He told them derisively: "You got scared, didn't you?" They saw a similar scene at the Sri Lankan army camp in Valvettithurai. An abusive crowd stood in front of the camp. A drunken, gesticulating

soldier stood before the crowd returning the abuse. An officer came out and dragged the drunken soldier away. It was clear that the L.T.T.E. was angling for a scene where one of the armed forces would open fire leaving several dead civilians on the road. What a nice story that would have made around the world: "In the middle of a non-violent struggle with a Gandhian style fast going on, Indian and/or Sri Lankan forces open fire and kill innocent civilians!" It was also clear that the Indian and Sri Lankan forces were just barely controlling themselves.

The peace mission was to return to Colombo the following day. Since a hartal was on, they obtained permission to travel in their two vehicles. All the way from Jaffna, they were followed by a van past several sentry points manned by the L.T.T.E.. There could be little mistake about the identity of the persons in the van that followed. Past Pallai, this van overtook them. At Yakkachchi (4 miles before Elephant Pass) this van was parked on the road. A few yards away, the peace mission was stopped by 6 youths armed with grenades and machine guns. The peace mission was addressed abusively and some were dragged out of their vehicles. The peace mission was left stranded without even their baggage. The vehicle which followed them, together with the two hijacked vehicles returned towards Pallai. The parting shot from the hijackers was, "We are Rajan's group (E.N.D.L.F.)." If one could play the game, so can two. What the E.N.D.L.F. did south of Elephant Pass, the L.T.T.E. did to the north, putting the blame on the E.N.D.L.F.. It was generally known that North of Elephant Pass was territory jealously controlled by the L.T.T.E.. Members of the peace mission caught a South bound bus after walking two miles towards Elephant Pass.

The treatment of the mission was in tune with the course the L.T.T.E. was taking. The mission came on an invitation made by the L.T.T.E. sometime previously. If the L.T.T.E. had changed its mind on the usefulness of well disposed Sinhalese, it could have told them not to come. But to have them, talk to them nicely and treat them in this manner at parting was a rather prolix way of saying: "We have finished with you. Do not bother to come again." The action had the L.T.T.E.'s stamp on it. If the L.T.T.E. ever needed Sinhalese friends again, such as after their war with India, its leaders would have no difficulty. All they would need to do is blame such actions and the killings of Sinhalese on some hot heads who had since been disciplined, and then resume relationships as though nothing untoward had happened.

To Mr. Shelton Ranaraja's credit, when he answered questions in parliament, he was a sad, rather than a bitter or angry man. Many Tamils like to blame the Indian offensive of October, together with the killings of Sinhalese from 5 October on the Sri Lankan government. They say that all the trouble was caused by the Sri Lankan government attempting to transport 17 L.T.T.E. members to Colombo and provoking them into taking cyanide. But the events which began on 13 September and the dramatic events described above signalled what was coming. The L.T.T.E. had given up on trying to cultivate Sinhalese friends. Its capacity to shock was one of the L.T.T.E.'s most potent weapons. Friendship with the L.T.T.E. was a strange and self-flattering affair. In the course of the coming days dire hints were dropped for the benefit of several old friends who had for months sat on committees, given advice, drafted letters, addressed meetings and had placed themselves at the L.T.T.E.'s beck and call.

A report written by the peace mission for the Christian Worker (in the issues of the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 1987) had the tone of reflective disillusionment: "... It so appears that the gun tends to evolve a logic of its own, turning its user into an extension of itself... Rational thought and human communication are subsumed in the final solution offered by the gun. We

have already seen this on a massive scale in Lebanon. Now do we ourselves have to go through a very personalised reproduction of a similar situation where everybody seems to be shooting at everybody else? Sri Lankan politics has always appeared to many as a pantomime. But now the drama seems to be turning rapidly into a tragedy on a large scale. We can but hope that firm action will avert it." Very prophetic words to be fulfilled hardly a fortnight later.

Before Thileepan lost consciousness, he aired some of his religious hopes. He would go to a heavenly abode, he said, where he would join the 650 or so martyrs from the L.T.T.E.. Then with the joy that is reserved for these chosen ones, he would look down upon the land of Tamil Eelam. There is little doubt that he believed in something like this undemocratic and unegalitarian of creeds. It took some time for it to sink down that Thileepan was dying a slow and excruciating death. It was presented in such a manner as to touch the religious sensibilities of the Tamils. Being next to Kandasamy Kovil, the scene was right for a momentous religious event. Saivite devotional songs called Thevarams were sung. Sombre women with tear stained faces were there. Over its television network Niedharshanam, the L.T.T.E. merged the images of Thileepan and Mahatma Gandhi. Many were taken in. A Western diplomat who visited the scene observed blankly, "it looked to me like a stage set for the Gandhi film."

The L.T.T.E. betrayed a misconception of a non-violent struggle for which it can not be blamed. This misconception was common even amongst educated Tamils. The Federal Party (the T.U.L.F.'s main predecessor) launched a satyagraha campaign for Tamil rights in early 1961. This took mainly the form of sit-ins in front of government offices in the North and East, and long marches. There were mass meetings at which students queued up to sign petitions in blood. The police made strenuous efforts for a few days to disperse the crowds. But the crowds withstood the police baton charges. This was an exhilarating moment. During the 1958 riots the Tamils had acquired a reputation for being cowards who get beaten and run away. The helplessness of the Tamils then seems to have inflamed the violent Sinhalese hoodlums to ask for more blood. Many of the elderly in Colombo tasted the sting of racial violence. In 1961 the Tamil satyagrahis had proved that the Tamils were as a people not cowards. They were prepared to withstand pain and injury in order to win their dignity and rights as equal citizens. Scenes of selfless courage were in evidence everywhere. Men fell down on the road before military trucks and stayed their ground until they were beaten and dragged senseless to a side. People were once more proud to call themselves Tamils. After the first few days the then government of Mrs. Bandaranaike's, decided to ignore the satyagraha campaign. The campaign dragged on for 3 months and was ended by the imposition of a state of emergency and the use of force that was mild by today's standards. An insider claimed that the organisers were embarrassed by the prolongation of the campaign and by difficulties in finding alternatives to government rice rations which were stopped by the closure of the administration. They thus adopted measures such as the printing of postage stamps and starting a mail service, which would compel the government either to talk seriously or end the campaign by force. The government chose the latter only to have the problem fester and erupt into violence a quarter century later. It fell to another generation to revive the spirit of courage and self sacrifice. Besides, in the use of methods there was another important difference. In 1961 the people and their leaders stood together and suffered voluntarily. Though the F.P. and the T.U.L.F. continued to claim non-violence as a policy, they put off action for a future appropriate time in the future.

The result was a serious general misunderstanding of non-violence. Non-violence and violence were regarded as two alternative means to the same political end. Only the latter may need plenty of money and prove more hurtful. That they morally meant two different things was lost sight of. All that seemed to be required was to find the most efficacious means disregarding moral implications. The most important aspect of non-violence was lost sight of - that of self-purification together with honesty and integrity even in small things; that it involved love and respect for life rather than a coward's desire to avoid inflicting pain because of the trouble that may result. In consequence, once people got through with sitting in front of the Kachcheri, the old bad ways continued. Nor did they love the Sinhalese any better for it. The rich lording it over and humiliating the poor, caste pride, spiritual, administrative, and physical thuggery, all continued as before only to become worse with time.

When things went on in this manner it was to be expected that non-violence would be discredited in the eyes of the young while in fact it had never been tried. Young militants in the 1980's too may be forgiven for uttering with brazen confidence that non-violence had been rejected by the people as unworkable. Whether violence worked was a question few bothered to ask. The misconception was evident when the L.T.T.E. claimed that it was supreme master in the use of violent as well as nonviolent means and that it was equally at home in both methods. That it was master of violence was an accepted fact. Thileepan's ordeal was now proving to the masses that the L.T.T.E. was also master of non-violence. Violence and non-violence were here being treated as morally indistinct tools. Even amongst those who were against the L.T.T.E.'s violence, Thileepan's fast touched sensitive chords.

But the scenario being gradually built up by the L.T.T.E. was an essentially violent one. Crowds marching to Nallur from distant places were made to shout menacing slogans by loudspeaker cars. Prominent among the slogans were: "Prabhakaran is our leader," and "If Thileepan dies, Tamil Eelam will become an exploding volcano." The first kept Mr. Prabhakaran in the picture while the limelight was on Thileepan. No one knew what exactly the second meant. Those who closely watched the proceedings at Kandasamy temple, came away with different impressions. Some praised Thileepan's determination. Some blamed the L.T.T.E. of deliberately putting Thileepan through the ordeal of a slow and painful death. There were allusions that Thileepan himself had left instructions while he was still in his proper senses, that should he ask for water as weakness made him lose control over his will; such a request should be ignored. However, everyone hoped that Prabhakaran would take pity and order the fast called off. This was not to be. Prabhakaran's position remained that the fast had been voluntarily undertaken to secure five demands made to the Indians. Therefore India will be fully responsible for Thileepan's fate. Whatever Thileepan had decided, an element of complexity was revealed when a community leader raised with a senior L.T.T.E. official the question of reviving Thileepan who was by now unconscious. He was told that they had taken a final decision on the matter. The external factors seemed to suggest that this was the case. This surmise would be strengthened when 12 L.T.T.E. men committed suicide on 5 October. It looked as if the L.T.T.E. had decided that Tamil Eelam should become a burning volcano.

In the meantime the Indians had started a series of talks with the L.T.T.E.. Those on the Indian side included the High Commissioner Mr. Dixit, his deputy Mr. Sen and Lt. General Depinder Singh, Chief of the Indian Army's Southern Command. Those representing the L.T.T.E. included Prabhakaran, Balasingam and Sri Mahattaya. By all accounts it was not cocktail diplomacy. It was like schoolmaster India attempting to verbally lash into line an incorrigible schoolboy whom he would like thrown out but cannot. Mr. Dixit must have found Ceylon a strange place in which to practise Parisian diplomatic etiquette. A senior minister in the government in Colombo of the gentler kind, once reportedly complained to a friend after meeting Mr. Dixit: "I felt like having been treated like a pick-pocket in my own home."

The L.T.T.E. was evidently pressing for majority representation in an interim council for the North and East, which given the circumstances would be around for a long time. This elicited Dixit's remark: "Interim is interim." The L.T.T.E. evidently wanted elections put off for a long time. The L.T.T.E. had also expressed a wish to have control over Police and Colonisation. The Indians had strongly objected to the use of the press to whip up anti-Indian feeling. On this matter as pointed out earlier, the Indians seemed unable to think of an alternative to pummelling the L.T.T.E.. They were not thinking in terms of a direct approach to the people. In depending totally on their ability to awe or bully the L.T.T.E. into line, they were walking on miry ground. A journalist who was present described a scene where Depinder Singh challenged the L.T.T.E. concerning freedom of the press in Jaffna. He was assured that it was indeed free. General Singh then asked if a statement given by him would be published. Thinking perhaps that Gen. Singh wished to address the people, the L.T.T.E. readily agreed. Then Gen. Singh pulled out a letter from his pocket and asked sternly if it would be published. The letter was from the father of Douglas Devananda, a senior E.P.R.L.F. leader, whose brother Premananda was kidnapped shortly after the Accord. There was an embarrassed silence. Gen. Singh continued, saying that there was sometimes censorship in India. But what prevailed in Jaffna was unheard of. Gen. Singh hardly knew of the Indian censorship that would descend on Jaffna after October 1987.

The L.T.T.E. organised a big demonstration on Thursday, 24 September, 1987, when processions converged on Jaffna Fort to present petitions to the I.P.K.F.. The crowds were basically emotional and had little understanding of the issues involved. An Indian officer who was receiving petitions, suddenly unrolled a large map of Ceylon. He asked those present: "You are complaining strongly about Sinhalese colonisation. Show us exactly where it is taking place and we will put a stop to it." There was some confusion and puzzlement. Some hesitantly pointed to places. The women at the demonstration were being quite expressive. One woman with a loud voice referred to the Indian Prime Minister as "The dog born of Indira". The Indian officer turned to a senior engineering foreman who was there and asked him: "Why are your people so angry and insulting towards us?" The engineering foreman tried to reassure him: "Some may express their feelings too strongly. But we would always love India. India is our mother."

In the light of what happened later, it may be well to reflect here on the feelings of Indian soldiers. Most of the latter were from very poor backgrounds. When they arrived in Ceylon, they had a vague idea that they had come to protect Tamils from the Sri Lankan army. They had also expected to see a pitifully downtrodden population. But what they saw in Jaffna was contrary to expectations. There was little to do in the way of protecting Tamils. After the Accord, the Sri Lankan army were only too happy to behave themselves. Instead of uniform unrelieved, poverty, there was a fairly large well-to-do middle-class. Most people dressed well and lived in reasonable comfort. Unlike in India where each village may have just one television set, every other home in Jaffna had colour television. Shops were stocked with modern Japanese goods. Most homes had their wells, their water sealed lavatories and electricity supply as a bare minimum. They wondered why the Indian government had made such a fuss about Jaffna. Indian propaganda must have surely had a bewildering effect on the Jawans ¹. In its twists and turns, one day the L.T.T.E. would be a murderous evil force. Soon afterwards they would become gallant men of vision.

When the I.P.K.F. first arrived, soldiers expressed their surprise. Tamil Nadu Jawans observed with wonder: "This is a fertile place." Malayali Jawans said to the effect: "This place reminds us of Kerala." Those from North India perhaps thought that this was a strange place

which was vaguely like the South. Only the shops reminded them of what is said about Singapore. For the first few weeks, the I.P.K.F. was preoccupied with the shops in Kasturiar Road. The officers bought Japanese TV sets, video recorders and 3-in-1's. The Jawans looked for radio-cassettes, pen torches and ball point pens. As the weeks went by, some Jawans told civilians: "We thought we came to protect you from the Sinhalese. But all we see is your boys killing each other. We do not see any Sinhalese." The colonisation problem too did not make sense to Indian soldiers. They found it difficult to appreciate the problem of state sponsored colonisation. They would say: "What is the difficulty with Sinhalese in your areas? In India we have Tamil Nadu people in Maharashtra, Maharashtra people in Delhi, Delhi people in Karnataka and so on. There is no difficulty in that!" With Thileepan's fast, people were instigated by the L.T.T.E. to insult and humiliate Indian soldiers. Soldiers from Punjab and Rajasthan who had no stake in what was going on here, no understanding and cared even less, were ordered to put on a stiff upper lip and take it all, much against their natural impulses. Their anger is not hard to imagine: "First we were asked to come and save these people. We then find that these people were quite well off and lived much better than our people. They start killing each other and now come and throw stones at and insult us for no conceivable reason. Moreover they have the cheek to do this after eating our food."

Anyone would have known the consequences of the L.T.T.E.'s pushing an army smarting under such provocation into military action. After turning Tamil Eelam into a burning volcano, Prabhakaran would say with disarming gravity: "Now that we have been compelled to defend ourselves militarily, India must assume full responsibility for whatever ill befalls the civilian population."

When it became clear that Thileepan would die and that the likelihood of volcanic eruptions in Jaffna could not be dismissed, guessing was on as to how this would happen. Speculation and fear became ripe in certain quarters on the basis of a brick dropped in the hospital by a person considered fairly high up in the L.T.T.E.. He reportedly dropped dark hints about the fate that would overtake those officials who garlanded the Indian Red Cross, in the event of Thileepan's dying. The list of those who welcomed the Indian Red Cross included besides the L.T.T.E., many of the senior doctors, senior government officials and members of the Jaffna Citizens' Committee. The existence of a threat was not taken lightly. These and other persons in the administrative and academic elite who had earlier thought that their relationship with the L.T.T.E., though uncomfortable, was fair, were keeping their fingers crossed.

Thileepan died on Saturday, 26 September, the 12th day of his fast. On the same morning it had been announced that the negotiations had borne fruit. This may be an important reason why the death did not lead to an eruption. The crowd at the Nallur Kandasamy Kovil watched, tense but silent, as a doctor felt Thileepan's pulse. The doctor motioned Thileepan's father to cry. The people standing around were then urged to cry. The whole crowd wept. The tension was defused. Not a stone was thrown. Not a vehicle burnt. The moment of Thileepan's exit was touchingly dignified. Old Gandhians who had thought that non-violence was dead were profoundly moved. They even started saying confidently that Thileepan was different from the rest. He was not responsible for acts of violence, they added. The solemn manner in which the crowd received the news of his death, they hoped, was a sure sign that the Tamils had turned back to the old Gandhian way of non-violence. Thileepan's family too almost certainly believed this. They contacted an old Gandhian to write an appreciation. It was gladly done and it echoed these sentiments. It seemed bad taste to strike a discordant note. Even those whose experience of Thileepan had not been of the pleasant kind

would not say otherwise. Whether a voluntary act, an act of supreme obedience or an act of unprobed complexity, Thileepan's death excited awe. Perhaps, many in torture cells had died more painful and more heroic deaths, even in militant ruled Jaffna. But publicity made the difference. Columnists in the South who were no friends of the L.T.T.E.'s, could not resist a hint of admiration. Lucien Rajakarunayake writing in the Sunday Times of 4 October, 1987, compared Thileepan favourably with the chauvinists of the South who were eternally promising to shed the last drop of their blood before the first in the cause of Sinhalese supremacy, all the way down from the days of the Bhasa Twins - Jayasuriya and Rajaratne. Lucian Rajakarunayake went on:

"I do not agree with Thileepan's cause, nor have I ever agreed with the similarly motivated causes of most others on this side who have threatened death fasts or begun great walks for peace with lottery tickets on the sideline. However, one cannot help but be impressed by the extent of political dedication, even misguided, when a slow death is courted by one, when others are satisfied watching the other man's son die for the success of their selfish slogans.

"Mind you, if the Sinhalese begin to ask their politicians and other racial champions, who make such loud noises and promises of sacrifice on public platforms, if they are prepared to go half the distance Thileepan went in hunger, it may help get rid of the political poseurs who strut about in the garb of Sinhalese heroes, and by the curious identification of the majority only with the nation, as national heroes, as well."

When the agreement reached between India and the L.T.T.E. was announced on Monday, 28 September, after obtaining the Sri Lankan President's concurrence, it had little to say on the 5 demands put forward over Thileepan's fast. The membership of the interim council was increased from 8 to 12 and the L.T.T.E.'s representation increased from 3 to 7, giving it a majority. The L.T.T.E. agreed in writing to submit 15 names, including 3 for the chairman, from which the President of Sri Lanka would choose the required number. The people were relieved.

Why then did Thileepan die? That was a question for which no satisfactory explanation could be found. From the point of view of Tamils as a whole, the actual results were hardly a gain. Even in the council of 8 proposed earlier, the Tamils would have been in the majority, amongst whom there would have been a convergence of views on key issues. The difference in the new agreement was a majority for the L.T.T.E. by itself, until the mandatory elections were held. The only concrete achievement was a demonstration by the L.T.T.E. that its power to sour things for anyone choosing to act without its consent was hardly to be scoffed at.

Thileepan had not suddenly changed to non-violence. He was very much a part of the violent scene, as leader of the political wing of the L.T.T.E. in Jaffna. But he was a dedicated L.T.T.E. man who had spent the prime of his life in its service. It would be truly remarkable if he had knowingly thrown away his life for such meagre returns. Jaffna is a place where cynicism has reigned for so long that nothing is taken at face value. There have been several cases of persons in militant groups who had become frustrated and who simply carried on for the lack of an alternative, caring little whether they lived or died. There are those who would assume that Thileepan was one of them. A more plausible explanation coming from some others is that when the fast was undertaken, Thileepan was not told that he would die. Even if nothing was coming in the way of response to the demands, Prabhakaran could solemnly call off the fast in deference to the wishes of the people. Once Thileepan had started fasting on a public platform, he had little control over events. Whatever he wished, the decision was left to others.

It is perhaps uncharitable to speculate on the motives of dead men. Whatever was in Thileepan's mind, the cynicism of others cannot be discounted. On the testimony of those who

knew Thileepan, he was certainly capable of sacrificing himself for a cause in which he believed. He was certainly not a non-violent man. As late as 2 July, 1987, Thileepan took part in a lamp-post killing at Urumpirai junction. During the fast he gave expression to the L.T.T.E.'s religious creed. Thileepan was seriously wounded in the abdomen during the Vadamaratchi operation. It is known that, at least after this, he was emotionally sensitive.

Shortly before his final fast, Thileepan went to the Eelanadu office to complain about an editorial which had said: "Whether the Elephant comes or the Tiger comes, the Accord must be implemented." The elephant is the symbol of the ruling party, U.N.P.. The senior person who was on duty that night told him with some force: "You have misunderstood this. You know the editor is a reasonable and highly respected man who was principal of your old school (Jaffna Hindu College). If you talk to him, he will explain things to you." Thileepan stared at the ground for some time. He then exclaimed: "Do not crush us," and walked away. This encounter betrayed a feeling amongst the Tigers that the Tamil people who once gave them flattering devotion were now distancing themselves - hence the need for desperate measures. The Thileepan of September 1987 was not the same Thileepan who stood four square at the University during a peace meeting in mid 1986, arrogantly insisting on the paramountcy of the L.T.T.E.. His words had then come not from the logic of Tamil unity or Tamil well being, but from the logic of power. Given this new emotional sensitivity, how did changes within the L.T.T.E. affect him? A journalist who was Thileepan's class mate at Jaffna Hindu College and also knew Yogi who was a little senior to them both, had this to say: "Thileepan was from the time I knew him, a man with dedication. He did fully believe in the cause of the Tamil militancy." This journalist, who is not an L.T.T.E. sympathiser, had little doubt that Thileepan died more or less voluntarily. Yogi's association with the L.T.T.E. in London was relatively brief. His main asset was that he was the elder brother of the late Kugan, Prabhakaran's deputy, whom Prabhakaran trusted completely. Unlike Yogi, Thileepan had been on the ground during a difficult period and had served loyally for a long time. Those who would like to pin on Thileepan, the image of an orthodox Gandhian martyr or even that of the unquestioning obedient servant, would probably do him injustice as a human being with human feelings. Amongst ordinary people, there was much sympathy for Thileepan and not all of it was complimentary to Prabhakaran. However, Thileepan was soon to be forgotten amidst other events.

9.3 Towards Confrontation

The L.T.T.E. expressed dissatisfaction when it submitted fifteen names for the interim council and the President made his choice. Mr. N. Pathmanathan, Additional Government Agent, Trincomalee, whom the L.T.T.E. had named as its first choice for the chairmanship of the Interim Council was dropped in favour of Mr. C.V.K. Sivagnanam, Municipal Commissioner, Jaffna. Amongst those remaining there was no one from the Eastern Province, although the L.T.T.E. had submitted the name of an Eastern Province Muslim and others from the East amongst the 7 leading names. Mr. Sivagnanam, reportedly under pressure, sent a letter turning down the appointment. It appeared to most Tamils that the President had made his choice in such a way as would alienate the Tamils and Muslims in the East from the northern Tamils. Moreover, N. Pathmanathan was an experienced and competent administrator. Mr. Sivagnanam's main achievement was to perform the demanding task of being the government's commissioner in an L.T.T.E. dominated Jaffna. He seldom displeased anyone, was not known for any particular principled stand, but had a mind of his own on certain matters. He could move with decision where his own ambitions could be made to fit the aims of the powerful interest groups he had to contend with. To many, the manner in which the

L.T.T.E. looked upon his appointment, was a revelation about its relationships with public men.

N. Pathmanathan had been released from prison on 2 September, 1987, after being detained for 45 months under the prevention of terrorism act. He was a Grade 1 C.A.S. (Ceylon Administrative Service) officer who had served as the Additional Government Agent, Trincomalee under a Grade 2 Sinhalese officer. He was arrested in December 1983 and was notified of his charge more than 2 years later. The charge was peculiar to the P.T.A. and did not involve any first or second hand criminal act. The crime involved was the alleged provision of help for some Tamil prisoners who had escaped from Batticaloa prison. Pathmanathan is said to have been in the know of some person who in turn was in the know of such help being given! Pathmanathan was not taken to trial. He was detained for much longer than the mandatory limit of 18 months in the hope that he would plead guilty. Pathmanathan was determined not to plead guilty to something he had not done. While in prison he studied law and interested himself in the welfare of other prisoners who were utterly innocent and were languishing in prison because the system moved clumsily and many of the prisoners did not have the money to do the needful. His determination was such that the government had to drop the charges and release him. A senior civil servant who had worked with Pathmanathan stated that, "he was an extremely intelligent man and a committed Tamil."

It is understandable that the President did not wish to elevate such a man to the chairmanship of the interim council. It is interesting that the same device of asking for a list of names in place of one nominee is used to avoid appointing inconvenient vice-chancellors of Universities. The Indian High Commissioner held that the L.T.T.E. was wrong to complain as the matter had been explained to them and they had agreed in writing. The Tamil public felt cheated. But the L.T.T.E. had little reason to complain. Many would contend that Mr. Dixit had taken for a ride a ragged group of fighting men who were innocent of legal matters. Such a charge would not hold water as the L.T.T.E. had all the legal advice it needed at its disposal. They had the services of two lawyers, one of whom at least was recognised as competent and experienced. Anton Balasingam had held an academic post in Philosophy in Britain. Yogi was a student in Britain. It is unbelievable that they were unable to sort out among themselves, the consequences of what the L.T.T.E. was putting down in writing. Mr. Dixit may not have been excessively polite towards the L.T.T.E.. He may have been overconfident that he could handle them, or perhaps he hid his uncertainties beneath a facade of contempt. It was natural that he should feel more at home with the Colombo elite, whose first language and background he shared. Understanding what motivated them, his success with them had been remarkable, even when his office changed from Ambassador to Proconsul. He had perhaps at least begun to understand the L.T.T.E. when he advised President Jayewardene against transporting the 17 L.T.T.E. captives.

It is in all likelihood unfair to accuse Mr. Dixit of conniving with President Jayewardene over the appointments to the Interim Council. It is far more likely that he did the job of a negotiator who was anxious to avoid trouble. An agreement already existed between India and the President on the composition and method of appointment. Mr. Dixit would have had to ask the President to concede a little more in agreeing to an L.T.T.E. majority. The President conceded this much with some stipulations about the method of appointment. When the L.T.T.E. objected to the President's choice, it is reliably learnt that the President agreed to the L.T.T.E. revising the list, giving them the option of securing a chairman from the East by submitting all three names from the East. However the President could have gone further. He had little to lose in agreeing to the L.T.T.E.'s intended nominees.

Such omissions by President Jayewardene far from absolve India from the unprincipled character of its overall handling of the Ceylon Tamil question which helped to bring about the current impasse. Dixit, however, had his share of responsibility in India's cynical use of Ceylon's Tamil problem. Then came an unexpected problem, not uncommonly encountered in such unprincipled dealings. The L.T.T.E. acquired an autonomy of its own -- shades of Bhindranwale and the Punjab. Relationships were already complicated by mistrust and mutual cynicism. When the government in Colombo agreed to fall in line, what was on offer was not enough for the L.T.T.E.. This was a problem that India seemed incapable of tackling competently. There are those who attach much importance to claims by the L.T.T.E. concerning verbal promises made by India. Prabhakaran reportedly claims that Rajiv Gandhi assured him that the L.T.T.E. could keep its arms after a token surrender of some arms. Another claim much talked about concerns Tamil Nadu minister Pandruti Ramachandran. He allegedly assured the L.T.T.E. that, although they would have to send in 15 names for the 7 seats on the interim council, the leading names would be selected. The second has been discussed earlier. As for the first, even if such a promise was made, the end result intended was clear. No armed group was eventually going to be tolerated. The L.T.T.E. could not have been mistaken about that. Given the present reputation of the Indian government, it cannot be put past Messrs. Gandhi and Ramachandran to have made such promises.

Other reports of a secret package agreed to between the L.T.T.E. and the Indian government surfaced in the London Observer of Sunday, 3 April, 1988. The report filed by Dhiren Bhagat from Colombo quoted Indian High Commissioner Mr. J.N.Dixit. It stated that funds amounting to 200,000 pounds sterling a month (Rs. 5 million) were to be paid to the L.T.T.E.. The funds were to be paid for the maintenance of L.T.T.E. members until normal life returned to war ravaged areas. The Jaffna peninsula was to receive Indian economic aid amounting to 43 million pounds sterling. The report quotes Mr. Dixit as having said that the monthly payment was made for the month of August (1987). The L.T.T.E. is said to have resumed secret talks with India on the subject of new financial arrangements. The initial agreement is said to have been reached between Prabhakaran and Rajiv Gandhi in New Delhi at the end of July 1987.

The same report quoted the L.T.T.E. spokesman in Madras as saying that the payment was part of a larger package of guarantees to secure his co-operation in implementing the Indo-Lanka Accord. The package of guarantees is said to have included: A majority of the L.T.T.E. in the interim Provincial Council; one billion rupees economic assistance to the Jaffna peninsula for rehabilitation to be undertaken by the L.T.T.E. dominated Interim Council; and help to form a Tamil Police Force after the establishment of the interim council. The L.T.T.E. spokesman had characterised this as a gentlemen's agreement with the Indians. One wonders why hundreds have to die while gentlemen played their pecuniary games. Whilst big money was being talked about in high places, ordinary civilians were being assassinated for innocuous and sometimes necessary dealings with the army of the same India. Some who got threatening notes were those who sold things such as tomatoes to soldiers for a few tens of rupees.

This report about the money sounds plausible as it fits into the general pattern of things and has been corroborated by Reuters and the Times of India. It may not amount to anything sinister as the press in the South tries to make out. It is not inconsistent with India's pledge to secure the L.T.T.E.'s compliance with the Accord. It makes it even more unlikely that India was set on a one track course to destroy the L.T.T.E.. India would certainly have kept several options open. Even after the war India kept making approaches to secure the L.T.T.E.'s

compliance. One could say with certainty that if the L.T.T.E. had moved to confess past errors and to seek a solid democratic base amongst the people, India would have found it prudent to leave them alone. That the L.T.T.E. had to look for its security in secret and undemocratic deals with a foreign power, rather than in the trust of the people was a sign of its weakness. This makes all that followed even more inexcusable.

Apologists for the L.T.T.E. like to pick on such straws in the wind as the events surrounding the deportation on 5 October, and represent these as turning points in the tragic drama resulting from Indian and Sri Lankan perfidy. But the fabric of the tragedy was woven by the intermingling of the failings of the different actors. Lying, deceit and massacres are its various threads. It would be mere caprice to represent isolated events as turning points.

Granted that the Indian and Sri Lankan states are flawed affairs; anyone who aspired to lead the Tamils must be judged very harshly if these flaws are held up as adequate grounds for knowingly flinging the entire Tamil community into the fire. In mitigation however, the L.T.T.E. is the product of a brutal world; a world where great leaders, men whose education and maturity entitle them to know far better, routinely use deceit and mass murder as legitimate forms of action. This can be seen in the American use of Contra rebels in Nicaragua and in the Soviet meddling and the shifting of sides in Eritrea. That President Reagan delegates authority to decide on murder and assassination to distant C.I.A. officials or proxies does not make him less of a murderer than a bandit who makes his own decisions. The same can be said of most big nations which observe little restraint in the way of law or principle when dealing with foreigners, especially by proxy. The R.A.W. cannot claim moral superiority over the Tamil militant groups. The fight against terrorism will be futile as long as the world's leaders play with terror when it suits them. The impressionable young minds of the L.T.T.E. were moulded by the cynicism and duplicity they encountered in their dealings -- with the T.U.L.F., the Tamil elite, and the Sri Lankan and Indian authorities. They concluded that the way to success was to outdo the others in these qualities. They realised unforeseen success and forgot the original cause. The Tamil people who could have exerted the corrective influence and have ensured that the right men became leaders were themselves lost and became directionless.

The uncertainty over the Interim Council lasted a few days. Most people hoped that the matter would get sorted out, at least by the L.T.T.E. accepting the present arrangement as a spring board for more. Then came the affair of the 17 detainees and the decision by the L.T.T.E. that Tamil Eelam should after all become a burning volcano.

9.4 The End of an Era.

The suicides of the twelve L.T.T.E. men in captivity have been dealt with separately. Amongst them were Kumarappa and Pulendran. There was every prospect that they would be released. The evidence seems to point that the decision the detainees should take cyanide was taken by the L.T.T.E.'s top leadership. This brings us to two questions. What motivated men like Kumarappa and Pulendran who had reached their height of influence and power to throw away their lives so lightly? The other question is, what do friendships with members of the L.T.T.E. really mean? The L.T.T.E. is not a democratic organisation. Its members are under an oath of personal loyalty to their leader Mr. Prabhakaran. This aspect of the organisation was strengthened over time by a process of elimination. Those democratically minded fell by the wayside, mostly by leaving the organisation. There is enough pressure on ex-members of the organisation to remain passive. Those with the organisational ability to challenge the L.T.T.E. must take even greater care. It is then to be expected that those currently in positions of leadership in the L.T.T.E. whether out of conviction or convenience take the oath of loyalty to their leader seriously. Over time the workings of the organisations have acquired religious, or even theological overtones. Conformity is also ensured by a system of policing where every man is said to be the other man's spy. Kumarappa was a man whose loyalty had been tested. When the L.T.T.E.'s Batticaloa leader Kadavul refused to take on the TELO, the L.T.T.E. had to rely on Kumarappa and Pottu. The smallest price to be paid for disobedience, for a person with no means, may be some abject retirement. To many, this may be worse than death.

One person who perhaps came closest to defying Prabhakaran was Kittu. His fate will long remain a matter of conjecture. This may, just perhaps, throw some light on the fates of Kumarappa, Pulendran and even Thileepan.

Going by human nature and the unusual requirements of the type of organisation the L.T.T.E. is, the importance of the system of policing together with rewards and punishments cannot be under-estimated. It has been frequently found that the conduct of individual L.T.T.E. members can vastly differ as individual persons and in a group. In the wake of the Indian offensive of October, those L.T.T.E. members who were isolated by their families were much readier to accept mediation and surrender. Many such persons surrendered. A clergyman involved in social work observed: "Several of the L.T.T.E. boys who have their families in Jaffna are handing over their arms to boys from outstation areas and are going to their families. Those from the outstations are moving about with the rest in isolated pockets not knowing what to do and out of communication with the leadership." One area leader in Jaffna gave hints of wanting to surrender. Fear of punitive action weighed heavily on his family. It was later reported that he fell in with some other members of his group and had left Jaffna. Parathan, a leading member of the L.T.T.E.'s television unit, was also regarded a hard man. Shortly before the Indian army's advance into Nallur, he was observed alone in the Kandasamy temple area. He was going from house to house and sometimes stopping motorcyclists on the road, pleading with the owners for the loan of a 200 CC motorcycle. If a vehicle had been required by the group, it could have been commandeered. Evidently, Parathan did not want it publicised that he was looking for a vehicle.

Malaravan, the former L.T.T.E. leader of Ariyalai, was seen in the wake of the Indian advance, nestling like a babe between his father and mother, in the back of a car parked in the precincts of Kandasamy Kovil. Malaravan became notorious after beating to death a civilian, Edward, in the Ariyalai camp in November 1986. It is very probable that Malaravan's fate could have been different had his parents not been near at hand. It was later reported the he was detained while being taken southwards to be sent abroad. The facility to go abroad is again crucial in decisions to be taken by dissatisfied militants. If many of the militants had been dissatisfied, it would have cost the Sri Lankan government only Rs. 0.2 billion out of its annual defence budget of 15 billion (1.3%) to provide 2000 militants with the maximum Rs. 1 lakh that each needed to go abroad. It gives one small aspect of the government's lack of imagination.

Without making unfair generalisations, like in any organisation, the motivations of those who joined it are widely different. In the case of the L.T.T.E. some would be motivated by ties of clan or thirst for power, others by romance and many by a burning hatred of the government for what it had done. Some joined just for a lark because others were doing it and the community had little to offer in making routine life worthwhile. Those most easily disillusioned are the ones who had the intention of doing some good to the community. Such persons are likely to have independent ideas and will be the least amenable to an oath of personal loyalty to the leader. It was pointed out that most of the staff and students from the University of Jaffna who joined the L.T.T.E. in the early 1980's dropped out. Prominent amongst them were Mr. and Mrs. Nithiyanandan. The only person left from that lot is Anton Sivakumar whose relationship with the L.T.T.E. is again chequered. The best L.T.T.E. members are those who are caught young with impressionable minds, with a simple joy in carrying a gun, a boyish thirst for romance and who have no parents capable of influencing the child and of being a nuisance to the child's career in the militancy. The latest additions are from amongst girls. Many Tamil girls have a gloomy future resulting from the breakdown of a society where women were dependent and where well above 100,000 young men have gone abroad. Numbers connected with the militancy were far less - about 15,000 at best. Amongst

girls, again, motivations vary widely. Those most amenable to romance and whose tenure is short are likely to come from secure middle class families. A large number of girls joined the L.T.T.E. from lower middle class families from rural areas such as Mullaitivu. These were from homes directly affected by Sri Lankan military action. It was Prabhakaran's genius to weld all these diverse motivations into an organisation where personal loyalty to him would be enforced. He had the imagination to study people and use even those doubting persons who would at least be formally independent. For some with literary talents, a smile and some kind and flattering words from Prabhakaran were enough to secure their loyal services.

As for friendships with the L.T.T.E., the evidence suggests that there was a very sincere element in many of them. The friendship Kittu and Rahim formed with Captain Kotelawala of the Ceylon army was genuine, and has gone on beyond its period of mere utility. Kittu once reportedly came under criticism for preventing an L.T.T.E. sniper from taking a pot-shot at Captain Kotelawala who was exposed while inspecting positions around the Fort. Subsequently Kittu's party is said to have been fired at by an army sniper. A senior L.T.T.E. leader once said that their relationship with Captain Kotelawala was based on their mutual appreciation of each other as professional soldiers. The close ties between Kittu and Rahim are again out of character for an organisation where loyalty to the leader comes first. The presence of both in Madras is regarded a kind of exile. Even after the strange affair of Kittu losing a leg, he proved his usefulness as a field commander in Jaffna during Operation Liberation where his mere presence was able to inspire morale which had been failing amongst the ranks. The ties even extended to family circles. Kittu's old mother from Valvettithurai, recently visited the family of Rahim's intended bride in Nallur. Rahim is the last remaining in the L.T.T.E. out of a group of 6 class-mates from St. John's College who joined in 1984; the last to leave went abroad in September 1986 after being the Karainager leader. Rahim's survival capacity is tied perhaps with his ability to avoid unpleasant subjects in conversation. He displayed a touching desire to keep in touch with old schoolmates when his application to join the St. John's College Old Boys Association came before the committee in October 1987. Kittu can be crude, vulgar and illogical (the logic of power that one sees in so many army officers) in his appearances, and very inconsiderate to commoners who fall foul. But the ties he sought with leaders in the South appear to have a genuine element. He had that kind of erratic emotional bent.

Amongst the many murdered while Kittu was in charge of Jaffna was the Jaffna P.L.O.T.E. leader, Mendis (Wijayapalan). Mendis was regarded as a friend of Kittu's and was killed after one month's captivity in January 1987 despite an assurance given to his family that he would not be harmed. Mendis is accused of having helped several persons wanted by the L.T.T.E. to escape to India. It is not known with certainty if the decision to kill Mendis came from Kittu or from above. But significantly, it took place within a few days of Prabhakaran's arrival in Jaffna. One may hazard the guess that it would have been out of character for Kittu to have treated Sinhalese visitors and prisoners in the way they were treated in September and October 1987. This last decision appears to have been taken between Prabhakaran, Balasingam and Mahattaya. Balasingam's influence in decision making may not be of great importance. But the personal need Prabhakaran has of him seems to have enabled him to safeguard his position. Balasingam, a former British High Commission employee, who later wrote a doctoral thesis on Hegel, was a teacher of political science at a British polytechnic. He could also converse ably on philosophical subjects. After July 1983 he moved to Madras with his Australian wife Adele to be full-time spokesman for the L.T.T.E.. His writings helped to give the L.T.T.E. a Marxist image. But his real function was far less flattering. In Prabhakaran's words, he was to "explain rather than to direct the course of armed struggle."

His real significance stemmed from an emotional need Prabhakaran had of him. The relationship was a stormy one. When drinking with friends in Madras, Balasingam would sometimes say, "Drink, friend, drink. There is little else you can do when you are in an outfit like this." When back on the job, his doubts would seem to vanish. His wife, a former member of the British Communist party, would sometimes agree when others expressed doubts about the state of things within the L.T.T.E., but after talking it over with her husband, she would come back with her doubts cleared.

Mahattaya had a childhood steeped in want. He is very much a loner and is not much of a public man. Mahattaya is once said to have had serious differences with Prabhakaran. These appear to have been patched up. Those who befriended him in old times can perhaps claim a hint of loyalty that did not quite approach friendship. He would be suspicious of the kind of ties formed by Kittu.

The ties of friendship between Kumarappa and Indian army officers again appear to be genuine. He married after the Accord and took his marital relationship seriously. The thought of death in such a relationship cannot be uppermost in a person's mind. His was no ordinary suicide, for he had cause to live. The day before he committed suicide, he told an Indian officer he counted as a friend: "You must see my wife today." That has the fatal ring of a man who cares for his wife, but must yet bow to an inexorable destiny. This perhaps demonstrates the nature of friendships with men in the L.T.T.E.. Many of them are human in the ordinary sense. But they are bound by an inexorable fate which draws them through either faith or fear - perhaps both.

This fate finds its embodiment in their leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. One aspect of his calls to mind some kind of subcontinental cult god whose mighty will commands the rise of devotees and later sends them obediently to their destruction. It is as though loyalty, and blind obedience are one and the same thing to him. A common error in presenting great figures of history is to glorify their military successes where they murdered hundreds of thousands of their fellow men, and describe their ultimate failure as incidental upon some miscalculation. Their seamy side and the destructive process it engendered are lost sight of as the real cause of failure. Napoleon on the one hand is the military genius, the victor of Austerlitz who with a wave of his hand rolled back the combined forces of Austria, Prussia, Russia and Britain. He was also the great actor who looking at the pyramids of Egypt surveyed 5000 years of history. What are we to make of his hasty, ignominious retreat from Moscow to Paris in record time in the winter of 1812, leaving his harried men to face the ravages of the Russian winter? By romanticising him we lose sight of the personal tragedy of the man, his spiritual emptiness, his uncertainties and the reassurances he sought in the way of securing power over other men. His mistake was not a misjudged attack on Russia. By 1810 France was already creaking under the load of militarisation.

Likewise one aspect of Mr. Prabhakaran's case is fascinating. Using unpromising material his will forged together a force, the L.T.T.E., which made the world sit up. A government in Colombo which treated the Tamil problem with derision in 1978 and savagery in 1983 was shaken to its foundations. In time New Delhi too became unsure. Washington took a keen interest. Where lesser mortals would have chosen to call it off, Prabhakaran persisted for greater gain. All this required a ruthless will to manipulate everything that came his way.

It was now the end of an era. A struggle that had, in its dawn, been fired by several noble ideals, and called forth courage and much sacrifice from young persons irrespective of group, had now reached a point where the community was powerless and voiceless. How long could a military force that claimed to represent them retain any degree of real autonomy with such a weak base ? In the interests of sheer survival, people would have to dispense with standards and ideals and become immune to the loss of life. In time, with children becoming militarised with hardly any voice raised from within the community, even the last links on our hold on civilisation are put into question.

What went wrong ? Had we been led by a casual acceptance of violence as a tool to disregard the value of all life ?

One last scene impresses itself on the mind. The scene was the playing field of the University of Jaffna at dusk on 13 October, 1987. The Indians had blundered a first landing near the University the day before. Sentries were now posted everywhere. A line of women stood with guns around the field. They epitomised the hopelessness that has beset many Tamil women. Their faces were blank as if they cared little whether they lived or died. They had little resemblance to Joan of Arc or to the Parisian women who stormed the Bastille. One of them said in a quiet voice that betrayed no emotion: "Please close the gate when you go." A tear was not out of place.

9.5 A Digression on the Forces of History

With all our limitations (not one of us among this group of writers is an academic historian) and with all our differences in views, we have in a way tried to do what Thucydides did for the Pelopponesian war 2500 years ago - the debilitating war between Athens and Sparta which ended Greek supremacy of the Mediterranean world. What we have offered is a series of reflections and accounts of our own situation. We too have to come to terms with a world that has been changed by these events. We hope we have offered something towards understanding these events and, thus, towards changing our lot for the better.

One debate that will go on is whether there is a form of armed struggle that will bring about freedom and democracy or if violence is to be entirely abhorred and the struggle is only to be towards creating (on a large scale) the personal virtues of honesty and a love for truth, together with a willingness to suffer for them. And if the latter, whether it is consistent to confine nonviolence to human beings only or if it should be extended to the animal kingdom as well. Those who admit the possible use of force would maintain that i. they are not advocating it for the love of it; ii. violence is part of the day to day reality of this world; and iii. it would be sheer irresponsibility to blind oneself to it and leave its use entirely in the hands of anti-social or criminal elements. Moreover they would say, that at the end of the day, the objective reality is determined by those who have the guns.

Those who disagree will say that there is a subjective element in judging the fruits of violence. Apart from the evils of war, there is also the long term damage to the psyche. There is also the question of the time frame. The idealism of Lenin gave way to the purges of Stalin - perhaps the largest act of mass murder in the history of mankind, exceeding even Hitler's acts against Jews. Did not the legitimacy given to the revolution by dedicated revolutionaries like Lenin, pave the way for the passive acceptance of the arbitrary acts of Stalin? Did the journey from Tsar Nicholas II to Mikhail Gorbachev have to pass through the purges of Stalin?

To this may come the reply that we are not in a position to sit back and judge history as though it could have been otherwise. It was made by those who grasped the opportunities of

the moment. There is always room for others to mismanage things later. We will be judged severely if we do not grasp the opportunities of our time and choose to run away from them.

It may then be replied that life has gone this far on the assumption that force is necessary. Its use has an honoured place in human culture. But misery has persisted and even increased, to a point that unless we can create a culture where force is outside normal reckoning, mass suicide may become a reality. What is absurd to human reason may become a reality in another realm. Perhaps a search for and the surrender to God may be the only option we have left. Are not after all, all the sophisticated theories of revolution leak-proofed to the point of becoming esoteric creations? They are never proved false because the initial conditions are somehow never right. Ask anyone who has lived through a revolution! In the academic world, a moral interpretation of history would be treated as naive. But this was the standpoint adopted by many historians through the ages who felt a burning desire to communicate what they believed to be the truth - down from the prophets of ancient Israel and Thucydides. In fact, F.M. Cornford, a widely respected Greek scholar has this to say in his essay titled *The Unconscious Element in Literature and Philosophy*: "Now this is not to say that Thucydides' philosophy of life is not, within its limits, a true philosophy - as true as any alternative our own minds may contribute. It may even be truer. Fourteen years ago, writing under the impression of the South African war (Boer war, 1898 - 1900), I may have overstressed the financial aspect of imperialism. Since 1914 (First World War) Thucydides' moral interpretation of history has seemed more profound." (*The Unwritten Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press).

Chapter 1

OCTOBER DAYS

1.1 Background to the Breakdown of the Accord

It was the tenth day of October 1987 as the curfew was being tolled. Dark billows appearing above the trees and a misty stillness foretold the oncoming rains. The last rays of the setting sun dimly pierced the western sky. There then appeared above, the graceful sight of wild-geese, our Russian winter guests, flying south in V-formation, to winter in the marshlands of peninsular Jaffna. The beauty of the darkening eve was not unmixed with grim foreboding. Our country had seen many tragedies in recent years. Many were hopeful that peace at last had a fighting chance with the signing of the July Accord. The sound of shells and bombs mangling civilians were deemed a thing of the past. But today the city had again reverberated to the sound of shell-fire, and the people once more were gripped by fear and uncertainty.

Many had watched with dismay the bizarre procession of events in the two months following the Accord. The inherent instability in the arrangements made it inevitable that the bubble should burst. For this reason, who fired the first shot in the hostilities that followed was a question of little importance. In the early hours of the morning, the I.P.K.F. had entered the premises of the Tamil newspapers Eelamurasu and Murasoli which they regarded as being close to the L.T.T.E.. After causing some damage, the I.P.K.F. took away several members of the editorial staffs and press workers. It was then announced that the two papers were sealed. The L.T.T.E. began to mobilise and its armed men were deployed around I.P.K.F. encampments. That afternoon firing was heard from near Jaffna Fort accompanied by the thud of exploding shells. Many said in disbelief: "It cannot be the Indian Army that is shelling us. It must be the Sri Lankan Army." It was announced on the radio that evening that the L.T.T.E. had fired on the I.P.K.F. at Jaffna Fort and in Tellipallai. Moreover, All India Radio's Madras station underlined the claim that the unit fired upon at Tellipallai had belonged to the Madras Regiment which, according to the same report, had suffered five casualties. Up to this time the I.P.K.F., which moved freely in the Jaffna peninsula, had visited several of the major L.T.T.E. camps. In the two months after the Accord, the I.P.K.F. should have had no difficulty in collecting all the information it wanted, were a surprise move against the L.T.T.E. in the offing. In fact, the I.P.K.F. had maintained a presence at the L.T.T.E.'s main camp opposite the University of Jaffna. What still puzzles many is the question why the I.P.K.F. should throw away its element of surprise in something so trivial as the closure of two newspapers and the confiscation of some television broadcasting equipment. With its man-power, technology and intelligence, there are so many ways in which the I.P.K.F. could have used the advantage of surprise with immense effect. Having alarmed the L.T.T.E., the I.P.K.F. waited for the L.T.T.E. to strike. This was the first sign that things had been terribly bungled. Worse was to come. The build up to the break down of the Accord has been described earlier.

On 4 October, seventeen L.T.T.E. men travelling in a boat were apprehended off Point Pedro by the Sri Lankan Navy. Those detained included the key L.T.T.E. leaders Mr. Pulendran and Mr. Kumarappa. The Sri Lankan Government claimed that these 17 were acting in breach of the Accord by transporting arms from Tamil Nadu and were also in breach of Sri Lankan immigration formalities. The L.T.T.E. on the other hand claimed that this group was transporting documents in the process of shifting their headquarters from Madras to Jaffna and argued that the question of immigration regulations did not arise, because their leaders had been flown between Madras and Jaffna by the I.P.K.F. without any formalities. The Trincomalee leader Mr. Pulendran had been accused by the Sri Lankan Government of being responsible for leading the massacre of 150 Sinhalese civilians during the unilateral cease fire declared by the Sri Lankan Government for the Sinhalese-Tamil New Year in April that year.

President J.R. Jayewardene spoke on the state television Rupavahini on two successive days. First he said that the 17 detained were smugglers and were not covered by the Accord. On the second night, he said that they were caught coming back from Tamil Nadu with arms and ammunition.

The Tigers further said that they were going in a slow boat (fishing trawler) from Jaffna to Tamil Nadu to bring back their furniture and equipment from their main Tamil Nadu office. They also claimed that they had asked the I.P.K.F. high-command in Jaffna to help them bring back the stuff, but their requests were ignored. They also say that only two of their men - Kumarappa (Jaffna commander) and Pulendran (Trincomalee commander) were armed: according to them, this was in keeping with the Accord, as provision had been made for the Tigers to retain arms for self-defence. It is significant that the state-owned Rupavahini did not display the arms and ammunition allegedly seized from the Tigers who were aboard the trawler.

When Lalith Athulathmudali, the National Security Minister, was asked by a journalist the purpose of detaining the Tigers, he had replied that he would bring them to Colombo just to make them pose before state-television cameras, and would then release them!

The Sri Lankan Government insisted on transporting the seventeen detainees who were held in Palaly to Colombo for questioning. The L.T.T.E. appealed to the Indian Government to prevent this. According to press reports the I.P.K.F. and the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. J.N. Dixit, did exert considerable pressure on the Sri Lankan Government to prevent the transport of the detainees. Mr. Dixit said later during a B.B.C. interview that knowing the L.T.T.E., he had warned the Sri Lankan Government of the consequences that may follow from such a course of action. The Sri Lankan Government persisted and a decision was taken to fly the detainees to Colombo on the evening of 5 October. It was later reported that the detainees swallowed cyanide as they were about to be taken on board the aeroplane and that twelve of them, including Kumarappa and Pulendran, had succumbed. The question arises, how did these detainees come into possession of cyanide? It can be assumed that the initial routine search of the persons detained would have deprived them of the cyanide capsules carried around their necks.

The mystery may not be that hard to solve. It was reported that the detainees were taken lunch at 2:00 p.m. on that fateful day by the L.T.T.E.'s deputy leader Mr. Sri Mahattaya in the company of its chief theoretician, Mr. Anton Balasingam. According to a senior official of the I.P.K.F. until the last minute Indian troops were preventing Sri Lankan soldiers at Palaly from taking the detainees into an aeroplane. Around 4:30 p.m., a call came from New Delhi to abandon the efforts and let things take their course. According to this same source, Kumarappa had told him the previous day in a tone of urgency: "You must see my wife today." This suggests that a battle of brinkmanship had been taking shape for at least a day.

Given in Appendix II is an extract from a report in Colombo's Sunday Times of 1 October, 1989. This again confirms that the I.P.K.F. was extremely concerned about what might follow if the detainees died. General Rodriguez of the I.P.K.F. had tried everything short of actual force to get the Sri Lanka Army to release the detainees. The stubbornness and a lack of concern for the consequences on Colombo's part, suggests that a section of the Sri Lankan authorities was using the opportunity to trip the I.P.K.F. into a military confrontation with the L.T.T.E..

While the U.N.P. was westward looking in its economic policies, the signing of the Accord brought into the open a power struggle within the U.N.P.. A faction which included Gamini Dissanayake and Ronnie de Mel, supported the Accord. A faction which included Premadasa, and had wanted links with the West to go even further, showed evident displeasure. Premadasa had once promoted Sri Lankan membership of A.S.E.A.N., the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Western aid and training too had been crucial to the Sri Lankan defence establishment in fighting the Tamil insurgency. While there was no ideological quarrel between these two factions, the failure of the Accord would have meant much to vested interests within the U.N.P. as well as the defence establishment. It is also remarkable that, later, in 1989, the Sri Lankan state under Premadasa and the L.T.T.E. should find common cause against the Indian presence.

1.2 The Night of Shame

During the night that followed there took place some events that every son of Jaffna should be deeply ashamed of. Eight Sinhalese soldiers were being held captive by the L.T.T.E., from pre-Accord battles. No one doubted that their release was imminent. The relatives of some of these soldiers had appealed to the L.T.T.E.. The father

of one of them, a peasant from Galle, had appealed to a prominent Roman Catholic clergyman with connections in Jaffna, after several futile efforts at appealing to the Minister for National Security. On the 6th morning, the blind-folded corpses of these eight soldiers were found dumped in the city's main bus-stand with bullet wounds.

At the time, Mr. Jayamanne, the General Manager (G.M.) and Mr. Gajanayake, the Deputy G.M. of Lanka Cement Ltd. (or L.C.L.) were in Jaffna for the recommissioning of L.C.L.'s plant at K.K.S.. The plant had been closed on 22 April when an L.T.T.E. attack on K.K.S. harbour had resulted in the deaths of 18 Sri Lankan troops and the reprisal killing of five L.C.L. employees by the Sri Lankan Army. Seventy other employees then working at the harbour were saved by the timely action of a ship captain, a Sinhalese, who, fearing reprisals by Sri Lankan troops, promptly took them aboard his ship and put out to sea. The two cement plants at K.K.S. suffered considerable damage during the shelling of the subsequent months. In an unprecedented move which earned him the gratitude of the employees, Mr. Jayamanne took the lead in ensuring that even the casual employees of the two cement plants were paid during the long period of closure. Even those who did not agree with his methods of management, respected him as an able and enthusiastic engineer. On the previous day, Mr. Jayamanne had seen off some C.E.B. (Ceylon Electricity Board) engineers whom he had persuaded to come to Jaffna in order to commission a new transformer for L.C.L.. Mr. Jayamanne was amongst those Sinhalese who believed that Jaffna had a great future following the Indo-Lanka Accord. He was hopeful of restarting the L.C.L. plant the following day.

On the 5th night, Jayamanne and Gajanayake were having a friendly after-dinner chat with several colleagues, including engineers Sothilingam, Velayutham and Arivalagan at the L.C.L. guest house. Around mid-night several armed men burst into the guest house and wanted to take Jayamanne and Gajanayake away. Their colleagues protested. Velayutham who protested strenuously was badly assaulted. Jayamanne and Gajanayake were finally taken away and their dead bodies were found opposite the Cement Corporation gates the following morning.

There was a great deal of anger and sorrow at the two cement works at K.K.S.. They badly wanted to issue a protest leaflet condemning the killings of Mr. Jayamanne and Mr. Gajanayake and to send condolence messages to their families. But this desire was outweighed by fear. There were informers about and no one wished to be identified as being amongst the leaders of such a move. One leaflet purportedly issued by the cement workers expressed sorrow at the deaths of the twelve L.T.T.E. men. No mention was made of the murdered Sinhalese.

Another person murdered on the 5th night was an elderly Sinhalese baker who re-started his bakery at Chunnakam after the Accord. An A.G.A. (Assistant Government Agent) recounted his meeting with this baker. On that occasion he had been in his office when he was approached by a man with a bowed head. He had obviously suffered much hardship. This man addressed him as Mahattaya (meaning Sir). The A.G.A., surprised at hearing Sinhalese being spoken in Jaffna, listened to this man's tale. He said that he had to abandon his premises at Chunnakam and move south after the 1983 riots. Being a small holder he had no other means of livelihood and had no alternative but to come back and re-start his trade at Chunnakam. The A.G.A. was very much grieved at the killing of such a harmless man.

What follows is the account of the killing of a Sinhalese police officer at Valvetithurai (V.V.T.) on the 5th night as related by a professional resident there. Following the reopening of the Valvetithurai Police Station after the Accord, certain Sinhalese police officers used to pay evening visits to the local bar to drink and to fraternise. One such police officer was present at the bar on the 5th night. At about 8 p.m., Soosai, the Vadamaratchi leader of the L.T.T.E. and another person entered the bar and started assaulting the police officer mercilessly. He was then dragged out and was beaten to death with a wooden pole. The following day L.T.T.E. sources attributed this and the other killings of Sinhalese to the "people," who they said had become angry over the suicides of the twelve L.T.T.E. men. But the people of V.V.T. were deeply hurt that they were being held responsible for such an inhuman act.

Indeed, the Jaffna dailies attributed these killings to unknown persons. These were followed by a spate of killings of Sinhalese civilians in the Eastern Province. Thirty five long term Sinhalese residents of Batticaloa were gunned down. A land mine explosion killed Batticaloa's S.T.F. chief Nimal Silva. Mr. Antonymuthu (Government Agent, Batticaloa) who was travelling in the same vehicle was also killed. The B.B.C. reported that in the days that followed, a total of about 200 Sinhalese civilians were killed.

These events must be viewed in the context that shortly after the Accord, the L.T.T.E.'s deputy leader Mr. Sri Mahattaya told the Weekend, a national newspaper, that the Sinhalese civilians were welcome to visit Jaffna and

that no harm would befall them. Thus many Tamils in Jaffna regarded these killings as a breach of hospitality. It must also be kept in mind that many Sinhalese who visited Jaffna after the Accord did so with a feeling that the Tamils were fellow countrymen who had been wronged and that it was time for them to understand the Tamils and to build bridges. Especially many women felt that it was very wrong to have killed those soldiers who had been fed with their own hands for several months. In another development four members of the Rupavahini (the state television station) crew were abducted in Jaffna and were presumed killed. A lecturer in English and his bride, both Tamils, who were spending their honeymoon at Subash Hotel were rudely awakened by armed men who were going room by room looking for Sinhalese.

One may ask, if Mr. Dixit did foresee the consequences resulting from an attempt to transport the detainees, why did he not use his authority to act decisively to prevent such an attempt as he very well could have? According to the I.P.K.F. official quoted earlier, the order to abandon efforts to prevent the transport of detainees had come from New Delhi. This means the decision did not rest with Mr. Dixit, suggesting that New Delhi was preparing to take its gloves off. And then, having got most of what it wanted at the time of Mr. Thileepan's death, why did the L.T.T.E. take such an unexpected course? Perhaps, the Indians were becoming tired of a role where they had to be constantly arguing with two sides, both of whom were in some way dissatisfied with the Accord.

The decision that the seventeen L.T.T.E. detainees should commit suicide together with the killings of Sinhalese from the night of 5 October, was an open challenge to the Accord. The Indian Government was already under pressure, being accused of inaction in the face of a drifting situation. If the Indian Government still did nothing, it would have been accused of badly letting down the Sri Lankan Government which had risked a good deal on the Accord which India was to implement.

The Indian Defence Minister, Mr. K.C. Pant, and the Indian Army Chief of Staff, Mr. Krishna Sunderji, promptly arrived in Colombo. The Ceylon Daily News of 9 October announced in its headlines that the I.P.K.F. was to launch a terminal campaign against the L.T.T.E.. Few will disagree that India was called upon to act. What is in question is the manner in which it acted and the tragic consequences that ensued. These will be dealt with in a separate chapter.

We note here that one conspiracy theory that gained a certain amount of popularity with Tamils was to the effect that President Jayewardene was such a cunning man, who having signed the Accord with India, played his cards with consummate skill - so much so, that it culminated in the suicides of twelve L.T.T.E. men, thus trapping India into taking on the Tamils. India, the theory proceeds to maintain, was cleverly trapped by President Jayewardene into doing a job which the Sri Lankan forces could not do. It is understandable that President Jayewardene, out of office since December 1988, should promote the first theory.

The weakness in conspiracy theories is that there are so many unknowns in human affairs that it is easy enough to invent another conspiracy theory which says quite the opposite. It can, for instance, be maintained that the Indians acted so cleverly, that upon finding the Sinhalese and Tamils of Ceylon such volatile and unreliable negotiating partners, the Indians trapped them into blundering themselves into corners. Thus the acceptance of Indian suzerainty became the only way out for them both. Quite apart from possible roles by vested interests, developments in the Tamil region by themselves, had already put the Accord into trouble.

The overwhelming evidence of events is that no party to the conflict possessed the delicate skill or means, by which to control events or even to fulfil its stated intentions. In statements issued soon after the Accord of 29 July, the Chief of the Indian Army's Southern Command, Lt. Gen. Depinder Singh, gave the impression that he had the means to disarm the L.T.T.E. with consummate skill if the need arose. The loss of life and property that followed in the wake of the Indian Army's action which commenced on 10 October, left the impression of a hacksaw having been used where fine surgery had been promised. The Indian Embassy which had been a severe critic of the Sri Lankan Government's military campaign in the Tamil areas, especially the shelling and bombing of the civilian population, was left reacting to events rather than dictating them when the Indian Army used similar methods.

Chapter 2

INDIA'S ROLE - AN OVERVIEW

2.1 Expectations about India's Role

In the weeks that followed the agony of the July 1983 racial violence, almost the entire population of the Tamils of Ceylon turned to India for protection. India responded to the crisis by first sending its Foreign Minister Narasinha Rao and then its special envoy Gopalaswamy Parthasarathy, to negotiate a settlement between the Government and the Tamil representatives. In the Sunday Times of 16 August, 1987, Mr. Neelan Tiruchelvam (T.U.L.F.) had praised the scholarly and painstaking efforts of Mr. Parthasarathy's which were combined with disarming courtesy. The substance of the proposals drafted by Mr. Parthasarathy in consultation with President Jayawardene and accepted by the President was contained in the document known as Annexure C. Later, the President had other ideas and went back on these proposals. These proposals with variations have represented India's stand. The same family of ideas form the fabric of the December 19th proposals and finally the accord of 29 July, 1987. All these have envisaged provincial councils with substantial powers over law, education and policing devolved to them. The tricky issues over which considerable time continues to be spent, centre around the question of land-settlement on which the Tamils have well-founded fears. Everyone knows that India also had certain foreign policy interests in Ceylon. A commitment to non-alignment had served Sri Lanka well where relations with India were concerned. But friction had been created by the Jayawardene Government's tilting towards the West. India would also like to ensure that no hostile power would use the natural harbour at Trincomalee. These were not grudged. The Tamils were confident that India would never let them down. Up to this point no one had anything but good words for India's efforts.

In the wake of July 1983, together with refugees, a substantial number of militant recruits were also heading towards Tamil Nadu, the latter for training. This was India's second front in the event of the negotiations failing. Today's problems originate from the manner in which this front was handled.

Shortly after agreeing to Mr. Parthasarathy's proposals, Lalith Athulathmudali was appointed minister for the new Ministry of National Security in January 1984. Defence expenditures soon escalated to the region of U.S. \$ 300,000,000, or 15 to 20% of the national budget. It soon became clear that Sri Lanka had moved closer to the West, making new arrangements with western powers, in a fresh bid to find a military solution to its Tamil problem. Though Ceylon had severed diplomatic links with Israel in 1970, an Israeli Interests Section was established on the U.S. Embassy premises in Colombo in 1984. The Israeli agencies Mossad and Shin Bet, which specialised in under-cover and intelligence operations, began helping the Sri Lankan forces (as described in the article by Jane Hunter in *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, May 1986). Keeny Meeny Services (K.M.S.), an off-shore British security firm, made available former S.A.S. men to train Sri Lanka's notorious Special Task Force (S.T.F.). The contention by British officials that this was a purely commercial arrangement between a private firm and the Sri Lankan government, was taken to be merely for the sake of formality. Pakistani instructors became involved in training, both in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the Black Shirts (a unit of the Sri Lanka Army in black uniform) and Home Guard units. The training of the Black Shirts, popularly known as the Black Devils, reportedly involved teaching them to look upon Tamils as enemies. This was reflected in the utter devastation of Tamil villages in the Trincomalee District where they were deployed.

Central to these arrangements was evidently, the role of the United States. President Ronald Reagan's envoy General Vernon Walters, who later was to be the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., arrived in Colombo in December 1984 and is reported to have had talks with President Jayewardene and Lalith Athulathmudali. With India providing succour to the Tamil militants, it appeared as though a proxy war was being fought in Ceylon between Indian and Western interests, from 1984 to mid-1987. This period also marked the beginning of the proliferation of state sponsored paramilitary forces in Sri Lanka, a process that had a momentum of its own.

However, Tamils in Ceylon were generally confident that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was equal to meeting the deceitfulness of the Sri Lankan regime. It is said that when the T.U.L.F. leader, Mr. Amirthalingam, received news of her assassination when he was at the Jaffna Railway Station in October 1984, he was rendered speechless for several minutes. Her death was perhaps mourned with greater intensity in Jaffna than anywhere else. Be that as it may, except for a change in style, it would be erroneous to suppose that Indian policy changed substantively after Mrs. Gandhi. The Tamil leadership, both T.U.L.F. and militant, did however feel treated less respectfully by India following her demise. This treatment might have had serious negative consequences in the long term, particularly in Indian dealings with the L.T.T.E..

The present mood amongst the Tamils of Ceylon is one of bewilderment over India's conduct during the war of October 1987. The pain and shock of mental disillusionment with India has been only slightly less than those from the physical suffering. People could hardly believe their ears as the Indians shelled them from land and air. "Perhaps", they said, "this shelling is only a misguided preliminary. The Indian soldiers are different from Sri Lankan soldiers. They will be reasonable once they come." This hope too was tragically disappointed as hundreds were shot dead for no other reason than that they were in a place where the Indian troops were angry.

When people expressed their feelings to Indian army officers and asked why this happened, they were told: "This is war; we have lost three hundred men. Be happy that you are alive and think about the future." When people say: "India said she was sending her troops to protect us. But now, as a result of Indian Army action we have lost many of our children, fathers and mothers, as well as our houses and goods.", they are told in response: "These things happen in war, there is nothing we can do." The results of Indian involvement are clearly different from what the world expected.

It is well to look into the persistent criticism made by the Indian government against the military action of the Sri Lankan government in the Tamil areas. Every time there was civilian suffering amongst the Tamils as a result of the Sri Lankan government's military action, India was unflinching in expressing her concern. The Sri Lankan Government's military action culminated in the shelling and bombing of the civilian population, shelling of hospitals, the killing of patients, massacres of civilians, torture and the displacement of populations. All these were again and again roundly condemned by India. The case against the Sri Lankan Government has been pursued at the U.N. Human Rights Sub-commission by India. The Prime Minister of India has repeatedly warned the Sri Lankan government against its attempts at a military solution of the ethnic question, stressing that only a political solution would be viable. The Indian government exerted pressure, on humanitarian grounds, on the Sri Lankan government to prevent it from closing Jaffna Hospital. The Indian air drop of relief supplies to Jaffna on 4 June 1987 and the supply of food to Jaffna's residents by the Indian Red Cross were publicly motivated by the sufferings of numerous refugees following the Sri Lankan Government's Vadamaratchi operation.

It was clear to the international community that the role envisaged for the I.P.K.F. (Indian Peace Keeping Force) in Ceylon was a most unusual one. Though legal technicalities were satisfied, the wide-spread feeling remained that Ceylon's national independence and sovereignty were put into question. Yet the international community welcomed this arrangement, mainly for the reason that they felt that the Sri Lankan Government was unable to solve this problem. It lacked the will to solve it and, because of the immense human suffering it had caused, it lacked the moral right to try again. Thus the international community expected far higher standards of India and expected India to solve the problem competently, without resort to methods similar to those of the Sri Lankan government. Indian spokesmen, including Lieutenant General Depinder Singh, Chief of the Southern Command, gave the impression that if the need arose they possessed competent means to retrieve arms from the L.T.T.E. (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). Moreover India's coming to Ceylon as a peace keeping force was expected to place restraints on her mode of operation. Her men were expected to be thoroughly disciplined and sensitive to civilian problems.

It was clearly unacceptable that the I.P.K.F. should fire shells into civilian populated areas. When questioned, Indian officers would say that if they are ordered to take a town they must first shell it, adding that we civilians are ignorant of military methods. We feel here that such a stand-point is unacceptable in terms of what was expected of a peace keeping force and in terms of India's oft repeated sentiments on the matter. The shelling seldom affected or intimidated the L.T.T.E.. The victims were almost always civilians.

Apart from the expectations of the international community and the Tamils, such use of its fire power by the I.P.K.F. must also be seen in the context of a remark made by the Prime Minister of India in early 1987, when questioned by the Press as to whether the situation in Sri Lanka had any resemblance to that in the Punjab. The Prime Minister of India replied, that unlike the Government of Sri Lanka, the Government of India had neither

shelled nor aerielly bombarded its own civilian population. India's moral right to intervene in Sri Lanka was based on the expectation that it would fulfil obligations, which the Sri Lankan Government could not keep towards Tamil civilians.

2.2 India and the Militants

It is generally known that senior members of militant groups were resident in Tamil Nadu. The repeated claim by the Sri Lankan government and the international press was that the militants were receiving both arms and training through India. India's position has been that she had only Tamil refugees. However the Sri Lankan government took its claim seriously and attached the highest importance to sealing off the Palk Straits by strengthening and deploying its navy. Several militant leaders and expatriate Tamils have been frank about the links the Indian government and its intelligence agency R.A.W. had with militant groups. Such relationships ignore moral considerations and are governed by mutual cynicism. Each thought it was using the other.

Amongst the Tamil civilians in Ceylon, there was the uncomfortable feeling that they did not really matter and were merely pawns in the game. Still people generally expected high standards from India. More doubts emerged as the result of the conduct of the Indian police and the Tamil Nadu government over internal killings in India. Accounts of torture and killings by the P.L.O.T.E. of its own members, many of whom had qualms of conscience, emerged in many prominent Indian newspapers around early 1985. These killings had taken place on Indian soil. The matter was ignored by the police. Such experiences with the Indian police were many. To give two instances, Mr. Santhathiar, a prominent P.L.O.T.E. dissident, was murdered by members of the P.L.O.T.E. in Tamil Nadu. The police took no action when a report was made by Mr. A. David, a senior architect from Ceylon. Subsequently, an influential Tamil expatriate in London telephoned a businessman-friend in Tamil Nadu, who in turn contacted Mr. Somasundaram, a minister in the State Government. It was after all this that the accused was taken in, only to be released later. Another case is that of Ruban who left the L.T.T.E. for reasons of conscience and became involved in refugee work. One day in late 1984, he was walking in the company of friends when he was accosted by members of the L.T.T.E.. They proceeded to beat him to death. No action was taken when a well known figure reported the matter to the Tamil Nadu Police. It is relevant here that the militant leaders, especially Mr. Prabhakaran of the L.T.T.E. and Mr. Uma Maheswaran of the P.L.O.T.E. moved in the highest circles in South India and their organisations were well-funded. Reports have persistently surfaced in the press linking some of the militant groups with the narcotics trade. The latest was a report by the London Sunday Times' investigation team linking the L.T.T.E. prominently with this trade [Sunday Times (London) 30 August 87]. It was clear that the process of the law in India had been interfered with to an extent that many countries would have considered intolerable, for reasons of expediency. What this will mean for India in the long run is another question.

The Sri Lankan Government and the international community were publicly aware that India was using the Tamil militant groups to twist the Sri Lankan Government's arm. Informed observers in Jaffna were aware that the L.T.T.E. could obtain enough arms to keep the Sri Lankan Army at bay and no more. It was unable to obtain anti-aircraft weapons. The gift by Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister, Mr. M.G. Ramachandran, of £3 million to the L.T.T.E. and £1 million to the E.R.O.S. for "refugee work" soon after the Sri Lankan Government's "Operation Liberation", is another case in point. Considering that there were several institutions more experienced in refugee work, this was generally treated as a gesture of support for the L.T.T.E. and the E.R.O.S. having the blessings of the Indian Government. This was hinted at by the B.B.C.'s Mark Tully.

During the two months after the Indo-Sri Lanka accord of 1987, the I.P.K.F. isolated itself from the public. But some of its senior men had close relations with the L.T.T.E. high ranks. There was even a social life of sorts. A colonel in the I.P.K.F. once talked of having attended the wedding of the L.T.T.E.'s Kumarappa, who committed suicide when he was about to be transported to Colombo. At the wedding he had presented the bride with a sari. He also reflected with some sadness on how the L.T.T.E. leaders used to bring them gifts of prawns and other seafood, and went on to show photographs taken on the beach where he was present. Amongst the L.T.T.E. leaders in the photograph were Mahattaya and Kumarappa.

2.3 Scenes from the October 1987 War

In Karainagar, a crowd was watching the England Versus India test cricket match on a television screen supplied by a generator, because the electricity had been cut. The following day, 5 November, an Indian helicopter shelled the area killing eleven persons. This raid seems to have been carried out on the basis of the flimsy, uncorroborated speculation that passed for intelligence. The shelling of Chavakachcheri town was similar. The town was shelled from an Indian helicopter at mid-day on 27 October, 1987. The market area where the shells fell was full of ordinary people and refugees from further north. According to Mr. S.G. Deva, an eye-witness, there was nothing in the area at that time to distinguish it as an L.T.T.E. target. Between twenty and forty persons were killed. A dead mother was hugging her dead child and a piece of shrapnel had entered through her body and pierced the child she was carrying. According to a traveller who passed through Chavakachcheri market an hour before the aerial shelling, he had seen a Datsun pick-up mounted with a 50 calibre machine gun and armed L.T.T.E. men moving slowly through the market. He had remarked to some friends that there would be trouble as an Indian observation helicopter had been around. This however does not justify the action taken an hour later. Refugees who were waiting to go south at Sangupitty jetty were fire-bombed from a helicopter on 25 October. An eye-witness account appeared in the Sunday Times of 1 November. It may be noted that refugees fleeing the Sri Lankan Army's "Operation Liberation" in May 1987 were not molested in this way. A similar tragedy overtook several people attempting to get across to the Islands from the Araly jetty on 22 October. Seventeen were reported killed when boats carrying civilians were fired upon from the air.

On 3 November Mrs. Lily Rajah and three of her grandchildren, two boys and a girl were shot dead while being taken by the I.P.K.F., in front of the residence of the Solomons on the Maruthanamadam Road at Uduvil. There had been no provocation. According to one source, an I.P.K.F. officer had shouted: "Stop it". But by then it was too late. The two sons-in-law of the Solomons who had been called out were let off after the family pleaded on their knees.

From November onwards there were reported an increasing number of cases of rape, molestation and theft, by men from the I.P.K.F.. When soldiers were doing a search at Karanthan, near Urumpirai, they came upon a house where all the occupants were women refugees. The soldiers closed the door and spent up to an hour inside. This incident which took place on 16th November was related by one of those involved, now living in Rakka Lane, Chundikuli. She had been let off after pleading and crying on her knees. On 28th November in Urumpirai north, a lone soldier went into a house where a girl was. The soldier ran away when the mother and the neighbours started screaming. On 14 November, a university student who had lost her mother and grandmother in Urumpirai when they were shot by advancing I.P.K.F. troops, was being taken from Uduvil to Jaffna by an uncle. At Manipay she stopped at a friend's place where the father, mother and son were standing out, watched by two soldiers. The soldiers motioned the girl to go inside and the uncle to stay out. Sensing what was in store, the girl screamed. Her uncle asked everyone to join in the screaming. Some soldiers rushed out of the house and the whole lot of them ran away. The girl of the house had been twice raped by soldiers. She had been afraid to scream thinking that the rest of the family would be shot. The son of the house, also a university student, had been in a group of 20 boys who had been kicked and assaulted by soldiers earlier that day. The son complained to an army captain in the area. The captain replied: "I am sorry. I take full responsibility for the incident. We were angry after we went hunting for arms and did not find any. I ordered the men to beat up some young men. They are disciplined. They only follow orders." The girls have now left for Colombo.

Major Parameswara Iyer who was the I.P.K.F. commandant at Uduvil was widely regarded as a good man. He listened to the problems of the people sympathetically and made a strong effort to maintain discipline. On the morning of 25 November, he and three of his men were killed while on a search in the Dutch Road area. The captain at Uduvil Girls' School, one Sharma, was angry. The area was subject to shelling. Mr. Thanjaratnam, a pensioner, was killed while riding his bicycle. Mr. Cameron, an old man above 70, wearing a turban, was carrying a bottle of milk and had come to Uduvil junction to purchase bread. He was shot dead. A mother who had been injured by the shelling was being taken on a bicycle for medical treatment by her son. As they came up Ark Lane onto the Uduvil-Manipay Road, they were shot at by the troops from Uduvil junction. The mother died and the son escaped. A lady who is a teacher and member of the Uduvil Church said that at least 12 civilians were killed on that day.

A female student from the university who had been with her grand-mother at Pandatheruppu had this to say:

"There and in the neighbouring areas of Sandilipai and Chankanai, people live in constant fear of shelling, assault and searches. The L.T.T.E. goes to an area, fires a few shots and runs away. Then the I.P.K.F. soldiers

run amok. When the market was reopened, someone came and fired a shot and ran away. The soldiers started beating people. One keerai (spinach) seller was shot dead. During the first week of December, four I.P.K.F. men were shot dead by the L.T.T.E. along the Sandilipai-Pandatheruppu road. A farmer working in the paddy field was shot and injured by Indian troops. Neighbours took him to the I.P.K.F. camps at Mathagal and Pandatheruppu for medical treatment and were turned away. The farmer died. The next day, these I.P.K.F. camps were again offering medical treatment to civilians.

"We are in fear of searches, when soldiers would suddenly jump into our compounds. During one such search a soldier beat up the girl in the neighbouring house and forced her into a room. The others in the house and we screamed. Another group of soldiers arrived on the scene and the first lot ran away. The Colonel is apparently a decent man. The miscreants were caught and court-martialled. My aunt in Pandatheruppu too was once harassed by soldiers. But she stood firm. The Colonel told us that this was a recurrent problem when the army was on exercises in remote Indian villages. The army unit is normally moved away before complaints become too many. The former Citizens' Committee from L.T.T.E. days has now been resurrected under the I.P.K.F.. The Colonel told them of how he had been fired upon while in the camp and showed some tiny bullets. He told them, "You must put a stop to this. I am considerate and did not do anything this time. The next time, I will shell the place." The Citizens' Committee apologised profusely. During an operation, I heard the Colonel ordering his men over the wireless. He was telling them not to shoot anyone, but if necessary to give chase. But I do not know how good such instructions will be when a trooper gets killed."

On the 7th November, Indian troops in Inuvil and Maruthanamadam were tense as the result of reports of L.T.T.E. movements in that area. A tractor carrying bags of rice for a refugee camp and coming from the west through a lane, crossed the K.K.S. road a few yards south of Inuvil Hospital. In the process, it knocked against an I.P.K.F. barrier and crossed into the lane opposite, going east. The I.P.K.F. sentry at Maruthanamadam fired shells which went over the hospital and fell near the lane. One fell on the house of a Prof. Chandrasegaram who was sleeping under a table with his legs sticking out. His legs were badly mangled. He was admitted to the hospital and died a few hours later.

At Atchuvely, during the first week of November, some L.T.T.E. members threw grenades at the I.P.K.F. and escaped through a Proctor Balasingam's house. Two soldiers were killed. Soldiers entered Proctor Balasingam's house and called out the Proctor, his wife and another person, who were helpless parties in the matter. Subsequently all three were shot dead.

Despite a publicly expressed wish by the Indian authorities to restore normality, public service employees, hospital employees and University employees get beaten up by Indian troops at Manipay, Sandilipay, Thavady, Uduvil and Maruthanamadam as they report for work.

On the night of 7 December, about thirty L.T.T.E. men arrived at a small temple at Kondavil. The people of that area went to them and asked them to leave, saying that their lives were going to be endangered. The L.T.T.E. refused to leave. The people then replied that they were going to inform the I.P.K.F.. The L.T.T.E. men replied: "You need not bother, we can do it ourselves". Saying this, they fired their guns into the air. The people hurriedly left that area and went into temples. The newly arrived troops surrounded the area in the morning. Some L.T.T.E. men who remained behind, shot at the soldiers and ran away. Two soldiers were killed. That morning, some C.T.B. (Ceylon Transport Board) workers were driving to work in a bus, towards Kondavil depot, as a part of the effort by the Indian authorities to restore normality. At Kondavil junction, the bus was stopped by soldiers and the driver and conductor were very badly assaulted. Each time the wounded man groaned, angry soldiers hammered the bus and broke some of its windows. The driver and conductor thought they were finished, when, fortunately, an officer arrived and asked the soldiers to call it off. During this ordeal, the remaining CTB employees lay on the floor of the bus saying their prayers.

That same night, Mr. Balasingam, the brother of Mr. Thuraisingam, office assistant to the Vice-Chancellor, University of Jaffna, and his uncle Mr. Kopalasingam remained behind in their home at Kondavil to safeguard it from robbers, whilst others betook themselves to the temple. Soldiers came and called them out. Mr. Balasingam was stabbed to death and Mr. Kopalasingam was admitted to hospital with gunshot injuries. Mr. Balasingam had got married only a year previously. Two other young men were summoned from the entrance to a temple where they were standing and stabbed to death. In all six civilians were stabbed to death that night.

On that day (8 December), a local curfew was suddenly imposed in a wide area stretching from Inuvil to Kopay at 11.00 a.m. Many who went to work or to buy essentials in town suddenly found themselves stuck in the

middle of nowhere. Knowing that their families would have a sleepless night if they did not return, they made risky detours through country lanes avoiding the main roads. A typical experience was that of Mr. Murugavel's, the University Librarian, who had to get back home to Erlalai: "We were going north along Rajapathai when I saw some people rushing towards me, going south. We stopped to ask what the matter was. They rushed past me without stopping. Suddenly gun shots started whizzing past us. We turned our bicycles around and hooked it. We then went east, crossed Pt. Pedro Road and went north through lanes in order to avoid the army sentries at Irupalai and Kopay. We crossed the Kopay - Kaithadi Road at a point 300 yards east of the Kopay sentry and got into another lane. Further down, we headed west, crossing the Pt. Pedro Road and went towards Puttur along a lane. We then got to Erlalai by travelling along the Puttur - Chunnakam Road." These are the conditions of normality under which thousands report for work!

On 27 November, Mr. Gananathan was going from Sandilipay towards Jaffna when he was stopped by the army sentry at the Kattudai irrigation channel and was asked to join a party of nine others in the channel, standing waist deep in water. Amongst the party were 3 girls and a pensioner who had taken advantage of the I.P.K.F.'s "normality" to go to Jaffna and collect his pension. The pensioner tried to plead his case, only to be by the soldiers: "We are dying and you want you pension eh!" They were told further that a party of thirty soldiers had gone looking for the L.T.T.E. and if anyone of them came to harm, they would all be killed. Gun shots were periodically fired into the water above and around them. Gananathan, who had on a previous occasion got to know one of the Sikh soldiers at the Sandilipay sentry point, tried appealing to him: "You are my friend." "You are not my friend today," came the reply. Someone from the I.P.K.F. inquired over the wireless as to what was happening. "There is a queue waiting for rice", replied one of the soldiers. All seemed to enjoy the little joke. The party was let off after 45 minutes. During that interval they had appealed to all the gods in the pantheon. Eleven I.P.K.F. soldiers were killed in that area the following day when they surrounded a party of the L.T.T.E..

2.4 Encounters with Indians during the War

Our reports suggest that in encounters between civilians and officers, the latter were frequently arrogant and over-bearing. There was little effort to face up to where things had gone wrong. Civilians were often hectorated and bullied and the civilians merely swallowed their feelings.

On the other hand we have met some young, reflective officers who have displayed intelligence, courtesy and a desire to learn more about problems here by listening to civilians. One such person was a young Major. He recognised that women had a problem and had spread the word encouraging them to scream if they sensed danger. In all cases that we have heard of, this has worked. He had noted in his diary the Tamil words for, "come out, do not be afraid." He told us that he had been in town during the advance, and when people had expressed an inability to move to camps, he had advised them to close up and stay inside. Having known him, we believe he was telling the truth.

A common belief amongst the Indian officers is that they were engaged in a full scale war. Many of the officers were brought in, after hostilities broke out, with little or no knowledge of the complexities of the situation they faced. They were simply ordered to take Jaffna and they went according to their books as if they were facing a highly sophisticated standing army. The enemy was in fact a group of 2,000 teenagers, fighting in any manner they could improvise, caring as little about civilian lives. By available accounts the Indian force consisted of over 20,000 men, supported by tanks and artillery. Some officers confessed that they had to come here in a hurry after picking up something of the situation from Front Line magazine and from Tamil friends.

A Major attached to the Gurkha Regiment stationed near Thirunelvely, explained to some members of the University staff: "The Gurkhas form the most disciplined regiment in the Indian Army. Last night (14th December) we heard some firing from the Thirunelvely colony. I ordered my men to hold their fire and to shoot only if they saw someone shooting at them. I know that the L.T.T.E. was given to such provocation in the hope that several civilians would be killed during reprisals."

At least one Major in the Gurkha regiment was intelligent enough to understand the L.T.T.E.'s strategy. He understood that all that is required of the L.T.T.E. to rattle the I.P.K.F. and to obstruct any semblance of normality is to fire a few shots and run away. As a pre-condition for normality, the I.P.K.F. must first make up its mind as to whether it is going to be a real peace keeping force or an undisciplined army. When the Indian Army undertook the peace keeping role, it should have been prepared to sustain casualties. But taking reprisals against civilians on sustaining casualties has become the normal thing. An exception was when two soldiers from the Madras regiment were killed in Chunnakam, on the 14th of December. The I.P.K.F. has such a low regard for

the civilian population, that reprisals against civilians are not taken seriously. We do not know of any soldier being court-martialled for killing unarmed civilians. A casual attitude to civilian deaths certainly emanates from the top. A top ranking military official was questioned about the shelling of the civilian population. He said: "I have not used shelling in my area. But if this situation continues, I will have to think about it."

It has been evident that many soldiers from Tamil Nadu have found what was happening here too much to stomach. A Jawan once said: "You should see the destruction at Urumpirai and Kopay. Hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed. But the Tigers have escaped. Be careful, the northerners are in a bilious mood." Here he was referring to the North Indians in the I.P.K.F.. A touching piece of advice came from an army officer from Tamil Nadu who took a respected member of the community aside and poured out what had been bothering him. He said: "If you have been in Jaffna town, you would not know the full extent of the hardships suffered by the people. You should go towards Urumpirai and see what has happened. Innocent people have been killed by the hundreds. We officers understand the problem independently of whether they are Tamil or not. The Jawans are from all over India, from different cultures and are very ignorant. They do not know a Tamil from a Sinhalese. For them, even a 5 year old child is a Tiger. If one shot is fired they will fire a round. If one of them is killed, they will simply kill ten civilians. It is only now that we are trying to conduct some lectures and are trying to explain the situation to them. I am so tired. I wish to resign from the army in four months' time."

The community leader tried to comfort him by telling him that the Tamils had also suffered from the actions of the Sri Lankan Army. The officer waved his hand and shook his head. He said, "An army is an army. All armies are the same. The Indian Army is the world's most undisciplined army. One thing I can tell you is that, now that the I.P.K.F. is here, the people will have to choose between the I.P.K.F. and the L.T.T.E., and you cannot get the Indian Army out by shooting. If the L.T.T.E. shoots one, the Indian Army will shoot ten. If you must protest, as you should, bring a hundred thousand people and have a demonstration. But avoid shooting at all costs."

2.5 A Personal Assessment

Perhaps, the following comment from a university lecturer in medicine offers something towards understanding the present crisis:

"I think the whole psychology of the Indian Army changed following the landing of commandos at Thirunelvely on 12 October. That was an area where there was a high concentration of L.T.T.E. men and the L.T.T.E. was able to mobilise effectively. Having spurned air-cover (which the Sri Lankans never did), the commandos suffered an unexpected reverse. Up to about that time the Indian Army showed concern for civilian life. Around then a convoy of Indian troops came past my house. They were at ease and were waving at civilians. The L.T.T.E. fired at the convoy and my own house became a battle ground. I had to flee with a lady and children who were with me. We were at first fired upon and, later, when they realised that we were not L.T.T.E. men, we were allowed to walk away unharmed. The army asked the people in the next house to come out with their hands up. But when they came out, an L.T.T.E. boy sneaked up behind them and fired at the army. The officer shouted asking them to get inside the house and allowed them time to do so before opening fire. There was a very real sense in which the L.T.T.E. was using civilian cover. But not in the crude sense claimed by All India Radio. During that experience, the Indian Army displayed concern for civilian life.

"Then I feel the psychology changed and there was a deliberate decision to use terror. The intensity of killing at Urumpirai a week later was very different from what I had experienced. Shelling a large army concentrated behind a battle front is understandable. But in our context, with a small thinly spread out guerrilla force, shelling becomes a weapon of terror. It all leaves a bad taste. The Indian Army may have been disorganised in many things. But the suspicion that there was a deliberate decision to terrorize is reinforced by a remarkable consistency in the threats made. It became common-place for different companies of officers and Jawans to say things like, "I will shoot you" or "I will flatten this place." It was a tragic step for Mahatma Gandhi's India."

Chapter 4

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE INDIAN MILITARY ACTION

(Jaffna, The End Of 1987)

4.1 Introduction

Throughout history, the cost of war in terms of deaths, mutilation, torture, grief, destruction of material resources, privation, social disorganisation and psychological trauma, as been enormous and, in recent times, war has become increasingly costly and ever more destructive. The continued occurrence of war, accompanied by the presence of standing armies and the manufacture and stockpiling of costly weapons of limitless destructive power, shows man's incompetence in solving his problems in peaceful ways and his drive to struggle for power by violence and aggression. Woe unto a population caught in such a war!

During the months of October and November, 1987, Jaffna witnessed death and destruction on a scale unprecedented in its history. Military operations have been going on full scale in Eastern Sri Lanka and to a limited extent in the North, as part of the chronic civil war being waged in the last few years. The so called Operation Liberation, in the middle of 1987 in the Vadamaratchi area brought the action into the heartland of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. A similar fate for the rest of the Jaffna peninsula had been in the offing and frequently threatened. It is a tragic irony that it was left to the Indians who had all along been championing the Tamil cause and had been looked upon as their saviours and protectors, to complete this task. A comparable number of deaths has been claimed by epidemics in the past but in terms of the agony, destruction, terror and mayhem of complete war and the duration of continued action, the Indian military action far surpassed anything Jaffna had ever experienced. In the final analysis, it is perhaps the psychological trauma to the civilian population, even more than the deaths, the physical hardships and destruction of property, that is most poignant. Though not by any means a new or unique experience in the annals of the history of war, an attempt is made here to record the psychological impact of this acute war, from the perspective of a participant-observer. It is based on an earlier, more detailed, clinical study, "The psychological sequelae to the chronic civil war in Northern Sri Lanka," during the period 1983 - 1987.

4.2 Stress

Psychodynamically war is a form of severe stress that can cause, even in previously stable personalities, temporary personality decompensation, leading to transient stress reaction. The decompensation can be acute and sudden as in the case of an individual exposed to an overwhelming experience of death and destruction; or chronic and gradual as in the case of a person who has been subjected to being a refugee or living under conditions of unpredictable and irregular shelling. Usually the individual shows good recoverability once the stress situation is withdrawn, although in some cases there is residual, permanent damage to the personality and an increased vulnerability to stress. In the case of individuals who are marginally adjusted to begin with, or who are predisposed to mental illness, the situational stress may precipitate more serious psychopathology and neurotic or psychotic illness. It is not possible to predict with absolute certainty what form the reaction to stress will take in a particular individual, though the premorbid personality, previous reaction patterns to stress, family history of mental illness and the specific meaning and severity of stress in the unique life situation of the individual are good indicators. Indeed in some, stress may lead to adaptation and provide the impetus for personality development and increased stress tolerance. Common symptoms of what has been called "war neurosis" are dejection, weariness, tension, irritability, hypersensitivity, startled reaction, sleep disturbance and tremors; or more specifically, anxiety, phobias and depression. In clinics held at refugee camps, the majority of cases, apart from skin conditions (like scabies), gastrointestinal disturbances (like diarrhoea and peptic ulcer) and upper respiratory tract infections, were suffering from transient stress relations, reactive depression and anxiety. They manifested somatic symptoms, of which the following were common: headache, dizziness, dyspepsia, backache, palpitation, chest pain, paresthesias and other multiple complaints for which no obvious organic cause

could be found. On questioning, symptoms of sleep disturbance, irritability, dejection, loss of appetite and "worries" were discovered. It has been found that patients from developing countries, who lack psychological awareness, 'Somatise' their mental and emotional problems in terms of physical complaints. This could explain the common finding of multiple bodily complaints as a reaction to the chronic stress of being displaced.

During the military operation several factors contributed to the inducement of stress in the civilian population. A significant phenomenon during those days was the large number of refugees. More than 75% of the civilians from affected areas were displaced at one time or another, the figure reaching 100% in some areas. 'Fight or flight' is the normal neurophysiological response of an organism to threatening stimuli. Flight is the more common response particularly when the threat is overwhelming. Chronic flight due to continuing danger leads to one fleeing his home as a refugee to a safer place. The status of being a refugee creates in one a feeling of homelessness and loss of traditional support, with the collapse of the world one knew and the regular routine that was the framework of one's daily life. Many civilians sought refuge at temples and schools as advised by the Indian Army. These same temples and schools were shelled, resulting in a large number of civilian deaths. It was a tragedy that even refugee camps such as Kokuvil Hindu College, Chundikuli Girls' College, Jaffna Railway station, Inuvil Pillayar Kovil and the Karamban Roman Catholic Church turned out to be death traps. No place was safe. In some refugee centres, people were marched in front of masked "noddies". Some youths were shot, others were taken away. At Manipay Hindu Ladies' College, women were raped. Decomposing bodies were not allowed to be burnt or buried. It was reported that a mother had to look on, while dogs ate her dead son a few yards away. Large numbers were confined in small spaces for long periods of time, sometimes 2 to 3 days. They were without food and water, with perhaps kanchy¹ in some places. They had to relieve themselves within the rooms they were in. The children and the old were badly affected. Appeals to the Indian Army fell on deaf ears or were answered with threats of being shot.

As the army advanced behind them, the refugees trekked over long distances seeking alternative refugee shelters. The old and the disabled had to be left behind. A large number fled from one part of the peninsula to another until, eventually, there was no place left. The more enterprising and affluent ones fled to Singapore, the U.K., Canada, Australia, France, West Germany and so on.

The accumulated stress of leaving their homes and usual habitat was accentuated by a complete disruption of normal life patterns, together with lack of food, rest, medical attention and a continuing atmosphere of fear and terror. Another important psychological stress the civilian population faced was the sudden change of the role of the Indians. It has been found that an individual is better able to cope if he understands and accepts the necessity for any particular stress. The Tamils coped with the chronic civil war with the Sri Lankan Army and the accompanying atrocities because they believed they were involved in a legitimate struggle for their human rights. For the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the tragedy of the Indian action lay in the fact that India, the source of their culture and traditions, a holy place of pilgrimage, had always been held in the most intimate and revered terms. When the Indian Army suddenly started treating the local population as its enemy and to kill and destroy mercilessly, this metamorphosis from friend and protector to aggressor and enemy was undoubtedly the most shocking and psychologically traumatising factor of the whole war.

The public was unprepared for the sudden onslaught. People had breathed a sigh of relief at the coming of the Indians and even stopped keeping stocks of essential items as was customary at the time of the Sri Lankan Army's activities.

The older generation particularly found this change of role difficult to accept and different psychological defence mechanisms like denial, rationalisation and intellectualisation were resorted to, to cope with this changed situation. Some denied that it was the Indian Army that was shelling and shooting and claimed that it was probably the Sri Lankan Army, that only the militants were being killed and that the civilian had nothing to worry about. Others maintained that the atrocities were perpetuated by the North Indians, while the South Indians were "Good" and trying to stop the North Indians. Still others rationalised saying that this was all necessary and that we will understand only later. According to them, the action would be over in a few days and then there would be permanent peace.

They continued to believe completely the psychological propaganda spewed out by the Indian Radio special programs (Anpuvali and Vetu Malai). They continued to have faith and trust in the Indian Army, till they were confronted with the stark reality of seeing their houses shelled or their friendly approaches answered by a hail of

bullets. And still some continued to rationalise the consequences as something that happens with any army and held that we would have fared much worse under Sri Lanka Army. And then there were those who looked at it intellectually. For example a doctor compared it to a surgical procedure to excise a cancerous growth, where a certain amount of healthy tissue also has to be removed. (Only here, excessive healthy tissue was removed due to careless surgery, endangering the lives of the patients, while the cancerous cells escaped, leading to widespread metastasis). By these and similar "explanations", people sought to maintain their mental balance, their psychological homeostasis, in the face of the unexpected Indian attack.

It has been found that information facilitates adaptive reaction to stress. Lack of information and breakdown in communication lead to much confusion, apprehension and disorganisation. The local population had no precise information about what was going on; rumours and half-truths circulated from mouth to mouth. The Indian radio's 'local' programs (Anbu vali and Vetu Malai) and the Eelamurasu, the local newspaper, gave completely opposing versions. Each side announced victory after victory with heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy. What became increasingly clear was that these casualties referred to civilians and that heavy fighting continued. In mid November, the Eelamurasu was silenced and the Indian radio happily continued to announce the return of normality - the opening of shops, offices and schools, the restoration of services etc., when in actual fact, people were still afraid to walk around in their own compounds as full scale military operations were still in progress. Only two months later, in January 1988, did civilian life really limp back to normality, once the hostility had decreased.

Even those who could communicate in English or Tamil were terse and snappy or threatening. The Indian Army was evidently not interested. Everyone was the enemy. There was nothing to talk about. The civilians, usually leading senior citizens, who tried holding white flags were rebuffed rudely or sent scurrying by a hail of bullets above their heads. The Tellipallai District Hospital was shelled heavily for two and a half hours with 67 shells falling within the compound and injuring members of the staff and damaging many buildings, although there was no resistance or presence of militants in or near the hospital. After the shelling, a delegation of senior staff members in uniform, together with ambulant patients approached the nearby camp, but were stopped about 100 yards away. The sentry was seen to use the telephone and then he shouted at the delegates to get back or be shot. Again on 17 October, troops, while moving on the road in front fired on the hospital and on uniformed staff members. Although the army moved frequently along the hospital road, no attempt was made to establish communication with this big institution. The first contact was made only on Nov. 11, a month later. This lack of communication led to much uncertainty and helplessness in the minds of the public. They did not know what was expected of them or what rules and regulations to follow.

Most stress reactions show spontaneous recovery once the stress is withdrawn as did happen when people started returning to their homes, and communication and contact was established, with clearer information available. The atmosphere of hostility and terror was defused beginning from January 1988. But the fact that the stress had been fairly severe, was shown by the long time people took to recover. The refractory period was prolonged unlike after the Sri Lankan Army operations, where people resumed civil life immediately or had learned to continue despite military activity. A haunting sense of shock, disbelief and disillusionment, fear and terror, loss and sorrow still lingers like a bad taste. The Tamil man will not easily forget this experience.

On the positive side, some adapted well to the stress and showed hidden strength and leadership qualities. Particularly encouraging was that individuals, considered as trouble makers or administrative headaches during normal times, acted with heroism and initiative. At the Tellipallai District Hospital, a lady doctor, though with child, continued to run the hospital despite heavy shelling and direct firing on the hospital and her quarters. When most of the staff had fled, she stayed on with four nurses and looked after the patients for over two months, doing yeoman service at this critical juncture. The local population as a whole, after some initial panic and disorganisation, learnt to cope with the situation for two months, while fierce battles raged on all fronts, amidst exploding shells and gunfire, a continuous shoot-at-sight curfew and a breakdown of all civil organisations. The usual amenities of civilized life that we had been so used to, were suddenly not there. What are normally considered essential requirements, such as electricity, water, mail, transport and access to main roads, hospital and medical services, banking and circulation of money, jobs and salaries, ceased to exist for

over 2 months. People were caught unawares without any stocks. Open shops were scarce. A large number of refugees were on the move. The injured needed medical care. The sick and disabled, infants and pregnant mothers, unfed domestic animals ... the problems were unlimited. The reaction was often inspired and heart warming. People became accommodating, forgot old quarrels and helped complete strangers. Refugees were given shelter and food shared. People came forward to donate bags of rice, flour, milk and vegetables to refugee camps, food for the infants, care for the sick, solace for the grieved, and refugees were fed and clothed for long periods, thus establishing new friendships.

Small acts of heroism such as retrieving the injured and taking them to hospital facing great personal danger, were much in evidence. At St. Anthony's Church at Chunnakam, eleven severely injured persons were kept alive overnight by a nurse and St. John's ambulance volunteers until midday when permission was given by the army to the priest in charge of St. Anthony's Church to take them to hospital. At Sanguveli, when some young girls were taken away by Jawans, a brave, middle-aged woman approached the army camp, a very risky undertaking in those shoot-at-sight days, and raised such a cry that the commanding officer fired some shots into the air and the Jawans returned meekly to camp. The girls escaped being raped.

Communities organised themselves into groups to deal with urgent issues. Enterprising shopkeepers kept the interior areas supplied with essential items at reasonable prices, often taking risks to procure items from neighbouring areas. But as a whole, the community managed to withstand the severe pressure for over two months, completely on their own, with no outside help. They have established their self reliance, self-sufficiency and their ability to live off the land without the modern amenities of civilization. They have lived up to the local palmyrah tradition.

4.3 Anxiety

Phobic anxiety is basically the psychological component of a fear reaction that has become incapacitating. Fear was the predominant emotion during this time and phobic anxiety states could be considered almost normal under the circumstances. They usually reported intense apprehension, fear, feeling of impending doom or death, tension, being edgy, irritable, vigilant and easily startled, dyspnoea, palpitation, chest pain, choking sensation, sweating, abdominal pain, loose motions and increased micturation. Some reported frequent panic attacks, particularly during shelling, gunfire or on seeing the army. Children were reported to run and cling on to their parents or hide under beds. Many had sleep disturbances like difficulty in falling asleep, interrupted sleep, anxiety dreams where they see themselves being injured or chased by the army, nightmares and fitful sleep, with fatigue on awakening. Patients with a previous history of angina pectoris, developed anginal pain during these attacks. It was observed that some instinctively resorted to repeating mantras or short prayers which have been shown to work as relaxation techniques to alleviate anxiety.

What has been described as existential anxiety was also observable in some cases. Deaths became a pressing reality and people had to deal with that fear daily. What had been quietly forgotten or submerged in the press and care of daily life, broke into one's awareness, Man was made aware of his existential state, the transience of life that everything born must die one day. As death stalked the land, the veil that separated life from death was rent asunder and one stood face to face with stark reality. An existential fear gripped everyone. An old, experienced man compared the present war to the great destructive forces of nature - famine, epidemics, cyclones... Groping for mythical symbols to express his deep feeling, he said: "Mother Kali with her Asura forces from India have descended on Jaffna!"

Terror, a form of extreme fear, was widely prevalent in the months of October and November. This was not surprising since it was quite evident that there was a deliberate attempt at the time to terrorise the civilian population. The usual uniformity in the behaviour of the Jawans towards the civilians lends support to this assertion. As mentioned earlier, there was no attempt to establish communication or contact with the civilians; rather it was actively discouraged. Where there was conversation, usually during search operations, it was terse, snappy and revealingly similar. "Any sound from this direction and we will flatten your house and shoot you all." This was repeated in different situations, in different places, by different Jawans. Was this a standard order from higher-up? This wall of silence, except for the few belligerent words spoken, caused uncertainty, a feeling of isolation and loneliness, made worse by being cut off from the outside world.

Secondly the Jawans were undoubtedly free to do as they wished. By their words and deeds, they conveyed the message that they had been given a free hand by the higher-ups. They were not accountable and people felt deserted, alone, without protection and without recourse to justice. An Indian Red Cross doctor told me that this

could only have happened here. There was nothing to ask. This never happened in Punjab or in Bangladesh. The army felt free to destroy, kill, loot, rape... They were allowed to run amok, unchecked for nearly two months. This lack of restraint, the liberty to do as they wished, contributed to the atmosphere of terror. The atmosphere changed gradually from December as the commanders started to apply some constraints, making the Jawans accountable for their actions and took action on complaints. This did ease the situation somewhat and the Jawans showed much more restraint in their behaviour. A third factor contributing to the reign of terror was the inhuman behaviour of the army. The local population was pushed, shoved and beaten with extreme callousness and brutality. Status, age, sex,.... nothing mattered. Lawyers, doctors, engineers; the old, the young; and the sick and the disabled were all shot even after being identified; whole families were pulled out of their houses and shot. The bloody assault on the Jaffna hospital with the massacre of doctors, nurses and patients, described in detail elsewhere, was the epitome of this type of barbarous behaviour that struck terror in the hearts of the people.

Fourthly the indiscriminate shelling, particularly the its unpredictability and terrific noise, were instruments of psychological terror. It is questionable whether the intense shelling of whole areas achieved any military objective. There were at the most only a few thousand militants among 800,000 civilians in Jaffna, whereas the Indians went about it as if it was conventional war against a large army. One wondered how many of the militants were actually hit by any one of the thousands of shells that fell on Jaffna. As for its psychological effect, the militants could be observed to be nonchalantly moving around in casual conversation, quite unalarmed by the exploding shells.

But the persistent shelling of densely populated areas, even after large scale resistance and mortar shelling ceased, speaks of a more sinister purpose. Sixty shells fell on the Tellipallai hospital on 12 October, when no militants were around. The Christa Seva Ashram with well over a thousand refugees was heavily shelled on 13 October, with a part of the chapel roof collapsing on the incumbent. Again no militants were around. In addition there was the so called "noise" shell which exploded with a thunder-clap effect. This was obviously a psychological weapon used with deadly effect on the civilians. Nights were spent in abject terror, partly due to what has been called the anticipatory anxiety of not knowing when and where a shell would fall. Some died of psychological shock. A mother who had delivered her second child, died suddenly when Chankanai was shelled. Many children have never got over the effect of the noise and remain hypersensitive to any loud noise. Two children who had gone to Colombo as refugees developed severe anxiety and clung to their parents when fire-crackers were lit for the New Year. The animal population too suffered terribly from the noise pollution. Trembling dogs were seen scampering all over, rabbits dropped dead and wild birds vanished from the Jaffna Peninsula. The cry of despair that escaped from an old man in late November reflected the anguish of all living things: "When will this infernal noise stop? When will the shooting cease? Oh, when will peace return to this land?"

Another devastating aspect of the shells was the destruction of property and mutilation of civilians. Residents at Inuvil hospital heard a shell whiz past overhead and in a few moments a Professor Chandrasekaran of Jaffna University was carried over the hospital boundary wall with both legs gone and bleeding profusely. That image was to recur in their minds and send them into panic whenever they heard shells. One has to concede to the credit of the Indians, that neither heavy artillery nor the more lethal fragmenting shells favoured by the Sri Lankan Army was used and heavy bombing was not resorted to. But there was no need at all for artillery fire on a civilian population.

A questionable feature of the heavy destruction due to shelling was that it fell short of Jaffna. There is severe destruction on all roads leading to Jaffna, but stopping just short of the city limits. There was stiff resistance to the army in Jaffna and many civilian deaths but not much destruction of buildings. One wonders why. Could it be the Indians wanted to preserve Jaffna? But subsequent events such as their hurry to establish normality within the Jaffna Town suggest that they wanted the town intact and whole for their conducted tours for foreign journalists. If this is true, then it shows a degree of pre-planning and a deliberate use of the artillery for nonmilitary purposes.

The decision to use terror may have been to wrest control over the civilian population and force them to relinquish their sympathy and support for the L.T.T.E.. Perhaps due to their failure to win a quick victory and their gross underestimation of the L.T.T.E., the Indian Army found itself fighting a desperate battle to save face and take Jaffna at all costs. A second possible reason may have been a reaction to the fighting tactics of the L.T.T.E.'s guerrilla warfare in an urban setting. The civilian population was used for cover. They fought from hospitals, temples and schools. Women and children performed military tasks and allegedly dead bodes were

desecrated. These may not have been the norms of war, the Dharma, that the Indian Army expected. If one is to rationalize the behaviour of the Jawans at all, it must be in the context of their being psychologically unprepared for this type of battle and as a rage reaction to the way it was fought.

It has been reported that some soldiers were airlifted over long distances and immediately pressed into battle without adequate rest. Others came with only a change of clothes expecting the action to be a pushover and to be completed in a few days. They were handicapped by fighting an elusive enemy using guerrilla tactics, along with rigid conventional lines, resulting in heavy casualties. For example, at Uduvil on Oct. 13, a convoy of tanks was ambushed by a handful of teenage militants. It was observable that the army kept to the main road or ventured at the most into the road-side houses and compounds leaving the few militants free to move around in the interior, three or four houses deep from the road and in the fields. While setting themselves up as easy targets from all directions, the army allowed the militants to literally run in circles around them. Apparently they had been ordered to take and hold on to the main roads and its main junctions. Indeed, there does not seem to have been any direct fighting during the whole war except at the University grounds and Urumpirai. Few in the Indian Army had any knowledge of the political situation. Put in a completely foreign environment and ignorant of the local language and customs, they may have undergone a paranoid reaction. They were suspicious of everyone, treating the whole local population as the enemy actively supporting the L.T.T.E..

"You L.T.T.E.? ... Where L.T.T.E.?" ... L.T.T.E., L.T.T.E. ...was the one word on their lips. It became an obsession with them. There may have been also an element of inexperience and over-reaction to the situation in some units. It was observable that guns and shells were fired with wild abandon, continually for long periods with little or no provocation. Sometimes one got the impression that they were indulging in using the weapons for the sheer pleasure or experience of it. Late in the night one would hear a shot and then a whole barrage in answer, that would go on and on, and then a few shells for good measure. These men had been pressed into battle mentally unprepared. Expecting a quick finish, but meeting fierce resistance in a foreign environment, they reacted with an uncontrolled frenzy. Later on, a soldier tried to explain their behaviour by saying: "When one of us dies, our blood begins to boil and we do not know what we are doing." But in enlisting in the army, they should have expected battle and death and not taken it out on the civilian population when faced with such grim realities. It may be said that an army is an army and as armies go, they were no worse. But then, we expected something better from India.

In the final analysis, the ultimate responsibility for what ensued, rests with the higher command and more with the political administrators in New Delhi and their representative in Colombo for putting their men in a difficult situation. It was a situation largely of their own making.

The use of terror may have worked to some extent on a society that has learned the language of violence and was used to being ruled by terror. But to continue to rule by the use of terror is costly and impracticable and the Indians have realised this as evidenced by their current efforts to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil by more humane methods. Their recent (February 1988) search operations in Batticaloa were carried out with much more restraint and consideration for the civilians.

The terror of those days still lingers like a persistent bad taste, a recurrent nightmare. The Jaffna man is unlikely to forget that experience in a hurry as can be seen by his lukewarm responses to friendly overtures of army personnel. After all, friendship is not something that can be turned on and off like a switch.

4.4 Grief Reactions

Grief reactions were common during this period. Due to the suddenness and the psychologically traumatising circumstances surrounding the death of loved ones (such as the noise and destruction, the blood, mutilating injuries, pain, lack of medical attention and standing helpless as loved ones died) there was an increased incidence of the more severe reactions and several with atypical features.

A middle aged engineer whose 3 children and mother-in-law had been pulled out of their home and shot dead on the street for no apparent reason, developed a severe grief reaction with secondary alcoholism. He spent his days in deep sorrow with attacks of crying spells, the pangs of grief buffeting him like waves. His mind was preoccupied with thoughts of his children. He complained of loss of purpose in life with suicidal ruminations. His nights were particularly bad with recurrent nightmares about his children and their suffering, especially his pretty daughter. The soldier had lifted up her frock and shot her through the groin. She could not walk and had to drag herself along the road and finally bled to death for lack of adequate medical attention. This picture kept recurring in his mind. He would say: "She was deeply loved and I brought her up without a care. And now she had to suffer like this... It is unbearable," and break into sobs. Hostility, a feature typical of grief reaction, was apparent in his accusations of medical mismanagement, wanting revenge ("I'll personally kill these soldiers,") and his filing a case. His wife too was inconsolable and he expressed a fear that she would cry herself to death. They felt that without their children, life had lost its meaning. Previously an occasional drinker, he had now started drinking heavily and was in a state of intoxication most of the day and night.

A 24 year old farmer from Alaveddy developed an atypical grief reaction when his father and uncle were shot while attending to their cows. He became restless with irrational and incoherent speech and behaved in an abnormal and bizarre way. The picture was that of a psychotic reaction and required electroconvulsion therapy.

In some cases, multiple deaths of close relations precipitated decompensation. A nurse, previously of a jovial personality, developed a severe depressive illness when several of her close relations died. She needed intensive treatment before she gradually recovered.

4.5 Reactive Depression

A large number of patients with depression secondary to the current situation presented to the out-patient clinic and for in-ward treatment. The reactive type of depression is known to be brought on by any type of loss. In addition to the grief reactions, some of which merged into true depressive illness due to loss of loved ones, the other common causes for the development of the illness were loss of house and property due to shelling, loss of employment and other sources of income, loss of dignity and humiliation due to arrest and/or assault and loss of virginity and chastity due to rape. In some cases, wives presented with reactive depression when their husbands were taken in for questioning and assaulted. Conversely, husbands developed loss of libido and other depressive features when their wives were raped.

An Indian Army doctor speaking to me soon after his arrival following the July '87 peace accord, expressed his shock and sorrow at seeing so many houses destroyed. His camp was near Kurumbasiddy, where most houses had been destroyed by the Sri Lankan Army. I agreed, saying that it was built with their life-earnings. To this he replied: "It is not merely the money, it is the love and affection with which they would have built and maintained their homes. To see all that destroyed must be heart rending." I do not know whether he was here to see what happened in October and November and whether he would still be sympathetic.

The straw that broke the camel's back, the loss that proved to be just too much to bear after seeing their houses damaged or destroyed, that which tipped the scale into full blown depressive illness, was the loss of their personal belongings due to looting by the locals. A very unfortunate outcome of the prevailing situation, a state of anarchy without law or order, was the widespread looting that went unchecked. Those vulnerable, those most affected, were the ones who had already suffered much. It was a sad reflection on our community.

4.6 Psychosomatic Disorders

Psychological stress is known to cause physical disorders like eczema, backaches, headaches, bronchial asthma, hypertension, peptic ulcer and mucous colitis. Disorders of this nature were very common during the current period, particularly dyspepsia, tension headaches, backaches, hyperventilation and tachycardia.

In some cases the psychological stress led to more lethal consequences. Psychologically stressful life events are known to precipitate myocardial infarction. A middle aged telephone operator at Tellipallai hospital who had been quite healthy, suddenly developed chest discomfort and died when his teenage children were taken in for questioning. A known hypertensive who had been doing quite well had a stroke and died when his area came under intense shelling.

In contrast, some of our patients who had been chronically ill with arthritis, backache and dyspnoea and some of hypochondriacal nature, appeared to get better during this period of stress and led a healthy life even without medication. The complaints returned with the easing of the situation.

4.7 Personality Disorders

It has been found that individuals with abnormal personalities tend to join extreme organisations. Delinquents, aggressive and anti-social personalities may do well in a military set-up, where their energies can be diverted to national ends and their confinement in the army be a protection for the society.

It is a well established fact that war provides ample opportunity for sadistic personalities to derive pleasure from acts of violence, cruelty and torture on hapless victims. When the dogs of war were unleashed on Jaffna, one got the impression that a band of raving psychopaths had been let loose on the public. Strangely enough, after the cessation of military activities, the Jawans appeared to be a bunch of innocuous human beings, with the normal variety of personality traits and personal problems. It may be that the war machine itself brings out the darker aspects of one's personality and engenders behaviour bordering on the barbarous, which under normal conditions remained suppressed. To some extent this may have been due to the releasing of the usual restraints and discipline by the higher command. This was quite clear in the behaviour of the Jawans. They acted without any remorse and showed no fear of any disciplinary action from the commanding officers. In fact they indicated that they had been given a free hand. This picture improved by December and more so by the beginning of 1988. By January 1988 the Jawans were much more disciplined and polite and showed fear and uneasiness when indulging in anti-social or illegal activities. By now disciplinary action had been instituted. Identification parades were held and punishment meted out. It is interesting to note that the worst punishment from the point of view of the Jawans, was to be deported home without salary and their pension withdrawn. It is just possible that the officers had been hard put to control the troops after the initial reverses, the heavy casualties and the dirty, "Adharmic" war that erupted. In an attempt to maintain troop morale and retain some control, they may have allowed these indulgences. Indeed the officers themselves, with a few exceptions, were very indignant and belligerent during the actual war. The Indians were quick to realise quite early in the struggle, perhaps to the advantage of the local people, that it is easy to take, but difficult to hold onto an occupied land as shown in Vietnam and Afghanistan. They need the co-operation of the people. Thus the battle for the hearts and minds of the Jaffna men was launched; discipline and order were established, regular classes on public relations were held for the troops, rehabilitation and reconstruction work was commenced, and the popular medical clinics and food distribution were started in every village.

Once the tension eased, one got more insight into the personalities of the officers. As the Jawans started mixing with the public, one perceived the more human side of their character. Despite their metamorphosis during the war, they revealed a simple personality with problems that only the less sophisticated in extended family relationships will take seriously. They lived simply and had simple tastes, likes and dislikes. While in battle they had shown indomitable courage and a remarkable endurance. Another noticeable feature of their character, perhaps not surprising considering their Indian origin, was their extreme religiosity, at least externally. Vibuthis, pottus, pictures and flowers on vehicles, worship and respect at temple were very much in evidence.

At times this took on a tragi-comic aspect, as when a soldier riding on top of a tank that had repeatedly fired on and severely damaged the Christa Seva Ashram and the attached Seminary, folded his hands and bowed his head in prayer as he passed the cross at the entrance! Much more touching were the innocent love affairs that sprang up, despite the language barrier, some even progressing to more permanent relationships. One got a glimpse into their background from the small things they 'lifted' while searching and their expression of awe at the prosperity of Jaffna by such exclamations as: "What do you lack? Everything has been given to you!" (They hardly realised that all that they saw had been earned and built by sweat and toil off a hard and dry land). Evidently they came from the poverty ridden villages of India and the army was an opportunity for their families' advancement. But this did not detract from their straight forwardness and a down-to-earth outlook and an occasional kind word for the locals. When a young farmer in a frustrated outburst shouted: "You beggars you come and occupy our land which we have struggled to develop and order us about and destroy every thing," the soldier merely patted him on the back and said, "I ... I understand, but don't repeat to others."

In contrast, the officers were very sophisticated, polished and suave. The army hierarchy appears to have bred an elite, true to form. They spoke good English with a typical accent, and were all-Indian in out-look, athletic in build and extroverted and social. Their personalities impressed and easily won over the leading local citizens.

They appeared well disciplined and in complete control of the men. It was evident that the Indian Army was a historical institution with a long tradition behind it.

The officers made excellent public relations officers when they wanted to. Their main aim in dealing with the public was to reassure with flowery promises that "everything will be attended to, there will be no problems. It is all a minor matter. Very soon there will be normality and peace. The only problem is the L.T.T.E., please advise them," and so on. An Indian Red Cross doctor complaining of the army's inefficiency said they will promise anything: "Yes, we will get it down from India tomorrow. Don't worry Doctor. No problem." But nothing whatsoever will be done. One got the impression that it was all a show and bluff which had a deep contempt and animosity for the public whose co-operation they nevertheless needed to run the place; an arrogance that broke through the veneer at the slightest frustration. This attitude may have been responsible for the disagreements that arose between the military, the Indian civil administration and Red Cross in Jaffna.

There were exceptions. Major Paramesvaran showed genuine concern for the plight of the civilians and initiated steps towards solving problems. Unfortunately for the Jaffna man, he chose (bravely or brashly) to lead his men into battle and paid the price. His loss was deeply felt by the local population who had come to place their trust and faith in him. One may say of him that despite his army background, he was a genuine person.

4.8 Torture

In the brief period the Indian Army has been in Jaffna, it appears that they have not as yet adopted the more psychologically damaging methods of torture. Thus we do not see the degree of psychological sophistication and the prolonged systematised torture of victims resorted to by the Sri Lankan security forces, sometimes for no apparent purpose, which resulted in short term and long term neuropsychological symptoms. Torture by the Indian Army has tended to be short term with the specific purpose of gaining information. Although physical damage was sometimes severe such as fractures and even death, psychological sequelae was not common. For example, a foreman at the Paranthan Chemical Factory was taken in due to mistaken identity and tortured by being hung by the legs and beaten on the soles and back. Electrical current was passed into the sensitive tongue and penis causing severe burns and the burning end of a cigarette applied to the atma. On his identity being established the next day, he was released. Despite severe physical damage, he did not appear to have any psychological sequelae.

In contrast, an engineer going to Peradeniya who was taken in by the Sri Lankan Army about the same time, was tortured systematically for a prolonged period by methods including the regular passage of current through his head. Though physical damage was minimal, he suffered a complete psychological breakdown and was admitted to the psychiatric ward muttering irrationally and irrelevantly, a mental wreck.

4.9 Rape

What is said about violence in general is applicable to sexual violence. However sexual behaviour has its own unique characteristics. From time immemorial, plunder and rape have been considered the spoils of war. Although the total number of rapes during the Indian Army operation have been exaggerated in the press, it has been verified that quite a large number, ranging from young girls who had just attained age to old women well past their menopause were actually raped.

In our cultural setting, sexual violence takes on a more serious significance and has a severely psychologically traumatising effect on the victim and her close relations, including her husband. Chastity is traditionally considered one of the supreme virtues of women, to be safe guarded with the same diligence as their life. The screams and pleading of a young, attractive girl, whom three soldiers were trying to rape at gun point, still echoes in my ears. She fell at their feet and begged: "Please brother, shoot me, but don't do this..." Fortunately for her, her pleading got through to an officer who took pity and let her go, after slapping her. A young rape victim in Thirunelvely attempted to commit suicide by jumping into a well.

Loss of virginity in a young girl, even if against her will, meant that she could not aspire to marriage in our society and, if already married, there is a good chance that she will be abandoned. All rape victims are socially ostracised, often by the family also. It is not surprising that rape victims were not forthcoming in reporting such incidents and usually swallowed the suffering and injury silently.

Indeed this cultural milieu was quite familiar to the Indians and they took advantage of this silence and fear. In one case a girl had been taken in on suspicion because she had been in a school group-photograph with a known militant and been threatened by the captain with rape, assault, etc. (Perhaps the captain probably meant it only as a threat). Later, when she was released, a couple of Jawans had followed the family to their home, separated the parents and raped the girl. As she had started bleeding after the first had deflowered her, they had left saying they would come back the next day at the same time and that she should be in. It is worthy of note that in two cases where the victims braved both social ostracism and army intimidation to complain, the Indian investigating the case made out that the victims had to have some militant connection to be so bold as to complain. Although there was lack of action initially by the commanders, probably because they had to maintain troop morale in a difficult situation during the first two months, in later incidents disciplinary action was taken with identification parades and punishment, usually in the form of public thrashing and transfer to another unit. After December the Jawans were more discrete and circumspect. By 1988, the higher authorities showed much sensitivity on the issue of rape, probably due to the wide publicity outside Jaffna. They even brought in police-women and paramilitary women to allay the fear of the local women.

The psychological impact on the rape victim and her immediate family is quite severe. Initially, there is a period of shock lasting from a few hours to a day or two during which she is unable to speak and is choking and gasping; later a deep depression sets in with withdrawal, quietness and crying. Usually the incident leaves a permanent scar and she may be unable to rejoin the mainstream of social life. Two girls who later escaped to Colombo, continue to be depressed and dread the thought of returning home. The fear of pregnancy drove many to seek treatment, the mother or some relation insisting on positive assurance of non-pregnancy or requesting an abortion or D. & C., to be sure.

These incidents of rape, the lack of protection for women, and the rumours that spread, created a great fear among the women of Jaffna. The threat to womankind was very real in the months of October and November. Most women experienced sexual anxiety and felt exposed and vulnerable. Many fled to areas they felt were safe, a large exodus reaching Colombo in December when transport became available. Those left behind, started acting with circumspection by following the well meant advice of sympathetic, Tamil speaking Jawans - wearing sarees, putting poddus and staying indoors. It would appear that the Jaffna woman was perceived as more "liberated" and provocative vis-a-vis her Indian counterpart. Further, some of the women took it upon themselves, in a critical situation, to approach and be friendly and to establish communications when the men were rebuffed, assaulted or shot. This may have been misunderstood.

The public outcry and the wide publicity of this aspect of the Indian occupation that gained momentum from December reflected the deep rooted feeling of insecurity and the cultural significance of this threat to our women. A young lady who had fled to Colombo, confessed that when, on her return to Jaffna in January, she saw the Indian Army all over the place, a fear clutched at her heart and her immediate instinct was to get back to Colombo by the same bus. But she sensed, as only a woman can, that the men were now different, better behaved, and more disciplined.

4.10 Psychosis

Environmental stress by itself is generally not sufficient to cause the major psychiatric illness called psychosis. But in a predisposed or vulnerable individual, stress may precipitate a psychotic illness or cause a relapse in a healthy individual who has had an attack earlier.

Due to the prevailing situation the psychiatric services did not function for over 2 months, except for the few patients who "got caught" in the psychiatric ward at Tellipallai when the situation suddenly erupted on 10 October. Consequent to the heavy shelling of the Tellipallai Hospital, many patients took flight from the ward. Of these, two are believed to have been shot dead and one who was shot through the thigh and external genitals, was brought back to the hospital for treatment. Many patients on long term maintenance treatment from out-patient clinics relapsed due to lack of drugs as evidenced by the large number of relapsed patients now coming for treatment. A middle aged lady who had been doing well for over a year without drugs, had a relapse when the barrel of a gun was thrust into her mouth. From that time she became restless and paranoid. For some it was the death of a close relation that caused the stress.

During this period, many of our patients faced special hardships that the mentally ill are normally not exposed to. A very attractive young girl developed a florid schizophrenic illness and was taken in while wandering due to restless behaviour. The truck she was being transported in was blown up by a landmine and she suffered head

injury. She was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit at the Teaching hospital, Jaffna which was under army guard. While there, she had been taken to the nurses' changing room, threatened into submission and gang raped on four successive nights. Later she was taken to the K.K.S camp where she was reported to have been raped again. She had jumped from a high window and was readmitted to the Jaffna Hospital. While warded in the neurosurgical ward she had been repeatedly raped, by being taken to the toilet. She was later admitted to the psychiatric ward in a very disturbed state. Due to her mental condition, she manifested an increased libido, and this symptom of her illness may have been misinterpreted by the Jawans.

Some psychotic patients behaved in abnormal and suspicious ways, others wandered around during curfew hours and were taken in or shot. A young patient had been taken in while coming to collect his drugs at the O.A.D. clinic. He was given the so called "helicopter treatment" by being hung by the thumbs and beaten. He was sent to us three days later when, eventually, it was realised that something was mentally wrong with him. To report an incident with a more humorous twist to it, a schizophrenic patient who had earlier been warded at the psychiatric ward, was taken in on suspicion. He had promised to show the Indian Army some L.T.T.E. members. The jubilant army unit, in a convoy of jeeps and trucks was brought by the patient straight to the psychiatric ward! The whole area was cordoned off and security measures taken. The patient then proceeded to point to four patients warded there and said: "He robbed the Durghi Amman Temple; he is a top L.T.T.E. leader etc., etc.." When the psychiatric ward staff tried to explain that he was a mental patient probably acting under a delusion, the commander had indignantly replied: "He was talking quite rationally, how can he be mad?" They finally calmed down and left, leaving instructions to keep the four who had been pointed out, under confinement with no visitors or food, as cyanide capsules may be sneaked in with the food. The staff would be responsible if they escaped, they added.

Interestingly for some psychotic patients who had been handicapped by chronic illness, the period of stress appeared to be therapeutic, similar in effect to shock treatment leading to normal behaviour. There was a young engineer who had become apathetic and withdrawn and was at the time unemployed. He had attempted suicide twice, in deep depression. His area was the scene of heightened military activity with many deaths, refugees and so on. He responded by becoming quite energetic and helpful and undertook a variety of social tasks, even at risk to his life. His relations commented that he was quite normal for the first time in years.

4.11 Childhood Disorders

Children under duress commonly present disturbances in physical function (such as enuresis, functional diarrhoea), emotion (such as crying spells, withdrawal) or behaviour (such as clinging, temper tantrums).

A dental surgeon's eleven month old son developed a chronic diarrhoea which did not respond to the usual medications. Their home had come under heavy shelling and they had fled from place to place as shelling and gunfire started wherever they stayed. The diarrhoea would stop and start again. This continued for 2 months. It suddenly stopped spontaneously when the family returned to their home after some normality and quiet had been established.

Disturbance in sleep with nightmares and night terrors were widely prevalent following traumatic incidents. The relieving of traumatic experience in dreams may serve as a natural abreactive process whereby the child is able to work through and come to terms with the traumatic experience by repeated exposure, which he is unable to cope with awake. Children were found to wake up screaming in the night, drenched in sweat. Parents had to stay with a child when he fell asleep and be by his side whenever he awakened. A doctor's four year old girl who had been sleeping by herself before, now breaks into a panic if her parents are missing when she awakes. She puts out her hand and feels reassured if they are there to her touch.

All children were not uniformly affected by the stress. It was noticed that after showing some initial fear and clinging behaviour due to exploding shells and rattle of machine guns, some were quite undisturbed and took things in their stride. At refugee camps, children were found to be playing, making a big noise and enjoying themselves, despite all the tension the adults were going through. Others reacted badly, showing anxiety and other emotional disturbances even after things had settled down or the family had moved to a safer place such as Colombo. To some extent the child's reaction was dependent on the severity of stress gone through and on the reactions of the parents. Children of parents who were tense and anxious showed anxiety and fear. Although children may show transient behavioural and emotional disturbance under stress, the more permanent effect on the developing personality of the child is difficult to assess. Studies of children born under war conditions or children of parents who survived concentration camp, show permanent scarring. It is likely that exposure during

their formative years to insecurity, homelessness and the violent death of loved ones, as well as to other cruel and aggressive action and to the full paraphernalia of war with its instruments of destruction, will permanently influence their development. Indications of this influence are seen in the plethora of war toys and games that our children are so fond of playing with and in their daily vocabulary. When a child was given some building blocks, she immediately proceeded to build a "chain block" (tank) and a helicopter with "guns" sticking out showing clearly how preoccupied children have become with war. This is not helped by the present trend of involving and recruiting younger and younger children into military activities at an age when they cannot quite realise the meaning of their action or its long term consequences. When they act impulsively for kicks and the joy of action, it portends ill for the future. Child psychologists have shown that aggressive behaviour is readily learned by children through observation and imitation of aggressive models and that it can be reinforced and maintained in a variety of rewarding conditions. Thus aggression and violence become a "learned" way of solving problems, when the aggressor is rewarded, for example, by social recognition. This in turn shapes social behaviour where conflicts are solved by aggression and the usual restraints (guilt, conscience) on aggression are reduced and often even morally justified.

This disconcerting development in children in the last few years may prove to be the most far reaching sequelae to the climate of fear and the cult of violence that have been unleashed on this once peace loving society. By all appearances, violence, aggression and non-respect for individual rights is fast becoming part and parcel of our society and a way of life for the next few generations.

¹ The remnant water after boiling rice

Chapter 5

"NO MORE TEARS SISTER"

THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN

War of October 1987

5.1 Introduction

Imperial psychology has over the centuries, developed increasingly subtle and sophisticated means to subjugate and oppress people. But with regard to women, it still employs the most barbaric forms of control and repression - arrogance, dominance, men in battle garb, whether they come with swords or guns, on a horse or in armoured cars. The price of conquest seems heightened by the violation of the women.

Unquestionably, sexual violation is amongst the most traumatic and degrading of experiences. But to restrict oneself to cases of sexual violation would be giving a narrow picture of women's experiences in war. I realised that the totality of women's experience in the war brought out fundamental aspects of this war and the community. Therefore I wanted to hear my sisters tell us their own versions of their travails, tragedies and triumphs

5.2 A village in Central Jaffna:

A Woman's Story

The rich ochre soil contrasted with the shady trees and market gardens dotting our way along the single main road. The morning was still young and fresh, unlike two months earlier, when the sickening smell of death hung like a pall of smoke. This was in the heartland of agricultural Jaffna, where the rich soil is normally extensively cultivated, but now, was almost untended.

One cannot romanticise for long the mornings in rural Jaffna; nor can one forget the "past" as Indian army officials urge us to. The past, was and still is a gruesome reality in these villages. The inert, the gaping caved-in houses, and the burnt out shells of one time houses, all speak of the past. Suddenly shattering the quietness, come the open vehicles of the Indian Army. Flaunting their power and masochism ride the officers in olive green uniforms. Every half mile there is a sentry point. I sailed past one, as one was now used to them in the city. Suddenly I heard the rasping command "Down, down, down, walk". I was pretty careful after that. On the way I met patrols walking along the road like in the early days of the war with all the paraphernalia, including shelling equipment, on their shoulders. Yes, war was here and war is still here. I met the women together and individually, some in their work places some in their houses. They were still picking up pieces of their lives, sorting out the furniture that survived, or sweeping the debris .

The main narrator was a young working mother in whose house everything had been burnt. They were living along the main road in the vicinity of the Amman Kovil in the village of Urelu. From 10 October there was a curfew on, all over the peninsula. On the 11th they saw about forty Tigers, fully armed, moving along the road quietly. The next day, that is 12 October, from the early hours of the morning there started intense shell attacks from the direction of the Palaly army camp. She said that they had to take shelter under the bathroom flat because of the concrete reinforcement its roof had. At about 4:30 a.m., they heard some movement and peeped

out to see a large group of Tigers moving in the direction of Urumpirai. Another interviewee said that this group had stopped near their house in the vicinity of Urumpirai Hindu College about, 300 to 400 yards away.

Between 5:45 and 6:00 a.m, an Indian Army convoy was seen in Urelu passing quietly along Palaly Road. She said:

"We heard a noise - may be a motar shell, possibly from the Tigers and then, suddenly, hell was let loose. A fierce battle ensued and firing started all round and went on continuously. I hugged my little one and was immobile. The firing continued without respite till 9 'o clock. Then it started quietening down".

When they looked out, army men were crouched all round. This woman and the family were contemplating moving further into the village. She said: "We saw in the house in front, the mother and her two year old baby girl and thirteen year old daughter lying dead". They had found the husband and the other eleven year old child injured inside the house. The husband told us how, when he had looked out, the army had fired and he had run into the house screaming. His wife and two kids had tried to escape to safety through the back entrance and they were shot in cold blood. She was a mother holding a two year old baby - not a gun. (It was not till the following day that the neighbours were able to take the father and daughter to get medical treatment, despatching them in a cart to Kopay Hospital). The narrator and her family, while moving a little into the interior, had found the bodies of an old lady and her son along the lane opposite their house. The old lady used to look after the temple. They had also found the body of a man, around thirty-five years of age, by the side of the lane.

On the 13th they saw bombers over Urumpirai. Early on the following day, the bombers came to Urelu and started bombing. They said:

"We know of three persons from the same house - the grandmother, mother and a year old son - who died in the bombing. The husband survived."

Later on, the same day, shelling started intensely, and two sisters (around 35 to 45 years old) died as a result. Our narrator continued:

"We could not stand it any longer. We thought of vacating the area completely. We left for the interior, many of us together with our children and some of our elders. We loaded them on bicycles and scooters. Some even walked. However, we had to leave many of our elderly in the houses. They were too feeble to be moved around".

They were confident that their elders would be spared and that they could convince the army of their innocence. However when the residents of this area came back, they could only see the skeletons and decaying bodies of their elders and others who had stayed behind.

One woman found the bodies of her next door neighbours, a shop owner of fifty-two and his twenty year old son, in various stages of decay. She also said:

"In the lane opposite our house we found the skeleton of a girl. We could only identify her from the clothes. We knew the young girl. She had got a place in the university".

The girl, they explained, had come back to collect some things from the house, because they had evacuated in a hurry. She had wanted to get something for her sister who was pregnant. The residents also found other skeletons - of a woman who had come back to get some drugs for her invalid father and of a man - with only their clothes left to identify them. Bottles were scattered around the first skeleton and a shopping bag lay next to it. On the 15th the woman had survived a bombing attack on her house, together with a neighbour who had taken shelter with her. The daughter was hugging the mother when she was shot. The same shot injured the mother, but did not kill her. The mother had stayed in the house for almost 20 days drinking only water, with the corpses of her husband and child rotting away. One woman said:

"We were mentally prepared for the Sri Lankan army. They chose an age bracket and it is mostly the men that they gunned down. But the Indian army - we just could not believe it. We thought we could explain. But they

just fired! We women are stuck inside the house. Any way how could we go to Nallur when they were shelling along the highways? I have my invalid mother and little son. My husband is not here. How could I go?"

Another woman said:

"How many women and little children died? They could not care less. Anybody, everybody, just a human form, if it moved, they shot it down!"

It was very clear from these women that there was no attempt to differentiate the militants from the civilians. Though this operation was to disarm the Tigers, any moving form in these villages in those early days of war, was a Tiger for the Indian army, and was destined to be killed. And the ages of the dead ranged from 1 or 2 years to 92 years. In the previous few years, during the military operations of the Sri Lankan security forces, the terror of getting rounded up and taken away, had made men between the ages of 14 and 40 (the targeted age bracket), leave the villages of their birth and flee to countries all round the world as refugees, or join the militant struggle. Furthermore, the 35 years of the state's policy of systematic employment restriction, and economic deprivation and the deliberate non-development of Tamil areas, had sent many young men to the Middle East and other areas in great numbers to do menial jobs. The women were left behind to tend, care and keep life going.

5.3 The case of the Disappeared

From the hopeless tragic finalities of death, we move on to the disappeared cases where hope is the only basis around which life itself is constructed for the affected women -sometimes very nebulous hope. Many of the disappearances were of persons taken into custody in the search and round-up operations of the Indian Army. Some had been taken in when they had left their homes to perform their daily routine jobs. They were taken in from the road side, the market, the bank... While incidents of gross killings were on the decline in Jaffna peninsula, disappearances were on the rise and becoming a confounding problem. The Indian Army occasionally releases lists of the detained but otherwise is lethargic and unhelpful in these cases.

She delivered her baby, their first, a week after her husband was taken in by the I.P.K.F.. The others who were taken in with her husband were released later. She never saw him again after the day of arrest. She was heartbroken for he had gone to the house from the place of refuge solely for her sake, to collect the necessities for her to be hospitalised for the birth. It happened in November, 19 November to be precise. For the subsequent 4 months there was not a single avenue that the woman had left untapped in finding her husband. She had left no stone unturned. She had regularly scanned the lists of the detained that the I.P.K.F. releases for a glimmer of hope. People around her murmured that he is dead... She removed her pottu, the colourful spot worn on the forehead by many Hindu women, to signify her loss. But in her heart of hearts and to us, she insisted that he was still alive. She could not accept that he was dead. Would we help?... Do we have hope for her and her infant?

Usha's husband was only 24 years of age. They had married only five months previously, and she was four months pregnant. Of course he was a supporter of L.T.T.E.'s, but after the Peace Accord and marriage, he had left politics to settle down to mainstream life. On 27 January, he left his home for the market. That was the last she saw of him. She has several conjectures. Either the I.P.K.F., or even men from the T.E.L.O. might have taken him.

Another lady had this tale to tell. Her husband was 50 years. They had had four daughters. On that unfortunate day, he had gone to Mullaitivu on a business trip and walked into an area that was being evacuated by the I.P.K.F.. The stories that reached her said that a man like her husband was seen to be shot by the army and carried away. This woman, single handedly, had gone to every camp in and around Mullaitivu and Vavuniya. She had gone to the highest officials concerned. They could not tell her whether he was dead or alive. These are but a few of the stories out of a list of more than the 300 disappearances so far in Jaffna peninsula alone. The list is ever increasing.

5.4 Rape and Molestation

"Why me? I ask myself whether by chance, something in me made them think they could do this to me? I feel soiled inside myself. I feel small. Two months have gone by, but I think I am feeling worse. I was scared to tell my husband- it was only recently that I wrote to him. I will tell you my story if you say it will help other women".

I had known this woman long ago. She was such a lively, vivacious woman. Her smile and face have remained with me. I could readily recall her maiden name, although we were at that time only acquaintances. I could not accept that such a self-possessed woman could talk so dazedly. She is now a 38 year old professional woman with an 11 year old daughter. Her husband worked abroad. She went on:

"On 12 November, in the morning, three Indian soldiers came to our house at about 8 o'clock. My mother was in the kitchen. Only my daughter and I met them. They merely said: 'Checking,' and started pushing my daughter into a room. I dragged her and shouted ' Amma, Amma, checking, checking' Then the soldiers who were at the sentry point very near our house came running to our house. The soldiers who were inside our house told the others that they were only checking our house and did not stay long thereafter. My gold chain had been stolen. We were scared. I then took my daughter and hid her in a small box-room at the rear of the house and at about 9:30 we saw the same three soldiers come again. This time they had not used the front gate where the sentry point is located, but instead came through another vacant house, jumping over the common parapet wall. Then they locked my parents in one room, took me to a room, showed the gun and raped me, one after the other, all three of them. I did not scream. What if they shot my parents? I can still recollect those beady eyes. I could not handle it. I left the village, and Jaffna, as soon as the first buses started running to Colombo. I started having nightmares. I started seeing their faces and hearing voices. I took my daughter and we went abroad. I even went to a psychiatrist. I could talk to him because he was a total stranger. He gave me drugs. It quietened me, but it has not taken the trauma away. I am becoming worse, much worse. At least I saved my daughter".

Her daughter is well built and sweet for a 11 year old. Yes, she definitely had saved her daughter from the trauma. She continued:

"I have written to my husband and he says not to worry. But you know our men. Do you think he will accept me? I try to go to religious meetings and so on, but I cannot take part. I feel so apart from this world. I feel different."

One had seen the shattered interior of a wounded woman. However much one consoled and advised, it seemed so stupid. When I went home, I felt exhausted, impotent and angry at ourselves, our class, our men and our whole passive, stupid society.

Then there is the story of another young girl. She was only thirteen. Their house had once been a Tiger camp. The Indian army that had come to search, separated the child from the others and raped her. The child and family fled to Colombo. They were a well established middle class family. They were not interested in identification or anything at all. They do not want to hear any more of it and would rather let the trauma be buried in the recesses of their memory.

There is also the incident involving the rape of a 55 year old widow, and a 22 year old woman by two Indian soldiers in a poor Roman Catholic area. It was an afternoon, between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., on 18 November. The Indian Army was stationed closeby in a church. The older woman was probably seen first by the soldiers and, as she walked into her hut, they followed her and raped her while she was screaming. At that time the younger woman had walked into the back-yard to draw water from the well. On hearing the commotion, she went up to the door and called "Archie, Archie" meaning "Grandmother, grandmother". The door was opened and she was dragged in and raped. The girl being younger was able to free herself. She ran down the road screaming. She was sobbing, as she cried, "They have spoilt me".

As a result, an angry crowd spontaneously gathered. Around 400 people marched shouting to the army camp. The soldiers stood with their guns on the alert. The angry demonstrators continued to push forward. The commanding officer of the camp appeared on the scene, asked the people to stop at a distance and called in three people for an inquiry. They with the girl went up and told the story. The older woman who was lying in pain in the hut was also brought in and an identification parade took place. The two men were identified, and the officer promised that they would be punished adequately after an inquiry.

This is how another woman described her experience:

"It happened in December, long after they had taken our village. Our village had suffered so much death and destruction. One would have hoped that we would have been spared this agony. On 19 December, I went with a 25 year old friend of mine to make some tea for the people who were gathered in our house. We were all mostly

displaced people and had moved into houses away from the main road. We were going to the house, a little up the lane. Actually it was my sister-in-law's house. It was 11:30 a.m. and it was only when we were in the proximity of the house that we noticed the soldiers standing at the top of the lane. We could not go back, so we decided to go inside the house. As we entered the house, the soldiers followed us and said that they had come for checking. I said that it was not my house, and that I did not have all the keys. They went on insisting on checking. In the process they separated me from my young friend. They took her into a room. One took me around the house and harassed me to show the rooms. We could not even shout. The dogs started barking fiercely. By this time, the neighbours were aware that we two women were inside and came *en masse* to the house. The soldiers then left."

Our narrator, a middle aged widow, told us how her companion had been asked to lie on the bed at gun point, and threatened not to make a sound. But the young woman, being a self-possessed working woman, had been able to ward off the assailant and by this time the neighbours had come. But they would not talk to anyone of authority. They were from a middle class background, and were talking of how such things could ruin a young unmarried woman's future. The group of women whom we were talking to, were careful to make the point that nothing untoward had happened, lest this young woman's future should be ruined. Thereafter, the young girl and other girls in the vicinity left for Colombo directly.

This is the story of a girl who was just 18 years old. Her father was a labourer, a cigar roller. Despite this, he had educated his daughter up to the G.C.E. Advanced Level. The incident took place on 23 December. The Indian Army had in the previous days come to their garden to take their chickens. That particular day, two soldiers came, separated the mother from the daughter, held the mother at gun point and both men raped the girl in turn. She was only a young girl and a virgin. Unlike the others, this girl identified the rapists who were punished by the army. The doctor who examined her, remembers this story vividly. He said, "Its so tragic, she was such a dynamic young girl. I admire the courage of the girl."

Another doctor who was consulted in a case of rape told us:

"Those were the early days of the war. They brought a young girl studying in high school. Her parents were farmers and were old. The Indian Army took her for questioning on 16 November, because of a photograph. The girl was in the photograph with her class mate, who was the sister of an alleged Tiger. She was taken to the camp and questioned on the whereabouts of this boy and her connection with him. The captain threatened verbally to beat her up and even rape her unless she came out with the truth about the boy and alleged that he was her boyfriend. However, after questioning, they brought her home, and the captain gave her an ultimatum of 24 hours to think about it. After sometime, two soldiers turned up at her place, kept her parents to a side, took her to a room and one of them raped her. She had started bleeding. Then one man said that they would come the next day and warned her not to tell the mother and left. The girl became desperate and jumped into their well. Fortunately she was rescued by the neighbours. While this commotion had been going on, the captain arrived on a patrol or some such thing, and with him were the men as well. The captain, most probably thinking that she had jumped because of his threats, patted her on the head, assuring her that he would not do such a thing to her and asked her to tell him if there were any problems. But at that time she had kept mum, because the rapists were with him."

Later, however, the family took her to this doctor who had urged her to report the incident. And she courageously did so and identified the men.

These were the days of full blown "normalcy" where Indian Army officials were bent on convincing all and sundry that life had almost returned to normal. People were going back to their old villages, repairing shelled houses, and trying to live. The month of January was almost drawing to a close, but we realised that as far as women were concerned, the time factor, or the so called normality, did not bring respite. It seemed that the soldiers were relieving their "battle fatigue" on us.

She was a 22 year old student. Her father was semi-blind. The whole family depend on her brother who had a shop in Chilaw. On 29 January, the father and daughter left their home with prepared food for the mother who had been in the temple since 24 January, for religious observances. When they got near the temple four soldiers inspected their identity cards. One took a long time over hers. When asked for the time, she had said that it was 12:10 p.m.. They asked the father to sit down and for her to walk down the lane leading to the temple. Sensing danger, she started protesting, but she was threatened at gun point and made to walk alone. One of the soldiers stood on guard with the father while the other three walked behind her. When they were near an abandoned hut,

she was taken into the bushes. While one stood on guard, the others raped her. After the men had left, the young woman collected her disabled father, went to the temple and joined her mother. Later, she and her father went to the nearest camp and reported the incident. There she was asked to go to a bigger camp. At the larger camp they held an identification parade and she identified the four soldiers. She was advised to treat the matter at a private clinic and report the next day.

We now bring the desperate tale of a young woman who chose not to live through this shame that was brought on her. On 25 January, her body was recovered from the well in her house. Her parents had died during shelling by the Sri Lankan Army in January, 1987. She was 30 years old. On the 24th night, when she was in the house with two other women, Indian soldiers came and knocked. The inmates had not wanted to open, but the insistent knocks had made the now dead girl comment that they might have come only for a search! While the three of them were discussing, the knocks continued unabated. When they opened the door, the woman of 30 ran away fearing danger. The Indian soldiers were there for a few minutes and went away after seeing that the younger woman had run away. None knew her story till her dead body was found. The Judicial Medical Officer who conducted the postmortem, found clear marks of rape (such as laceration of the vagina, and contusion of the labia).

Although there are many more cases of rape, we have presented only a few sample cases. As one woman activist observed;

"Rape occurred mainly in November and December, when the families were trickling in from the refugee camps to their old homes. Many women were quite isolated, with few neighbours being around. It provided ample opportunity for the soldiers to rape. Many of the women were beaten before being raped."

One of my young friends and her little sister once had to go through an I.P.K.F. checkpoint when they were fleeing from village to village. My friend said angrily how the hands of the soldiers had invaded the privacy of their bodies, pawing and feeling them all over. The worst was when after a long silence, her little sister had asked her "Akka¹ - what did the soldiers do to us - is that what they call rape?" In sharp contrast to the sad plight of this sheltered innocence was our encounter with the Indian Army authorities with their utter callousness and contempt for our women. "I am only trying to explain to this young lady," an Indian Army official once said in the midst of discussions, "that stories are grossly exaggerated. Yesterday we went to investigate a case of alleged rape. Ultimately it turned out to be only molestation".

Our anger is at our own impotence and powerlessness. We feel that our physical selves, and our womanness are under the control of these marauders, who take what they want at their will and pleasure. But for these men of authority, it is only a matter of mere definitions.

Another time - in the face of mounting evidence - this same official was forced to take a more conciliatory tone:

"I agree that rape is a heinous crime. But my dear, all wars have them. There are psychological reasons for them such as battle fatigue."

A screaming rocket burst into my head. I thought to myself, yes it is part of all wars; but still, we women cannot swallow it. Our bodies are ours. You cannot relieve yourselves on us.

The Indian Army made it clear to the community that they were ready to act on any case of violation with severity. Once rape was established, the Indian Army did take punitive measures against offenders. But its attitude was one of splitting hairs on the evidence and thereby, perhaps unintentionally, discouraging complainants. It was not ready to consider the threat to life and limb that might have been used to suppress evidence. For example, an incident connected with the rape on 18 November, concerning which people had gone on a delegation to an army camp, is an eye opener. The commanding officer of the camp had not only held an identification parade, but had also taken the particulars of the young men of the neighbourhood who were in the forefront of the delegation. A few days later some "rounds" were made in the vicinity of the house of one of these young men. He was taken into custody and beaten very badly. While beating him they were alluding to the rape saying that it was the Tigers who had raped, and that the people had put the blame on the I.P.K.F.. He was later released as he was innocent. Such incidents lead victims to believe that the I.P.K.F. does not respond kindly to protests against rape and that threats and beatings are used to suppress evidence.

The Indian Army stands further exposed by their response to the rape of the 22 year old student mentioned earlier. She had identified the rapists at the army camp and she was asked to come the next day. When she reported the next day with both her parents, they were all sent to the Ariyali camp in a truck and were told that higher officials would see them. They waited the whole day and eventually became so angry that they refused to eat anything. At midnight a soldier came and said that the commander wanted to see the girl alone. The mother got very angry and both the mother and daughter started raising their voices in protest. Then the man put his finger on his lips and left the room quickly. The mother fearing further forceful encroachment, spent the night just outside the room. The following morning the family wished to go, but were asked to wait again. Realising the fatality as much as the futility of waiting, the young woman, with some resourcefulness, said that her mother was ill (she had a bad leg) and that they had to admit her at the hospital. The army suggested their own hospital. The family was so adamant, that the army asked the father to wait in the camp while the mother and daughter went to Jaffna Hospital. The daughter was asked to return after admitting her mother. However she got herself admitted as well. She later learnt that the father walked out of the camp once she and her mother had left for the hospital.

An officer once protested:

"We are not checking women deliberately. You see, one day, when one of our officers was going on an open vehicle, there were two young women on the road side. One waved while the other raised her skirt and fired an automatic gun at our officer and a jawan. Don't you think we have to check women? It is women who are carrying weapons strapped to their thighs and in their blouses."

Hundreds of women at sentry points were being given total body checks by men. Searching for weapons became an open licence to paw a whole population of women. One adolescent was bitterly crying at one check point - they had even made her show the sanitary towel she had on. Moreover, even the Indian press, including the woman reporter Anita Pratap, dismissed rape as rumour and called it a well orchestrated smear campaign against the I.P.K.F.. In January, the Indian Army with great fanfare brought women of the C.R.P.F. to do the checking of women. But this was a farce, because when impromptu checks and searches occur, they do not occur in areas where women check points are conveniently placed. Moreover, at Elephant Pass, a C.R.P.F. male officer was known to be inside the enclosure observing the women being checked.

Furthermore, like rape, many cases of molestation occurred during the so called house to house searches. At the Manipay Hindu College refugee camp in late November, the Indian Army separated the men from the women and proceeded to molest the girls. The women screamed together and prevented further such activity.

At Passaiyoor in December, in a routine house to house search by the Indian Army, they raised the skirts of the women in a house. The women went on an angry delegation to the commanding officer of the area, complained, and demanded decency and dignity. There was an identification parade and the women identified the soldiers concerned. After that it was arranged that search operations should be carried out only with a civilian observer present. The molested women in this instance, were generally from a working class background, particularly from the fishing community, and were far less likely to take any slight to their womanhood and dignity with demureness. At Lawton Road, Manipay, in December, molestation occurred, as a result of which one woman was left with a split upper lip when she resisted. Another escaped the worst only by screaming out loudly.

We do not say that the Indian Army does not take any preventive measures. But the measures taken are very slow in forthcoming and the army goes to great lengths to exonerate the alleged rapist and build alibis. Little is done to alleviate the sufferings of the victims and their families. Even as we are writing, information about cases of rape and molestation trickle in from all over. As women, we feel the helpless anger of our victimised sisters, and the pain and agony of smashed and stigmatised lives. The cumulative effect of all this was a fear ridden and restricted lifestyle for women. Women who stay at home are very fearful of impromptu house to house searches. So they cook early and gather in one house or keep all

the windows, doors and gates shut. It has been a common sight in Tamil areas, especially in Jaffna, for women to be mobile on bicycles - women in saris, taking children to school and going to work, and young daughters with mothers on their bicycle carriers. A woman said:

"We used to do many things. Especially after the operations by the Sri Lankan Army, we women had to shoulder more tasks and protect our men or send them away."

The Sri Lankan Army had targeted a 14 to 40 year old age group for their definition of a Tamil terrorist and used to round up villages to arrest males from this age group. Thus life for the most able bodied section of the community became precarious. Many young men left, leaving behind the women, children, and the old to keep life going in their homeland. She continued,

"But now, with all these incidents of molestation, and rape, we cannot go anywhere without a male escort and most of the time we are forced to remain inside."

Though the situation in general is easing now, the ongoing incidence of sexual violence against women gives impetus to the return of narrow values. An older woman asked:

"Why cannot these women be inside their homes ? Look at these young girls, laughing and talking. With all this happening, they still parade around! They are deliberately inviting attention."

Reflecting on the new surge of conservatism brought about by the presence of the I.P.K.F., a younger woman said:

"Actually we should not bring up our girls timid any more - but I do agree we should not tempt these men."

As if to echo this, I wish to relate an interesting anecdote. Girls from a village close to the university said that the Indian Army had given a note to their school which the teacher read out. It said: "Girls should wear sarees, and should not go around on cycles". The tragedy of all this is summed up by the young woman who said in a funny, poignant way:

"At the checkpoint even if army men just brush or even make a comment, the old ladies of the village would gather and gossip - 'Poor girl she has been spoilt, how will they get her married off.' To avoid all this I shut myself inside the house."

Caught in such a situation, without a strong women's leadership in the movements, or grass roots organisations, the community of women had no path to organise along and come together so as to raise their voices against such gross evils as sexual violence by the Indian Army. Thus the community has left it to be handled spontaneously. And we find two clear streams of action emanating.

First, the middle class families in cases of rape and molestation have always tried to hide it. They were not willing to expose the culprits because they existed as individualized families and feared the censure of the society around them. The only events that have been brought out have been ones where the victims were ordinary people. The middle classes after having all the advantages of education, and being able to have some kind of a privileged relationship with the Indian Army, did not bring out the issues. Nor did they organise protests, but instead they continued to side step the problem. They did not think in terms of justice being done to the individual or community. This portrays the anaemic character of our middle classes in whom the community had reposed its power but who continually fail the people.

Secondly, this type of handling, of the victimisation of women, individualized the burden of the act carried by the woman, thereby internalizing the pain and trauma and creating far reaching damage to the inner life of a woman. The society stands apart and the most it does is to indulge in sympathetic gossip. Depersonalizing the woman in such acts of violence could be achieved through the collective consciousness. The community of women supporting the victim and letting the trauma drain out, is like opening out an abscess and letting the puss drain out. As a young woman of twenty enlightened me:

"Why can they not treat it as a wound sister and let it heal? The soldiers destroy once. But the village destroys us a thousand times."

Neither have we built structures for women to come together and act (despite the high flown revolutionary language floated around by the women in the liberation movements). Nor have we as a class, had the courage at the point of crisis to come together. The onus of carrying the burden of victimization has fallen on the shoulders of the women of the labouring population and on individual women of this class - a duty which they have courageously under-taken. These fragments of conversation add to what we have personally experienced as women in the aftermath of the war. It shows the community of women made to give up a life-style of relative freedom. It shows the community denuded of power and internal strength, and having to resort to the most restrictive of existing social norms. Those who have taken the brunt are the most vulnerable section - the women - making them totally powerless and condemning them to a cloistered existence. Furthermore, no serious attempts were made at community level to bring about an awareness of the problems arising from the Indian patronage of liberation movements. In fact it is the liberation movements that led us into such a physically interlocked relationship with India. In actual practice, all movements drifted to a position of existing with Indian patronage. Therefore it is not surprising that most of the women had a simple faith in India before the present history ravaged their psyche. Many women we met told us that they could not believe that the Indian Army could commit such base acts. These women, like their men, believed not only that India came as a friend, but also in the so called Indian respect and esteem for women.

5.5 Detainees

Saku was only 25, a mother of two children. She was still suckling her little baby. She was taken in for questioning. Though her husband was also with her, only she was taken in and she had to leave her baby behind. Her family brought the baby to the camp the next day. She was allowed to keep it. She was questioned on the whereabouts of a Tiger member. They alluded to him as her paramour and the baby as his. They had put her in a pit and filled the pit up to the armpit with soil and a soldier jumped on it asking for information. She felt tightening and constriction on her body and chest. She told her story. She had only cooked some meals for the Tigers. Later they pulled her out. She was released 5 days later.

Sumathy is 24 years old and was taken in for questioning on 10 January. She was blindfolded and beaten with a thorny stick at the time of her arrest. She was taken to the camp in the area. They gagged her and beat her with S-Lon pipes which are made out of plastic for piping water. The pipe was loaded with sand. They said that they had full information about her and that she must tell the truth. They beat her for 3 days like this on and off. Her knees were swollen as a result.

The commanding officer, when interrogating Sumathy, beat her with a cane between her shoulder blades. She said that she had only cooked a few meals for the L.T.T.E. and only knew two of them. She was interrogated and beaten the first three days. She was then put in a large room with two others, a 45 year old woman and a young woman, maybe of Sumathy's age. She refused most of the food as the pain was unbearable and she did not want to eat their food. She was released 5 days later.

Once when she was in the detention camp, she saw a young man, tied upside down, having his testicles pulled. The torturers were at the same time, pulling him up and down, by a leg that was tied with a rope to the ceiling. He was screaming: "Only yesterday I told you, only yesterday I told you..."

When one meets Suseela, one knows how she survived - through sheer determination. Being from a poor family, Suseela was only 14 when she was married to a mentally sub-normal man from a rich family. She said:

"Sister, life - happiness - had no meaning to me. Of course his family were kind to me. They gave me jewellery and built a small house for us. I lent the jewellery to my family to make a living. I had no life of my own. My husband would leave me and go to his parents' house to sleep. All the while I would stay alone and scared. I would cook food, but he would eat at a shop or go to his mother's house and eat. So eventually I stopped cooking."

She continued vehemently and half angrily:

"I want to fill my life. I want to do social service. I want to be of service to others. That is how I started helping the people in the village and then the Tigers. I want to do something. Sister, after all these happenings, though people are grateful, they are scared to associate with me, especially to send their daughters with me. They are sometimes sarcastic about my life and make snide comments about my stay in the army camp. Even when I come to see you, they say that I have gone to meet the Tigers. After all this, the barren life and the pain, *I have no more tears sister.*"

She pleaded with me to find something useful for her to do for the community. I was very affected by the energy - the spirit - of this young woman.

And one realised how inordinate power could accumulate in the hands of leaders - women like Sumathy would do anything in the name of the common good and are ready to be led.

5.6 Tamil Women and the

National Liberation Struggle

A common view is often expressed regarding Sri Lankan Tamil women, that they have a certain degree of freedom compared to women in some South Asian societies. These sweeping generalisations point to facts ranging from socio-anthropological observations such as that the Sri Lankan Tamil society is matrilineal or matrilineal. Many women are educated, and have accessibility to professional education and status. They are mobile, dress freely and often act as bread winners. One has to examine these generalizations deeper to understand the real nature of women's position in Tamil society.

The evolution of relative freedom for women in our society in comparison to other South Asian societies, is a part of the overall evolution of society. Our country, unlike many other South Asian nations, is fairly well penetrated by capitalist relations. This is primarily a historical development that occurred because of integration with the world capitalist system. During colonial rule, the plantations became the main economic activity of the island. The middle classes were integrated into servicing this colonial economy and administration. This pattern continued into neocolonial times with some qualifications, furthering the integration into the world economy. Examples are the dependence on tourism, and the development of the Free trade Zone. Therefore what is fairly apparent is that, although there was no rooted capitalist mode of production, the society had well established capitalist relations.

This had removed some of the restrictions of feudal society. Moreover, the fact that education became the greatest employment asset and its widespread availability, made women struggle to become educated, take up careers and professions and move into public life. As a result, these struggles have resulted in the accommodation of women in spheres outside the family.

However, these improved standards in practical life are a facade. The inferior status of women was exemplified by lower pay for women's work, dowry payment by women to men of similar status and profession, and by restrictive cultural, and social practices. All these ramifications of patriarchy and the oppression of women in the economy and ideology, remained fully entrenched. Though colonial capitalist penetration and subsequent reforms had broken up the old feudalism, the remnants of feudal structures now take up a distorted form. A classic example is the dowry system amongst the Tamils. In feudal times, the dowry was a method of preserving family wealth. It was the means by which the ruling class consolidated its wealth and economic power. While one expects the development of capitalist relations to dismantle dowry system, the contrary is true in present day Jaffna society. The dowry system is embellished further, and made into a market economy relationship. For example, if a family has a male who is a professional, such as a doctor, engineer, accountant, or executive, they would be able to sell this person as a husband to a wealthy man's daughter, and get money in the form of a "donation". This so called donation to the man's family, at today's rates, runs into several lakhs of rupees¹. The bias towards "educated" persons is historical. Since colonial times, education had meant upward mobility, social status and accretion of wealth, either in this country or more importantly, abroad. Since feudal times, the person has hardly mattered. It was kin based family interests that dominated. Another phenomenon that is observable in Jaffna society is that despite the acceptance of the market economy, it has not moved forward ideologically. Since many of its feudal values and relationships are based on patronage, the hierarchical order has remained. The middle classes of Jaffna have advanced without a rooted economic base. Their mobility had depended on salaried, service orientated professions where they are always subordinate, and given restricted powers. Their

momentum for advancement and self-expression, was constrained at one point or the other. From this circumscribed position, the search for and preservation of identity became primary. They could only seek their identity, through power as a community, as families, as males, and as heads of families, by preserving or "pickling" the inner core of life. Thus their society seemed to be living a split life. Puritanism and repression in private life seemed effectively to co-exist with materialism and integration in public, and economic life. However, after a decade-long history of the freedom struggle, and with major liberation movements even boasting of armed women's sections, one would have expected tangible cracks in the ideology of Tamil society and some liberating experience for the women.

5.7 Women's Organisations

The women's section in our liberation movements seem to have produced minimal impact on the outside community. They did not conscientise women in the community regarding women's issues springing from the consciousness of our concrete conditions. They did not become catalysts for change as a section in the leadership movement, pushing forward women's grass roots organisations.

In our struggle there was a breakthrough in the community when the Mothers' Front was formed. During the time of enormous crisis in the mid-1980s, when the mass arrests of youth were a fact of life, it was fashioned along the lines of the Plaza de Mayo mothers. The mothers of the disappeared, together with other women in the community, formed a militant "Mothers' Front". During the period 1984-85, the front mobilised mass rallies, and picketed public officials demanding the removal of military occupation and protesting against arrests. Not only the spirit, but also the enormous numbers that they were able to mobilise, spoke loudly of the high point to which such mass organisations, especially of women, can rise. The front consisted of women from all classes. It had central and village level organisations. However, in later years, with the increasing hegemony of L.T.T.E. and the suppression of all democratic organisations through pressure to toe the line, the front, pushed into political conformism, lost its wide appeal and militancy. It became another Y.W.C.A.. Thereafter, its central structure confined its activity to mere charity work. This underscored the reality that a progressive consciousness would not be allowed to develop at the community level. The lack of clarity in the women's sections of liberation movements, made them unable to give any direction towards a broad front. This weakness was only too apparent during the October war and its aftermath. At this time, when urgent and pressing issues like rape, molestation, loss of life, and loss of breadwinner needed organized protest, the existing women's structures, be it the Mothers' Front or others, did not take any initiative. They who should have come out in the open, rallying around the issues of human rights violations and sexual abuse, were immobile and quiet. They did not demonstrate to the I.P.K.F. or India that they would not leave unexposed the grossest violation of women, and their suffering. In essence they did not show the forces that rule our destiny that women are a force to contend with.

However, the Jaffna Mothers Front did decide to fast, to push for negotiations between India and the L.T.T.E.. It is admirable that they showed their solidarity with their sisters in Batticaloa. However one becomes skeptical when one looks at the cause for which they were fasting. We knew from the past that India, the L.T.T.E. and the genocidal Sri Lankan government would negotiate. We had learnt during the years of the civil war and the October war, that neither the Sri Lankan nor the Indian government cared for the interests of the Tamil people. Moreover, even for the Tigers the lives of the people were subordinate to the narrow interests of their movement, as their conduct during the October war showed.

These developments leave the Tamils in a dangerous situation that is subject to further manipulation by foreign influences. Although many Tamils have been killed by militants in the past, accused of being agents of the C.I.A., Mossad and so on, we have failed to see the big holes in our unprincipled politics through which these influences can enter, in ostensibly benevolent roles - as arms donors and even peace makers. Thus when a women's organisation like the Mothers' Front, with the largest following, can only put forward dramatic postures patronisingly assigned to it, it loses its vitality as a force. If only it can be fully rooted amongst ordinary suffering women, mobilise their militant strength and articulate their sufferings and aspirations, can it win esteem and ensure that it is a force to be reckoned with. Sadly the Jaffna Mothers' Front's inarticulate acceptance of women's sufferings at the hands of the I.P.K.F., and, earlier, the L.T.T.E.'s inwardly directed violence, leaves them in a wasteland, only to be used as a tool by one force and disregarded and bullied by the other.

5.8 Women and Arms

This is not a comprehensive analysis. Nor is it an adequate one. However, we are trying to bring in a few strands of thought that could only be filled out by women's own experience within armed liberation movements. Whatever the experience - positive or negative - one cannot deny that this is a sweeping phase in the life of the whole community of women.

One cannot but be inspired when one sees the women of the L.T.T.E., two by two, in the night, with their A.K.s slung over the shoulder, patrolling the entrances to Jaffna city. One cannot but admire the dedication and toughness of their training, seen in the video films put out by the L.T.T.E.. One could see the nationalist fervour and the romantic vision of women in arms defending the nation. This becomes a great draw for other women to join the militant movements. Our social set up, its restriction on creative expressions for women and the evils of the dowry system, are some of the social factors that led to their initial recruitment. Moreover, the political climate created by the struggle in the past decade, and the increasing loss of men to state terrorism and the world at large as refugees and emigrants, are some of the contributory factors necessitating women's recruitment. However, it would be an over-statement to say that it is the climate of "liberation", the kind of literature that is available, the knowledge of the experience of women in other struggles from far flung corners of the world, or the rebelliousness against being kept out of the centre of the struggle, that was drawing the fertile minds of young women to active participation.

Since the mid-1980s, women were being recruited into the movements - mostly into the P.L.O.T.E. and the E.P.R.L.F. which had sizable numbers, and fewer into the L.T.T.E.. Later on, however, there was a rapid growth in the number of women in the L.T.T.E. as well. The L.T.T.E.'s women's section was called the "Birds of Freedom." The recruitment spur came after the Vadamaratchi operations of the Sri Lankan Army and the massive arrests of men that followed. The L.T.T.E. specifically targeted women; younger women who were already knocking at the door to be included in the struggle were eagerly accepted.

Though all these brought winds of change, the impact on the community was nebulous. At times it even makes a negative impression. Episodes like the finding of the bodies of some women of the P.L.O.T.E. cadre at Maniam Thottam, made the community angry and blame the women.

Unlike in the other groups, however, in the E.P.R.L.F., women were taking a more assertive role and putting forward clear, honest political positions in times of crisis. For instance, after the massacre of the T.E.L.O. cadre by the L.T.T.E., the E.P.R.L.F. was the sole movement in the E.N.L.F. (the United Front of the E.P.R.L.F., the E.R.O.S., the T.E.L.O. and the L.T.T.E.) that protested and organised demonstrations and other protests. This campaign was led by their women members. This position contrasts with that of the other members of the E.N.L.F., such as the E.R.O.S. who tactically decided to keep quiet and co-exist with the L.T.T.E.. Later when the E.P.R.L.F. was crushed by the L.T.T.E., many E.P.R.L.F. women were beaten-up by the L.T.T.E.. One prominent member of the L.T.T.E. had said while beating some women:

"What, liberation for you all. Go and wait in the kitchen. That is the correct place for you."

This attitude must have percolated down to the women in the L.T.T.E.. For example, in discussions, women of the L.T.T.E. have said that women should not stray too far away from the roles set by the society and that women had taken arms too early. Coming from a group whose total axis is militaristic, this comment seems surprising. Looking at militaristic movements, brotherhood among males appears paramount to them. Macho pride is one of the impetuses for heroism. This passive stand taken by (or pushed on) the women of the L.T.T.E. is not surprising, especially when we look at the L.T.T.E.'s history. Women at one time were considered evil by the L.T.T.E. and they were said to make men loose their sense of purpose, on account of which men in the movements were prohibited from having relationships with women.

Contrary to our expectations, even the women's section of the E.P.R.L.F. failed to make any impression despite their militancy and remained abstract and isolated from the community. It is fairly evident that it would be utopian to expect the women's sections to forge ahead with clarity, given the level of their political consciousness and taking into consideration the objective reality of our society, the nationalist struggle and the short history of the women's sections. That is, the women's sections of none of the movements were able to grasp the fundamentals of our concrete conditions, formulate a theoretical framework and define practical tasks. This cannot be blamed on the women themselves. Even if they had striven to

achieve high ends, their expression would have been curtailed, disregarded and even trampled upon. Because our society is hierarchically organised and steeped in the ideology of male dominance, the woman's position is shaped in every aspect - personal relationships, property exchanges, work practices, and social and cultural norms - by a girdle of patriarchy. If in a society like this, the dominant ideology under which the struggle is organised is itself an even more narrow, revivalistic and romantic one, well sprinkled with images of male heroes and male valour, and if nationalism is a type of aggressive patriotism, then a concept of women's liberation would be working against the inner core of such a struggle.

In such a situation, a call to arms for women had been based on images of mythified "brave and valiant mothers" who justified such male pride and went for wars or sent their sons, lovers and husbands to the war fronts. Therefore the armed women's sections developed either in terms of "use" as in the case of the L.T.T.E. or in a mechanical fashion, as a graft of an idea borrowed from other liberation struggles as with the E.P.R.L.F.. Thus the passive stand by the L.T.T.E. women can be understood, as the movement approved of them exactly as their society did. The fact that the E.P.R.L.F., possessing an advanced consciousness, was unable to transplant it in the community, is a general phenomenon in all E.P.R.L.F. activities - in the armed struggle, the mobilisation of people and the construction of people's structures, among others. In every major aspect, the E.P.R.L.F. exhibited estrangement between its theory and practice. Therefore neither our material reality nor our history had the basis to support a fully blown women's section in the armed movements. It is tragic that these women's sections themselves did not make any attempt to grasp their reality; an analysis of the position of women, the crucial social issues confronting them in Tamil society and women's history, would have enlightened them and cleared the way to laying down the fundamental tasks and priorities.

Apart from initial documents from all movements calling women to arms, there were no explorations into the theory and practice of the women's question with regard to Tamil society. This was very clear as we further went into discussion with some of the "Birds of Freedom". They confessed to much confusion within the movement regarding the women's question. But they ultimately ended the argument with an expression of faith in their leader's ability to solve all problems. That is why a saddened woman activist told them: "Please remember, a woman's role is greater than just being a machine that carries arms."

Looking at the composition of the armed women cadre, the majority were found to be from poor backgrounds, a small proportion from the middle classes and a few with university backgrounds. The middle class girls were found, especially in the case of the L.T.T.E., to be in the student political wing. For the women from the poor background, theirs was a task with a sense of purpose, a way in which they could lay their life down for something greater than a life of abject poverty and lifelong labour. Those who came from the middle classes to the L.T.T.E., especially those who joined the S.A.L.T., their student wing, were mostly city schoolgirls with a narrow vision, who were guided only by sentiments of patriotism. They held romantic and idealized images of the L.T.T.E., its heroes and leader.

The influence of these women's sections on the community of women was not only marginal, but at times it also reinforced old prejudices. It seems such a tragedy that young women who went with dedication and determination, were much maligned by society. When the L.T.T.E. was withdrawing during the October war, the opinions of the community turned venomously against women. As one older woman said:

"The Tigers were all right till these women joined them. They have spoilt the movement and the boys' dedication."

For them all the grave mistakes of the Tigers could be easily pinned on to the small group of women who had no power at all within the movement. Another professional woman said in a scathing tone:

"Those days when we asked these women why they joined the movement, they said that it was for the sake of our land. Now where is the land? Why could these women not have kept quiet? They are the ones who give all the encouragement to the men."

Such hard and cruel words coming from women themselves, show the deep seated ramifications of women's oppression. These as well as the commonly heard insinuation that women themselves invite molestation and rape, show the trap that women have set for themselves. Wherever a woman is, not only is she oppressed and

made to play a subdued and nonassertive role (being allowed to be assertive only within the ambit of male dominance), she is also destined to take up set roles - playing to perfection the emotional and sensitive roles, at once, of daughter, lover, wife and mother, and providing a stable base for the man and the family to stand on.

This lot gives her her paramount credibility. This is her identity. Moreover, the society has evolved historically in such a way that she herself is made to shape her belief and propagate and maintain her own oppression from generation to generation within the family structure. However, it is not an easy task to ascertain the extent of the permeation of women's oppression in our own Tamil society and construct a proper strategy and tactics to counter it. That women of this nation made an attempt at it and took the first courageous steps is the positive gain of this era, although there is great bitterness surrounding this period. There might be many consequences emanating from it. Many women might be frustrated, bitter and angry and some might reconcile themselves with mainstream life. A few might continue the old way in subordinate and peripheral positions in the movements. But it would be a positive result if a few of those who come out, with richness of experience and self-criticism, become a catalyst for the further advancement of the position of women in this land.

Even in the community, women have come out strong during this war. In many instances of confrontation with the Indian Army, they have stood out as individuals or as small groups, exposing the atrocities and violations of dignity. A Brigadier has his collection of anecdotes of sharp tongued Jaffna women. On the other hand it was mainly women who, in the midst of war, pleaded and argued with the Tigers for life for their families and the whole nation. Again it is women who have braved the guns and sat in a fast to save others in Batticaloa.

Thus when one appraises the political bleakness that confronts this community and this land, the women's history does have a triumph. There is powerlessness, disappointment and disillusionment, but also hope. We have done it... a little bit...

⁴A lakh = 100,000 Rupees = U. S. \$ 2500

Chapter 6

INDIA'S DILEMMA ¹

6.1 Introduction

The tragedies of the October war continued relentlessly into November and December. It left us among the dead, the debris and the crumbling structures. The smell of putrefaction clung to the fresh morning air. The terror of the army on every street corner, molestation and even rape became facts of life.

It left us paralysed - benumbed as a community in a political and structural vacuum. It also left us with this terrible knowledge that people are but dispensable numbers: rape and molestation inevitable facts for the warring parties. It left us bitter, and angry that these gruesome consequences were even awaited with certain satisfaction as good material for international propaganda by the "leaders" of the people. The sadism of this situation seemed the greatest blow to the community. We sat by, watching the Indian military presence become well entrenched in our land, sea and sky, and Indian political dominance a creeping reality.

Unlike other analyses that have come up, we do not see the current crisis as resulting from distinct events that stand on their own and, therefore, one that is subject to being analysed episodically. As such we do not consider this war as a catastrophic consequence of a simple misjudgment on the part of the Tigers or India. Nor do we consider it as a consequence of the inbuilt fears that the Tigers are presumed to have of democracy and elections. Contrary to the popular view, we do not think that if the single event of handing over the 17 L.T.T.E. men had not occurred, every thing would have been fair and fine for the peace accord, the L.T.T.E., the Tamils and the I.P.K.F.. Though all these views have elements of truth in them, we agree with those who place the war in a geopolitical context. However we do not agree that the correct and methodical interaction of foreign policy institutions or the clever manoeuvring of foreign policy can simply determine this geopolitical reality in our favour.

All these opinions view history as a chain of events. Rather, history is an evolutionary process where events are manifestations. We see this war as a historical legacy of the way social forces within the Tamil and Sinhalese nations developed and interacted. An analysis of the political background of the war and Indo-Sri Lankan relations, would entail analysing not only the geopolitical situation, but also the internal contradictions of the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. Such a treatment is very important for us, because many Tamil intellectuals of nationalist leanings see the contradictions, objectives and interactions within the Tamil nation in a simplified framework in isolation of southern Sri Lanka. This cloistered view had been one of the deterrents to constructing a viable nationalist objective.

In this sketch an encompassing view is attempted, within the framework of historical analysis. However, this does not come in the best forms of polemical discourse enthralling left intellectuals and Marxist theorists, but rather breaks into emotional and descriptive scenarios. This has been inevitable for us, as we are participants in the pain and agony of a nation. This sketch is attempted principally to bring out into the open the little known side of our nation (already people are adapting themselves to living with reality, pushing and smothering the pain into the recesses of memory) and the underlying causative processes and forces. However, this study is incomplete as no particular force is dealt with in detail and the sketch draws in broad strokes certain outlines of the tendencies.

6.2 A Survey of the Background to the

Present Crisis

6.2.1 Mother India: Illusion or Reality

Many in the Tamil community expressed shocked disbelief in the way the October war was conducted. The ruling classes of the Tamil nation had always seen India as a patron, an arbitrator, and an advocate of Tamil aspirations. This perception was not only based on the cultural and emotional links with southern India, but also on a studied intellectual approach. Ideas such as exploiting India's great power pretensions as a useful tool for advancing the Tamil separatist cause, have been put forward by Tamil intellectuals. But is this a correct perception? What is India's thrust abroad?

6.2.2 India's thrust abroad

It is argued that in the context of power relations in South Asia, India has some autonomy and its foreign policies may sometimes even conflict with imperial centres - although it still remains basically dependent. It has been proposed that the development of Indian capitalism pushes it to look abroad for markets and resources. This is further enhanced by the perception of India as a potentially great power. These analyses trace this great power perception to the colonial period when emerging Indian elites acted as imperial agents for Britain. Another reason given for India's thrust abroad is the pre-capitalist social formation in India, and the inability of the local market to respond to the needs of India's growing industrial power and further capital accumulation. This can be seen as part of India's diplomatic thrust in the neighbourhood. In this, those interests of India, that can supply goods at very competitive prices, would run counter to those of the western countries and Japan.

Therefore despite the fact that India is in size and scale a big nation in the region, its influence abroad is impeded by internal contradictions. Moreover its influence is uneven in the region. For example, take the case of Sri Lanka, the southern neighbour, and in the north of the region, Nepal and Bhutan. Nepal and Bhutan are more or less totally integrated into India economically, and due to their strategic importance (along the northern border), politically and militarily as well. But Sri Lanka had been able to circumvent such integration and control. To understand the reasons for the relative autonomy of Sri Lanka, we have to search the historical roots of Indo-Sri Lankan relations since the colonial time.

6.2.3 The Colonial past and the evolution of

Sri Lanka's Economy

During British rule some sections of the Indian elite assisted in the administration of colonial structures and the imperial capitalist system, not only in India, but all over the British Raj. In the imperial interests Sri Lanka was designated a crown colony and received preferential treatment in the region because of its smallness in size. This rendered it amenable to control. India's ruling class, because of its relative internal strength and independence, was always more of a threat to the colonial administration than the Sri Lankan ruling class. Furthermore, Sri Lanka's geographical position in the Indian ocean and the possession of a natural harbour at Trincomalee, made this accommodation and preferential treatment useful for continued control of the important sea-lanes of the

Indian Ocean. Apart from the colonial designs to subjugate the whole region, internally there was overwhelming consensus on stubbornly maintaining Sri Lanka's relative autonomy from India. For instance, the East India Company administration was forced to withdraw the Indian civil administrators in its service, after agitation by the indigenous population. This shows a contrasting experience to that of countries like Nepal and Bhutan where Indian civil administrators and migrant traders were an instrument in controlling the indigenous people.

There is another side to this story of opposition to Indian influence however. In the mid-nineteenth century the colonial administration brought in large numbers of impoverished Indian Tamil peasantry from South India to work the plantations in Sri Lanka, when the local Sinhalese had refused to be incorporated into the plantation sector. These Indian Tamil labourers were brought in as indentured labour in conditions of near slavery. The Indian Tamil labour who built up the plantation sector and who, even to this day, remain the backbone of the country's economy, were simply grafted on to Sri Lankan society by their colonial masters and were rejected as aliens by the local population. In post-independence Sri Lanka their situation deteriorated. They were disenfranchised and became the most exploited and oppressed social group within the country. Unfortunately the growing contradiction between the local subsistence agriculture and the plantation sector manifested itself in the most fierce antagonism towards this under privileged group. Unscrupulous political elements used this contradiction to their advantage by portraying this dispossessed poverty stricken group as an arm of Indian expansionism. Even opposition to Indian supremacy in the region was expressed by victimising this minority group.

The local ruling classes, both indigenous Tamil and Sinhalese however, had an upward mobility during colonial rule. The Tamils especially in the lower rungs of the civil service; The Sinhalese in trading, small scale plantations, and satellite services to the plantation sector as well as in the civil services. In fact though there were prosperous Indian and Moor traders in Sri Lanka, they were viewed with intense antagonism by the Sinhalese trading class. The real content of this anti-Indianism was that the local ruling classes did not want another group that was exercising control.

6.2.4 Post Colonial Sri Lanka: Rise of

Narrow Nationalism

Unlike in many other small states in the region, Colonial Sri Lanka occupied a defined place in British imperial designs in the South Asian region, and the Sri Lankan ruling class had a competitive relationship with Indian counterparts who came into the island. Furthermore, the historical development of nationalist movements in Sri Lanka, showed that, though their anti-colonial ideologies were complementary to and derived inspiration from the Indian nationalist movements, they had also an underlying contradiction with them. This contradiction arose from the content of nationalism itself, which was based on the economy of the ruling classes of Sri Lanka. Colonial penetration had made the Sri Lankan economy totally integrated and fully absorbed into the imperial economic system. Plantations became the main economic activity of this island. The rising middle classes of the Sinhalese and the Tamil communities were integrated into servicing the colonial economy and administration. Therefore, though anti-colonial struggles were waged, and nationalism was espoused by the middle classes, the thrust was limited. The middle class had no strong economic base to rely on, except the colonial economy; nor did it have indigenous economic roots to compete with the colonial power. Thus the anti-colonialism of this class and its anger against domination were only emotional. Its link with the nation and the people took the form of cultural and religious identity. Its alienation made it necessary for its assertion as part of the broad sweep of the people. This assertion was articulated in terms of overwhelming enthusiasm for the emotional content of culture and past history. Its real economic contradictions, for example on the Sinhalese side, lay in its competition with the Tamil middle class and Indian trading class for colonial spill-overs. Therefore the contradictions between the rising Sinhalese middle class on the one hand and the Tamil middle class and Indian trading class on the other, made Sinhalese nationalism contain seeds of anti-Tamil, anti-Indian sentiments. Excellent studies on this subject have been done by Kumari Jayawardana.

In post-colonial Sri Lanka, under the system of parliamentary democracy, this class aimed at domination of its competitors from the Tamil community for the economic and political control of the newly independent state. Sinhalese chauvinism played on the cultural connection between the Tamils of Sri Lanka and the Tamils of South India and created fears of Tamils conniving with India to submerge the Sinhalese nation and destroy its language and religion. The Sinhalese chauvinists mythified their role in preserving the Buddhist religion, the Sinhalese race, and the language, and with this ideology they were able to appeal to a broad base, across class, caste and region. Thus it became the most useful ideology for a ruling class, who sought power through

parliament. On the other hand, Tamil nationalism, though of similar class base and aspiration, could not attain to power in the independent state. Thus incipient anti-Sinhalese sentiments could never take the offensive in a concrete form.

Therefore, to sum up, for the ruling classes of both communities consolidation of power depended on the espousal of these narrow nationalist ideologies, and because, since independence "state power" rested in the hands of the Sinhalese ruling class, Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinism became institutionalised, over a period of time.

6.2.5 Sinhalese Chauvinism and Tamil Nationalism

This presentation does not provide the scope to digress into a detailed account of the history of Tamil nationalism. We instead concentrate on certain aspects which throw light on the nature of the forces leading to the particular history of the Tamils.

There was a basic difference in the material base of the ruling classes of the two communities. The plantation sector, the mainstay of the colonial economy, was physically placed in the South and it opened up many avenues for the Sinhalese ruling class to enter into the colonial capitalist system. There was no economic activity of comparable dimension introduced in the Tamil areas by the colonial rulers, that could stimulate indigenous economic enterprises and create wealth. Therefore the rising Tamil middle classes found economic prosperity by servicing the colonial administration in the South and elsewhere. The Tamil middle class sought to prosper by the assiduous pursuance of British education; and thus serviced the lower rungs of the colonial bureaucracy. They produced professionals and personnel to service other civil institutions, such as the schools. They were a class created by British colonialism.

This colonial legacy ensured their position as an intermediary controlling group even in majority Sinhalese areas of the South. This privileged position produced an overblown psychology of superiority. However the underpinning material base consisted of economic activity totally under the control of the state structure, and dependent on the South. This weak and paradoxical position was to produce both the impetus as well as the impediments to the growth of Tamil nationalism.

After independence the state gradually pursued overtly discriminatory policies against the Tamils. As Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinism became institutionalised, the pervasive influence of this ideology touched every aspect of Tamil life-employment, land, education, and industrial development. The discriminatory policies eroded the mainstay of the Tamil middle class's economic base. This increasing threat to their livelihood in the state structure and in the South, and the feeling that they were being pushed around and treated as second class citizens, frustrated and angered the middle class Tamils. However, being economically dependent, they could not be free. Thus they continued to be accommodating, while suppressing their bitterness and anger. The political parties of this class harnessed this anger to consolidate their power. They also reflected this paradox of conflict between their emotions and the economy. Their rhetoric was fiery and appealing to the consciousness of the Tamils, who considered themselves intellectually superior to the Sinhalese. But the political practice was one of bargaining with the Sinhalese leadership for parliamentary power sharing- reflecting their dependency in fundamental areas..

However the most important aspects of national oppression, such as the question of the state aided land colonisation of Tamil lands by Sinhalese, and the encroachment into Tamil fishing areas by marauding Sinhalese fishermen with state patronage, were hardly identified as the primary issues by the nationalist leadership of the T.U.L.F.. These issues were simply exploited to raise rhetorical cries in parliament about national oppression. In fact there was no attempt to mobilise and take forward those poorer sections of the Tamil community whose very existence was threatened by these activities of the state. Thus they ignored the erosion of the material base of the broad masses of the Tamil people and concentrated on a few problems of the Tamil ruling class. The Sinhalese leadership was fully immersed in its chauvinistic ideology, which was intolerant of any real power sharing with the Tamils. Invariably, up to the 1970s, the Sinhalese parties had to rely on some participation of Tamil nationalists in forming governments and this created an illusion among the Tamils regarding power

sharing. In 1970 the S.L.F.P. came to power with an absolute majority and thus exposed the Tamil leadership's parliamentary political limitations in parliamentary politics. Discrimination and oppression worsened over the 1970s. Passive protests by Tamil nationalists were quelled violently with the use of state power, and worse still, from 1977 onwards, anti-Tamil mob-violence (euphemistically called "race riots") was periodically let loose, at increasing frequency.

The failure of the Tamil national leadership to get anything from the Sinhalese ruling class through parliament was in contradiction with the rhetoric of anger and the slogans of valour they were feeding the electorate. As a consequence of this a sense of frustration and bitterness was created among the people. And as brutal mob violence was the reply to non-violence, Tamil nationalism no longer confined itself to a class but reached out to all sectors of the people across class, caste, and regional barriers. Sinhalese chauvinist oppression became the objective common denominator. Anger and frustration at this ignominy and threat to life brought a binding emotion and a feeling of togetherness in the community. The youth who were most affected by the discriminatory policies (such as media wise standardisation in higher education and the quota system in employment) demanded a more autonomous life and voiced the anger of the people..

The youth and the more radical elements felt that the parting of the ways had come and that coexistence with the Sinhalese was no longer possible. Thus the Tamil bourgeois leadership had to adopt the slogan of "Tamil Eelam" - the cry for a separate state-for their political existence. But they had no concrete programme towards this objective. Of course the Tamil nationalist leadership could not pull the Eelam rabbit out of the parliamentary hat. The leadership had put forward a cry that they knew could never be fulfilled in a constitutional way, and Eelam had never been practicable with their class's economical integration and dependency on the South. Moreover they failed to discuss these realities with the people and give them a more viable alternative. They kept the people under an illusion, by such slogans calling the T.U.L.F. leader Chelvanayagam the Mujibur of Eelam, and even hinted at taking up arms from the election platforms. Critics of these slogans were called traitors to the "cause". However little progress was made inside or outside parliament apart from the T.U.L.F. leadership's praising the President as the greatest democrat in South Asia. At the same time the Tamil people faced the 1977 race riots and they had to run away, again hunted. The T.U.L.F. was impotent. As a result the sense of betrayal was acute amongst the youth and the people.

The Tamil national struggle became increasingly isolated and separatist through the intransigence of the Sinhalese nationalists, in whom the power of the state resided. But it would be wrong to view Tamil nationalism, even though the cry of secession was raised after three decades of increasing oppression, as defensive in every aspect; or that it became narrow nationalist and aggressive only after the ascendance of the militancy. (Tamil nationalists like their counterparts, had a sense of superiority. Their historical build up from the feudal past was equally mythical and romantic. They were feeding their electorates and the youth with images of valour, preservation of race and language, and a history heavily loaded with anti-Sinhalese, pro-Indian ingredients.

Tamil politicians often drew images from history harking back to the "glorious" days of the Tamil kings and the days of the Chola empire in South India. They contrasted the antiquity and purity of the Tamil language with the more recent development of the Sinhalese language, scoffing at the latter as a derivative of other Indian languages. They attributed the high levels of literacy and education amongst Tamils to their superior intelligence as opposed to the Sinhalese whom, they claimed, were lazy and less intellectually inclined. The anger that the old guard Tamil leadership felt against Sinhalese domination was due to their perception of themselves as rulers in the past now enslaved by an "alien" people.

Though nationalism was meaningful due to the threat to existence under the Sri Lankan state, its narrowness, violent rhetoric and bigoted imagery were the reactionary elements that were to remain with the nation. The militants were not the initiators; they were the continuation of this history. The ideology in its totality, goes to the credit of the "moderate" and "middle of the road" nationalists, who were the initiators of this narrowness.

The extreme narrowness of their ideology prevented them from organising at grass roots level around the real issues of national oppression. They whipped up nationalist fervour from election platforms, repeatedly evoking these reactionary images and sentiments. The people were not politically conscientious or prepared for the kind of events to come. Their political consciousness was simply taken up to a secessionist stage, just for the political existence of a party and its need to get into parliament,

Another serious defect of Tamil nationalism was its regional bias. The nationalist leadership even within the ruling class was confined to the educated middle class which was mainly from the Jaffna peninsula. This group, most affected by state discrimination in education and employment, unfortunately became the leading force in the struggle.

The Eastern Province, despite its extreme underdevelopment in comparison to Jaffna and the South, remained a rich agricultural area, self sufficient in major crops such as rice. Some sections of the ruling class in the Eastern Province had their base in large land holdings and were not as dependent on the South or on state patronage as the Jaffna Tamils. Therefore they responded to the state's oppressive measures rather differently from the peninsula Tamils. Historically, the two regions developed in different directions with regard to economic and social organisation and cultural practice. Further, the Jaffna Tamils acted on behalf of the state as civil administrators and officials in the Eastern Province and established their dominance. As a result the Batticaloa Tamils learned to regard the peninsula Tamils and their motives with deep suspicion. All these factors contributed to Tamil nationalism taking on primarily a Jaffna face. And when Sinhalese chauvinism revealed its most sinister motives through its policies such as the disenfranchisement of Tamil plantation workers and the colonisation of Tamil lands with Sinhalese settlers, the Tamil leadership offered no tangible way forward.

After independence the successive Sinhalese governments created a policy of land alienation in areas of Tamil concentration to Sinhalese settlers. Bands of settlers were brought into these Tamil villages with state patronage. Over the years this changed the whole demography of some areas in the Eastern Province such as the Ampara District, the strategically important town of Trincomalee and the villages surrounding it. Tamils who were the majority in all these areas have now become minorities. It has even tilted the electoral balance further in favour of the Sinhalese. The hill country Tamils lived concentrated on tea estates, surrounded by Sinhalese villages. Geographically, they were separated from the native Sri Lankan Tamils who lived in the North and the East. All along the indigenous Tamils shunned them socially, mainly because of their lower class and caste backgrounds. The first Sinhalese government disenfranchised the Indian Tamils. Some sections of the upperclass Sri Lankan Tamils also viewed the Indian Tamils as a potential threat in the future and supported the move. The more moderate or liberal Tamil politicians were at best indifferent to the plight of the plantation labour. Their issues were taken on often to bolster their propaganda war. This trend continued even when the militant movements took over the nationalist mantle.

6.2.6 Sinhalese Chauvinism and Indo-Sri Lanka

Relations: Control or Coexistence ?

As we saw earlier, Sinhalese chauvinism was essentially anti- Indian. Such factors made Sri Lanka keep itself at the peripheries of the Indian ambit, and pushed the Sinhalese ruling class to further ties with countries outside the Indian orbit, particularly with the industrialized West and China.

However, these ties were never developed to the levels of being antagonistic to India. All Sri Lankan ruling parties, before 1977, co-existed with a tactical understanding of Indian aspirations. In hindsight it can be seen that India also did not push its influence on its smaller southern neighbour. For India to play a more aggressive role there would have to have been one of two causes: either a danger to its strategic defence or the needs of its expanding economy.

Also a more aggressive Indian role seems to have been curtailed by its own perceptions. The plight of the Indian Tamil plantation workers in Sri Lanka who were viewed as India's fifth column by the Sinhalese, is a case in point. When the Sinhalese racist parties wished to repatriate the Indian plantation workers back to India, the Indian Government signed the Sirima-Shastri Pact without any reservation. The Sirima-Shastri Pact repatriated more than 500,000 plantation workers, many against their will, breaking up communities and even families in the process. The Sinhalese perception that India will use these workers to gain a foothold in Sri Lanka is mistaken, because the Indian state is conditioned by the fact that they are mere workers and not possible rulers.

6.2.7 Sinhalese Nationalism and

Sri Lankan Governments

Sinhalese supremacy was the basis on which especially S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's S.L.F.P. came to power in 1956. But economically it proposed a state capitalist structure and a welfarist and reformist policy. Though the programme itself contained some egalitarian principles, because of the Sinhalese chauvinistic bias, the Tamil population was politically and economically affected. The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam pact - one of the most generous and rational packages to be offered by chauvinist governments - had to be abandoned due to protest from the U.N.P. with the connivance of the Buddhist clergy. The course was set for deteriorating communal relations.

The economy continued in the same pattern with various modifications - but Sinhalese chauvinism still remained the dominant ideology, continuing its oppression of the Tamils. A break in the economic system, and change in political thinking came in 1977 when the U.N.P., with J.R. Jayewardene at the helm, swept into power mainly on an economic programme of free market policies. It was put forward as a panacea for the evils of the welfare capitalism of Mrs. Bandaranaike with its stagnation, queues, unemployment etc. Though the U.N.P. manifesto adopted a more conciliatory tone on the national question to go with its capitalist open economy programme, its political existence seemed again to rest on a base whose dominant ideology was Sinhalese-Buddhist chauvinism. At the time of the elections the overriding economic concerns seemed to obscure the ideological underpinnings, but the dormant chauvinism showed up with the eruption of the 1977 race riots.

The alienation of Tamil nationalists, increasing discrimination, and violent oppression of the Tamil community, had created the conditions for the phase of armed struggle to be born. J.R., a die-hard, pro-American politician, developed pro-Western economic programmes and alliances, and, in his attempt to smash the Tamil resistance, sought the help of Western allies. The United States' good offices brought in Israel as a military advisor, and a V.O.A. base was established in Chilaw, disseminating American propaganda. Trincomalee harbour was made available, ostensibly for refuelling facilities for American ships, and more ambitious plans were rumoured.

These moves were perceived by India as openly subverting its interests. The U. S. and the West saw in the Sri Lankan state a staunch ally and an important check to India's growth as a regional power, especially after India's ties with the Soviet Union were strengthened. The strategic importance of Trincomalee, the natural harbour, underscored the superpowers' interests.

6.2.8 1983 - A Turning Point

1983 was the watershed for local and regional forces - for the Sinhalese chauvinist state, the Tamil militants, for Indian interests; revolutionary politics and militarist tendencies. The June 83 mob violence broke the unstable equilibrium at which contradictory forces were interacting, struggling and evolving. It set in motion at a tremendous pace, the process that was to lead eventually to the October 1987 war. The destruction and chaos seem nothing but a natural outcome. When the July 1983 mob violence against Tamils occurred as a government engineered plan, India voiced its "humanitarian" concern.

For the Sinhalese ruling class which had always feared the espousal of the Tamil cause by India, these indications were seen in a paranoid manner. And the mainstream press and Sinhalese Buddhist organisations fanned anti-Indian propaganda.

India discerned a tangible advantage in using Tamil aspirations for its own interests. The Indian government saw the armed liberation movements as good vehicles for the destabilisation of the Sri Lankan state, with the aim of checking the threats to its strategic interests, posed by Sri Lanka's moves. Overtures were made by India offering to assist militarily the armed Tamil movements. Though the Indian government's decision was never openly acknowledged, training camps were being set up in India. However, India gave its political support to the parliamentary party of the Tamils - the T.U.L.F..

In the meantime, Indian assistance was the talk of the living rooms of expatriate Tamils in London, New York and Boston. The Indian military assistance gave confidence to the expatriate community that a separate state for the Tamils in Sri Lanka was a historical possibility, and a respectable cause. From afar, they were ready to invest for a future. Standing order support started to snowball for the Eelam cause. Luncheons, and dinner parties were held to raise support for the armed groups. Those who raised funds for movements became community leaders among the expatriates. Discussions were addressed by political front-men from all the groups. The armed groups became monetarily more sound and politically more important. Expatriate big wigs breezed in and out of New Delhi and Madras, seeking appointments with Indira Gandhi, and talking to Prabhakaran and Uma Maheswaran in

separate rooms. They were surprised, but not disturbed by their inability to get the latter two into one room. Sri Lankan Tamil platform speakers did the rounds in Tamil Nadu. An expatriate doctor from the U.S. arrived with the Eelam flag designed by him and a commissioned recording of the Tamil Eelam national anthem. Indian assistance spurred recruitment, and swelled the ranks of all groups, thus bloating unnaturally the rather small and infantile politico-military structures of the groups. The sweep of Indian military assistance created shifts in political opinions and the class character of the struggle became well established. It was after the '83 riots and Indian help that taking up arms became popular with middle class youth. Though the ideology of nationalism was that of the middle classes, and the rhetoric was out of their consciousness, the harsh life underground, and the persecution by the police did not make it appealing to the youth of this class in the early days. Before 1983, the rank and file of the groups were young men mostly from the oppressed and deprived sections of the community. However, 1983's gruesome mob violence, the enormous suffering of the people and Indian assistance, tipped the balance. In the process armed actions became the total focus of the struggle among the groups and, in general, within the community. It unlinked political accountability from military action, the fundamental experience of all people's struggles. Liberation struggle became synonymous with armed action. And politics took a back seat in the community and in the movements. But in India's interests, the destabilisation of Sri Lanka could not be better organized than through these politically stunted organizations. India organized the aid through the R.A.W. (Research and Analysis Wing), and it was mainly in the form of training. An empirical analysis of R.A.W.'s activities shows the trends in the political thinking of the Indian state vis-a-vis the Tamil militant groups.

6.2.9 The R.A.W. and the Tamil Militant Groups

The first group that was chosen for training was the T.E.L.O.. The T.E.L.O. at that time was a handful of persons without a clear cut organisational base or theoretical perspective. With Indian assistance the T.E.L.O. became a front line armed group. Recruitment in Tamil Eelam commenced on a massive scale. Once the training took off, the T.E.L.O. launched some daring and successful armed raids on the Sri Lankan security forces.

The scramble for military training offered by India intensified. Five militant movements out of many were chosen by the R.A.W. and training was offered separately as separate packages. The L.T.T.E. had always felt that they had the moral right to leadership because they had sacrificed much in performing many armed actions, and thus had suffered the most for the "cause". Moreover, their narrow nationalist ideology could not accommodate the existence of other movements. They as a group denied the historical contribution of other movements to the cause, and felt cheated when they were not chosen as the sole beneficiary of the Indian assistance. This was one among the many reasons that laid the foundations for their decision later to eliminate physically the competing groups. Nevertheless the L.T.T.E. did not let its bitterness jeopardise its relations with the R.A.W. or India. They, like the other movements, solicited assiduously the military aid on offer. Moreover, the L.T.T.E. and all the other major movements shored up their support by meshing their own with Tamil Nadu's politics. Until the splits came into the open, all the movements were generally referred to as "Tigers". But it was predominantly, the L.T.T.E.'s image of glamour and heroism that caught the popular imagination in Tamil Nadu.

One did expect other movements like the E.P.R.L.F. and the E.R.O.S. with left-wing leanings, to be more cautious about the Indian military training, especially as they had criticised the L.T.T.E.'s military strategy. But the reality was that the atmosphere of total focus was on military and armed action. This proved too much of a pressure for these movements as well. They lacked well organised politico-military strategies of their own to counter this militaristic focus; and they also lacked the conceptual depth that was required to handle the reality of India, and assess the pros and cons of Indian help. Therefore they, like the others, surrendered to the Indian plan wholesale. Their fault was not their receiving of military assistance, but their lack of a coherent structure, a political theory, and popular base which made them unable to control India's dominance and keep the initiative in their own hands. Thus, the slow but steady surrender to India became their destiny.

Therefore when we analyse the level of influence and penetration of the R.A.W. into the movements, one aspect is clear. It is that its influence is far reaching in all the movements. But the degree of penetration varied. The T.E.L.O. was fully penetrated. Others were able to keep a fair distance from this secret service. The E.P.R.L.F. and the EROS had an ambivalent relationship with it. The L.T.T.E. was the most resistant to R.A.W. influence among all five groups. The Tigers who had evolved with the political history of the popular nationalist movement in the homeland, had already built a tightly knit centralized armed structure with fanatical dedication to the cause of their movement, and, most of all, their leader. Therefore, though the L.T.T.E. was a reactionary and stifling phenomenon, the R.A.W. found it difficult to penetrate it fully or to destabilise its structure.

The R.A.W. offered training in separate packages on different terms to the different groups, and thus not only intensified intergroup rivalry, but also ensured a diffused build up of trained personnel, so that no one movement should get ahead of the others militarily. The dangerous and sad aspect of this was that, using the antagonisms between groups to its advantage, the R.A.W. collected information on the movements from each other. India also saw to it that no movement could establish tangible connections with liberation struggles elsewhere or with other countries.

The conclusions we could derive from the above observations are that, though the RAW and India wanted the growth of armed Tamil movements, it was planned in such a way that none of them would be able to supersede the other, and ultimately pose a threat to India or to Sri Lanka. They penetrated the most politically naive of the movements, the T.E.L.O., and used them as their agents. Their competitive offerings in action offset their greater internal rivalries and fragmented support base.

One gathers from all available reports that the R.A.W.'s objective was to use the militant movements to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan state to concede some of India's interests, together with some devolution to the Tamils. Abortive instance of the latter was the Thimpu talks of 1985, where the militants were said to have been "frog marched" to the talks by the R.A.W., and the proposals of 19th December 1986. What was on offer was a far cry from the militants' stated objective of Eelam- a separate Tamil state. The effect of the R.A.W.'s involvement on the social and political consciousness of the Tamils was an unmitigated disaster.

6.2.10 Indian Training, the Nationalist Struggle

of the Tamils and the Sri Lankan State

The Indian military training saw to it that the movements became more successful in containing the armed forces. On the other hand, the Sri Lankan government with the loss of control of the North, sought to chip away at the nationalist argument, and the territorial integrity of the Tamils and thereby make Tamil Eelam a worthless claim. They made moves in the East, the more fertile parts of Tamil Eelam, and escalated colonization in an effort to change the demography of the region. From amongst the Sinhalese colonizers they also built up such paramilitary corps as the home guards, who began to carry out acts of violence against the indigenous Tamils. This started a frontier type of war, especially in the Trincomalee district, and resulted in brutal murders of Tamils and created conditions for a life of terror in the East. The L.T.T.E. in response could not mount an organised defence of the indigenous Tamils, but carried out retaliatory raids not only on the colonizers but even on traditional Sinhalese villages outside the Tamil homelands committing brutal acts of murder and arson. The restrained slogans of pre 1983-L.T.T.E., were abandoned in favour of their instinctive emotional slogans.

Furthermore, the greater sophistication of the liberation movements' armed activities, tied up the Sri Lankan government head to foot in a destructive war which also crippled it economically.

6.2.11 National Consensus: A Facade

Though many considered the period after Indian military aid as one of progress in the Tamil nationalist struggle - the wresting of control of the northern district within a mere three years - this apparent advance and triumph is falsified by other aspects of the struggle. The Eastern province, the other area of Tamil concentration, had remained for a long time outside the sphere of Tamil nationalism. The Batticaloa Tamils and other Eastern province Tamils were reluctant to join a struggle that was Jaffna dominated.

The growing entrenchment of the Sri Lankan military in the East, and increasing the colonization, rendered the Eastern situation more complex; the lack of vision on the part of the leading group, the L.T.T.E., whose Eastern front was small seemed to have handed the Easterners on a platter to the brutality of Sri Lankan S.T.F. and Homeguards, when the North was relatively trouble free. This brought in further division and increased the basis of prejudice between the North and the East, besides enhancing the anger and frustration in the East at Northern hegemony and step motherly treatment. This shook the cohesion that seemed to have developed after the 1983 anti-Tamil mob violence.

The development of the northern front occurred at the expense of many fundamental tasks of nation building. The blind spot in the concept of the Tamil nation was the question of two large sections of the Tamil speaking people - the Muslims or the Islamic Tamils and the hill country (plantation) Tamils. Tamil nationalism was the ideology of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Historically, it had very tenuous links with the ideology of the Islamic or hill country Tamils of Sri Lanka.

The case of the Islamic Tamils spotlights the weakness of Tamil nationalism with clarity. They are a grouping with a unique economic, socio-political structure, and cultural characteristics. Large sections of them live in the East, with pockets of them well entrenched all over Sri Lanka, but isolated from each other. The cohesive factor binding them is Islam, not Tamil. Not only do they have historical contradictions specific to themselves with the Sinhalese, but have suffered during anti-Tamil "race riots" as well.

Though the slogans and programmes of all movements paid lip service to the rights of Muslims, there has never been a concrete programme to realise their goals, or the articulation of their needs and objectives during the process of the struggle. What has been proclaimed is a programme designed by the Tamils for the Muslims. There are immense contradictions and prejudices between Tamils and Muslims, which should have been handled during the years of struggle, a common basis built and an organic cohesion produced. What we have is tokenism, some tenuous slogans, a token presence of Muslims in the movements and the imposition of the hegemony of the Tamils (especially peninsula Tamils) which led to increasing contradictions. Therefore the advance of the Northern front was a facade. Internally, the inner core of the nation was cleaved, and many sections were inarticulate, isolated and in disarray. This situation was successfully used by the Sri Lankan government to increase the animosity between the Tamils and Muslims by even arming small groups of Muslim youths to escalate the conflict.

Not only was the nation cleaved on a regional basis, but also the intensified inter-group rivalries, ultimately culminated in the L.T.T.E. annihilating group after group with brutality unparalleled in the history of liberation struggles. This led the community to be broken into dissenting segments. Their discontent and hatred were reduced to sullen silence by the terror of the L.T.T.E. and other leading movements. We were not only losing on the home front, but there was a slow and steady erosion of international support, as brutalities within and between groups and against Sinhalese were on the increase.

One detrimental aspect of Indian assistance was found in all movements, especially in those where armed actions formed the total axis (like the Tigers and the T.E.L.O.). In them the military machinery grew out of proportion to the political structure. The structures were neither dependent nor connected to the people of the land. And there was hardly any accountability to the people. This lack of accountability was partly the reason why movements like the Tigers could pursue brutal supremacist struggles, while those like the P.L.O.T.E. and the T.E.L.O. indulged in large scale torture and murder of dissidents with impunity.

The Tigers not only brutally eliminated other movements, but they also suppressed any other opinion among the people. All peoples organisations were terrorised into toeing the line by the power of the gun. Very soon many civilian organisations such as the Jaffna mothers' front, trade unions, citizens' committees, teachers' unions and the local press that were all started through the independent initiative of the people, were either suppressed or appropriated by the L.T.T.E.. Though the L.T.T.E. seemed to have ascended to dominance, it was not an organic growth. It was achieved by terror.

Although all movements talked of India only as a rear base, none of them inclusive of the L.T.T.E., could establish any real autonomy from India organisationally. This was principally due to the fact that none of them seriously considered de-linking themselves from India, and building alternative structures, organising the people towards self-sufficiency-economically or socially or politically - to at least a limited extent. This dependency afforded India scope to use a carrot and stick method with Tamil militant groups in its political and diplomatic manoeuvres with the Sri Lankan government. From Thimpu to the 29 July Peace Accord, the Tamil movements had no autonomy.

6.2.12 Negotiation: Anathema

The seemingly successful period of the Tamil militant groups was interspersed with armed actions against Sinhalese villages as a reprisal to the state's activity in Tamil areas. This led to a Sinhalese chauvinist backlash and gave a greater momentum to the forces of reaction within the southern political scene. The resurgence of the J.V.P., the rise of the M.E.P. and the chauvinistic tilt of the S.L.F.P. are classic examples of how narrow

nationalism became a relevant ideology despite the onward march of the country towards capitalist progress for almost a decade. Due to the increasing neocolonialist penetration and dependency under the Jayewardene government, the Sinhalese nation was experiencing a disintegration of social structures, relations and values. This coupled with Sinhalese anger at the government's inability to smash the L.T.T.E., resulted in a resurgence of petit bourgeois militancy. The content of this new militancy was narrow nationalism, romanticism and the glorification of the past and traditional feudal values. The remarkable rise of the J.V.P. on the populist crest in recent times, signals the revival of narrow nationalism with a new vigour.

Though it is apparent that a rational approach to the national crisis lay in finding a political solution between the leaderships of both communities and thus reducing the possibility of Indian involvement, the Government caught in the trap of its own ideology, could envisage participation in negotiations only from a position of strength vis-a-vis the Tigers. That is why negotiations set up at the dictates of India and pressure from the international community, were a failure. And the state continued to build up its military potential.

As the first step, the Sri Lankan state launched its first offensive to wrench control of the North. The defence of the Tamils was weakened by the internal killings, which made it difficult for the L.T.T.E. to sustain the fight and it had to withdraw, losing its control over the crucial border areas, and the land connection with the East. Though the L.T.T.E. still had its bases and moved fairly freely, its earlier position of free access was heavily curtailed. The Tiger control zone shrunk to the peninsula, north of Elephant-Pass. This success gave a psychological boost to the Sri Lankan security forces. A military solution and negotiation from a position of strength were becoming a reality for the Sri Lankan state while India's December 19th proposals were on the table. This was a heavy blow to the Tigers who also would have preferred a position of strength before any negotiation. The Sri Lankan state started its relentless pressure on the Tamil support base. An economic blockade was imposed and sporadic aerial bombardment of so called Tiger camps preluded the final offensive - the so called Operation Liberation.

As the time bomb exploded in the commercial heartland of Colombo on 21 April 1987, the conquest of the Jaffna peninsula was on the cards - the ensuing frenzy of the Sinhalese-chauvinist platforms demanded it.

6.2.13 Operation Liberation or The June War

On the surface it looked a success for the Sri Lankan state. It had smashed a stronghold of the Tigers, the vanguard area of Tamil nationalism - Vadamaratchi. But the war itself and the manner in which it was conducted brought about an international outcry. India stepped up its "moral" pressure, and, by a show of strength rather than by physical invasion, aborted the final Sri Lankan onslaught on the heavily populated Jaffna city and its hinterland. Sri Lanka's allies threatened economic sanctions and demanded a political solution. On the Tamil side, the L.T.T.E. and the Tamil nationalist cause were never in such a defensive position. The Tiger control zone had been whittled down to a corner of the Jaffna peninsula.

On the other hand, India had never found a more opportune time for the offer of its "good" offices. It offered the Sri Lankan government the final package, put in clear cut terms its strategic needs, reiterated the sovereignty of Sri Lanka and pushed the solution down the throats of the Tigers. To the world at large, it took away the image of Indian expansionism and portrayed India as a genuine "peace keeper". To the war weary Tamil community, peace seemed a sweet reality.

6.2.14 The Peace Accord

When the Peace Accord was signed, there was euphoria in the Tamil community. But the L.T.T.E. could not rationalize the Accord to its cadres. The Tiger leadership had been pushed into accepting it.

But such a position was taken while the Tigers were at their lowest and in their most defensive position. The Tiger leadership had erred partly because of certain misconceptions in constructing their relationship with India. They had surmised that India's political aspirations in the region would cause it to look for agents for the destabilisation of pro-Western Sri Lanka. They had openly spoken on platforms about

the Tamil struggle and their "Movement" having given this opening for India into Sri Lanka, and said that Tamil Eelam as a separate state would continue to be friendly to India and thus ensure the existence of India's control over south Sri Lanka. This perception was based on some ideas prevalent amongst Tamil intellectuals. With this perception they could not grasp the reality behind India's continuous reiteration of the fact that it respected the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka.

Some Western analysts saw India's opposition to a separate linguistic state as stemming from a fear that it would give impetus to nationalist movements within its own borders. Though one cannot deny that this is an important aspect of India's perception, it is more important to analyse it in terms of the economic and strategic defence needs of the Indian ruling class.

Though India found the pro-Western defence alliances of Sri Lanka detrimental to its interests, the free economic policies of the Sri Lankan government were in fact a boon to the interests of Indian capital. As we mentioned earlier the development of capitalism in India was stimulating it to look abroad for markets, especially in the South Asian region. To compete with Japan, the West, and the newly industrialised countries India needed to modernise and refine its technology and its management and marketing techniques. Moreover, the big capitalists of India (such as Tata and Birla) were expanding their business interests at an international level and linking up with big multinational companies. Already India had made sizable investments in Sri Lanka's Free Trade Zone and its banking sector. The suggestion that Sri Lanka might become what a Hong Kong is for China, is not so far from the truth when we take into consideration the above facts. Therefore, the maintenance of a stable united Sri Lanka with policies that satisfy India's economic expansion and defence requirements, would be India's objective. Thus, it is not surprising that in the Peace Accord, the letters and annexures which deal with Indian interests are well defined in minute detail, while the part dealing with several key issues of the national question, is vague and given only in broad outline. On the Sri Lankan side, one could rationally view the Peace Accord as affording J.R. Jayewardene a solution or at least an escape from the grip of chauvinism, giving foreign investment a spur and the economy a truly capitalist impetus. However, it was not to be so.

However, Sri Lanka was to be continually confounded by the paradox that existed between its ideology and the economy. Though the economic programme was capitalist, its political existence depended on a reactionary ideology that was anti-Tamil and vehemently anti-India. Thus the populist forces in south Sri Lanka shouted "sell-out" when the peace accord was signed. This stage need not have arisen if the U.N.P. had sought a rational solution, and explained to the electorate the impending Indian problem if the national crisis was not neutralized. For neutralization it had to produce a programme for decentralization and give certain powers to the Tamils in the North and East and ensure the territorial integrity of the Tamil homelands without total division of the country. It could have allayed the fears of the Sinhalese majority and accommodated Tamil aspirations to work towards a rational bourgeois solution. Their irrational and military approach had given India a powerful role, albeit an apparently peaceful one, to play. This enabled it to gain a foothold in Sri Lanka without being seen as aggressive.

On the other hand, the Tamil nationalist struggle under the L.T.T.E. leadership had gone on a path of internal destruction and terror, alienating and cleaving the community. It was failing in its objective by not conceptualising the needs of a struggle whose primary objective was creating a self-sufficient, autonomous state (as far as possible) out of an inextricably linked Sri Lanka. It was falling short by not perceiving India's true aspirations. The result was a failure to construct any means of dealing with the geopolitical reality that avoided total dependency and capitulation. The L.T.T.E. could not grasp, even at this late hour, that "Tamil Eelam" had ironically been rendered an empty slogan, at least to some extent, by their own efforts.

The urgent need here was to work for a rational solution to save the Tamil nation from total Indian hegemony and Sri Lankan control. The surrender of the island to the manipulations of a regional power resulted from the intolerance and intransigence of narrow nationalist forces on both sides.

6.2.15 The Left: A viable Alternative ?

Last but not least of our failings was the lack of a viable alternative to counter this narrow nationalism: a third force. And that brings us to the Left. So far we have not outlined the evolution of this small but politically and historically important force in both communities. But we wish to draw out some observations. It is the failure of this force historically that had cleared the way for the ascendancy of narrow nationalism to the core of our

political life. The Left had the capacity to lead us out of this quagmire. As early as 1947, at the congress of the Communist Party of Ceylon, a resolution calling for regional autonomy for Tamils was put forward. In the debates against the one language policy of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1956, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (the Trotskyite left party) and the C.P.'s enlightened position on the parity of languages and its prophetic pronouncements regarding the future - "One language two nations, two languages one nation" - stand as landmarks and show the role the Left could have played. It is their subsequent, capitulation and lack of creativity that lost the initiative to nationalists.

In the contemporary neocolonialist era, the traditional nationalists such as the T.U.L.F., because of their weak economic base, cannot successfully lead a national struggle towards liberation without capitulating to imperialism. They have no real independent economic power and this leads them one way or another to become integrated and dependent on international capital. The only way they can sustain their nationalist aspirations (stemming from colonial and now neocolonial domination) is by adopting a rhetorical and emotional ideology. Essentially a section of the ruling class uses this to consolidate its power. It is apparent that only a force that represents the interests of the broad masses of the working population, and is therefore opposed to the economic dependence on foreign capital, could design a strategy and a concretised programme to limit the neocolonial penetration and thus lay the foundation for a national economic base. Because our economy was already integrated with international capital and because of specific features of our social formation, the national struggle required a creative and far sighted leadership for a consistent struggle against the forces of reaction. This was not given.

The Sri Lankan Left's base has been traditionally in the urban working class. The leadership comprised petit bourgeois intellectuals who held a Marxist perspective. They were at one time able to predict the development of the national question. But in time, when they opted to participate in the parliamentary process, they had to accommodate the force of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism. Their entry into electoral politics abandoning all other forms of struggle, coincided with the powerful revival of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism which tapped the populist consciousness of the people, especially from the rural base. Since the Left had never represented the rural poor, this base rejected them decisively. In this way a large section of the population was abandoned to the bourgeois political parties' control. The Left, in a desperate attempt to consolidate what ever was left to them, made recourse to the Sinhalese chauvinist line themselves, further eroding their strength.

The lack of clear political leadership among the leftist forces was not only due to their urban bias, petit bourgeois leadership and capitulation to the parliamentary path. The crisis within the international communist movement and the great debate in the 1960s about the future was another factor. The split in the communist movement fragmented the left forces in Sri Lanka. Most of the fragmented left parties dogmatically and mechanically applied experiences of revolutionary struggles in other parts of the world and isolated themselves from the masses in both communities. Their theoretical outlook and internal party struggles were products of mechanical imposition and the adoption of frameworks developed in the international communist movements. The dominance of the Soviet Union and China in the Communist movement also played a great role in narrowing and stereotyping the outlook of these movements.

The major extra-parliamentary left - wing party was the Communist Party (Peking Wing), which gathered together the most radical and militant elements of the Sri Lankan Left. Unlike the parliamentary Left, it had a power base amongst certain sections of the oppressed castes in Jaffna where pitched battles against caste oppression had been waged in the mid - 1960s. The majority of left-leaning intellectuals amongst Tamils were also with the Communist Party (Peking). It was also the first left party to build up a solid base among the hill country plantation Tamils. Despite all this, it was also not totally immune to Sinhalese chauvinism. It failed to comprehend the primacy of the national question in the politics of the island and left the fighting for the rights of the Tamils in the hands of the Tamil bourgeois parties. It had no coherent line linking class struggle with the national question. Therefore it could not consolidate its base amongst the hill country Tamils and the Sri Lankan Tamils. This error in its theoretical understanding of class struggle in the Sri Lankan context, led the party to just drift along with the events and merely respond to the measures that the state was taking.

As a result it began to lose support and to disintegrate in the late 1960s. The fragmentation occurred over the theoretical conflict regarding the legitimacy and nature of armed struggle. The efficacy of armed struggle and the political and strategic means of conducting armed activities against the state also had to be tested and proved.

The strength of the J.V.P. lay in the fact that it adopted the powerful weapon of Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism. Its leader, Rohana Wijeweera had broken away from the Communist Party. The famous "five classes" conducted

by the J.V.P. included the topic of Indian expansionism in which the hill country Tamils were portrayed as India's fifth column. Their anti-Tamil stance gave renewed vigour to the racist feeling of the petit-bourgeois rural youth in the south of the country. The J.V.P. gained much ground by raising this patriotic cry, mixed with Marxist rhetoric. This culminated in the 1971 insurrection which was crushed brutally by the regime of Mrs. Bandaranaike, who was later on an ally of the J.V.P. for a short time during the aftermath of signing of the Peace Accord. in 1987. The 1971 youth insurrection was limited only to the Sinhalese South. The North and East watched it passively.

When the Tamil youth were getting ready to launch their armed campaign against the state in the mid-1970s, the Sri Lankan Left was nowhere to be seen. Thus the leadership of a struggle that would create the most decisive political crisis in the history of Sri Lanka slowly and steadily passed into the hands of narrow nationalism. And it is also clear that it is the Left's internal weakness and contradictions that provided the primary means for external forces to infiltrate their way to controlling the nation.

6.3 The New Phase: Post October 1987

6.3.1 The October War: The people do not matter

Brigadier Manjit Singh of the I.P.K.F. once told a young man in Jaffna, "Be happy that you are alive". Yes, in this brutal war, to be dead was your right, to live was your privilege. In the terror stricken nights of those October days, listening to the continual whizz of the shells, the pounding of great big cannon, the roar of the tracked vehicle and the sharp piercing crack of automatic weapons - to be alive seemed a privilege. Days would dawn and nights filled with fear, would drag, not even knowing what the morrow would bring.

The nation was on the roads, their worldly belongings in plastic bags, their children on their hips, in the blistering noon day heat, from refugee camp to refugee camp, from village to village, fleeing from the withdrawing Tigers and the advancing army. This was 12 - 20 October 1987, in the central Jaffna villages of Kopay and Urumpirai where the war was raging. We heard the women say:

"...my children, run to safety, do not linger any longer, tell your father that I am dead... we left our mother, shot by the army, to die and walked away."

"..we stood still, motionless. I gave my breast to the baby to suck, to keep it quiet. The firing continued all around us unabated. I thought we were as good as dead.

"..when we fled in panic from the raining shells and firing we stepped over bodies, lying on the roads."

"..I cycled fearfully and furiously, everywhere along the road I could see only smashed up houses and bodies on the road - the smell was unbearable."

"..We lay flat among the dead, pretending to be dead...for 18 hours."

"...They had looted our rooms, pulled out the clothing, we found boot marks of blood on our clothing - the boots soaked on the blood of those who were shot on the floor below.."

"... We buried her in the garden, stood around and sang a hymn and said a prayer...she was shot dead in the kitchen, with a half done sambo¹ still on the grinding stone."

In those early days of the war, successful landmine attacks took in fair numbers of Indian army jawans. During the heroics of 12 October, 29 Indian commandos had died. Many spoke with a swagger:

"The Boys are doing great. The fourth biggest military power in the world is humbled."

But as days advanced, what the heroics brought down was the stamp of the Indian boot with unrestrained brutality, and the sacrificial pyre consumed people in great numbers. Then came the shells, cannon, tank fire, helicopter fire and even bombs from the Sri Lankan bombers. When Tiger sentry point after sentry point withdrew without a whimper, only firing rounds of automatic fire thereby luring the Indian army, the people were the sacrifice. The brave talk sounded empty and hollow.

21 October was the day of the massacre at the hospital. The Tigers were there: maybe it was a deliberate ploy on the part of the L.T.T.E.. They came in two lots. When the doctors had pleaded with them to leave, the Tigers went away only after firing some rounds widely and leaving some weapons inside. The Indian army came an hour or so later, at which time there was no retaliatory fire. But they stormed the hospital and brutally killed, taking the lives of the sick and those who were caring for the sick in and around the area. The killing went on throughout the evening, night and the next morning.

The pattern became established - the Tigers would lure, and sometimes kill a few jawans. Then the Indian army would run berserk - shoot, stab, molest and rape. It was unarmed defenceless people who were paying the price. The famed cadjan fences of Jaffna were burnt; sometimes whole settlements of huts were burnt. Invariably houses, and public buildings were shelled or bombed. Kondavil, Kokuvil, Urumpirai, Kopay, Manipay, Sandilipay, Pandatheruppu, Chavakachcheri, Suthumalai....there was hardly any village to tell a different story.

6.3.2 Terror: The Peacekeeper's Tool of Control

These reprisals were not a momentary display of anger at the scene of the death of a fellow jawan, nor an aspect of indiscipline of a massive army. It seemed to be a tactical part of the strategy. A responsible officer told some senior citizens:

“If the Tiger chaps are here, and even if one jawan dies, we will scorch this place.”

And this was not an isolated comment; in every village, in every street corner, the officers gave the people the same message. What can we surmise, except that reprisal raids were part of the strategy - to give a message of Terror. Terror is now the law of the land. It did work, it does work: but for how long?

It was not only that the hospital operation was conducted with callous disregard for the human cost, or that terror was a tactic and reprisal raids were the order of the day. The entire community felt degraded as their women faced molestation on a large scale on the excuse of checking for arms at sentry points, in people's own homes and in the refugee camps. Raping, not just by one, sometimes by two and in one instance by three. To scream was the only defence the women had against this monstrosity.

Even in matters of less importance, the Indian Army showed complete disregard. As Jaffna was being taken, they announced over the radio that the entire population should go to three places for refuge: two schools and the Nallur Kovil (temple). Out of these, the Nallur Kovil did not even have sanitary facilities. At one point there were twenty to thirty thousand people at the temple, in the drenching monsoon rain without any shelter. No functioning hospital, no drugs. The children were dying of diarrhoea and fever. For the Indian Army it was military action. Operations had to be done and the people in these areas did not matter much or were just an after thought.

The people were the killing fodder not only for the occupying Indian Army, but also for the Tigers. It seems a strange twist that the so called leaders of the people wanted them to die defenceless. Invariably the Tigers have used the vicinities of refugee camps as places to mount attacks from (Kokuvil Hindu college where 34 people died is an example) and then withdraw at great cost to the people left behind. They turned a deaf ear to the people's sufferings and their entreaties.

They continued to lure the army, just to run away, letting the people face the result. It was cruellest of all when they told the people that another 500 to 1000 must die for them to have a viable international publicity campaign. This was not an isolated instance or the statement of a group without contact with the leadership. It was pronounced at many places and in many forms. When the people were starving, wandering around like dogs for rice, the Tigers issued leaflets asking the people to boycott Indian distributed food.

When the children were dying with diseases, they threatened those who cared for them, ordering them not to issue Indian drugs. Did they offer alternatives, so that we could eat Tiger food and give our children Tiger drugs? Many important and searching questions surfaced during the crisis. How was it that the movement that claimed to be the leaders of the people, acted with such a disregard for the people? Why did they choose this path of bull-like collision, well knowing our defenceless position? Why did they not understand that the task of rescuing the nation from Indian military and political domination, from the present position of weakness, would entail enormous creativity and not simple slogans and rhetorical, intransigent positions? One has to search in the roots of the Tigers to explain these aspects of our history. Though many factors contributed to this short-sightedness, some aspects of Tiger psychology are pertinent.

6.3.3 The Messiahs and the People

The Tigers were a historical product of nationalist ideology and saw themselves as its legitimate representatives. They grew voicing the disenchantment of the youth, rebelling against the bankruptcy and hypocrisy of Tamil nationalist leaders in parliamentary politics. They held in contempt their slick lawyer politics and verbose debates and decided to replace them with action. They emphasised an action oriented programme and built an organisation centred on a tightly knit centralised armed group. Altruism, nationalist ardour, determination and rebelliousness were marks of the youth who made up the core. Dedication to the slogan of Tamil Eelam, and more so to the “Movement” was the central axis of the organisation. Anything could be justified in the name of the sacred “Movement”. This elevated religious sense was nurtured in all its members. They performed daring armed actions, and propelled history by a kind of politics of heroism - the L.T.T.E.'s politics of heroism had individual heroes going forward, holding the banner and doing the impossible.

The guiding ideology was a nationalism of extreme narrowness, deriving its energies from primitive instinctive loyalties - in our case to language and race. Romantic, idealised imagery and rhetorical slogans appealing to the anger and emotions of the nation were the core content of this ideology. Behind the slogans, there is an emptiness - the classic example is the slogan of “Tamil Eelam”. Though the Tigers saw themselves as the vanguard of this nation and the leaders of an incipient separate state, they did not explore any of the fundamentals of nation building. Nor did they expose the present social weaknesses, or grasp the weakness of the economic base of the Tamil nation, dependent on and inextricably linked to the South and the state machinery. Nor did they address the contradictions arising from regional minority groups, besides class and caste differences. They had no coherent policy to lead the people to overcome these divisions during the struggle. Taking the case of external factors, though they assiduously sought India's help and protection, they had no concept of the geopolitical context and the thrust of Indian hegemony.

They had no theory or analytical framework to explore complexities. They preferred simply formulated answers and fed the people with simple solutions. Their simplicity had an appeal and earthiness. Their people's politics emanated from the satiation of populist desires, fears and sentiments. The other side of the history of such ideological groups is that their idealised, emotional content leads to fanaticism, since the imagery is in absolutes - the Nation, the Language, and the Movement. They are intolerant of others - other nationalities, groups and opinions. They possess a sense of greatness and of awe inspiring duty - which rationalises and purifies even brutality. As one woman dissident aptly described,

“Thambi (Prabakaran, leader of the L.T.T.E.) had a sense of history, a Messianic fervour, and this marked him out as a leader from the start. But these characteristics in the man who had only an idealised and narrow ideology led to fanaticism and brutality.”

This woman further exemplified both the appealing and the reactionary sides in two quotations from Prabakaran taken from talks given to his men:

1. “Only a good cook is a good fighter” (when men in his movement thought cooking was degrading)

and

2. "Politics is there to explain armed action. Not to guide it."

A.S. Balasingham, the so-called "theoretician" of the L.T.T.E., played the assigned role to perfection.

The most poignant aspect of this idealized doctrine was the heroism of suicide. The unique characteristic of the Tigers is the swallowing of cyanide, when they are captured. This act was proclaimed to be sublime, the utmost sacrifice to their cause. It was glorified by the nation as an unparalleled act of dedication in the history of liberation struggles. However, cyanide signified a suicidal urge, to escape from reality, for those who could not handle material reality and its complexities. For an individual member this was an escape from the reality of persecution and torture, in place of building the will to overcome. For an organisation, this served as a means of not addressing objective reality. Given some imagined aspirations and needs, this state of the psyche, through a process of rationalisation, led increasingly to annihilatory ends.

It used to be wondered how a materialistic society such as obtains in Jaffna raised up idealistic youths who were prepared to give up everything for such a cause. Superficially, this may seem a paradox. But at a deeper level, this materialistic urge and this narrow idealism, are two sides of the same coin, whose workings are closely linked. People in certain circumstances, because of the narrowness of their perception, come to identify certain privileges and rights as being central to their existence. These values are propagated by a dominant section which sets the cultural mores. These values themselves have their roots in historical, social and economic factors.

When those rights and privileges that are deemed central to the community's existence are challenged, it creates amongst those affected a build up of idealist emotions, giving them the ability to fight back blindly with remarkable will - power. But these idealist notions have no material base to stand on. This leads to fanaticism.

In the case, especially, of the Jaffna Tamils, they had developed a system where education and jobs in the lower and middle reaches of the white collar government sector had become vitally important. Success in this became tied up with prestige, and financially well endowed and well connected brides. Discrimination in university admissions from 1971 challenged a right that had become indispensable to the Tamils. This need not have been the case, for the farming sector had begun to do well, and land, together with bank loans, was available. But making the change in the economic base was, perhaps for reasons of inertia, not publicly contemplated. Instead, the ideal state of Eelam came to be thought of as the answer to Tamil ills. Amongst the first to push this were those who were university students in the early 1970s.

Even with the liberation groups Eelam was no more than a slogan. They made no practical moves to create a material base, that would give flesh and blood to the concept of Eelam. For instance, none of the groups, for all their criticisms of the old leadership and their militant activity, had any grasp of the dimensions of the colonization problem, which was crucial to the integrity of the homeland. They had not developed any means of resettling Tamils in the East, nor could they do anything constructive to stop the colonisation programme of the state. Brutal and sadistic reprisal killings of Sinhalese settlers and villagers was their answer. This made mere existence itself, for Tamils in those areas, terror ridden and unbearable, as Sri Lanka's Special Task Force and the Homeguards took their revenge unresisted.

The plantation workers on the other hand, had very little to do with the national struggle except to be targets of Sinhalese mob violence. Almost all the groups mustered a few slogans about the plantation Tamils for their political convenience, but did not take any great pains to incorporate them into the struggle and left them undefended. The increasing fanaticism of the L.T.T.E. and the transient hysteria amongst its supporters, must be seen in the context of its unrealistic programme to achieve Eelam. The L.T.T.E.'s political objectives and the strategic means it employed were quite divorced from objective reality.

The narrow idealism of these groups had a specific dialectic in their relation to people. It is often repeated that "the people support the Tigers" - that the Tigers appeal to a cross section of the Tamil society, and that they reflect their emotion and pride. What exactly is this relationship of the Tigers to the people? Lenin wrote a leaflet criticising the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which was a merger of several Narodnik groups and circles, advocating armed action in the absence of ground work amongst the masses. On the subject of the theory of excitative terrorism, he wrote:

"Each time a hero engages in single combat, this arouses in us all a spirit of struggle and courage, we are told. But we know from the past and see in the present, that only new forms of the mass movement or the awakening of new sections of the masses to independent struggle really rouses a spirit of struggle and courage in all. Single combat, however, in as much as it remains single combat waged by the Balmashoves, has the immediate effect of simply creating a short-lived sensation, while indirectly it even leads to apathy and passive waiting for the next bout."

The dialectic portrayed by Lenin is an apt description of the Tigers as well. However, in the case of the Tigers, not only was there no organic link with the people who were just passive spectators, but more importantly, people were held in contempt. This made the Tigers refer to the people as "Sheep". This attitude made the Tigers disregard the people's criticism. The disenchantment and resentment of the people, came into the open in those dark days of October. Ultimately as events revealed in those desperate hours, even the lives of people lost their significance for the Tigers. The Tigers often claimed that the 658 of their members who died during the struggle were the only martyrs for the Tamil cause. The thousands of people who died during the military offensives, and the cadres from other groups were all non-existent for them.

In their theoretical documents, the L.T.T.E. claimed their relationship with the people was as fish to the sea. But the sacrifice of the people who were their protective wall against penetration by the state's security forces; who provided the militants with food and shelter; who provided them with hiding places against the ever hovering threat of Sri Lankan secret services; who risked everything to succour them in those early days; was never appreciated nor commemorated. Individuals and people were used, as the Tigers used the deaths of ordinary civilians to campaign against the Sri Lankan state in international fora. Martyrdom was a private preserve of the L.T.T.E.. The offshoot of this kind of politics was that raising of the people's consciousness, came to mean an appeal to the most instinctive and emotional levels of existence. As the period of Thileepan's fast showed, the Tigers aroused in the people an emotional hysteria where people deified Thileepan and at his death were ready to commit any act, even brutal murder and arson.

To recapitulate, L.T.T.E. had an ideology based on the most instinctive, emotional aspects of ethnic loyalties which was intolerant of others, and had an overwhelming sense of its own greatness. This ideology did not provide them with the necessary apparatus to handle complexities. Therefore they could only view the internal and external contradictions in a simple framework, and offered only simple solutions. Their politics ascribed a marginal role for the people - and if they mobilised the people, it was at a basic emotional level so as to only advance the narrow cause of their movement.

6.3.4 The L.T.T.E.: India's Prodigal Son

Against this background, if we view L.T.T.E.'s relationship with India, its somersaults and ultimate collision, a certain clarity emerges. The L.T.T.E.'s sense of greatness, and the feeling that they were the bearers of the torch of Tamil nationalism, made them feel that they had the moral right to leadership. This was enhanced by the fact that they believed they had sacrificed the most to build a basis for the armed struggle. This perception made them feel angry that India expected power sharing between groups and that India questioned their supremacy. Their anti-Indianism started on that score and had little to do with the interests of the Tamil people. Certain incidents throw light on the contradictory position of the L.T.T.E. vis-a-vis India.

In late June 1987, when Indian officials were ceremonially welcomed by the L.T.T.E. following the airdrop of 4 June and the aborted third phase of Operation Liberation, the L.T.T.E. handed over a memorandum asking the Indian government to recognize the L.T.T.E. as the sole representative of the Tamil people and Prabhakaran as their leader. The Tiger controlled media went into euphoria stating that India would recognise only the biggest movement - namely the L.T.T.E.. When India dropped food parcels from the air, Tiger spokesmen, including Prabhakaran, thanked India and expressed their appreciation of the action. How ironical it is that they are now asking the people not to receive any Indian food and are murdering individuals liaising between the I.P.K.F. and the people for basic amenities. When the Accord was in the offing, they denounced other movements as traitors for supporting the Accord. But later, when Prabhakaran was taken by helicopter on 24 July 1987 to talk about the Peace Accord by the Indian authorities, the same media again proclaimed a great victory and announced the recognition for the L.T.T.E. as the leading movement.

The somersaults in their political line prove that their anti-Indianism was not due to the realisation of the total potential of Indian thrust for dominance, but was rather due to the shallow individualised politics of supremacy of the movement and its leader. This was also an offshoot of their intolerance of other groups and opinions. To

achieve this narrow end they could inspire their members' blinkered dedication, to acts of extreme commitment. Thus Thileepan the Tiger went on a suicidal fast and the nation went on a bout of hysteria when the interim government was being planned. The propaganda line was that the fast was being held for five broad demands. Ironically another movement's, (E.R.O.S.'s) initiative on similar demands was obstructed by the Tigers.

The Tigers stopped the Jaffna University students participating in the march organised by E.R.O.S. and diverted two bus loads of people who were going for the E.R.O.S. march to Nallur, where Thileepan was fasting. It was quite apparent that these demands were only a front. What the L.T.T.E. wanted was a dominant role in the interim government with executive powers, together with the exclusion of other militant groups. These motives came out crystal clear when Thileepan died and India played up. The L.T.T.E. was given a dominant role and was the only militant group chosen to represent the Tamils. The L.T.T.E. proclaimed it as a great victory. These moves of the Indian government convinced the L.T.T.E. that India would pander to its wishes in order to put the Accord into practice.

With this perception of their indispensability for the success of the peace accord, and without an appreciation of even their own limitations and the defensive position of the Tamil nation, the L.T.T.E.'s subsequent political moves were totally estranged from reality. Their simplified thinking could not take into account other factors such as the South, and the political existence of the U.N.P. and J.R.. Nor could they allow for India's need to stabilize the southern government and J.R.'s leadership, India's need to neutralise the propaganda and politics against itself in the South, and last but not least, India's great-power psychology.

Reggie Siriwardene and Radhika Coomarasamy in their article bring forward a point of view on the evolution of the movements that possess such idealised doctrines:

"The mixture of idealism, a glorified sense of self and history and the messianic aspects contained in ethnic and religious identification is extremely conducive to fanaticism. Fanaticism has often been considered a situation where even though an individual's perception of reality is greatly at variance with the objective conditions, the emotional attachment to a set of beliefs propels him forward. Each setback instead of forcing re-evaluation of belief has an opposite effect and pushes the individual forward to martyrdom. Fanatic movements then lose all capacity to compromise, accommodate other points of view and refuse to adapt to changing conditions"

This presents lucidly the contemporary history of the Tigers. Thus it was not surprising that regardless of any future consequence, they pushed India to the wall when they started butchering the Sinhalese civilians in a fit of petulant anger. Therefore, in reality it was not only India's failure as a guarantor, but also the L.T.T.E.'s failure as a leader that triggered off the war in this way.

The Tigers' history, their theoretical vacuum, lack of political creativity, intolerance and fanatical dedication will be the ultimate cause of their own break up. The legendary Tigers will go to their demise with their legends smeared with the blood and tears of victims of their own misdoings. A new Tiger will not emerge from their ashes. Only by breaking with this whole history and its dominant ideology, can a new liberating outlook be born.

6.3.5 Vortex of Violence: India's Catch 22

The L.T.T.E. as an organisation may be disorganised and broken up, but in small bands they can sustain a hit and run war for a long time. The L.T.T.E. is able to sustain this not on the basis of support, but by imposition of terror. Though India claims that normality has returned, the war of attrition is continuing. Even after three months the L.T.T.E.'s small units perform sporadic armed actions and the Indian army continues its reprisal raids, round-ups and search operations and ad hoc curfews. Normality is an illusion. This atmosphere of terror pervades even as the new year dawns.

Along with these two features surfaces another element - with the L.T.T.E. on the defensive, other dissident groups have surfaced. At present in the peninsula those who have come to the front, in alliance with Indian army, are mainly from the P.L.O.T.E., the T.E.L.O., and the E.N.D.L.F.. The disturbing fact is that most of the members who are here at present are the remaining elements without an alternative. The dedicated members from the P.L.O.T.E. and the T.E.L.O. have been

eliminated in internal and inter-group violence, torture and murder, or have run away in fear of their lives to far corners of the world, as refugees or as disillusioned individuals. The elements present here practise a politics of revenge - revenge against the L.T.T.E. for the brutal annihilation of their movements and against the peninsula Tamils whom they presume are supporters of the Tigers. These acts of revenge as well as their function as informants to the Indian army, destroy all hope of any leadership, evolving from these movements. The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (E.P.R.L.F.) has always claimed that its hands were not as bloody as those of the other movements. But it has in recent times abandoned all its avowed goals and thrown the people's interests to the winds and has become a group of informants and proxy killers for the I.P.K.F.. Thus it seems inevitable that the doctrine of eye for an eye will be practised to its fullest. Though the Tigers are on the defensive, the killings by Tigers too have markedly increased. On the eastern front we have to add the other forces, the Sri Lankan S.T.F., and the Jihad, resulting in further instability.

In this scenario, India for its own interests tries and will try to bring in stability by the use of its military might. This kind of enforced equilibrium (a steady state) is not organic and will not be sustained, because, internally, the dominant forces are inherently in conflict and the stabilising forces are in reality weak. That is, the dominant forces of the Sinhalese chauvinistic state, the J.V.P. and so on and the narrow nationalist forces of the Tamils - the L.T.T.E. and other groups with basically the same outlook on the national issue - are in conflict. The stabilising forces are anti-racist left alliances and progressive nationalist movements. Thus the situation will continue to erupt on and off, breaking any semblance of normality.

6.3.6 The Peace Accord and Sinhalese Chauvinism

The southern situation is deteriorating fast, and before long, the island will be caught in a vortex of violence. The Peace Accord and the Indian military presence have given added energies to the Sinhalese chauvinistic forces. These populist forces have started rallying around the J.V.P.. The J.V.P. is a group that had all along propagated a narrow nationalist ideology that is anti-Tamil and anti-Indian. Its anti-Tamil sentiments are such that it does not recognize the depth of oppression of the Tamils and thus advocates a "no concession" position, apart from putting forward an abstract solution to the Tamil problem, called "rights." At present it is not rhetorically and violently anti-Tamil for tactical reasons. But its abstract and meaningless solutions and its theoretical documents show its anti-Tamil racism clearly. In recent times it has successfully revived its armed action to keep in line with its ideology. Its rhetoric is flamboyantly romantic and its actions are violent. The J.V.P. talks about social issues as well as unemployment, deprivation, degeneration of society and conditions of living. The analysis is in a simple framework and the answers are simple such as "Women must bear children.. therefore a revolution must occur", and the solutions equally naive. However, many in the South feel that the J.V.P. reflects the legitimate rights of the Sinhalese people and a cross section of southern society is capitulating to this view.

The J.V.P.'s real class base has been shown to arise from the small producer. An analysis of the prevalent mode of production in the Sinhalese rural areas shows that, in the agricultural base of the island and the small peasant economy, there are numerous strata of proprietor class. And this class is the main bearer of Sinhalese chauvinist ideology. Because of the pre-capitalist nature of the rural economy, the rural proletariats have assimilated the illusions of the petty producers. The urban-biased left parties had long abandoned the rural proletariats to the bourgeois parties' political control. This further reinforced chauvinist ideology amongst the rural population. Now with increasing neocolonial penetration in the South, the rural proletariat is facing a worsening economic situation. This class is therefore understandably looking for alternative leadership. The J.V.P. provides the right blend of egalitarianism, patriotism and chauvinism.

Thus the chances of the U.N.P. continuing in a bourgeois democratic framework, holding fair elections on a regular basis, are pretty slim. On the other hand, Ronnie de Mel (the Finance Minister in the previous government, who subsequently resigned from his post) argues the case for a rational bourgeois solution. He warns against the military option, urges the party to go to the electorate and explain to the people the Peace Accord, and gather strength and isolate the J.V.P. and other chauvinistic elements inside and outside the U.N.P.. Opposed to this option and to the pro-Peace Accord tendency is the U.N.P.'s populist wing. The rational option serves the interests of a small section, big business, entrepreneurs and other compradore sections. The populist aspect is espoused by no less a personality than the President, then Prime Minister, Mr.Premadasa. Therefore the U.N.P. is facing an internal power crisis as well.

The President represents, and depends on, the chauvinists for support and thus could only turn to the electorate and populist forces to resolve the internal power struggle. Therefore he is directly appealing to the ordinary masses with his grand grass roots programmes tainted with anti-Indian populist politics. Ultimately this may lead him to alliances with other chauvinistic forces outside the broad front. Such alliances, will have far reaching consequences for the U.N.P. as a parliamentary party.

Brute force and repressive legislation are likely to be used to smash all opposition. A sign of the developing sinister tendencies is the paramilitary training of the U.N.P.'s rank and file, forming units referred to as the "Green Tigers". These units are coming to resemble the death squads of the Marcos regime. Against this background the Sri Lankan military aspirations and their relation to Indian interests also play a part in determining future developments.

Though the evolution of political forces in the two nations look mutually exclusive, the whole process is inter-linked. The J.V.P. and the L.T.T.E. are groups which, although having developed in different backgrounds, profess similar ideologies, and have a common framework and parallel social bases in the two ethnic groups. They share an intolerance of other opinions and other groups, and they both indulge in brutal murders and torture of their own dissidents and of members of rival groups. Many who give their overt or tacit support to the J.V.P., try to forget these aspects. It will grow into demonic proportions when the movement grows larger - a historical phenomenon parallel to that of the L.T.T.E.. As the Tamil community was to learn bitterly, when the necessary checks are not made and questions are not asked in the formative days, the people would later have no control. Massacres went on for days and our history was stained with the blood of our own people when the L.T.T.E. turned its guns on the T.E.L.O., the E.P.R.L.F., the P.L.O.T.E. and ordinary civilians; when the T.E.L.O. turned its violence on dissidents and ordinary civilians, or when the P.L.O.T.E. tortured and murdered its own dissidents. Similarly in the South, this brutal tendency will add to the U.N.P.'s state violence for sectarian and private ends.

Furthermore, it should be realised that it would be incorrect to believe that by the espousal of narrow nationalism, India's dominance would be contained, or conversely that Indian penetration would contain the violent rise of Sinhalese chauvinism. Both are interlocking phenomena. The J.V.P.'s simplistic "India bashing" does not take into account, the geopolitical reality, India's aspirations, and as a militant Sinhalese nationalist group with a chauvinistic ideology, its own geographic constraints. This might provide a basis for further entrenchment of India in the Tamil area and increasing domination of the North and East, and later also of the South. And on the other hand, increasing India's role in Sri Lanka's internal political life would give further impetus to narrow nationalist movements in the South.

A good example is found in the current situation in Trincomalee. The Indian military presence in Trincomalee removed the patronage of the Sri Lankan security forces and the state machinery given to the Sinhalese. When the patronage was removed, the Sinhalese, feeling vulnerable and fearful, fled to refugee camps. The indigenous Tamils retaliated for the years of terror at the hands of the Sinhalese. Therefore the Sinhalese refugees fear to resume their earlier life pattern. The Sri Lankan security forces who were the patrons of Sinhalese violence in the Trincomalee district have voiced their frustration to foreign journalists; and Sinhalese refugees are even more rabidly anti-Tamil and anti-Indian, making them fertile ground for fresh J.V.P. recruitment. On the other hand the I.P.K.F. seems to be the only guarantor of the Tamil people's safety in Trincomalee. The Indian military has also successfully marginalised other Tamil militant movements, making the Tamil people totally dependent on Indian authority. Against this backdrop, the Indian army is seen to move heavy armour to the China bay area, entrenching its defence position.

Therefore in this complex interaction of forces India's role, though it seems to be external, is totally interlocked. Western foreign policy writers have tended to view the Indian role in terms of regional crisis management. India appears to have gained a foot-hold into the territory and politics of its southern neighbour in a role formally approved by the West and the Soviet Union as peace keepers and crisis managers.

But India has enmeshed itself in a difficult situation here. Its most important objectives cannot be achieved without what seems to be the most elusive phenomenon - stability. India needs stability for its gains in defence and economy. Furthermore it is the essential justification for being on this island. Ideally, India would like stability with preservation of the unitary state structure in Sri Lanka, and the realisation of the legitimate rights of Tamils with India as guarantor.

However, in the North and the East, the L.T.T.E. is going to last a long time. The operation to disarm the Tigers caused much civilian damage in both life and property. Inter-group rivalry and senseless murders are a regular occurrence. The local population is terrorised, living in a political vacuum. Despite pledges the U.N.P. will not be able to bring off easily measures to alleviate the Tamil nation's problems, without endangering its political existence. Thus, India might have to back-track on many issues regarding the Tamils, or try strong arm tactics. Either way it will spur the growth of narrow nationalism and anti-Indian bitterness amongst both Sinhalese and Tamils.

Thus India will not be able to solve the conflict. It has not only triggered off volatile and destructive tendencies which have lain dormant, but also has this time managed to get enmeshed in them. India may not gain a reputation as model arbitrator from the International community, but may rather be tolerated as an immature regional power as are most big powers of this world.

6.4 A note on Economic Factors in the

Regional Crisis

For persons with an intellectual bent, the situation in Sri Lanka provides an interesting case study in terms of the interaction between politics and economy. The Sri Lankan ruling class, since independence, through various state structures and processes, have attempted to consolidate power. While making the changes from a British type parliamentary system to the creation of the executive presidency, and from welfare state, centralised state capitalism to a fully open economy, the different factions of the ruling class attempted to consolidate power and accumulate wealth. In the developed capitalist countries, the various forms of parliamentary democracy negotiate power for the ruling elite and create a sense of complacency among other classes, thereby ensuring the stability of the system. Being on the periphery of the world capitalist system, dealing with fluctuating markets for what are often cash-crops, and having low industrial development and stagnant rural agricultural sectors, parliamentary democracy has resulted in a less stable mode of entrenching the system to the sole benefit of the ruling class. The ruling class' super-exploitation could not be offset by affluence acquired through colonialism or neocolonialism, as was possible in the developed nations. This exploitation is naked and the masses of people in its home base are deprived. Within this context, the need to hold on to power through parliamentary democracy in a situation of meagre resources, has led the ruling class to adopt from Western economic theorists such concepts as "trickle-down" development. The satisfaction of the electoral power base is obtained by sidestepping real issues dealing with the economy, and crusading on secondary issues that have emotional content. Thus, in Sri Lanka, electoral victory and control of the state apparatus was obtained only through the satiation of the aspirations of the majority community. These aspirations arose from a belief that their ills were fundamentally to do with minorities, race, language and religion. Such campaign issues always required the formation of alliances with the petit bourgeoisie. Since the ideology of the petit bourgeois small-producer dominated the widespread rural areas of the Sinhalese South, this class played a

pivotal role in the parliament. As shown earlier, the triumph of the narrow nationalist ideology, whether in the context of a fully fledged open economy or in a protective nationalist state capitalism, was eminently evident.

This sort of dependent economies lack the buffer to absorb the shocks of internal subversion. From the early days, armed conflicts, whether the 1971 J.V.P. insurrection, or the current J.V.P. subversion, brought about disarray in the political situation and a downward plunge for the economy. This phenomenon is more or less due to the economic instability of the dependent capitalist system and its paradoxical dependence on narrow nationalist ideologies. Thus, although the U.N.P. was committed to the market economy in toto, it could never sell itself as a paradise for multinational investment. Its free-trade zones never took off and no large scale investment took place, making Colombo a failed "paradise city," and tourism soon felt the ill effects. After a decade of self-destructive civil war, the ruling party tried to listen to its capitalist sensibilities and neutralise ethnic tensions. This resulted in a backlash of petit bourgeois nationalism in the South and a revival, with new vigour, of the J.V.P..

In a bid to stave off the violent situation created by the militancy, and to ensure political and economic stability, the ruling party replaced the faction within itself that was committed to a capitalist programme with the faction that is populist and narrow nationalist. That is, the Premadasa faction, with its grand grass-roots programmes, replaced the more Westward looking Jayewardene faction. However, despite these many political manipulations and machinations, the changes in the legislature and the state structure, have not provided the local ruling classes with their political or economic stability. Thus, the economic vagaries of the dependent capitalist state, its lack of ability in offsetting internal dissent, and the precarious nature of its economy, together undermine and frustrate the political consolidation of its ruling classes. As such, the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie are unable to provide a solution to the present crisis and are in a state of disarray. Moreover, the situation reflects the economic and political realities of pushing an open economic programme and unleashing market forces in the peripheries of the world capitalist system.

Again it is the neocolonial situation with its economic and geopolitical realities, that would prove to be the important challenge to the J.V.P.'s narrow political vision. It is fairly obvious from the activities of the J.V.P. that it aspires to capture state power. Its present simplistic slogans and bravado against Indian hegemony and its political and economic programmes, which do not account for the realities of a country locked in the mesh of the world capitalist system, will be exposed if the J.V.P. ever assumes power. It would have to either collapse or compromise. And then the true nature of its petit bourgeoisie class interests would be exposed.

Thus, again, we seem to arrive at a historical dead end. The bourgeoisie, of whatever race or faction, cannot hold power without an effective alliance with the petit bourgeoisie. The petit bourgeoisie, although overtly seeming to be progressive in their resistance to domination and neo-colonialism, given the nature of their class base, have always compromised or taken a path of adventurous self-destruction. While the bourgeoisie brought about various degrees of neocolonialist penetration, thereby bleeding the people, the petit bourgeois ideology of narrow nationalism, drawing on a brutal culture of violence, cripples the people's moral strength and weakens organised resistance against oppression. Furthermore, the political tunnel vision of the petit bourgeoisie is leading the country into abortive episodes that seem to pave the way for more domination, more deprivation, and tragedy.

One can see that although the self-image and ambitions of the Indian ruling class are great, and India's need to assert its dominance in the region has been fashioned out meticulously, its economic and political situation as a dependent capitalist country at the vagaries of the world capitalist system makes its involvement in a war of

attrition both detrimental to the ruling class' power perception and debilitating to its economy. Nevertheless, its wars are beneficial to its expanding defence industry and to the ruling class which controls power. It is also an avenue for sharpening the oppressive machinery of the military, and the C.R.P.F., making them more efficient in quelling internal subversion. Thus there might be short term gains for its ruling class, although in the long run, due to its dependence and uneven development, that it will be able to absorb the shocks of prolonged conflict is doubtful. The enormous loss would be to the millions of India's oppressed and poor, for whom this brings more dangers and deprivation and has no meaning.

<http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume2/Chapter6.htm> - [ftnref1# ftnref1](#)¹This article was written during the first quarter of 1988, and was slightly revised in June 1989.

¹A common coconut preparation.

Chapter 7

A PERSPECTIVE ON NONVIOLENCE

"The institution of war is now at least 5000 years old. Our predecessors began to go to war with each other as soon as they had learned to produce a surplus beyond the provision for the bare necessities of life. War is a chain reaction. War breeds war without end. We ought never to have committed ourselves to this wicked institution: war, and we had learned by experiences what its nemesis is, we ought to have abolished it at least as long as the middle of the third millennium B.C.. Can we liberate ourselves from the Karma of war? If we can, we shall have performed a very great spiritual feat. If we cannot, we are doomed". (Arnold Toynbee, *Surviving the Future*, Oxford University Press, U.K., 1971.)

7.1 The Vanishing Prospects for Peace

The prospects for peace in Sri Lanka seem dim indeed. What started out as an ethnic conflict has escalated to produce internecine fratricide among the Tamils, an involvement by India, and a bitter struggle for power among the Sinhalese. The minds of growing children are increasingly conditioned to think only in terms of violence, and to opt for violent solutions. Public apologists were not slow in justifying and accommodating violence with such rationalizing concepts as "preventive violence, after having exhausted all means of nonviolent struggle." And the vicious cycle continues. As a community, the ultimate blame for creating the conditions for violence and a power vacuum inviting intervention, rests squarely on our shoulders. An observant Sinhalese trade unionist taking refuge in Jaffna surmised that the militant youth are the legitimate offspring of Tamil society, reflecting their hidden aspirations and thinking.

Professor M. Paliawadana, ("Violence: Who is Guiltless?," *Lanka Guardian*, 10 (23), 20-24, 1988) speaking for both the Sinhalese and Tamils, traces the source of the violence to our own minds:

".....We are ourselves engulfed in the general disorder and violence and hypocrisy and we are all the time mutually reinforcing these things in our day to day relationships. The human crisis is not the product of some mysterious, unspecified people other than ourselves.(We) have the same mind as others, that ambition, hypocrisy and violence sit there like a solid rock, that because of these things, our minds are basically "separatist", and that as long as our mind is like that, we are likely to keep on contributing to the present chaos. ...Let us try to remember that we are ourselves among the creators of the problem."

Sigmund Freud in "Civilization and its Discontent" comes to a more pessimistic conclusion on the darker sides of the psyche-Thantos- the instinct to destruction and death:

" The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. *Homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to man). Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion? As a rule this cruel aggressiveness waits for some provocation or puts itself at the service of some other purpose, whose goal might also have been reached by milder measures. In circumstances that are favourable to it, when the mental counter forces which ordinarily inhibit are out of action, it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast to whom consideration toward his own kind is something alien".

In fact, even after all this turmoil among the Tamils, some social institutions such as nepotism and the dowry system are more entrenched than ever. While the traditional caste system is publicly disowned as an embarrassment, more insidious distinctions have been gaining ground. One may be able to justify defensive aggression against political discrimination and oppression of a minority, as a natural reaction to recurrent mob violence. But when this aggression turns inward, towards the community itself, manifesting itself as fanatic intolerance for any form of opposition or difference of view, internecine fratricide, political and extra-judicial killing of ordinary civilians, massacres of men, women and children, desecration of dead bodies, torture and exporting of violence as hired mercenaries, then it is a sign that we have reached the stage of what Eric Fromm has termed malignant transformation (*"The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness,"* Penguin Books, England., 1973).

7.2 The Forgotten Spiritual Heritage

In spite of the clamour for liberation, our dominant materialism has prevented us from reorganising social and economic relations for the common good. Our farmers are forced by economic considerations to produce cash crops to the detriment of the whole society. We clamour for a homeland, and an end to colonisation, and yet, few Tamils are willing to settle down in the outlying areas of Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Mullaithivu, where there are no modern comforts and no easy profit, but only a life of struggle and sacrifice to start with.

Traditionally, occupations held in high esteem in our culture were those of the healer, teacher and priest. Sadly these professions too have been adversely affected by materialistic considerations. The first is a caring profession devoted to alleviating pain and sickness, the second to a non-stinting dispensation of knowledge. Today they have both become pecuniary enterprises. Some of the first institutions to start functioning after the recent disruption due to war, were the tutories and places of private medical consultation. The impact of the West has changed the primary motive in education, observes the educationist, Professor K. Nesiah, from the ancient goal of self-realization towards economic goals. The social institution of dowry which often deteriorates to commercial bargaining is another good example of materialistic priorities.

We clamour for physical and material freedom, when we have so readily mortgaged our spiritual freedom. Whatever the mystical interpretation of the recent events, it is quite evident that we have wandered far from the goals expressed by so many of our sages, including the poetess Auvayaar who has sung:

"Rare, rare indeed is human birth

The true object of human birth

is to realise him within".

This calling to our deeper self has been discarded by the wayside. Without the transfiguring or, at least, the restraining influence of the moral and spiritual values of love and nonviolence, we have resorted to violence and hatred to achieve our goals; only to see the growth of the more virulent forms that have torn Tamil society apart. For each one killed there is a brother, a sister, a father, another kin or a comrade seeking revenge. Life has become cheap. We have lost all respect for life. It is indeed a gruesome and tragic plight for this ancient civilization with such a rich spiritual heritage.

It is equally true that compassion for living beings, human or animal, is the foundation of Buddhism, and this lofty principle too has been sadly neglected and forgotten by those professing its faith. Even the most Utopian political systems can never provide freedom. There will always be domination of one over another, a scramble for limited resources and unequal distribution of wealth.

In questions of life, it becomes quite evident that there is an additional factor that defies analysis. The ironical twists of fate, the failure of the best laid plans by the most powerful forces and the unexpected turn of events, cannot be explained away. The situation as it has developed has not been determined or manoeuvred by any one person, be it Rajiv Gandhi, J.R. Jayewardene or V. Prabhakaran, however much they may project a mastery of the situation. Nor does it reveal the sum of an interplay of forces. Rather it appears to have a logic of its own and to convey a meaning beyond the particular. The immense suffering of the Tamil people themselves cries out for a deeper interpretation and a reason for it all.

Perhaps at the end of all this, when we have exhausted our material desires, grown weary of violence, drained the cup of suffering and travelled the road of experience, we will finally realize the value of who we are and where we are. As T.S.Elliot so aptly puts it:

We shall not cease from exploring

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time"

7.3 Nonviolence

The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. He frees himself and shows the way to others. Freedom and slavery are mental states." (M. K. Gandhi, *"Nonviolence in Peace and War,"* Navajivan, India, 1946.)

Talk of love and compassion may make fine sermons. But such moral and spiritual platitudes are difficult to practise and may not be seen as having much relevance to real life. The Tamil community was faced with progressive discrimination and violent repression by the state and it had to react: either with passivity and submission or with defiance and resistance. Violent struggle would seem to be the only way against an opponent who is ruthless and cruel. It would appear to be not only more effective, faster and sure of its goals, but also more exciting and glamorous, thus appealing to the young at heart. Non-violence, if properly understood and practised, can be more effective, less costly and not necessarily slower, the pace being set by determination, discipline, the techniques of the non-violent activist and the general support from the local population. Gene Sharp has dispassionately, without appeal to morality or ethics, analysed the politics of non-violence and has shown it to be, by the ultimate modern test, cost-effective. (*"The Politics of Nonviolent Action"*, Horizon Books, U.S.A., 1973).

In order to understand the active struggle against a repressive regime, the nature of political power has to be first understood. The exercise of political power must in, the final analysis, depend on the consent, tacit or otherwise, of those subject to it.

It is doubtful that nonviolence was ever taken seriously by those who advocated it. The T.U.L.F., publicly committed to non-violence, talked of a secret plan for establishing Eelam and selected a popular militant leader as its representative for parliament. In all the public activities, the spirit that characterised Gandhi's actions was completely lacking. Some of the public protests were a complete farce. For example, during the so called fasts, it is taken for granted that many notables would take a break at meal times. One was able to observe during the Indian occupation, much duplicity in methods of protest. Thus non-violence was not looked upon as an effective method, and no public faith or respect for it was built up.

Nonviolence was only used as a stop-gap measure, while reliance was placed on violence. Nonviolence does not guarantee victory every time it is used. There may be failures as in any military struggle. Rather, each failed action should become the foundation to build a more united and determined effort, to learn from mistakes and to move forward. As in war, nonviolent struggle involves the matching of forces, and the waging of "battles". It requires wise strategy and tactics, and demands of its soldier, courage, discipline, and sacrifice. (Gene Sharp, *"The Politics of Nonviolent Action"*, Horizon Books, U.S.A., 1973).

There are many misconceptions about nonviolence in our community and it may be worth while, now with the cost of violence becoming apparent, to look at nonviolence more systematically and thoroughly.

7.4 Brutalisation Versus Reconciliation

The means of confrontation are as important as the ends, for the methods used transform the user and the final end in the process. A local writer referring to the execution of a local militant leader by another group wrote:

One's mind goes back to the morn when people looked up gratefully to the young men - even boys - who set out with ideas of freedom and brotherhood. That such noble ventures came to grief in dissent and fratricide is an old story. What has gone wrong? The answer must come from the people at large and must be sounded abroad with both courage and compassion. Defeat and humiliation stare us in the face. May God forbid that the tears which drench this ground brim forth their wonted crimson harvest.

The problem with violence is with its nature itself and its inevitable progress to more malignant forms. Violence dehumanises and brutalises the user. Once the hands are soiled with blood, as it were, the usual inhibitions and taboos that operate internally are broken. With this lack of restraint and loss of control, comes a feeling of power - absolute power. A marked intolerance for difference of opinion, a fanatic faith in one's own view or a blind obedience to leadership, a conviction of infallibility, and a casual indifference to pain, suffering and life, manifest themselves. A false sense of a feeling of absolute power is evident in the talk of several army officers, leaders of violent groups and representatives of undemocratic regimes. Their talk often betrays a feeling that others owe them gratitude for being allowed to live, or that they possess legitimate power over the lives of others. One need not probe too deep to find their hidden feelings of insecurity.

Further, violence and the shedding of blood create an atmosphere of raised emotions, hostility, hatred, fear, suspicion and paranoia that makes clear thinking impossible. This was evident during the successive anti-Tamil riots. Sinhalese leaders who had previously adopted a civilised and accommodating attitude towards the Tamil problem, in the wake of subsequent violence, made statements betraying unaccountable intolerance. Paradoxically, in human affairs, there is a tendency for the aggressor to feel more aggrieved than the victim.

The act of killing creates a whole host of enemies seeking revenge. Persons enmeshed in this world of fear and paranoia unleashed by their violence, are unable to trust anyone and are always alert and suspicious. Studies of war veterans who have committed atrocities, show an increase of stress symptoms such as startle reactions, terrifying dreams, distrust, behavioural problems and drug abuse. In addition, there is the danger of addiction to the thrill and excitement of violence, which has been described as malignant post-traumatic stress syndrome. They come to "feel most alive when they are in a situation of intense conflict or potential danger", and feel bored or depressed in the absence of such situations. Many are anxious or paranoid in crowds or public places, and could get irritated and argumentative in such situations. They develop a severe self-loathing and self-hatred, sometimes "a manifested and boastful and exhibitionistic pride in being loathsome," perpetuating spirals of violence and counter-violence. In children, their personality development can become permanently distorted and deformed due to their experience of violence. A NAMDA report claims that they

"become incapable of imparting trust to their friends and associates, and, subsequently, even to their own children. They may develop smouldering bitterness and resentment, and a thirst for revenge which overwhelms them. They may be unable to exercise control over their own feelings and behaviour and may act their impulses in antisocial ways" (*'Bitter Waters' - The effect on Children of the Stress of Unrest,*" Source: Red Barna, Oslo.)

The state of our debasement is nowhere more vividly portrayed than in scenes of children bearing arms and few acknowledging that something was amiss.

In contrast nonviolence has a more wholesome effect on its practitioner, strengthening him spiritually and developing in him what Gandhi called "soul force". Mahatma Gandhi's prescription for nonviolent struggle basically constituted a strict discipline and gradual spiritual development to evolve a pure state of mind and soul that radiates love and nonviolence, a state where no harm, physical verbal or mental, is intended or practised towards anyone, including the adversary. The "soul force" or love towards the opponent has the power to transform him in ways that defy rational explanation. This is what Martin Luther King was talking about when he said, "We should love our enemies because love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend". Gandhi reported that each nonviolent campaign aroused one or more of five responses in the adversary: Indifference, ridicule, abuse, repression, and, finally, respect. Though the success of nonviolent struggle may depend in its early stages on the sympathy, good will or moral appeal to the conscience of the opponent, when the spiritual development of the practitioner has progressed far enough and his soul force is strong enough, he develops an ability and power to transform a situation and the adversary, that is of a new dimension. Thus while nonviolence, practised at a political or physical level, is effective as Gene Sharp has shown, it entails a degree of covert violence, a defiant withdrawal of consent and a threat of retaliation or consequences, a matching of different forces and 'combat'. Gandhi's technique goes a step higher, into the spiritual realm having truth and nonviolence as its foundation, and thus should have the additional attraction to us, as we claim to be steeped in a culture that gives prime importance to spiritual development.

On a social level, when nonviolence is properly practised with the participation of the general population, it binds and unites the people, the young and the old, the men and the women, giving them a sense of purpose and pride in their action. Going back to the pragmatic level, it is often argued that nonviolence will not succeed against a violent and ruthless opponent. But this is not true. In Norway, during the Nazi occupation, teachers were able to resist non-violently Quisling's effort to impose a puppet state. The military strategist Liddel Hart claimed that Hitler's Generals found nonviolence in Norway, Denmark and Holland far more baffling than the violent resistance in other occupied countries. There should, in fact, be no dismay or surprise at repression: it is often the result of the opponent's recognition that the nonviolent action is a serious threat to his policy or regime. Nonviolent activists must be willing to risk punishment as a part of the price of victory. There are also risks when both sides use violence. It is abundantly clear that the Tamil community as a whole has suffered much more after five years of violence, and is left with fewer choices, than it would have had if it had chosen to wage a nonviolent struggle. For much of the violence that was unleashed on the Tamils by the state was a reaction to the escalating counter-violence. Although this is by no means an excuse for the atrocities committed by the government, we ourselves have to take cognizance of the effects of this spiralling vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence. And after all the suffering and destruction, we are nowhere closer to the goals of human liberation. Whether the political concessions now gained will be more tangible than what Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam realised on paper in 1957 and 1966, is left to be seen. Nonviolence would have been far less costly, if the Tamils had been voluntarily prepared to suffer even a little of what they underwent during the war. More importantly we would have come out a united and strengthened community. What we have are the inevitable consequences of violence. After thousands have died, we have a community in disarray and with little control over its destiny. We have condemned future generations to this veritable cult of violence.

In the prevailing climate of polarized racial hatred and prejudice, the Tamils stereotype the Sinhalese as brutal, violent and without a moral conscience. The Sinhalese, they maintain, will only will understand the language of violence. Nonviolence, they say, will not evoke a chord of sympathy and is bound to fail against such violent repression. Even if we accept for the moment this extreme image of the Sinhalese, it has already been pointed out that nonviolent strategy expects violent repression from its opponent and that it is not dependent on the good will of the opponent or on converting him. It works simply by refusing to obey. We have the inspiring example of the Norway teachers' resistance to, perhaps, the most oppressive regime in history, the Nazis. This demonstrated the effectiveness of nonviolence even against extreme violence.

The Sinhalese people themselves are, as a whole in normal times, a compassionate and loving people. Nevertheless, together with their politicians, the Sinhalese must share the collective guilt for unleashing death and terror against the Tamils and then attempting to justify it. This has been acknowledged by several conscience-stricken Sinhalese individuals. For their part, despite all the rhetoric, the Tamil militants were never in a position effectively to protect the Tamil civilians against such a policy by the government. The Sinhalese themselves are now going through a violent inner convulsion that may make the ethnic divisions pale into insignificance. It is the reaction to the violence that had been unleashed on the Tamils. We have to break this spiralling cycle of violence and counter violence, if we are to find peace. But it is difficult to see how it can cease, now that it has been started.

It would seem so simple and easy for the Sinhalese and Tamils to resolve their conflict as brothers. For ultimately, being fated to live side by side on the small island, these two communities will have to come to terms to live as neighbours, whatever the political settlement - even if it is as two separate states, or as an Indian protectorate or territory. Obviously, it is in the best interests of all the parties involved to come to some kind of agreement. Well what is preventing them? It is that subtle but complex psychological process we have been talking about that is intervening between war and peace. For ultimately, war and peace are states of mind.

Chapter 8

EPILOGUE

(February, 1988)

8.1 Jaffna

The open fields around Jaffna make a wondrous sight during the early months of the year. Just such a field lies three miles to the east of the city, marking two miles of open space extending up to the lagoon that separates Valikamam from Thenmaratchi. January saw the fields lush green with newly grown rice. Its canals, filled with water during the rainy season contain riches for an enthusiastic bird watcher. Wild duck, kingfisher, stork and some less common species are all there. One can watch with fascination as a duck glides in the air, nose-dives into the water and comes out with a wriggling fish in its beak. As the month wears on, the stalks turn golden as the rice ripens. Amidst all this beauty, one has to learn to ignore the rusting bodies of cast-away motor vehicles. Jaffna is an orphaned city. There are no city fathers. Faceless men come and go. They build anywhere. They dump rubbish anywhere.

If you miss the scene for two weeks, by mid-February an entirely different scene greets your eyes. The green is no more. The fields are strewn with newly mown hay, a haystack in every square. Gusts of the northeasterly wind carry the voices of women who are threshing the rice. This time the fields are filled with other kinds of birds, including the common sparrow and the seven sisters, scavenging for left over grains. A solitary dog goes about savouring new smells. Against the reddening glow of the setting sun families walk home, their work done, carrying baskets filled with tiffin carriers, water bottles and thermos flasks. They are in no hurry to beat the curfew. A huge, lone bird with a long beak and of light brown hue reposes in an air of meditation befitting the solemn eve. The nesting songs of a multitude of feathery denizens, hymn the descent of night. Next, it will be the turn of cattle. A morning caller will relish the joyous sight of new born calves frisking in the sun.

The coming of the southeast monsoon by the middle of the year will see the same fields thronged with children flying kites. When we were children, there used to be an old labourer who could make ten kinds of kite and would readily oblige children. He is gone now. Some of his sons, they say, went to West Germany. We had little time for such things since we were past the leisure of childhood. We were busy becoming accountants, doctors, engineers and as the last resort, that underrated underdog, the school teacher. With all their liabilities, social and economic, they must carry the burden of responsibility for what the ancient Greeks called "arete" (all round excellence) of generations to come. When one looks back on the benign influences on one's life, one may easily think of a self-effacing school teacher or spiritual mentor who acts as a spring of lucid water, unseen of the eye. But seldom would one think of a doctor, an engineer or an accountant. Today even children do not have time for such things. Well bred children are taught early in life to say: "I am busy". Our educational system is one huge edifice on the Gradgrind model, immortalised by Charles Dickens in "Hard Times". We brought forth far too few men who were historians, men of originality or men of vision. Having paid the price, the hangover from four years of war has given us plenty of time to reflect, to notice those things we chose not to see. The only busy ones are those applying for foreign visas.

It is often said that Jaffna is back forty years in time. Whether that is good or bad is a matter of personal taste. One sense in which that is true is that the bulls are back in business. The old Dutch Road linking Uduvil and Sandilipay is a scene of striking beauty right round the year. The younger lads will of course prefer the beauties at Uduvil Girls' College where Dutch Road begins, provided irate fathers wielding walking sticks are not around to intercept letters passed over the wall. Those with a reflective turn of mind could go further down where the only reminders of present times are tall electric pylons and military helicopters plying between Jaffna Fort and Palaly. Some passers by stopped to see the sight that was considered abolished -- a man who was ploughing with bulls. He stopped and inquired what they were looking at. "We were wondering at what you are doing", they replied. "Oh, that", he said, and smiled, putting up his hand to shade his eyes from the rays of the morning sun. He continued: "Only the big farmers can afford tractors now. The fuel charges are prohibitive. Give me two good bulls and I can plough half an acre in 3 hours flat."

8.2 The South

Over a year the country lost two of its most promising national leaders, Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama, the Communist Party member of parliament and Mr. Vijaya Kumaranatunge, leader of the Sri Lanka People's Party. Their significance was that while they addressed the majority Sinhalese constituency, they articulated the grievances of all the people in Ceylon - including the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese poor. Few with a mass following have done it since 1956 with so much honesty, effect and conviction. The first died in a motoring accident and the latter was killed on 14 February, 1988 by a killer from the J.V.P. (Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna). Two other national leaders who died since the July 1983 anti-Tamil violence are Bishops Lakshman Wickremasinghe (Anglican) and Leo Nanayakkara (Roman Catholic), both of whom were widely respected throughout the country. Undoubtedly it was men like the bishops who paved the way for the political leaders named above. The story of Bishop Lakshman's intellectual journey was one of how difficult it was for a man from an educated middle class Sinhalese family to break out of the assumptions of Sinhalese nationalism. An unwholesome trend that has sprung up in the South is that many intellectuals are not reflecting on their role which resulted in the crisis that hovers over the entire country. But they are rather given over to glee over the fate of the Tamils during the Indian army's progress in the last months of 1987. They occupy themselves trying to prove how Tamils may have fared better if the Sri Lankan army had been allowed to do the job. Having had little to say during the 4 years of bloodletting, gestures of sympathy for the Tamils have followed the Indian offensive. There are of course many in the South, perhaps fewer in the North, who have been unwavering in the cause of justice to all, Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese. Papers in the South which branded as terrorist anyone who spoke about the atrocities of the Sri Lankan army, seemed to be suddenly telling the truth. Publicity was given to statements by the afflicted, who in their anger said things like: "The Sri Lankan Army is much better than the Indian Army," and to those who have called the Indian Army a "beggar army". The fact is that both armies behaved badly. Though the Colombo papers did not say it, the Sri Lankan Army too, had indulged in widespread murder, rape and looting. The pre-occupation with Indian bashing is yet another manifestation of the destructive face of Sinhalese nationalism.

Those who formerly supported the militarism of the government are the very ones who are now angry with the government for having harvested the fruits of this militarism - namely

India's role in this country's affairs. This anger has now turned into blind sympathy for the J.V.P., simply because the J.V.P. is anti-India, anti-government and is shooting. The J.V.P. also receives sympathy from a group of intellectuals who having imbibed the mish-mash of liberation ideologies and tend to sympathise with any gun-toting group that styles itself a liberation movement. In their view, which is based on a few external factors, the J.V.P. represents the legitimate aspirations of the Sinhalese people, just as the L.T.T.E. did those of the Tamils.

In a real sense the J.V.P. is logical extension of the Sinhalese chauvinism of the mainline parties. The J.V.P. (popularly known as the Che Guavera movement in 1971) launched a rebellion against the government of Mrs. Bandaranaike's in 1971 which was brutally suppressed within six weeks. In this period, an estimated 15,000 Sinhalese youths were killed. Its leaders were released from prison by the new Jayewardene government in 1977 and the party was legitimised. Although this received general approval, subsequently there was widespread feeling that, given the intransigent nature of the J.V.P., this was also a Machiavellian move by the ruling U.N.P. to split the votes of the left parties (S.L.F.P., L.S.S.P., C.P., and N.S.S.P.). True to the government's cynical and unprincipled form, when it was accused by the international community of responsibility for violence against Tamils in July 1983, it tried to turn the blame on three of the left parties, the C.P., N.S.S.P., and the J.V.P.. All were banned. The ban on the J.V.P. remained. Its leaders including Rohana Wijeweera who contested the 1982 presidential elections, went underground. The attempt to find scapegoats did not stick. The ban on the C.P. and the N.S.S.P., which had taken an anti-racist stand, was lifted. If the J.V.P. had participated in the 1983 race riot, it was under a smoke screen provided by the government itself. The J.V.P. had little opportunity while the government pursued a military approach to the Tamils. The J.V.P. was to have its opportunity, however, when the government faced the necessary consequences of its actions and bowed to India's wishes.

The other source of strength to the J.V.P. is the failure of the left parties as a result of their own inadequacies, together with the government's repression. By 1980, the government's open economic policies resulted in a high inflation rate. The worker dissatisfaction led to the general strike that year. The strike was put down with widespread use of thuggery and 40,000 dismissals. Mr. Cyril Mathew, then Minister for Industries and the then Prime Minister Premadasa, who is now the President, were widely associated with the goon squads which made their appearance again in July 1983 against Tamils. The helplessness of the Left in the face of the failure of the general strike resulted in its humiliation and a Pyrrhic victory for the government. The J.V.P. thus stands to acquire the mantle of being anti-India, anti-Tamil, anti-government and pro-socialist, all at once. Considerable sympathy results for the J.V.P. not from its ability to do anything constructive, but simply because it warms hearts by shooting at policemen and politicians and becoming, thus, the Sinhalese people's vicarious avenger. This is in many ways similar to the support the militant groups, especially the L.T.T.E., gained amongst Tamils who were smarting under the humiliations inflicted on them by the government. After the July 1983 violence a catch phrase amongst Tamil expatriates used to be, "I will give money to whoever hammers hardest and gives us action."

Where the use of English has declined and wholesome alternative reading in the local languages is hard to come by, opportunities abound for charlatans within and without the universities who can throw around some big words and big names from the West. The arduous journey from Marxism to fascism which was performed for the L.T.T.E. by Anton Balasingam, is now being performed for the benefit of the J.V.P. in the South. Writing in

Sinhalese, one southern intellectual has said that just as Newtonian Physics was rendered false by Einsteinian Physics, which in turn was rendered false by Quantum mechanics; the Western philosophy of Marxism has now been out-moded. It would hardly be surprising if in its dialectical turn around, the J.V.P. is now preparing to cut off its vestigial links with Marxism and incorporate some Buddhist symbolism.

Many would agree that the main problem facing this country is the frustration created by a lack of democracy. The forms of it which exist today are too crude, and the holders of power too crass for the system to give redress to small groups with legitimate grievances. Faced with the potent menace of its own creation, the government with no new ideas left has resorted to the same methods that failed against Tamils. The Special Task Force (S.T.F.) which was created by President Jayawardene's son Ravi and trained by former S.A.S. men from Britain, for use against Tamils, is now deployed against the J.V.P. in the deep South. No one is talking about the scale of disappearances. When dealing with Tamils at least, the government had to look over its shoulder at both India and international opinion. Since repression in Tamil areas descended slowly and because the people believed they had a cause, several active groups had been able successfully to mobilise popular resistance until early 1983.

The Sinhalese community now faces a grievous danger, both from their collective failure to deal justly with the Tamils and their own disaffected sections. The ruling class has wallowed in ill-gotten money, while the rural poor had been militarised and sent as cannon fodder in a much praised campaign to subdue the Tamils militarily. They had been sent as troopers, homeguards, and colonists into Tamil areas, and then precipitately abandoned when India entered the scene.

8.3 The Press

Sections of the press in Colombo at least seem to have begun regretting their silence over what the government did to the Tamil population. An abortive change seemed to be coming in January 1987 when Colombo's newspaper, *The Island*, made a departure from the normal practice of quoting official handouts, by giving publicity to a statement by a senior citizen in Batticaloa on the S.T.F. action in Kokkadichholai that resulted in scores of civilian deaths. As the war seemed to be getting in for a stalemate, Colombo's *Sunday Island* published interviews with national leaders where the questioning was more strident. But the cover up of the dirty war continued. Take for example the Sri Lankan Army's shelling of Jaffna town and its hospital on 7 March 1987 which resulted in 17 deaths. Unlike Juliet Ricks who reported for the BBC, Lucian Rajakarunayake who came to Jaffna to report for the *Sunday Island* (report on 22 March, 1987), found no evidence of the incident while many of the injured were still in hospital. He instead referred to the "alleged incident" in a dismissive manner. The Press in Colombo reflected the euphoria in the South when government forces took control of Vadamaratchi in June 1987. This reached a high pitch when the flotilla of Indian Red Cross relief vessels meekly turned back after interception by the Sri Lankan Navy. The commanding naval officer, in words that reflected popular Sinhalese prejudices about India, asked the Indians to give the food to their own starving people. Colombo was awash with drinking parties joined in by the press. Then came the Indian airdrop of relief supplies on 4 June, 1987 and all the euphoria and bravado of the politicians vanished without trace. Since then the press has taken on a somewhat chastised tone. The article in Colombo's *Weekend* of 19 July 1987, by Kumudini Hettiarachchi, trying to tell the Sinhalese how dangerously out of tune they are with the rest of the world in seeing this crisis, has been referred to in Vol I, Ch. 8. There was a general feeling that this country's official information outlets such as

Lankapuwath, which had been tamely quoted by the press, had brought on the Sinhalese infamy and ridicule rather than straightening their image. In January 1988, Colombo's Sunday Times broke new ground by reporting that the Sri Lankan Police had been responsible for a reprisal in Batticaloa where civilians were killed.

In their minds at least those in the South had begun to think of the North and East as an alien land. But how does the press in the South that had voluntarily worn the yoke of cowardice and falsehood, respond to a situation where the violence had come home ? There was no escape from the bloody schism within. Their own gut instincts too had let them down. Old habits are hard to break. Yet the press in Colombo is not without signs of hope.

Although there is much published in Colombo now about the goings on in the North, one gathers that the subject of disappearances in the South is one that is hard to write about. There was one remarkable interview in the Sunday Island (21 February, 1988) with Mr. Ravi Jayewardene, son of and security advisor to President Jayewardene. The interview by Lasantha Wickrematunge in which Ravi Jayewardene was queried about the S.T.F. which he fathered is remarkable for containing more information in the questions rather than in the answers. Here are some excerpts:

Question: The S.T.F. is identified with the "Green Tigers" activities in the South. What is the extent of S.T.F. involvement with the "Green Tigers" especially with stories relating to the disappearance of a large number of youths?

Answer: None. Frankly I do not know what the "Green Tigers" is and who runs it..... the S.T.F. will have no involvement with them at all. They are a highly disciplined force and I cannot imagine them committing atrocities.

Question: How do you think people have got confused and the accusations are made against the S.T.F.?

Answer: I know how this mistake has been made. Many units in camouflage uniforms have been deployed today by the police and other organisations in all parts of the island. Some of these units are mistaken for the S.T.F. giving it a bad name....

The choice of the name "Green Tigers" for the semi-official hit squad is a genuflection in the direction of the government's erstwhile foe, the L.T.T.E.. The answers by Ravi Jayewardene are an admission that there is something afoot in the South that the government ought to be ashamed of. From the absence of the details of disappearances appearing in the press, one gathers that the press is either not privy to, or is reluctant to publish such information. In this at least Mr.S. Sivanayagam and Mr. Gamini Navaratne, who in turn edited the weekly "Saturday Review" from Jaffna must remain pioneers. They sought and published details of human rights violations in the North and East, as well as information passed on to them from the South. (One might say the Saturday Review said too little on such violations by militant groups. Still what it said was much more than what others were willing to say). This is a sure sign that the Prevention of Terrorism Act that was meant for the Tamils has, as predicted, come to roost in the South. To survive under the P.T.A., an editor needs a

feeling, as well as guts, for the game of going to the brink and taking risks. No editor in Colombo will probably be allowed that opportunity.

With public men in Colombo under threat of being murdered, journalists will no doubt feel themselves threatened sooner or later. However one does find in the South a greater willingness by several people to take a stand against extremists than one found in the North against militant excesses. One reason for this is that the J.V.P. did not come to be seen as the legitimate voice of the Sinhalese people in the way that militant groups came to be seen as the voice of the Tamil people. Thus the resulting confusion amongst Tamils was greater. We give an extract from an article in the Sunday Times of 21 February, 1987, by Qadri Ismail, on the subject of the murder of Vijaya Kumaranatunge by the J.V.P.:

"By killing him the J.V.P. can no longer pretend that it is not a racist organisation -- let alone a democratic one. This was known by all but the wilfully blind many months ago. The J.V.P. has now proved something else: that they do not intend to capture power by convincing the people of the superiority of their ideas. They do not have any. They intend to capture power by silencing all those with ideas. Then the only thing left may be the J.V.P. - and its guns; for the only option left for Wijeweera now is to kill all those standing in his way -- even if some of them are now his allies and sympathisers. The gentleman in Sri Lankan politics has been killed for the crime of threatening to unite his country."

While the government is seen to be blundering along with democratic opinion unable to bring it to account, the J.V.P. may receive a good deal of blind sympathy, even from those who abhor its actions. A stage may be reached where fear will prevent the voicing of honest opinion. More and more people in the South are becoming silent on learning that they are on the J.V.P.'s hit list or are under suspicion by the forces of the state. The Tamils went through a similar process. Up to July 1983 it was possible for those with some courage and a popular base to criticise fascist tendencies in the militant groups. With the blind surge of popularity for the militants and the material support they received from India after the July '83 violence against Tamils, all voices of reason ceased and consciences became hard. Anyone who criticised the actions of militants was branded a traitor and soon pushed to the wall.

In such confrontations, with the state failing to maintain high standards of humanity in its conduct, each side tends to seek the compliance of the populace through terror. When the methods of liberation groups are seen to be utterly deplorable, the state obtains legitimacy, both local and international, to unleash its capacity for unlimited terror. The legacy of the J.V.P. and the L.T.T.E. must be seen in this context. In the coming times, the press is bound to face extremely difficult times as well as opportunities to be creative.

8.4 India

An article by K.J.Akhbar, Editor of the Calcutta Telegraph, published in Colombo's Sunday Times of 14 February, 1987, from all we are able to gather, gives a fair insight into the thinking of the Indian elite that governs the presence of Indian forces in Sri Lanka. After referring to the humanitarian nature of India's original involvement (to help the Tamils protect

themselves from Lanka's army), he quite rightly points out the danger inherent in creating new countries in India's neighbourhood (in this case Tamil Eelam):

"The Anandpur Sahib Resolution, in which lies the genesis of the demand for Khalistan (just as the genesis of Pakistan lies in the Lahore Resolution), was conceived within months of Bangladesh being created. Let us have no illusion that a number of such resolutions would have sprung up also within months of creating another country in Lanka and that if we would ever manage to do so. A new flag anywhere in the world is a dangerous thing: it breeds new ideas..... We have no option except to seek protection of our own interests within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. Once we accept that we must also accept the consequence: the price we must pay is to guarantee the unity of the country, more particularly because we played no little role in creating the Tiger's capacity to challenge Lanka's integrity. It is in a sense fortunate that the Lankan army proved incapable of breaking the Tigers, for otherwise we would have had a permanently entrenched hostile neighbour as in Pakistan."

He then speaks of the importance of Trincomalee and how important it is not to have a hostile power controlling Sri Lanka's coastline:

"How long do you think it would have taken for small boats to start ferrying arms into India to help insurrectionist groups to continue their wars against the Indian state? There is no shortage of such groups. The Naxalites, I am certain would welcome an infusion of arms to fight their wars of liberation in Andhra Pradesh, Bengal and Bihar..... Let us not delude ourselves that another Punjab cannot happen..... Would someone in Pakistan not like, for instance, to arm a Muslim extremist group in Hyderabad or Naxalites in Andhra? Or who knows which future secessionist in Tamil Nadu? Or simply fuel normal communal tensions which bedevil us?"

What emerges is a preoccupation with national security not dissimilar to that of the Sri Lankan government. One question the Indian elite do not ask is why these secessionist tendencies arise ? What are the genuine problems of regions that ought to be met by democratic accommodation ? Even token acts of statesmanship seem to founder -- such as the fate of the Akali Dhal -- because of a lack of commitment by the centre, a lack of trust, and a cynicism that comes from trying to be clever. It seems so, casually natural for them to arm the Tigers when it suits them on the humanitarian grounds of protecting Tamils, and then to talk of fighting them on grounds of national interests and bash the Tamils in the process. Starting from Bhindranwale, similar tales of desultory cynicism lie behind many of India's problems. When the Indian ruling class finds itself in a corner after the calculations of the experts had failed, the policy changes in effect to one of sending in the C.R.P.F. in the hope that once bashed hard enough, people would come round. Then come the tales of torture disappearances and the like on the one hand, and what seems a long lasting terrorist problem on the other. The Indian elite did not tire of lecturing the Sri Lankan government on the need for a political solution to the ethnic problem, but they themselves lacked the moral grit and honesty to apply their advice at home.

The fathers of Indian independence had the strength of basic humanity and some commitment to democracy, although their self-righteousness was not always sustainable. The present ruling class annoyingly sports the latter without the corresponding moral underpinning. Having fought the British for their independence, the Indian elite is in danger of forming a cruder form of polity than what the British left behind. The trouble is that much Indian discussion on security matters is done by technocratic minds that are very erudite and have imbibed the latest and smartest in geopolitics. This leads to a natural substitution of the military for common morality in approaching problems. It boosts their sense of personal vanity to think of themselves as a Henry Kissinger - like maestros moving military presences and bargaining chips here and there. The smell of decaying flesh and the sights of misery are far away from their limousines and air-conditioned offices. It is easy for them to forget that they too are mortals.

Except for those who are too clever to see it, it is idle to pretend that means do not matter, however desirable the ends. Just as the L.T.T.E.'s Anuradhapura massacre of Sinhalese came back home in the form of open indifference to Tamil lives, and the Sri Lankan S.T.F.'s methods in Tamil areas and the generally violent approach to the Tamil problem resulted in a climate of arbitrary killing in the South. The callousness of methods used by India in Sri Lanka will create in India itself a mental and moral climate where the same methods look legitimate.

If free media coverage of the I.P.K.F.'s activities in Jaffna had been permitted, in place of official lying which brought discredit on India, much good would have been achieved. It would have also helped to control some of the cruder military minds of the kind which attempted to close the Uthayan newspaper premises on 11 October, 1987 by shelling its neighbourhood near Kailasapillayer Kovil, killing 13 civilians in the process.

Indians cannot evade responsibility for what their soldiers did in Sri Lanka by simply giving discourses on military psychology. While their politicians seem ignorant, their military top brass talk of how their hearts bleed for the distress of the Tamil people and go on to explain murder and rape in terms of the psychology of the soldier and battle fatigue. One could see that they are unrepentant about what has happened and about the ugly things that still happen. It will be apparent to a reader of the events described that there is much more to them than the psychology of the soldier - namely incompetence and callousness at the top, both political and military.

Such excuses will not do for a country which had not tired of lecturing the Sri Lankan government on the atrocious conduct of its army. India did not and would not accept explanations in terms of the psychology of the Sinhalese soldier, who, like the Indian soldier, could be a charming fellow at other times.

To our knowledge, not one Indian soldier has been tried for human rights violations, of which there are many. Bruised prisoners are routinely seen in public as if that was the natural course of things. Several who were taken in by the Indian Army have not re-appeared. That is also the natural order of things for which apologies are considered unnecessary. Perhaps Indian hearts bleed for the tragedy of the suffering universe without being able to relate it to flesh and blood individuals.

Every British outrage since the Amritsar massacre of 1919, every lathi blow, and every hour spent in prison, has been counted as forming the anvil on which the Indian nation

was nobly forged. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, a member of the Hunter Committee that was appointed to investigate the incident, estimated that about 400 unarmed Punjabi's were gunned down at Jallianwall Bagh during the Baisakhi festival of April 1919. The British Army too had its psychology. It had a mutiny complex after the Indian mutiny of 1857 which made them excessively anxious about crowds. If human failings could be offered as excuses, there is no need for the law, the cornerstone of civilised life. The British who, to their credit, were at least conscious of their obligation to the law, did not offer such excuses. A committee of inquiry headed by Lord Hunter was appointed. Mahatma Gandhi who had trusted the British in the same manner that Tamils of Sri Lanka had trusted India, was dismayed by the incident at Amritsar. When the Hunter report was published it struck Gandhi as being little better than "thinly disguised whitewash" and went on to ask if there was some secret code of conduct governing the official class in India "before which the flower of the great British nation fell prostrate." (Mahatma Gandhi, by B.R Nanda, Unwin Books). That still did not amount to total dismissal.

The Tamils of Sri Lanka have witnessed many more than 400 deaths of un-armed non-combatant civilians resulting from Indian fire in what was to have been a disarming operation. Many of those deaths resulted from clumsy indifference by what was said to be the disciplined and competent forces of a great nation. No commission of inquiry has been appointed, even if just to let the Indian parliament know what happened.

If India is serious about the values of civilisation and the rule of the law, it is no good talking about the provocative conduct of the L.T.T.E. and the anger of the soldiers. The civilians too were angry, angry with both the L.T.T.E. and the Indians. But they were helpless. The first thing about civilisation is the protection of the helpless. How many Brigadier-General Dyers and how many Amritsars has the Indian state produced in the 40 years since independence? Can India afford them?

A notorious order by General Dyer had made Indians crawl on their bellies in a street in the Punjab where a European woman had been assaulted. It reminds one of the way Indians in Sri Lanka do their round ups and keep people humiliatingly waiting for hours to be viewed by informants. Sometimes they are mercilessly beaten for no provocation. On 7 January, 1988, everyone, high and low, in the commercial heart of Jaffna was rounded up and made to sit on the road in the hot sun from 9:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.. This was after an unknown person had shot dead a soldier. No water was given. Those on the fringes were continually beaten. An officer addressed them several times as "bastards". When they were released it was time for curfew. When they attempted to go home in the morning after roughing out the night in shophouses, they were again beaten. Do Indians ever not learn from their own history ?

What we are saying is that India, which is rightly critical of the evils in Israel and of white racism in Africa, and has itself experienced these evils at first hand, should not merely have formally enforced the laws enshrining centuries of human wisdom; but should also have displayed greater respect for their content.

It is left for Indians to decide whether they wish to be faithful to the ideals of their independence struggle. We can only wish them well, not least because we cannot afford turmoil in our big neighbour and to a large extent our spiritual home. This requires a reassessment of moral priorities.

8.5 Some Final Thoughts

I. People's Life and an Alternative

The war has smashed organised life and removed all types of semblance of control that the community possessed over civil structures. It has also brought out all the weaknesses of this community and pushed it into total inertness. Indian rule asserts itself through military and political means. The middle classes which have traditionally functioned as servants rather than as initiators are unable to break through, or render their noncommittal services to whomever they have come to accept as their master.

The intelligentsia, which at this juncture should be the catalyst energising the benumbed community, is unable to do so. In many instances they have side stepped confrontational issues with the I.P.K.F. (as they have done with the militant groups) and have resigned themselves to passivity. This is the result of their history. As in the past, their conceptual and moral shallowness has made them submit to the authoritarianism of the L.T.T.E. and to gloss over the L.T.T.E.'S brutality. A handful of them have even produced acceptable theories to explain many of the atrocities. Some have attempted to isolate and victimise critics of the movement. However the character of this articulate intellectual segment is largely opportunistic. Their activities, intellectual contributions and their public life, all reflect their stand of preferring to do what is convenient rather than doing what ought to be done. The characteristics of this position are authoritarianism and brutality which characterised their the leadership. Their unprincipled conduct reflected merely a desire to create niches for themselves within which they could survive with the trappings of respectability and nominal power. Yet at the same time they ensured for themselves exoneration from the burden of these reactionary policies by deliberately hanging on at the periphery of these tendencies rather than committing themselves. What is the unacknowledged basis of this segment's position? Why is it that their aspirations do not fit into the classical definitions of organic or traditional intellectuals? This segment is a product of the colonial middle class, whose path to intellectual pretensions was an off shoot of getting educated only for materialist aspirations.

They were unable totally to break obligations of patronage to the ruling class in Colombo as well. Thus vacillation, and rootlessness led many of them to this weak two timing position. The term "Lumpen-intellectuals" describes them well. As the articulate sections of the community fail the people, what is the alternative? Can the organised political voices provide the way ?

The L.T.T.E.'s political line, its obstinacy and shortsightedness left us without any substantive achievement. Even at present, their moves pave the way for total subjugation to Indian domination. For example their recent warning to boycott the civil administration, if heeded, will remove from people the little control they have over civil structures, thereby creating the conditions for Indian authority to encroach fully into the society. Thus the move is counter-productive and would signal doom, as control of the civil life of the community slips by default into Indian hands.

On the other, hand can the E.P.R.L.F. or the E.R.O.S. provide the leadership? Although there is some evidence that they would try some reformist programmes, their limitation of being subservient to India would sooner or later lead them to compromise on crucial issues concerning India's domination of the people. This can be seen from the absence of any protest

from them against the I.P.K.F.'s atrocities against the ordinary civilians, so far. Therefore it is unlikely that they will be able to offer a viable alternative.

Would the so called moderates, the T.U.L.F., be an answer? India would certainly try to bring them into the mainstream. But they were the fathers of bigoted racist politics in the community. While they raised emotional anti-Sinhalese hysteria among Tamils, they were involved in tea party politics with the Sinhalese ruling class. At least the militant groups had a certain authenticity among the people, whereas the moderates lost it in time.

Indian domination and Tamil narrow nationalism are contradictory. Although these two forces are conflicting, they are interlocked in each other's momentum. The undermining of these forces cannot be done by constructing strategies for the one or the other in isolation. Therefore, because of their interdependence, any alternative should construct a strategy that handles them as a whole. This can be done by bringing anti-racist forces together to undermine neocolonialist penetration and Indian hegemony - and, at the same time exposing the bankruptcy of extreme nationalism. In the Tamil areas, the failure of the L.T.T.E. and wars have brought disillusionment. However, narrow nationalism is still a force in terms of ideology, though its support base is disgruntled, and yet, not more enlightened. It is still anti-Sinhalese, and self-glorious in terms of its relations with India, though the October war had dislodged the cosiness.

In the South, the rise of the J.V.P., a parallel to the L.T.T.E., seems to be the only reply to the Indian presence. Although at present, the J.V.P. for tactical reasons has taken care not to come out with an overtly rhetorical stand or armed action against the Tamil population, its anti-Tamil sentiments are well documented in its theoretical essays and exposed in the criticisms by the dissidents from that organisation. But they have never accepted devolution of power to Tamils nor have they any concrete programmes for solving the national question, apart from abstract and meaningless slogans. These dormant tendencies will surface when contradictions intensify with catastrophic consequences - as happened in the case of the L.T.T.E. which was ostensibly not anti-Sinhalese, before 1983, but later exposed its true nature. Without a programme to advocate the devolution of power, decentralization and a just political solution to Tamils, India could not be contained -- let alone be dislodged. Thus any individual organisation has to view the "rational" solution offered in the peace accord in its proper perspective, with a view to fashioning future tasks. It should not confuse justice to Tamils with Indian dominance or abdicate to India the responsibility for the former.

The need to accept the political solution provided by the Accord as a first step is a reality. Therefore this position would rationalise the Indian presence. How should a political force articulating the people's interests, view this? We have to show that this devolution has not been the result of the struggles of the internal forces, but rather, that it is imposed by an external force due to the weakness of the internal forces. In such a context the only way an alternative could off-set domination is by strengthening the forces of democracy within. Only then can the devolutionary aspects of the Accord be realised. To achieve this, we have to, as a precondition, build back the weakened democratic structures. Democratisation of the communities should take place to articulate power at grass root level (in the broader interest of the community).

This is a crucial step because, as in the Tamil nation, there has never been a healthy, full blown articulation of the people's interests. While the L.T.T.E.'s vision of people's struggles was one of heroes and subjects, other movements like the E.P.R.L.F. and the E.R.O.S. who

criticised the L.T.T.E.'s programmes and spoke of the need to mobilise the people, did not themselves have a concrete concept or programme relevant to our realities. Structures for participation by the people were mechanically thought out and remained in the manifestos. Though individuals in these movements strove to work towards a vision, the lack of a coherent organisational programme and the estrangement of theory from practice resulted in empty slogans. That is why, when internal violence and intergroup brutality broke out, there was little visible protest. However, certain instances, such as the T.E.L.O.'s internal violence, and the L.T.T.E.'s offending acts brought people together in some places in angry protest. This was due to cohesion at village and community levels.

Thus, revived democratic institutions would voice the people's needs in devolution (in specific issues such as colonisation etc). These would also act as a monitor for the implementation of the limited decentralised power. It would enable such institutions to organise against misdoings and atrocities by the forces they need to deal with. Moreover these structures are essential to stand up against the pressure of individual terrorism that the L.T.T.E. and degenerate elements of other movements indulge in and see to it that individual members of the community are not isolated and victimised. Finally, they would also protect the community from becoming the tools of external agencies.

The ideology under which such structures are revived or reorganised must be anti-racist. Narrow anti-Sinhalese politics should be uprooted. They should reach out to anti-racist groups and individuals in the South - southern forces that will advocate steadily and consistently a devolution of power to Tamils and stand up against human rights violations. Only this can ensure an unlinking of the cause of Tamil rights from Indian patronage, and thus curtail the Indian role as a protector and arbiter.

In reality, Indian dominance in our affairs has come to stay (as a poster erected by the I.P.K.F. at a sentry point says "We have come to stay to protect innocent civilians"). While the military rule is apparent and abrasive, political domination is subtle and invasive. Our task lies in minimising the control of our civil structures by Indian authorities. Already India had announced that it will start constructing coastal railway lines in the East as well as implementing certain investment programmes in the North and the East. In response, we cannot just be rhetorical, but must have a strategy to take the workings into our own hands. At this juncture, Indian penetration into the South seems theoretical. But with rumours of military coups, and strong arm tactics by the Sri Lankan Army, the possibility of such penetration cannot be dismissed as fanciful. The confidence of the chauvinists in the South that anti-Indianism among them is strong and permanent, lulls them into leaving out a crucial factor -- the presence of Hill Country Tamils. We have not dealt with the question of Hill country Tamils in this argument. They need an independent portrayal and analysis. They are becoming central protagonists in the politics of this island. A few militant movements have attempted to graft the hill country Tamils in an ad hoc manner into the Eelam struggle and started work amongst them. But the hill country Tamils have, however, been under the total political domination of the C.W.C (Ceylon Workers Congress). Though they are the largest and most deprived working class population of this island, they received no serious consideration from the working class movement, and were viewed as passive and inarticulate. This failure of the Left was due to its capitulation to Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinism.

On the southern front, the anti-racist task of advocating devolution for Tamils will be enormously difficult with the rise of narrow nationalism and Indian entrenchment. But it is important to neutralise both tendencies. Through a programme of this nature we could

envisage a marginalisation of Indian patronage for the Sri Lankan Tamils and the hill country Tamils. In this way we would lessen the tempo of narrow nationalism and create difficulties for neocolonialist penetration.

However the struggle for solidarity with the Hill Country Tamils seems a lost cause for the working class movements in the South because of their past betrayal. Each nation has to bring forth its grievances which caused these internal divisions in order to seek justice and thus create a unity with the purpose of creating an organic "oneness".

These are broad principles and have no prescriptive values. They appear abstract. However, we are individuals sharing these ideas with the hope that they will go some way to initiate discussion. Whether there will be organisations to take on the task is something only the future will tell.

II. Towards Reconciliation

At this point people might ask: "Having said all this, what is the solution?" That is not a question for a few individuals to answer. Nor does it have a ready made one. It is something that requires understanding, courage and a will to act at the popular level. It is of little use trying to expound what pretends to be a solution when things are moving fast and where anything that looks clever now will be wearing a wilted look by the time it appears in print. Vijaya Kumaranatunga was amongst the few Sinhalese who kept their heads while passions resulting from massacres and counter massacres were on the boil. A man with any less moral commitment would have slipped. Though his politics was of the Left, he did not trip over cabalistic slogans. His language was as lucid as his ideas. This is why he was a potent challenge to the false and pretentious. Sixteen days before he was killed, the Sunday Times (31 January, 1988) published an article by him remarkable for its honesty and simplicity. What can work must of necessity be simple ideas. We give some excerpts below:

"So then what went wrong with the Accord? The government has deliberately delayed the implementation of the Accord. My own feeling is that the ill-conceived and reckless activities of the L.T.T.E. gave the U.N.P. government, which itself is deeply divided on the Accord an excuse for delaying its implementation. India, the third party, became discredited not only in the eyes of many Sinhalese, but also in the eyes of many Tamils and Muslims, because it failed to act decisively and quickly enough in the ensuing situation. So all parties to the Accord have their own share of responsibility for the sorry state of affairs in this country. It is now time to face the question with which we began: Where should we go from here? We could, if we so desire, procrastinate and let things drift towards a protracted guerrilla war between the L.T.T.E. and forces opposed to it. But in that direction does not lie peace and security for the people of Sri Lanka.

"If we choose to take the road leading to the restoration of democracy and work towards freeing Sri Lanka from a foreign military presence, then the governments of Sri Lanka and India must vigorously and resolutely implement the Accord. It is not by military 'pacification' of the North, East and South that democracy and peace will return to Sri Lanka but by implementing the political solution embodied in the Accord. That solution is the setting up of Provincial Councils without further procrastination.

"But make no mistake about it; our ethnic problem itself will not be solved merely by the implementation of the Accord. However its implementation is a necessary first step in the resolution of the problem.

"The final resolution of the ethnic problem is inseparably linked with the struggle to rescue our country from the economic and social ruin of the past decade. That struggle is also the struggle to build a Socialist Democracy in Sri Lanka."

The implication of this is that the Sri Lankan government should come up with adequate generosity to settle the residual issues such as colonisation without delay. The Tamils for their part must accept the Accord with all its weaknesses as representing the best possible hope, and must call upon the militant groups to trust the people and surrender their weapons.

Many Tamils would object to this saying that the accord does not meet the basic aspirations of the Tamil people. They would argue that the Provincial Councils had been rendered effete because of over-riding powers vested with the President and Parliament. But the alternative facing us is protracted instability, a climate of terror and an emigration of all those who can contribute towards democracy together with educational and economic stability. If some educated person defends Yogi's rhetorical notion of losing even 75% of our people as war casualties in order to save our land, he is very likely not to regard this country as his permanent home.

One deeply ingrained habit amongst Tamils is to think that freedoms are best secured by being wrapped up in the law book. Laws are important. Good laws can over the years inspire a stabilising social consensus. But without the restraining influence of a deeply felt social consensus, good laws can be broken with impunity by bad governments. Thus what is more important than laws to Tamils and to everyone else in this country, is a public conscience that is willing to fight continually to ensure justice for everyone. We need a more active form of democracy than the public merely electing governments and then going to sleep and leaving the rest to politicians and lawyers. The laws that ensure fair play may come if trust is established between the several communities that people this island and democracy is re-established. In this sense, instead of pushing matters that give an impression of an antagonistic stance against Sinhalese, it may be more important to secure the rule of the law, freedom of labour and freedom of expression and to free education from state control and curb the extra-judicial powers of the state. One salutary feature of the accord is that it lays down for the first time the principle that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic state and recognises Tamil and English as official languages together with Sinhalese.

Once it is accepted that the cause of justice and democracy requires a perennial struggle for values, and that it is not a matter primarily of legalities, then to accept the accord with its blights in order to put an end to destabilising armed activity is not such a bad thing.

Another objection maintains: "We the Tamils cannot trust the Sinhalese. If we give away the militants' arms, the Indian and Sri Lankan governments will play us out." Here the question is what do we do with the arms? The argument at one time amongst the elite was that if enough Sri Lankan policemen and soldiers are shot, the scale of the security operations would tell on the economy and the Sri Lankan government would have to give in. Whilst this

argument has been put forward since 1982, the Sri Lankan government shewed few signs of giving up. The victims of this war were rural Tamils and rural Sinhalese. The elite on both sides who egged on the fight were for the most part comparatively safe - if not in Ceylon, then abroad. The other question is this. Suppose the Sri Lankan and Indian governments decide to throw in the towel, would the Tamils have democracy and a control of their own affairs? Experience suggests that such an expectation has no basis.

For example, the experience of the Tamils has much to do with overt (physical and legal) oppression. But resisting the more subtle and insidious forms of oppression in modern times, requires a society that is at the level of the common man both interested and alert in matters pertaining to the common good. The increasing importance of patronage in our decision making processes, together with our recent political experience has made the common man an inert non-entity. One needs to be pessimistic as to how we would, for instance, stand up to pressures from attractively packaged modern technologies and economic inducements, which need to be critically sifted before acceptance. At this level, we need not only a rational relationship with the South but also with the rest of the sub-continent, which is faced with similar problems. The kind of benevolent political influence needed to bring about such a change, is not going to come from the sectarian politics of the present.

The Tamil problem has further acquired many complicating facets, such as the dilemma of Trincomalee Tamils. The end result of genocidal action against Tamils by the Sri Lankan state and massacres of Sinhalese civilians after the Accord, is that Tamils fear the departure of the I.P.K.F.. A similar situation exists in Batticaloa. Thus even if a policy of shooting to chase the Indians out is viable, it will receive no unified support from Tamils.

The only possible solution to all our problems is to improve communal relations all round - especially between Sinhalese and Tamils. The alternative is Indian tutelage. Even if that option is chosen, we have no way of ensuring India's continued presence. Whether one looks at it from a moral or a pragmatic point of view, winning the confidence of the Sinhalese represents the only way forward. For a start, taking the risks involved must be an act of faith involving no great ingenuity.

Chapter 9

A POSTSCRIPT

9.1 A Reflection on Events: Mid-1989

Introduction

We have now been living under the long shadow of the gun for more than a decade and a half, holding hope against hope for the survival of our children who are dominated by violence from all directions without a purpose or meaning. But, on the other hand, we also note the glazed faces of people accepting it all with a sense of resignation. Under these circumstances, to be objective or analytical seems to be a major effort, like trying to do something physical in the midst of a debilitating illness. Whenever we write we are dogged by this reality, fearing our losing the thread of sanity and the community submerging without resistance into this slime of terror and violence. The community is bereft of all its human potential. Every "sane" person is fleeing this burning country - its hospitals have no doctors, its universities no teachers, its crumbled war-torn buildings cannot be rebuilt because there are no engineers or masons or even a labour force, its families are headed by women, and the old, the sick, and the weary die without even the family to mourn or sons to bury the dead. If our earlier account had appeared to be "plugging a line," as some would want to put it, it was because it was important for us to arrive at a synthesis in analysis, seek an understanding, find spaces to organise, and revitalise a community that was sinking into a state of resignation. Objectivity was not solely an academic exercise for us. Objectivity, the pursuit of truth and the propagation of critical and honest positions, was crucial for the community. But they could also cost many of us our lives. Any involvement with them was undertaken only as a survival task. One day we sat down to discuss a postscript to our account. As an exercise we started laying out the complex forces in interaction. After the exercise, one of us wrote in bold letters - A TRAGIC MESS.

However, certain trends set in motion, as shown in our analysis two years ago, seem to continue to hold the recent years in sway. That does not mean that things have been static or that the scenario was politically dormant. Contrarily, a great many things have occurred in the intervening two years. Three elections, proclaimed as democratic, took place - for the Provincial Council of the North and East in November 1988, the Presidency in December 1988, and the Parliament in February 1989. Within the reigning party the earlier power bloc has been marginalised. The head of state has changed - President Jayewardene, the blue-blooded representative of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie, was replaced by Premadasa, a populist up-climber. And many acts of parliament have been passed. Paradoxically, within this seemingly overt democratic activity, the situation has deteriorated. The morbidity of the political situation has increased. The political situation in the south of the island has deteriorated so much that the brutal culture of violence is analogous to, as one of the southern activists mused, a synthesis of fascism with Asiatic despotism. An amorphous spectre of terror and violence seems to pervade the entire island. No one can be complacent or aloof. The government of Sri Lanka is unstable, and the civilian structures are tied up in knots and paralysed in the entire island. Human rights violations have increased beyond count. Terror by the state and every other force seems permanent, ever becoming part and parcel of our daily life. The Indian Peace-Keeping Force on the other hand is causing more violence, and instability.

Democracy and Illusions

Moreover, every democratic flurry, such as the elections, has been considered a watershed, especially by the propaganda machinery; while journalists from the West and from India speculate on changes that could emanate from these events. For us, it has been much ado about nothing because, within all this furious democratic activity (such as frequent negotiations, changing slogans, India's attempt to demonstrate the setting up of structures for political organisation and power sharing, and Sri Lanka's attempt to be seen in control) the reality is that the people are increasingly marginalised and none of the forces is accountable to them.

Many have wondered at the apparent lack of enthusiasm on the part of the population to the attempts at democracy. It is ironic that a country which had one of the best records for its reliance on the parliamentary democratic system, sank into sullen silence and refused to vote. Why did the Northern Tamil population reject the Provincial Councils which were portrayed as a mode of organising structures for political negotiation and power sharing? Then again, when an act of parliament (under pressure from India) ensured a merged North and East Provincial Council, the closest to a traditional Tamil homeland, why did the people keep their distance? India would want us to believe that it is entirely due to the terror campaign carried out by the Tigers, the L.T.T.E., for a total boycott of the electoral process. Be that as it may, the Tiger campaign did have its weight. It is however the disillusionment of the people over the entire array of political forces, and the meaninglessness of the vote, that prevented them from even entertaining the idea of risking their lives. Every political proposal came at the point of a gun, both for and against the vote. The Provincial Council elections were seen to bring in rulers rather than representatives of the people. (See Appendix IV, which reproduces "Laying aside Illusions", a document signed by 50 university teachers in reply to Indian High Commissioner to Colombo, J.N.Dixit's talk in Jaffna)

Democracy was illusory, especially in the North, because of the human rights violations perpetrated by India and its collaborators. Blatant killings of civilians and so-called Tiger supporters went unexplained. Mass torture was common place, such as when, virtually the entire male population of a village was hung upside down and water was poured through their noses or when the women in a commuter van were made to walk round the vehicle on their knees. Torture was routinely meted out to all those detained, and one could not elicit some reasonable response from the authorities by complaining about it. Veiled threats and intimidation were the order of the day. If one talked too much, one could be intimidated, killed or have his shop or house blown up. If one wrote about some event (which is what the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jaffna did after the killing of 2 students in a peaceful demonstration) one would only receive a curt dismissal. This emphasized the contempt of the Indian machinery - its Peace Keeping Force and its diplomatic corps.

Finally, no one seemed to be convinced that the Sri Lankan state would or could devolve power in a situation where the Sinhalese chauvinists had the upper hand. This was subsequently made very plain by the Chief Minister of the merged North-East Province, who continually complained that the Sri Lankan state was not devolving any real economic or political power to the Provincial Council.

India's Quagmire

Any attempt to seek stability and peace from a politically insensitive great power will, inevitably, have a precipitating effect on the crisis. When India's attempts to bring the Tigers

back under its patronage failed, it attempted to groom other local political forces for the exercise of its patronage. India tried genuinely to portray to the world at large that there was an indigenous facet to its control, by arming and training the E.P.R.L.F. and a mixed bag of other militant groups, as the executors of its military power. However, the main military opposition, the Tigers, survived for more than two years in the jungles of the North and retained the potential to wage a hit and run war in the urban centres. Thus they were able very effectively to lock the Indian military and its local collaborators in a demoralising war of attrition. India is unable to scale down the level of conflict, or to reduce the tempo of human rights violations carried out by its troops in frustrated reprisal raids. As such, it continues to alienate further the community it had ostensibly come to help.

As for its attempt at creating a local political face, neither the T.U.L.F. nor the E.P.R.L.F. whom it groomed as alternatives for political leadership, took off. In the East where a greater need was felt for the I.P.K.F.'s role and where the pro-Indian groups had a more stable position, the I.P.K.F. failed to bring peace and stability. The T.U.L.F. fared miserably in the parliamentary elections. The role of the pro-Indian groups in the violence directed against Muslims in the East, particularly in Samanthurai during May, further discredited the I.P.K.F.. Furthermore, these incidents provided concrete grounds for the fears of the Muslim minority for their survival as a community in a Tamil-dominated polity. Thus the Muslim Congress (a Muslim party propagating the ideology of Muslim nationalism) became extremely popular among the Muslims and gave political life to the cleavages between the Muslims and Tamils.

The Tigers and other Tamil militants

In these last two years, the Tigers still remain the chief protagonists on the Tamil political scene. Their war of attrition in the Tamil areas had the world's fourth largest army tied down in a demoralising situation. The brutal reprisals and ruthless murders carried out by the Indian army and its local collaborators increased the bitterness and anguish of the community, thus providing a continual source of recruitment to the Tiger ranks. Furthermore, although the people generally were disgruntled and disillusioned with the Tigers' strategies (which were resulting in continual loss of life and disruption of day to day existence), the Tigers were still largely identified as defenders of the Tamil cause. However, it is equally true that they would have wanted the Tigers to opt for a more pragmatic stance towards the I.P.K.F., and would have been satisfied to see the Tigers as the leaders of the newly-formed Provincial Council of the merged Northern and Eastern Provinces. Although the Tigers' tactics imposed a terrorised silence on the people, there was still a tacit understanding and a hopeful commitment from sections of the community to the Tigers. The other groups, including the E.P.R.L.F., misread the signs in their political blindness, and, in the post peaceaccord period, changed their tactics to imitate the Tigers and practised terror and murder against the local populace. But the Tigers had based their support, much more than on terror, on the ideology of narrow nationalism and the aspirations of the middle class, to whom the Tigers' obsessive dedication carried much appeal and respect.

The reality of the Tigers' power base was further exemplified in February 1989 by the good showing of the E.R.O.S. in the parliamentary elections. The E.R.O.S. had been in collusion with the Tigers, who allowed the E.R.O.S. to participate in the elections even though death threats were issued by the Tigers against all participants. Tragically, this threat was carried out when the Tigers murdered Annamalai, a long-standing member of the N.S.S.P. and an active member of the M.I.R.J.E.. He had lived in Jaffna and identified with its people and their sufferings during its darkest decade. The N.S.S.P. had long opposed the Sri Lankan state's Tamil policy and had campaigned in the South for self determination for the Tamils.

It would be wrong to underestimate the Tigers' strength as much as the strength of the narrow

nationalist ideology among the Tamils - especially among the northern Tamils. However, a count down has begun for Tiger dominance. The tide was not always on their side. Be that as it may, some signs bode ill for them. Prolonged life in the jungles in difficult conditions, and the wiping out of their support structures in the villages by the I.P.K.F. and its collaborators, are all taking their toll on the morale of their cadre. The death of many of their experienced men in the October 1987 war and subsequent armed actions sapped the knowledge, expertise and spirit of the movement. And although there is a continual flow of new recruits, they are of a different generation. As one of us wrote, the age of the child warrior had begun. It is the greatest tragedy for this nation and the Tiger movement that mere children, without any ability to coherently think or undertake politico-military activity, carried the most lethal weaponry, as they wandered around with blazing hatred in their heart and were hunted. Though the Tigers were challenging the Indian army and mobilising to subvert Indian hegemony, their tactics and strategies, both politically and militarily, were visibly stultifying the community's organised resistance. Militarily, the landmine war in the crowded urban settlements paid the price in civilian losses, further undermining the total commitment of their support base. The campaign to boycott civil structures that the Tigers pursued following the October 1987 war, was seen by the community to be destructive and meaningless, and was obeyed only out of fear. The community as a whole, watched in disbelief as some senior civil servants were arbitrarily gunned down for keeping the civilian machinery running. The continual disruptions brought about by these boycott activities and hardships imposed on the ordinary people, also helped to lay the foundation for an unwilling cooperation of the local populace with the Tigers. Furthermore, the Tigers' recent moves of negotiating with the Sri Lankan state mystified the community and brought a creeping sense of suspicion of the glorified image of the Tigers as a fearless movement, dedicated to the cause of the separate homeland - Tamil Eelam.

Thus, it would not be far from reality to see cracks in the fanatical ideology of the Tiger movement. Many wonder why the Tigers made overtures to the Sri Lankan state. Is it because there was erosion of their morale? Is it a new pragmatism in Tiger thinking? Is it their desire to survive with trappings of political and military power as the leaders of the Tamils, even in a powerless provincial council? Or is it because there was pressure from greater powers which want a neutralisation of the Indian presence and see it happening only through the Sri Lankan government's coming to an agreement with the principal protagonists on the Tamil scene? The answer is really a condensation of all these reasons. The Tigers primarily wanted to wield power as the only force. It is the only factor that explains many of their past actions. Many in the North knew that, in mid-1988, emissaries of a rather low key nature from the Tamil Eelam lobby of the U.S.A. visited the jungle hide-out of the Tiger leader Prabakaran with a request to scale down the war, adopt a conciliatory stance with the Sri Lankan state and to arrive at a means of getting rid of India and coming back to power. At the time it was known that the attempt ended in failure. But could such a message be more relevant to the Tigers after a fairly demoralising year?

Thus after a decade of national liberation struggle and a ruthless striving for leadership that caused enormous loss of life and the denudation of the people's moral strength, the Tigers seem to be at a dead end. Their pursuance of a supremacist struggle at the cost of the very concept of liberation and their moulding of the spirit of their cadre on a fanatical dedication to the Leader and the Movement, was to be their undoing, as it is within all such narrow nationalist, fascist movements. Thus we as a people are also having a countdown. We can wait years. For a people, history does not change overnight.

In the case of the pro-Indian groups, their lack of political sensitiveness jeopardised their more stable position in the East. It was shown in the way they handled the question of the multi-ethnic tensions of the East. They exploited the prejudices of the Tamil community

against the Muslims for the sake of quick popularity. They also gave way to the sentiments of revenge against the Sinhalese settlers, thus fanning suspicion, fear, anger and communal violence. These episodes complicated and marred their attempt to portray themselves as legitimate representatives of the people, at least in the East. It is indeed tragic, as the E.P.R.L.F. had been the least communal of the Tamil militant groups in the past. As pointed out in our earlier essays, the E.P.R.L.F.'s fundamental weaknesses stemmed from their superficial theory and practice, a lack of creative political thinking, and a loose party structure. These aspects, together with considerations of security, allowed no other path of progress than that of existing as puppets of India, and, for all the revolutionary rhetoric, to be dominated by narrow nationalism and opportunism. In the North, where the E.P.R.L.F. had less acceptability, it further alienated the people by its brutal conduct.

The southern situation

In the South, the last three years have seen the release of a cascade of the dammed up effects of twenty years of chauvinism and a decade of the patriotic war. All the heightened passions and the political expediencies adopted by the Sinhalese ruling class to stay in power, seem to have arrived at a logical conclusion. The marauding terror gangs of the S.T.F. and assorted death squads, which come in many colours ("Green Tigers", "Black Cats" and so forth.) left their death trail in the deep South. In the past, terror was conducted against a marginalised minority who were peripheral to Sri Lanka's parliamentary politics. Today it has come to the heart of the political process and the core of Sri Lanka's economic base.

The J.V.P. had on the other hand polished to perfection the tactics of terror chosen by Tamil liberation organisations like the Tigers. Work stoppages and civil disobedience campaigns are conducted through the issue of intimidatory letters and threats of death and there does not seem to be even a pretence at mass mobilisation. However, the recent spate of strikes where the J.V.P. was the motivating force, also put the legitimate claims of wages for the workers as one of its demands. Nonetheless, it is the J.V.P.'s death threats that seem to be the most effective. Death penalties are always carried out in a gruesome manner, and the sadistic, primordial nature of these killings have no analogy in contemporary history. Even after killing someone, the J.V.P. do not let go; they lay down instructions on how the deceased should be interred. For example, the family may be instructed to drag the body to the burial grounds, and, if they disobey, the next day they would find the corpse propped up against their door. The J.V.P.'s targets are the supporters of the ruling party, government officials, and anti-racist forces, mainly of the Left. The J.V.P.'s terror is matched by the terror of the state. Thus the numbers of those slaughtered run into thousands. In a number of killings of ordinary persons and opposition activists, doubts remain in the peoples' minds as to who was really responsible. Indeed, they do not know whom to fear more. On 29 July 1989, government forces killed over 100 Sinhalese civilians, who were forced onto the streets at gun point by the J.V.P., to demonstrate against the Indian presence. A curfew was then in force. The Minister for Defence, speaking to the Sunday Times subsequently, suggested that people should fear the guns of the state more than they feared J.V.P. guns. Thus a once peaceful community has become one bristling with lethal weaponry. A culture of violence is the nurturing ground for the future generations of this beautiful and fertile island, where we, in our childhood and youth, laughed and played among the tall grass and sand dunes.

Our previous essays chronicled the dialectical evolution of the ascendancy of narrow nationalist ideology and the over emphasis of the ethnic factor, along with the inadequacy and failure of the Left. The Left in the North had been a small force and was historically submerged by the rise of nationalism. The position of the southern Left worsened after they abdicated their responsibility for solving the national question to the Indian state. Their

unequivocal, and perhaps well intended, support for the Peace Accord was used by the J.V.P. to jeopardise their very survival. But worse still, their silence concerning Indian human rights violations during and after the October war, made them vulnerable to criticism from all sides. The campaign of decimation carried out by the J.V.P. seems to be most viciously executed against the Left. The tragic loss to the future of this country is heightened by killings, such as that of the charismatic and humane leader of the Left alliance, Vijaya Kumaranatunga. The Left's long standing advocates, including the leading trade unionist L.W.Panditha (who was the convenor of 21 trade unions) have been slaughtered. Poignant are the stories such as that of the school master George Ratnayake, a long-standing member of the communist party in a remote village in the deep South. This village had always voted "red," not because they were communists, but because of their "School Master." This simple and dedicated man was shot down in broad daylight on the main street in his village, as he disembarked from a bus. His beloved village sat in stupefied silence

The Future

Within this tragic history there is still an attempt by concerned people to think coherently of the future. There are debates going on as to the correct path for survival, organisation and possible break-throughs. There is, especially in the North, a limited attempt at organising at the grass-roots level, so as to handle the repressive situation and violence from all sides. These are very small beginnings indeed. In the South, staying alive seems to be still the dominant issue, and activists as individuals and groups are attempting to handle questions of the realities around them. At present, the odds are stacked against these initiatives in both communities. The present belongs to the forces of reaction. What is the future for this beleaguered land?

India has been extending its regional influence, both through diplomatic channels (such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and military and economic actions such as its intervention in the Maldives and economic blockade of Nepal. Its involvement in Sri Lanka, as we have shown, has been problematic, bringing no quick solution and, instead, giving growth to discontent at home and disenchantment abroad. Thus it will have to either withdraw or prove that it is achieving its originally stated aim of bringing an end to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Given the option of Indian withdrawal, will that in itself solve the entire problem, as chorused in agreement by the U.N.P., the J.V.P. and the Tigers? It is clear that the Indian withdrawal may be conditional upon an effective transfer of power in the North and East to the Tamils. Yet, such devolution will be vehemently attacked by the J.V.P. which has consistently opposed provincial councils and the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. For the Tigers, Indian withdrawal would be portrayed as a military victory. But they would also want to maintain the apparatus of the merged Provincial Council, with themselves in control of it, a position that would enrage the J.V.P. and its support base. The question of the Indian withdrawal requires a clear analysis of the complex political forces contending for control throughout Sri Lanka. For the people, any solution to the brutal and intense violence has to come from within the communities and cannot be imposed from outside. The development of these internal structures is a long and arduous task, a process which is only just beginning to be comprehended 1 .

9.2 An Addendum - February 1990

Although much has happened on the surface in recent months, one hesitates to write more for the reason that it would be improper to touch on aspects of an unfinished story without giving

a thorough-going analysis. Such would properly be material for a separate book. Some of the developments have reached such poignant proportions that if Tamils as a community and Ceylonese as a nation continue to ignore them, our future would indeed be without hope. We shall merely highlight some of these developments. With the I.P.K.F. having withdrawn to small enclaves in Jaffna and Trincomalee with its allies, Tamil nationalist politics as represented by the L.T.T.E. may appear to be in a strong position. This line has been pushed by a vocal section of the Tamil expatriate lobby, as well as for reasons of local politics in Tamil Nadu. Speeches and special songs by publicists in Tamil Nadu are enjoying wide circulation on tape. One need not probe far to detect something forced and superficial about this euphoria. Behind the flags, bunting, speeches and songs, the Tigers are deeply anxious, if not disturbed. Their methods and ideology have taken their toll. Every new crisis brought fresh doubts, resulting in many senior men leaving the movement. A significant aspect of the widespread disillusionment with the liberation struggle is that the L.T.T.E.'s new recruits are largely children in their very early teens - known as child warriors or Cow&Gate warriors - and mainly from the more deprived sections of the community. In contrast to the early days of the militancy, there are hardly any recruits from high school and above. The older boys may form links with the L.T.T.E. for pragmatic reasons, and may do some publicity work for them. This helps to bring in child recruits. But they would carefully avoid any commitment to fight for the L.T.T.E..

There is then the question of how committed the society is to the form of liberation envisioned by the dominant politics. The people appear to be resigned to accepting permanent conflict as being an inherent attribute of the dominant politics. In Jaffna, where social mobility has been considerably increased by large scale emigration to the West since July 1983, the average mature adult and university leaver, looks to emigration as the desired goal. Some sources put the number of emigrants from Jaffna at 200,000, or 25% of the population of Jaffna in 1983. For reasons of its own insecurity, this emigre class tends to encourage, and become locked into the politics of extremism and destruction at home. This has been discussed elsewhere [See Reports of the University Teachers for Human Rights(Jaffna)]. The militancy did little to remove the discomfort felt by Eastern Province Tamils against the Jaffna dominated politics. Some of the abler and politically sensitive leaders the L.T.T.E. from the Eastern Province, had faced difficult times with the hierarchy. In trying to force a Tamil identity on the Muslims of the North-East, the Tamils are flying in the face of their own historical experience at the hands of the Sinhalese dominated state. The Tigers, while enjoying a spell of unchallenged power, can hardly be unaware of these factors. Their attitudes to the recruitment of children reflect a sense of despondency. In the early days of the militancy, when mature recruits came in large numbers, the ideals of freedom were much talked about. The reasons talked about today have a fatalistic ring. When parents approach L.T.T.E. leaders to ask for their children who had left home and "volunteered," they are frequently reminded by the leaders that they too are missed by their parents. Little is said about any great cause.

It is hardly surprising that the propaganda thrust of the struggle must hinge around the two words "Traitor" and "Martyr." Indeed, the hundreds who ultimately made sacrifices for the same cause and were killed abjectly as traitors, speak not just for the enormous wasted potential, but also for the widespread frustration and anger that lie simmering below the surface. With room for democratic activity largely non-existent, it is easy to underestimate grossly this anger and the resulting insecurity for Tiger aspirations. This is reflected in the increasing obsession with "traitors."

In contrast to its treatment of dissidents who were fellow Tamils, it has been possible for the Tigers to sit at the same table and exchange pleasantries with the unrepentant traditional adversary-the Sinhalese state. Even public praise and expressions of confidence have been

lavished on the latter. Once again there is a dangerous moral insensitivity on the part of the Tamils to what this state represents - as is evident from the terrible fate of the thousands of Sinhalese young, at the hands of the state.

What has won widespread admiration is the destructive aspect of the Tigers. Their methods ensured that no one else was allowed to do anything, good or bad. Lacking the ability to face up to the Tigers, all other parties were driven by their weaknesses to show themselves in such a bad light, that the Tigers were welcomed back with widespread relief and their legitimacy was enhanced. However, recent events in the East have shown that, when challenged, the Tigers too could behave towards civilians in harsh military fashion. Many consciously acknowledge a negative reason for accepting the Tigers - that without them, they would be fighting once more. Again, one must not lose sight of the fact that the remarkable success of the Tigers and their fatal weaknesses are reflections of Jaffna society itself.

Apart from the failure of the society to take a stand or question the massive destruction of life and energies through internal developments, yet another factor most vividly reflects its fatal politics and its destructive value system. It is its failure even to see what is being done to its own children who are being cajoled and cornered into carrying arms, with no idea of what they are doing. All armed parties are guilty in this respect. It is hardly the case that people are unaware of what is going on. The earlier conscription for the T.N.A. was well known. The prevalence of armed sentries so small that their presence is known only through gun barrels peeping over walls, is much talked about in Jaffna. National newspapers too have presented photographs of baby faces carrying AK 47s as though they were pop guns.

But the leading sections of society, whether religious authorities, professional associations or associations of teachers, do not appear to acknowledge that there is a problem. There is, rather, much glib talk of the "Boys" delivering the goods. Some go so far as to justify the children being "guided and used" in view of the manpower shortage resulting from the older boys shying away from involvement. They would argue that these young persons have to be sacrificed to protect the "gains" of the struggle in which so much has already been lost. There is no questioning the kind of society we have been creating through this struggle. It is hardly surprising that many visiting outsiders have been astounded by these attitudes. This insensitivity and moral degradation is seen to go much deeper, when one looks at the politics that is articulated by the Tamil elite. Anyone who stands out and projects a qualitative difference, is isolated and destroyed. The weapons used may include slander, the misuse of institutional power and more indirectly, even murder.

What we have today is a weak society tending towards fascist regimentation. It has produced so-called traitors in dizzying proportions and little that is creative. To hide its mediocrity and the poverty of human qualities in its leadership, it needs to strengthen patronage and stifle intellectual development. This is reflected in its politics. There is a cost to the propaganda edifice that is being erected in Tamil Nadu, incorporating the Tamil militant struggle in Ceylon and the militarism of the Chola empire (from the 10th to the 13th centuries A.D.) so as to project a Dravidian racial mystique. This cost must eventually be borne by misused children and paid for in the blood of hapless victims.

In the South, the discomfiture of the J.V.P. has been achieved at the cost of brutalising the armed forces and the society to a degree far greater than what prevailed during the Tamil campaign. A conservative estimate of the number of Sinhalese youth killed or disappeared, in the course of the campaign by the government forces and paramilitary groups, is put at well over 8000. Newspapers routinely report bodies floating down rivers and charred bodies, usually around half a dozen, being discovered by the roadside in some remote village.

Following the killing of two lawyers, there was much fear of filing habeas corpus applications. The South paid a terrible price for allowing the rule of law to be subverted since the passage of the prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979 in the name of fighting Tamil

separatism. No one is talking about the government's accountability being a realisable goal for the foreseeable future. With politics having become enmeshed with lawlessness, it is doubtful whether the rule of law can be restored and the killer squads restrained by merely reversing legislation.

The recent killing of Richard de Zoysa, a respected dramatist and journalist, and the disappearance of Lakshman Perera, U.N.P. municipal councillor for Mount Lavinia, both of whom were close to a particular section of the ruling party, raise questions of whether the internal politics of the ruling party is immune from the killer politics it had engendered for its survival. In Ceylon which had a long tradition of the military being subservient to the civilian authority, one must now ask where the power balance between the two really lies. In the de Zoysa and Lakshman Perera affairs, a large section of the cabinet appears to have been in the dark.

What appeared in the local press regarding both these incidents which took place in February 1990, poses several embarrassing questions for the state authorities. The journalist community was both scared for its safety, and skeptical of statements emanating from the government. The Minister for Information and Broadcasting summoned a special press conference on 19 February to say that the involvement of R.A.W., the Indian intelligence agency, was a possibility in Richard de Zoysa's abduction. Speaking to the press the same day, the Minister for Defence and Foreign Affairs ruled out the possibility of R.A.W.'s involvement. There was to be more of this kind of contradictory statements from the government. Several prominent media persons took no chances and flew out of the country.

What an opposition member said in the parliament on the subject illustrates the enormity of the problem facing ordinary youth of the South:

"We may not take notice of a hundred Richard de Zoysa's killed in Hambantota, as indeed there have been. But the death of this man has pricked and wakened the somewhat anaesthetised conscience of the middle class".

As regards the Tamil problem, there has been no ideological conflict between the U.N.P. and the J.V.P.. In spite of having struck a deal with the L.T.T.E., the government is yet to put forward to the Sinhalese electorate, the reasons why power should be devolved to the Tamils. The conflict between the government and the J.V.P. has the hallmarks of a struggle for survival on the part of the former and one for power on the part of the latter. As much as the government may wish to devolve some power to the Tamils for pragmatic reasons, including that of marginalising India's role, whether it retains the required control over the armed forces and the administrative machinery is another matter.

The weakness of the arrangements between the Sri Lankan state and the L.T.T.E. result from ideological contradictions and conflicting aims, and the serious intrinsic weakness of both parties. Given this, it would be a gross exaggeration to say that Indian intentions have been defeated. True, a concert between the L.T.T.E. and the Sri Lankan state, rendered the maintenance of Indian troops on the ground a serious political liability. What India has now decided to do is to cut its liabilities and handle the problem differently from a stronger position. As the Indian presence was being whittled down, the euphoria in the South had virtually evaporated in the face of disturbing reports and questions in the press about the future. It would be very difficult for the Tamil party and the Sri Lankan state to distance themselves from the narrow ideological positions that have been built up over decades, particularly when a rival or dissident faction could trip them up by stepping into their shoes. This is what the J.V.P. had attempted to do. There are also pockets of discontent waiting to be used, such as happened in the provoking of violence between the Tamils and Muslims of the East in 1984. The importance of India in determining the power balance should not be underestimated.

On India's part, in using nationalist feelings in Tamil Nadu to pursue foreign policy objectives

in Ceylon, it may have paid a heavier price in terms of its own internal stability than it had bargained for.

All in all there are a number of possible scenarios, most of them gloomy. Perhaps one lesson from all this is that the problems of Ceylon are to do with its own historical inertia and jaundiced states of mind arising from it, and that outsiders can do little to change this overnight. Some would contend that this is a historical experience that the people of that country have to live through before being forced to abandon their false values in the face of utter futility and desolation. It is not a mechanical process. It is, rather, a process that will call forth much individual courage. Indeed, it is under such conditions that some of the most powerful religious experiences have been realised. With this in mind, concerned outsiders, and, particularly, those who have undergone such experiences, can play a sympathetic role in protecting those who take risks in standing up for universal values and in providing encouragement to those who work for greater accountability from those who wield power. (Appendix I gives a brief impressionistic picture of recent developments.)

Appendix I

AN IMPRESSIONISTIC VIEW OF THE SITUATION IN EARLY 1990

I.1 January 1990: A Time of Ironies

By the end of December 1989, the I.P.K.F. had withdrawn from all parts of the North-East, excluding Jaffna and Trincomalee. A complete withdrawal, which is being insisted upon by the Sri Lankan government, remains a painful dilemma for India. Such an event will no doubt raise difficult questions in India, when it comes to counting the cost against what has been achieved. The Tamil civilian population, both tired and having lost all capacity for self-assertion, awaits events very much as before. It accepted the Tiger's dominance in 1986 in the hope that, with one party in control, life may be more orderly. When the Sri Lankan army launched its Operation Liberation in May 1987 and was poised to enter Jaffna, the people wished that the Tigers would go away instead of putting up a resistance that would be costly, bloody and futile. They had welcomed the Indian army with great relief, after the Indians had stopped the Sri Lankan army from taking Jaffna. When India got into a conflict with the Tigers shortly afterwards, they fervently wished that the Tigers would quickly make peace with India, lest the old adversary, the Sri Lankan state, gain the advantage. Once talks between the L.T.T.E. and India appeared to have finally broken down by October 1988, and India decided to back the E.P.R.L.F. for the provincial leadership, many felt that the Tigers had miscalculated and that some order would yet emerge.

In areas recently vacated by the I.P.K.F., people had watched the assertion of authority by the Tigers and the Sri Lankan forces with mixed feelings. Just as in the aftermath of the Indo-Lanka Accord, during August and September 1987, there is now relief that irritations stemming from military conflict were, temporarily at least, in abeyance. In suburban Jaffna where the air is full of talk of revenge killings by pro-Indian groups, a grim reality today, many are awaiting the I.P.K.F.'s departure just as they had wished for the Tigers' departure in the wake of the incipient Sri Lankan offensive in June 1987. Killings by Tigers elsewhere are much less talked about.

Surprisingly little interest is shown in corpses, evidently of Tamils, being washed ashore in Vadamaratchi. A number of such corpses were burnt during the second half of January. Of eight corpses washed ashore between Polikandy and Point Pedro on 26 January, one was that of a child of two. Some were of women. Witnesses said that injuries pointed to their having been subject to cannon fire. People generally believed that the Sri Lankan navy had played a role in these killings. When the matter was raised by India, the Sri Lankan authorities denied any involvement.

In contrast to the massacre by the Sri Lankan navy of passengers in the boat Kumudini, in 1985, and that of fisherman off Mandaitivu, in 1986 - both of which rightly had the citizens' committees and church and community leaders voicing strong protest - this time there was dead silence. The general talk is that the present victims were supporters of the E.P.R.L.F. and others with family ties to them, who now are fleeing to India in fear of reprisals. This silence raises questions of whether the Tamils' consciousness and identity, forged under the experience of common oppression, was still in existence. This is also a pointer to the ease with which differences among Tamils could be used.

This has been a time where the symbolism of events had been very different from the underlying reality. For the Tamil people, it had been a time of mind boggling revision of association of sentiments and events. Following the provincial council elections in October 1988, there was evidently an elected government of the Tamil North-East, led by a Tamil group (the E.P.R.L.F.), the Tigers having refused participation. There was the promise of more powers being yielded to this government under Indian pressure. But enthusiasm for this fulfilment of more than what the Tamils had once hoped for, was evidently lacking.

A Tamil National Army (T.N.A.) too had come into being through Indian sponsored forced conscription, with the stated purpose of protecting the Tamils. But its decimation by a concert of the L.T.T.E. and the Sri Lankan forces was watched with indifference. The fate of innocent conscripts from the poorer classes elicited little or no public concern. Many of these conscripts who had little training or motivation, were killed in large numbers, some after capture. Some were killed by their own side as they tried to surrender. The more fortunate were ceremonially handed over to their parents by the L.T.T.E.. Ironically, the areas which passed back to the nominal control of the once odious Sri Lankan army, were even spoken of as 'cleared'. The E.P.R.L.F. which had once annoyed Tamil nationalist circles by standing for a united socialist Lanka, was now threatening the Sri Lankan government with U.D.I. (Unilateral Declaration of Independence). On the other hand the L.T.T.E. which had for years refused to negotiate with the Sri Lankan state on the grounds that the terms on offer did not satisfy their demand for a separate state of Tamil Eelam, had now reached a tactical understanding with the Sri Lankan state that even involved operational links.

As for the Indian soldiers in Ceylon, their feelings evinced a mixture of bitterness, puzzlement and anger. They felt that they had come to help the Tamils and had lost over a thousand dead. The "treacherous politics" of the Tamils, they felt, had turned their benevolence into humiliation and waste. They had little understanding of the role of their state and army, and the enormous civilian suffering that had contributed to this state of affairs.

Veteran Tamil Nationalist leaders A. Amirthalingam and V. Yogeswaran were assassinated in Colombo on 13 July, 1989. Their politics had articulated the feelings of the rising generation of educated Tamils of the 1950s who were facing the first stirrings of discrimination. To write about their lives and their significance is, by itself, a task for a professional biographer. It suffices to say here that their strengths, their weaknesses and even their capitulations were not dissimilar to those of the younger generation of militant leaders in whom they aroused feelings of hatred, as well as a sense of betrayal. Besides feelings of grief and nostalgia among members of the public, they also leave behind anger.

For reasons well understood in Colombo, the affiliations of their killers remained for months, officially at least, a mystery. By early 1990, however, the press in Colombo started treating people to conflicting reports in keeping with the general spirit of the times. The Colombo based Tamil daily, the Virakesari, carried reports according to which, at public meetings in the North and the East, L.T.T.E. spokesmen gave reasons why they killed Amirthalingam. The English language press on the other hand, carried reports quoting senior L.T.T.E. spokesmen in Colombo denying the L.T.T.E.'s having a hand in the killings. Interestingly, the denials and the affirmations sometimes appeared on the same day.

Those who did the killings were themselves gunned down by security men, and came to be commemorated as martyrs on wall posters which appeared in the Tamil areas. Ironically, Yogeswaran too would certainly have been acclaimed as a martyr to the Tamil cause, had he

died years earlier, when he narrowly escaped death during the officially instigated police rampage in Jaffna in 1981. This symbolic act of parricide which ended the lives of these nationalist leaders, marks a shift in the actors, rather than in the politics and its motivating principles.

In the South, the J.V.P.'s insurgency and the government's military response to it through far more indiscriminate killing, had resulted in several, perhaps tens of, thousands being murdered. These represented further refinements of the diabolical methods developed by the state in the face of the Tamil insurgency. There were well authenticated reports of mass burnings of corpses and of mutilated corpses floating down rivers. Following the killing of an Assistant Registrar in 1989, the University of Peradeniya was the scene of a gory reprisal where about 15 severed heads were placed around a pond in the university's centre. Southern human rights activists have received accounts of many such victims having been picked at random from detention and rehabilitation centres run by the Sri Lankan government. University authorities have put the number of university students missing in the South at over 240 and still rising. Temporarily at least, the government had reasons to put on a more benevolent face in the Tamil areas. A sizable section of the Tamil leadership had few qualms about expressing confidence in the new leadership of President Premadasa during this tragic situation engulfing the South, in spite of their own historical experience of the same U.N.P. leadership.

Clearly, little had changed. There was a repetitive character behind the lack of principle and opportunism governing these events. Far from learning anything, the actors were becoming increasingly trapped by their schemes and their ideological predilections. Every move had a note of desperation that went little beyond immediate survival. In this situation of alliances under-pinned by nothing more than immediate expediency, no actor however discomfited at one time can be dismissed. The prospects of lasting peace grow even more distant.

I.2 The Tamil National Army

It has been pointed out that, although the older militant groups recruited volunteers and sent them for training in India, in due course these recruits came to hate and despise the civilian population. In June 1989, India launched the formation of the T.N.A. by conscription, forcibly taking in young boys who not only did not want to fight, but also did not believe in the legitimacy of the cause. The stage was thus being set for a major social disaster. It is established from a number of testimonies that training was given by Indian Instructors. To understand this, one must look at the problems of strategy created for India, in the wake of President Premadasa's call on 1 June 1989, that the I.P.K.F. be withdrawn. It is not in the nature of India's relationship with the E.P.R.L.F. for India to pump in huge resources into a plan conceived by the E.P.R.L.F.. Even after the I.P.K.F. had formally ceased operations on 20 September 1989, Indian troops continued to surround localities and search, looking for escaped conscripts. Publicly however, India denied any links with T.N.A..

The T.N.A., sent into action after a mere few weeks of training, and with little motivation and a feeling of abandonment, were effectively cannon fodder, even with their ample weaponry. Their actions were motivated by the demands of survival and sometimes by elemental hatreds. Driven to hopeless despair by the designs of powers around them, several of them even showed a touching concern for difficulties faced by others who were better off.

In Amparai in late October 1989, some Tamils in a crowd were asked to move out and about 40 Muslims were mowed down by the T.N.A.. Some members of the T.N.A. who tried to surrender were fired upon by their own side. Despite the Tigers having made much propaganda out of the conscription of unwilling Tamil youths and schoolboys, the fate of T.N.A. members falling into Tiger hands varied. Many were released to their parents. Others suffered as people suffer in the hands of an angry conquering army. In Batticaloa, in mid-December, an estimated 50 or so T.N.A. members were found shot dead with their hands tied, after they had surrendered, following the killing of an L.T.T.E. leader.

There were also many instances where T.N.A. members acted with pathetic concern for others. An incident at Kopay junction in December illustrates the deep hopelessness felt by many. A young man going on a motor cycle to Vadamaratchi was detained by a group of I.P.K.F. and T.N.A. men at Kopay, for not having a pass. A T.N.A. boy was asked to guard him. The young man told the boy that he had left his pass behind as he had been in a hurry to go and see his sick mother. The boy thought for a while and murmured, "I too have a mother." The boy then offered the young man his AK47 rifle and told him, "If I let you go, I will face punishment. Here, take this gun, shoot me, and go. They will then think that you escaped". The young man who could not believe his ears, found that the boy was in earnest. He then talked to the boy and dissuaded him. The young man's release was later secured by another T.N.A. member who told the Indian officer that the young man was his cousin.

In the E.P.R.L.F. itself there were many who were disturbed by the conscription, and actively aided the escape of T.N.A. boys under their command. A group of nine escapees who were released at Neervely by the L.T.T.E. in mid-December, 1989, said that conditions and food had been demoralising. They had slept on the floors of huts, trying to keep out rain water with sacks. Their leaders slept on railway sleepers. At Chavakacheri, they had been advised by sympathetic E.P.R.L.F. men to get transferred to Pandeteruppu from where they would be helped to escape. At Pandeteruppu, their E.P.R.L.F. leader asked them to run away and that he would take the punishment for their escape. The punishment would take the form of deprivations and beating.

In some places the attitude of the T.E.L.O. showed surprising originality. At Trincomalee, the T.E.L.O. gained popularity at the expense of the E.P.R.L.F. and the E.N.D.L.F. by telling young men to say, when they are picked up for conscription, that they are already registered with the T.E.L.O. for military training. The T.E.L.O. then put them through some token motions such as carrying a gun and then released them. In other places, the T.E.L.O. got young men to fill up forms and let them go. These forms were evidently used to procure Indian resources.

When T.N.A. boys get killed, they are just statistics - 40, 60 or 100 - in the march of history. When militants allied to India get killed, many civilians would dismiss them as traitors. Their tragedy, their inner agony and their many instances of nobility and heroism, are seldom talked about. For their own people, to try to understand is an unwanted burden. For the decision makers in high places in New Delhi, it is well to remember that many of their victims were far greater men than themselves.

I.3 The Tamil Militant Groups

Of the Tamil militant groups, the E.P.R.L.F., the T.E.L.O. and the E.N.D.L.F. allied themselves with India. The P.L.O.T.E., though having lost its political appeal, maintained a

strong presence of fighting men in the Wannu. It had recruited there in the early 1980s when it made a greater appeal. After October 1987, it steered a line independent of the I.P.K.F.. At the beginning of the second half of 1989, it withstood a major attack by the L.T.T.E. in which the latter is said to have had the backing of Sri Lankan forces. Its present fate is unclear, after it was dislodged from Chettikulam in early January, 1990, following heavy fighting. It has to contend with a hostile environment using its residual appeal. Its leader, Uma Maheswaran was assassinated in Colombo in July 1989.

The E.R.O.S. appears to have been successful up to a point in avoiding committing itself to any course that involved risk. It survived as an organisation without being thanked by anyone. Its political weakness was a consequence of its worship of tactical survival at the cost of principles. It was very unhappy with the L.T.T.E. going to war with India, but later appears to have come to an understanding with the L.T.T.E..

E.R.O.S.'s operations had the same character as before, giving the public a learned appearance and using the gun and terror where there were easy pickings. A particular episode, that of the disappearance of Mr. Kanthasamy, was revealing. Mr. K.Kanthasamy, a dedicated rehabilitation worker who had the trust of several donor agencies, returned from his exile and set about planning rehabilitation projects for the North-East in early 1988. He was also the founder secretary of the Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Organisation. The E.R.O.S. applied pressure on him to channel funds for projects in Trincomalee through a front organisation. Kanthasamy stood firm and the pressure mounted and took the form of threats. On 19 June 1988, Kanthasamy was kidnapped. When appeals were made by individuals to E.R.O.S. leaders, the response reportedly took the form of arrogant maligning of Kanthasamy. Kanthasamy, a heart patient, joined the ranks of the disappeared. The E.R.O.S. then issued a statement praising Kanthasamy and appealing for his freedom. The facts are given in records that were left behind by Kanthasamy and published by his associates in London. Kanthasamy was an organised person who maintained systematic records.

On 15 February 1989, the E.R.O.S. contested and did well in the parliamentary elections, although the L.T.T.E. had banned any participation in the electoral process, and had killed two candidates from other parties. The E.R.O.S. did nothing to condemn the L.T.T.E.'s actions and demand from all parties a respect for freedom to express ideas. It earned its prize without risking fighting for the principle of democracy. It was widely believed that the E.R.O.S. had made a deal with the L.T.T.E..

In March 1989, the E.R.O.S. did a public service, when its M.P.'s visited Mullaitivu during heavy fighting and exposed the misery of the civilian population. But its methods began to breed all round resentment. Its cadre became occasional victims of pro-Indian groups who looked upon the E.R.O.S. as having benefited from dirty work done by them. Later, in the first half of 1989, the bodies of six E.R.O.S. members were found after they reportedly went to an I.P.K.F. camp in the Wannu. At the end of 1989, the L.T.T.E. issued a leaflet condemning the E.R.O.S. as receiving training from the R.A.W..

The E.R.O.S. in earlier years did recruit well motivated and able men, many of whom became unhappy with the organisation's compromised position. Whether the leadership can rethink and give the organisation a future is left to be seen.

In the case of the E.P.R.L.F., the process of militarisation set in motion by the Indian involvement in 1983 and the success of the L.T.T.E. and T.E.L.O., first drove it to despair and

finally to madness. From the beginning the E.P.R.L.F. had to swim against the dominant trends in Jaffna society. Its early members were able young men influenced by Marxist ideas, who left school early and went into political work in the villages. But the social prestige, as well as fund-collections, largely went to the groups demonstrating military success. In its own drive for militarisation, the E.P.R.L.F. recruited a large number of persons from the depressed classes and gave them guns. They were used without political education to give them self-confidence, infusing in them a sense of purpose, or giving them the awareness to challenge the dominant elitist ideology. The guns these recruits had, without giving them a sense of dignity, provided them with a means of expressing resentment against society in general. Instead of challenging the dominant ideology and the oppressive aspects of Tamil social tradition, it reinforced prejudices flowing from them. Since the L.T.T.E. was a military organisation which did not articulate a social program, traditional elements in society found it easy to sympathise and even form tactical links with it. And while the E.P.R.L.F. was unable to act as a liberating influence and mould the depressed classes into a political force, the L.T.T.E. could take recruits from the same classes and mould them effectively into a military force.

When the E.P.R.L.F. returned in the company of the I.P.K.F. in August 1987, it did so with a strong urge for revenge against the L.T.T.E. and a deep resentment against the people. In time, the use made of them by the I.P.K.F. made them suspicious and resentful of people in general. The I.P.K.F.'s use of them as hit men and informants operating from I.P.K.F. camps, completely destroyed their political potential. Even after realising power through the Provincial Council, they lacked the party discipline and ability to mobilise support from sections of the population whose just grievances had not been addressed by the politics of the Jaffna elite - grievances concerning the depressed classes in Jaffna, various regional issues and the Muslim problem, among others. In reprisals after attacks by the L.T.T.E., they took the cue from the I.P.K.F.. Instead of mobilisation towards liberation, what the depressed classes saw from them was greater inexplicable brutality than that suffered by influential sections. The depressed classes had the worst of killings, beatings and destruction of property. People sometimes came to regard themselves lucky if detained by the I.P.K.F. rather than its allies who were sons of this community. The E.P.R.L.F.'s participation in the I.P.K.F.'s conscription program was a reflection of its powerlessness as well as a loss of any sense of reality. With the prospect of the I.P.K.F. going in early 1990, leaving them high and dry, pretending that the T.N.A. would protect them, their anger turned against the people rather than against India. The I.P.K.F. did nothing to deter their ruinous conduct. Anyone who was suspected of harbouring L.T.T.E. sympathies was in danger of being killed. Some members of the E.P.R.L.F. and other militant groups aligned to the I.P.K.F., during their last days in Jaffna, visited many cruelties on the civilians, including the murder of the Jaffna Kachcheri accountant who argued against an unfair instruction. Again, it was as usual the depressed classes who felt most helpless against this orgy of indiscipline and blind fury. Having begun as a movement with socialist and democratic ideals, its final role was to strengthen the dominant politics of Tamil society, reinforce its hierarchical and totalitarian drift, and to destroy for many years to come, the prospect of an alternative.

Those who aspire to leadership should be judged harshly for their misuse of opportunities and authority, and for murdering those whom they were meant to protect. In looking at this situation however, it is well for us to try and understand it. We must also look at the role of the society, its opportunism, insensitivity, shallowness and its immense capacity to stifle and destroy youthful potential. We must look also at the destructiveness of the dominant politics and, in particular, the role of the L.T.T.E.. The early leaders of the

E.P.R.L.F. were once young men who were motivated by ideals into doing political work. Our society did not give them admiration or respect. There was no serious opposition to the L.T.T.E.'s banning them in December 1986, killing over 50 of their members in custody by April 1987 and even branding them first as anti-social elements and, later on, as traitors. The L.T.T.E. would not only not allow them to do political work, but also sought to destroy them without even the honour that was their due. The anger of young men placed in that position should be understood, although it cannot be justified politically or morally.

Once in the I.P.K.F. bandwagon, the E.P.R.L.F. lost many of its abler leaders who had earlier stayed on. Many of its cadre had little idea of what they were going to do, except to have the prospect of ignominious death hanging over them. The E.P.R.L.F.'s late Trincomalee leader, George Thambirajah, had told a class-mate on his return to Trincomalee in August 1987, "I know that the L.T.T.E. will get me one day. Before that I will take as many of them as I can down with me." Another leader who had been a pleasant, dedicated young man in his earlier years said: "We did political work once. That was not appreciated. We were not allowed to work. Like Stalin, we had to take a decision to survive. So we decided to kill". The organisation had come a long way from 1986, when it had maintained a democratic structure, and had mostly avoided the resort to internal or other killings which were rife in other prominent militant groups.

Mannar town was one place where the E.P.R.L.F. had earned itself an acceptable name with the public. A few days before the I.P.K.F.'s departure in December 1989 and the re-entry of the L.T.T.E., some foot-ball players from schools were on their way to an L.T.T.E. sponsored match. When asked by the E.P.R.L.F., they said that they would be in trouble if they failed to go. The E.P.R.L.F. men looked sombre. They said, "We will not stop you or cause you trouble. You need not have any anxiety over fighting here. We are withdrawing. We have tried to maintain an understanding relationship with the people in our area. But now there is nothing we can do. Those from our group elsewhere have misbehaved with the people. We will leave this place and go to some other country".

Another said, "I brought several of my close friends into this organisation. They have now been killed as traitors. My parents are influential and I could have lived comfortably. I stayed on to prove that my friends who died were not traitors".

Although generally suspicious of civilians and instinctively aggressive, some of these militants would, seeing that no ill was meant, listen after being shouted at. They would even listen submissively on being told that they were no longer a political force, and that many of them had once been young men who wanted to do some good, but had now become psychiatric patients. Some of them would admit that the T.N.A. was a total disaster, but would not say who promoted it. They even felt that the only way to regain some credibility was to disband the T.N.A., ask parents to take their children away and make a confession before the public. But they were doubtful if the leadership would accept it. They were also crucially dependent on India for their security. A public confession would have to say many things embarrassing to India. Having come to depend on India, they would in time suffer the tragic fate of those who were used by a big power and proved an embarrassment later on. Those who survived the arduous crossing to India would meet with rejection and humiliation, in sharp contrast to earlier days, following July 1983.

I.4 India and the Indian Peace Keeping Force

To arrive at a proper understanding of this episode, one must try to get away from the strong emotions that this has engendered. The average Indian officer can only see an ungrateful population set against the deaths of many comrades. Civilian deaths, agony and anger do not exist for him. They did their job the only way they were trained to do it, they would contend. If you want to blame anyone, blame the politicians, they would say. It has been a temptation for many Tamils to use racial sentiments found in the West to malign an army from a poor third world country. That would be unfair. The Indian Army has the professional qualities to be used as a disciplined force. Reprisals have mostly been carried out in a planned manner, intended to terrorise.

The failure of the Indian Army is largely a consequence of arrogance and, stemming from it, a refusal to understand and respect civilian feelings. Considering the stakes India had in this situation, the number of Indians who came here with a view to making a serious study of the situation was low, in comparison with the number of Westerners who came here. Most damaging, apart from a deliberate decision to use terror in most difficult situations, were political decisions by the I.P.K.F.. While pleading that they were not politicians, but were military men doing only a military job, they used their powers freely to experiment with politics - forming citizens committees, censoring the press, directing the actions of militant groups, and so on. The decision to terrorise L.T.T.E. supporters through murder during the run up to the provincial council elections in October 1988, was a political decision of the I.P.K.F.. From the talk of some officials, this appears to have been made on the premise that, because Jaffna Tamils were opportunistic enough to accept the mass killings of T.E.L.O. members in mid-1986 in exchange for order, they would once again accept the decimation of L.T.T.E. supporters for the same reason. Such decisions determined the negative attributes which were fatal for the E.P.R.L.F.-led provincial administration. The I.P.K.F.'s opposition to the L.T.T.E. was not based on a political critique of the L.T.T.E.. There was, rather, much admiration for the L.T.T.E. amongst I.P.K.F. officers. For an army placed as the I.P.K.F. was, political decisions were certainly necessary. They should at least have been taken in keeping with democratic principles subscribed to by India, rather than left to casual arrogance.

Perhaps the most inexcusable decision of India's was to form the T.N.A. by forced conscription. It was done under conditions which lacked both accountability and legitimacy. Neither the I.P.K.F. nor the E.P.R.L.F. led administration, had earned the latter. It was done in a manner that was callous, offensive and degrading. Young boys were picked off the streets, long distance buses and trains. To poor and defenceless parents was added the agony and the tedium of going from place to place and from camp to camp, in an attempt to trace their sons. These wretches, numbering the thousands, were given meagre training and armed to survive as best as they could. They were disowned by almost all, including India. For many, this single act of forced conscription, terminated any feeling that India could play a constructive role.

What prompted this high-level decision which was, at once, indefensible, irresponsible and even tactically unsound ? Who in the Indian hierarchy made this decision on conscription? Whose interests were being represented here? Or was it the decision of a bankrupt bureaucracy that just wanted to try something, however stupid?

During early 1988, an Indian General told a university delegation that recovering arms is an extremely difficult job, adding that for this purpose they would use "these gun-toting rascals" and then disarm them. The reference was to pro-Indian groups. He explained that every non-professional person carrying a gun was a rascal. Having started with a disarming operation, India has now turned to flooding the place with arms and in militarising those already disillusioned with what had happened. There was no more talk of rehabilitation.

For young Indian soldiers, it is time for home thoughts. On the streets you may see one examining a new pair of trousers collected from the tailors. Another might test his newly purchased pocket radio. Those more curious would chat with the civilians. "In Mannar, the people were nice to us. But in Jaffna it is different", they would say. They too had discovered that many houses in Jaffna have some member abroad. One may hear them remark, "So, when the troubles begin, you will leave the others and go away". They too are a simple people like ourselves, taking a simple joy in the simple and inexpensive things of life. With India very much a part of our nurture, it is a pity that our actual encounter has left many bitter memories.

For thousands of our young men, so thoughtlessly used by India, there can never be home thoughts.

Appendix II

An extract from Sugeeswara Senadhira, "The cyanide drama that brought 'referee Rajiv' into the ring," Sunday Times, Colombo, 1 October 1989.

Many people including the former President J.R.Jayewardene, share the opinion that the turning point was the arrest and subsequent suicide of the 17 L.T.T.E. members including two area commanders, Pulendran and Kumarappa. Referring to this Mr. Jayewardene said in a recent interview, "The referee Rajiv entered the ring to fight my battle."

Inside facts of that interesting episode were never related and after talking to many people including the Tigers, the I.P.K.F. and senior Sri Lankan officials and a senior minister, I managed to put the pieces together and link up the story which is as follows.

On October 2, 1987 the Sri Lanka Navy received a tip off about a boat seen in the Palk Straits and that it may be carrying arms. According to Navy sources, the tip came from the I.P.K.F.. A naval patrol craft was dispatched to the area. The navy men saw a fast boat trying to cross over to Sri Lankan shores. They gave chase and caught up with it. When they approached the boat the sailors saw the mounted gun and realised it was a vessel carrying Tamil militants. But when they ordered the people in the boat to surrender, they did so without a fight.

But the Navy did not know they had a prize catch until they brought the prisoners and the huge stock of arms found in the boat to the Kankasanturai port where Pulendran was recognised by a soldier. He recognised the L.T.T.E.'s Trinco Commander Pulendran as the dreaded terrorist leader who together with a group of guerrillas stopped two buses at Kithulotuwa in Habarana and massacred 126 civilians.

Pulendran and the L.T.T.E. leader of Batticaloa were handed over to the local commander of the Sri Lanka Army, Brigadier Jayantha Jayaratne.

The prisoners were frisked and their cyanide capsules were removed. According to Dilip Yogi, the Tigers did not protest because they thought they would be released as there was a general amnesty.

Brigadier (later promoted to the rank of Major General and died in October 1988) Jayaratne immediately informed his superiors and he was told that a special plane would be sent to bring them to Colombo. By then the Tigers had come to know about the arrest of their colleagues and they requested the I.P.K.F. Commander, General Rodriguez, to get them released as the Government of Sri Lanka granted a general amnesty to Tamil militants.

General Rodriguez asked Brigadier Jayaratne either to release them or hand them over to the I.P.K.F.'s charge. After speaking to Colombo, Jayaratne informed his Indian counterpart that the prisoners would be sent to Colombo. But he agreed to allow a few Tiger leaders, including their theoretician Dr. Anton Balasingam, to visit the prisoners.

The I.P.K.F. chief wanted to keep some Indian soldiers to guard the Tigers, Brigadier Jayaratne agreed to allow the Indians to stand about 10 yards behind the Lankan troops guarding the prisoners.

Within a short time, more than 3000 women and children arrived at the Palali camp, demonstrated and demanded the release of the 17 prisoners.

Rodriguez walked into Brigadier Jayaratne's makeshift office at Palali and once again demanded the release of the Tigers.

"If you try to take them to Colombo, the demonstrators will forcefully enter the camp. How can we control them?. We can't shoot women and children." he argued. Brig. Jayaratne explained that he had to obey orders.

When he went to the hanger to ask the Tigers to board the plane, he was in for surprise. The 17 L.T.T.E. men took out cyanide capsules and warned that they would swallow them if there was an attempt to take them to Colombo (cyanide capsules were passed on to them when the L.T.T.E. leaders met them).

Jayaratne reported the latest development to Colombo. But he was instructed to send the Tigers to Colombo immediately.

As soon as Jayaratne replaced the receiver, the I.P.K.F. commander walked in again and said, "Don't send them to Colombo. If they die there will be a bloodbath." "No I have my orders. I have to send them to Colombo," Jayaratne replied.

"You may have your order but you are the man on the spot. It is your responsibility to avoid any step which could have disastrous consequences," Rodriguez argued.

When Jayaratne refused to change his decision, Rodriguez asked him to delay the departure of the plane by 12 hours. "Dixit (Indian High Commissioner) is in Delhi now and he is expected to land at Katunayake at 5 p.m today. He can drive to the President's house and obtain an order from President Jayewardene for the prisoners to be handed over to the I.P.K.F.."

When Jayaratne refused to budge, Rodriguez tried to bully him. "I will not allow your plane to take off with the prisoners. I'll order B.M.P.s (armoured cars) on to the runaway", he threatened.

“I’ll shoot your B.M.P.s sir”, was the reply given by the Sri Lankan officer.

However Jayaratne phoned Colombo again and made another attempt to which the reply he got was, “If you don’t send the prisoners to Colombo within the next two hours, you hand over your charge to your second-in-command and come to Colombo under arrest.”

Jayaratne selected 34 of his strongmen and told them to rush into the hanger when they received his signal and prevent the Tigers from taking cyanide. He kept the doctors, ambulances and stomach pumps ready.

Then he walked into the hanger with his soldiers. But they could not stop the Tigers from biting into the capsules. Pulendran, Kumarappa and seven others died immediately, four died in the hospital and four were saved.

Appendix III

A talk delivered by Rajan Hoole on behalf of the University Teachers for Human Rights at the Rajani Thiranagama Commemoration meeting on 2 October, 1989, at the Kailasapathy Auditorium, University of Jaffna.

III.1 Dr. Rajani Thiranagama: Her contribution to the University Teachers for Human Rights (U.T.H.R.)

In the course of a brief talk, we are faced with the task of doing justice to the breadth of vision that governed Rajani's contribution to human rights work. If one were to pick a brief quotation from her writings that may give us an indication of her perspective, the following would do well: “Objectivity, the pursuit of truth and the propagation of critical and honest positions, were not only crucial for the community, but could also cost many of us our lives. They were only undertaken as a survival task”. This is taken from a postscript that Rajani wrote for the ‘Broken Palmyrah’ during the weeks preceding her murder. Prophetic as these words may seem, it was not like her to be prophetic. I shall try to make clear what she meant.

III.2 The Degeneration of Politics and Implications for Human Rights Work

Up to the early 1980’s, there was amongst a sizable section of Tamil youth, a healthy interest in political issues, accompanied by idealism. The issues were often those of social injustice and their national and international dimensions. And, quite surprisingly, there was a remarkable absence of communalism which was poisoning the air in the country. But the 1983 riots and the involvement of foreign resources in the militarisation of our youth, ensured that the tendency which gained ground was that of extreme nationalism that worshipped military success, and, by its very nature, became intolerant. Every other political tendency felt impelled to imitate this, even at the cost of coming out second or third best. Politics died as homicidal divisions increased. We know well our recent history which led to a remarkable indifference to any kind of social or political effort on the part of today’s university students. Guns seemed to determine everything. In this atmosphere of disillusionment, militant groups were finding themselves obliged to strengthen themselves against each other by taking in very young persons through a variety of questionable methods. The role of the Indian and Sri Lankan states in this episode is a shameful one. Rajani was very concerned about the fate of

these young men. She had a deep compassion for these young men who could not understand their actions, viewed death as a welcome certainty and hated the community which has done nothing while they were consigned to this degrading form of slavery.

What then became of the young idealists of the 1970's and early 1980's mentioned earlier? You find them apart from those who went abroad, in farms, factories and shops. With their trained intelligence they have a sure grasp of what is happening around. In the absence of any political force they could align with, some have lapsed into cynicism. Others feel that no effort is worth while and have chosen silence. In general, the community has become polarised into sections which believe in aligning themselves to one military force or the other, purely for the purpose of wiping out the other side. This was believed to be a necessary first step to all further plans.

It was an atmosphere in which any attempt at objectivity or impartiality was bound to be viewed as, at best, an academic exercise, and, at worst, a futile nuisance and a bar to more important things - such as wiping out the other side by pitting our boys against each other, with the Indian and Sri Lankan states playing the role of the erratic gods in Homer's Illiad.

Rajani and the others in the U.T.H.R. believed that these options were destructive, unjust, superficial and cowardly. She believed that an alternative had to be found. This was closely tied to her vision for the University of Jaffna after the October 1987 war. She believed that it was not merely shameful negligence for a university to be indifferent under such circumstances, but also that a university could not survive as a university if it is to be indifferent.

Thus in Rajani's view, the task of expressing the truth of what is going on around us impartially, and making people feel for the tragedy, became a survival task. This is what the U.T.H.R. (Jaffna) tried to do in its first two reports. Rajani used the expression "Creating a Space" to describe this work. She hoped that it will lead to some discussion, at least within the university, of what was happening around. She believed that sound values and anger against hypocrisy and injustice were major assets in the task of survival. Rajani admired the women from our coastal villages who possessed some of these qualities. She believed that courage was of the essence. She had often said that to make an impact on destructive tendencies which commanded respect by treating their own lives lightly, one had to be prepared to give one's own life for one's beliefs. She did not flinch from this ideal.

III.3 Human Rights and Politics

Rajani was very much concerned with politics and would have been the last person to view human rights work in isolation. In describing the work of the U.T.H.R., I have heard her tell others, "A life is a life. Whoever takes life must be exposed independently of party feeling. We wanted to show, that in the first place, we valued life". She held that a human rights organisation cannot be affiliated to a political party, because of the independent nature of its work. But it can have as members persons from political parties with a firm commitment to human rights. A human rights organisation should also welcome a commitment to human rights by a political organisation.

In our context, there is no political force with a commitment to respect and defend human rights. Nor is there any question of a human rights organisation spending its time giving advice to political forces. We are dealing with what are, in fact, military organisations

with their own leaders and advisors with respectable scholarly credentials from an assortment of Western capitals. Any local functionary who listens to you with sympathy is, at the drop of a pin, bound by orders from the top. Thus in our context, a human rights organisation has to put itself out on a limb depending on moral pressure and public concern for its defence. This was a minimum Rajani had expected from the university community.

III.4 Rajani's work amongst Students

As a human rights activist living in this community, Rajani's work had many facets to it. These included work in women's concerns, her role as both doctor and counsellor, and help rendered to individuals from the depressed sections of society that were driven to the edge of despair. Some of these are being dealt with by more appropriate speakers. The foregoing will sound like abstract theory, unless it is seen that there was a workable practical side to it. I shall confine myself to examples from university life.

Rajani recognised that given the chronic social climate, there were bound to be many students having problems connected with past associations and queer ways of thinking. She believed that they had to be weaned away into creative channels through frank discussion, together with a relationship of trust and personal concern. To start with, she defended a student's right to have his or her own opinions - even ones she strongly disagreed with. On her return from England, she was angry that the university had not lodged a protest over a medical student who was shot and injured on 31 August, 1989, while returning from clinical work. She was indignant that the I.P.K.F., while declaring on the one hand that people were free to support any political opinion provided they did not carry arms, were, on the other, citing alleged subversive involvement as an excuse after a person was shot without any questioning or examination. She felt that the university had sacrificed an important principle and was urging even a belated protest over the shooting of the medical student.

She would sometimes spend hours discussing the problems of a student who had political involvements. While helping the student, she would firmly tell the student that his political opinions were destructive and her hope was that he would re-examine his course and grow out of it. In one instance she was approached by a student who was asked to report for questioning. She held that no one who tortured had a moral right to interrogate others. She told the student not to go, and if asked, to say that she, as his student counsellor, had ordered him not to go. The matter ended there.

She valued life and felt sorry when anyone was killed - be it a militant from any one of the groups or an Indian soldier. She was saddened that they all died without knowing for what cause they gave their lives.

III.5 Rajani and the reopening of the University following October 1987

The crisis facing the community following the Indian offensive of October 1987 was one which brought out her energy and strength of character. She was so appalled after seeing the conditions of refugees at Nallur Kandasamy Kovil, that she sat down to write a leaflet. She felt that the reopening of the university was the best chance of having some means for the defence of the community. She said that we cannot sit around waiting for the Indians to ask us to come in and conduct lectures. She urged her friends to go and make arrangements for the staff to enter the university immediately. Attempts to have the university reopened were made from about 10 November, entry was gained on 15 November and arrangements were made for the staff to meet on 18 November.. The Indian Army was in control of the premises at that time. A section of the staff felt so numbed by the damage that they advocated not doing

anything until outsiders came and the damage was publicised. Rajani held that we had existed long enough as a community displaying our sores and eliciting pity. She felt that, to prevent the recurrence of such a catastrophe, we must show a will of our own to make our own future. Thereafter work commenced on securing what had survived the war. Rajani was the first member of the staff to enter the medical faculty, which was in a more isolated area. Those were days when people were scared of soldiers. With curfew commencing at 4:00 p.m., roads were deserted by 12:00 p.m.; but Rajani, a single woman, would sometimes stay on with a carpenter and one or two others, fixing locks to doors in the medical faculty until 1:30 p.m.. I recall shifting typewriters and other equipment in the company of labourers to secured rooms, under her supervision. Soldiers who were about the medical faculty came to refer to her as "The Principal".

On one occasion, a Sikh soldier rushed into her room while she was arranging it. On discovering that she was a doctor, he sat down and explained a personal medical problem to her. He had received a head injury during the 1971 war which gave birth to Bangladesh. He had been warded in Chandigarh, and still suffered recurrent pains. Rajani listened sympathetically. Rajani's courage and example were such that many men, particularly non-academic staff, came to depend on her for motivation and direction.

It was then common for Indian officers to attack the militants and blame them for everything. Tamils commonly responded by saying that they did not know the militants and were innocent. But Rajani took the officers head on and would say forth-rightly: "We as a community must take responsibility for our catastrophe. The militants are part of our history, and a part of our community. I cannot artificially distance myself from the militants and condemn them". She felt that all the risks she took at that time had to be taken because the young men who took many risks and had brought the community to this state, were likely to respect only those who themselves took risks.

III.6 Jaffna Hospital

Rajani was busy with many things during the weeks succeeding the war of October 1987. She would cycle to far away places with other women, collecting experiences of what mothers, young girls and elderly women had been through during the war. Roads were then dotted with sentry points and people were still scared. Much of what she recorded appeared in the "Broken Palmyrah". She also spent a good deal of time counselling and helping women who were affected by rape, and deaths or disappearances of near ones. Many came to her when the word spread that Rajani would do what she could.

One incident which concerned her greatly was the massacre at Jaffna Hospital on 21 October, 1987, during the Indian assault, that left about 70 dead. Rajani felt that the callousness of the Indian entry was inexcusable. Many of the doctors felt that it was too dangerous to bring out the truth. Some felt that they should wait for an appropriate time. There was even a fear of issuing public appreciations for the medical staff killed. Rajani felt that the truth should be brought out at the earliest and set about interviewing staff at the hospital where she had once worked. The following extracts are from the "Broken Palmyrah," written in her inimitable prose:

"So we lay down quietly, under one of the dead bodies, throughout the night. One of the overseers had a cough and he groaned and coughed once in a way in the night. One Indian soldier threw a grenade at this man, killing some more persons. I know the ambulance driver died. In another spot, one man got up with his hand up and cried out: "We are innocent. We are supporters of Indira Gandhi". A grenade was thrown at him. He and his brother next to him died.

“.....The blasting grenades made tremendous noises as if bombs were exploding. Then the debris and dust would settle on us and cake in the fresh blood of those dead and injured”.

III.7 Challenge to the University

What Rajani believed in was not an abstract philosophy, but something that evolved to the demands of a social conscience and insisted on both compassion and consistency. Her courage was tied to a sense of responsibility. There is no doubt that she was practically effective. She died because the rest of the community valued her services, but was too cowardly and cautious to emulate her sense of responsibility. For many, the accepted wisdom is not to take any risk, but to rely on the risks taken by others. If we have for the present, the uncertain present, the option of clinging to positions while shirking moral responsibility or of slinking away with degrees without caring to secure the future well being of the student community, it is because there were fools like Rajani.

At this time of crisis and tragedy, many students have shown courage and responsibility. A number of persons in the university have displayed commendable qualities of leadership. All this may appear to be in vain unless these become part of the character of the university as a whole. It is in the nature of the powers around us to have us silent and indifferent. We cannot remain a university if only a small minority feel for its mission. It is only human to become tired when driven to isolation.

Appendix IV

A statement issued by 50 university teachers during the run-up to the Provincial Council elections of November 1988

**University of Jaffna.
October end, 1988.**

LAYING ASIDE ILLUSIONS

On 17 September 1988, the Indian High Commissioner J.N. Dixit held meetings with various sectors of the Jaffna public, at the Jaffna Kachcheri.

The gist of his message was: The only sane and pragmatic option for the Tamils is to participate in the forthcoming Provincial Council elections for the provisionally merged North-Eastern Province. This would help to fill the political vacuum and sort out thorny issues like land settlement. An elected Provincial Council would make devolution a reality and peace a possibility.

On the surface, his thesis sounds cogent. But does it correspond to the ground realities? Is people's participation in the so-called electoral process a possibility today?

Free and fair elections presuppose an atmosphere where people can make up their minds without being pressurised at gunpoint - whoever holds the gun.

What is the reality today? We know that neither individuals nor community organisations can effectively raise their voices against the many human rights violations that continually take

place today. People live in fear. They live unsure of their destiny, in terrorised silence - thanks to the acts of omission and commission by the I.P.K.F. and the various armed militant groups. The run-up to the nominations made the situation worse. Almost daily, revenge killings are taking place; innocent middle-aged civilians - both men and women - have been amongst the victims. In many instances the Indian Peace Keeping Force's complicity is well known. No one has the means or the courage to protest - mostly in fear of the I.P.K.F. and the dominant militant groups. In view of such a situation, for India to exhort full participation in what is portrayed as free and fair elections is a parody; especially because India itself is partly responsible for creating such political conditions in the community over the past five years. Indian involvement as an instrument in marginalising the people could be traced back to 1983, when India armed the militant groups. Criminal acts by some of them, which included a large number of murders on Indian soil, went calculatedly unchecked. Though India was the common patron of all the groups, divisions and antagonisms between the various groups, grew at a rapid pace, culminating in annihilations.

Thus it seems not incorrect to presume that India's own interests were being served by maintaining these divisions. The militant groups became large military organisations, accountable to different interests, including clandestine state agencies in India. The people had virtually no check over the activities of the groups. The rate and scale of killings in the community and in the atmosphere created by these, made people live in terror, and left them with little choice but to become passive on-lookers. Thus this past, as well as the present, calls into question India's own claims about its intentions to produce a viable democratic political process.

However, even if elections could be technically held, whom can Tamils elect as their representatives? Given the present state of divisions and volatility, it is hard to think of anyone who could function as representatives of the people - rather than as rulers. The future of elections will be decided by the manner in which India and the different groups perceive their own interests. The outcome of elections cannot resolve problems arising from habits that have been exacerbated by the prevalence of murder and assassination. Until the emotions arising from this situation have been curbed and people are able to speak out freely, elections will not be welcomed with any degree of enthusiasm.

It must be mentioned that the generality of Tamils held India in very high regard. There were the links of religion and culture. The leaders of the Indian independence struggle had a devoted following here. Furthermore, in recent times, Tamils owed much gratitude to India for the succour and refuge it provided for Tamils fleeing the state-sponsored violence in Sri Lanka. India also did a great deal to expose the Sri Lankan state's racism internationally. But things changed rapidly from October 1987.

The erosion of confidence in India amongst the Tamils is the result of hundreds of civilians - men, women and children - being killed by the Indian army during the closing months of 1987; and the mounting toll of disappeared, and victims of torture and deaths in custody, continuing unabated to the present day. When such brutal realities are brushed aside and India is able to speak in paternalistic and threatening tones, the community should realize its own position of weakness. The Tamils should be aware of the problems of relying on India to guarantee peace. It is fairly clear that the present elections as a key for a better future for the community is in serious doubt. What is the alternative? It would be irresponsible as well as fatalistic, just to make pronouncements of powerlessness of the people and lay all the blame on Indian involvement. Such a position would not allow the community to extricate itself from the morass it is in and would amount to empty India bashing. This would still leave the initiative and controlling influence in the hands of external forces.

We have to examine not only our relations with the Indian and Sri Lankan states, but also ourselves. Our obeisance to terror within the community, and our opportunism and lack of

principles in the face of many internal killings, have made it easy for external forces to use the same weapons to control us. In the face of our acquiescence to anti-democratic tendencies within the community, our plea for democracy becomes a meaningless exercise. Many individuals and young persons who voiced criticism of the political forces have been victimised, driven away, or killed while we looked on.

Thus if the people are to regain their lost self-will and dignity, they will have to move towards a principled collective response. We have to assert universal values to which we are both emotionally and intellectually committed.

It is the lack of such commitment that enabled us to come to terms with murder, when it concerned others' sons, and, then, watch helplessly in panic when the cancer, allowed to grow, threatened our own sons. We are now paying the price for our past indifference.

When we look back, there are two aspects to our failing to stand up collectively - as people, as professionals, as institutions or as ordinary workers belonging to unions. First, we were confused about fundamental principles and failed to reach any working agreement. The second is the fear that if one stood up, the person next may let one down, thus placing one in danger. Consequently, a few isolated threats, real or imagined, or even the hint of a gun, have sufficed to close down institutions. We have further dehumanised ourselves by losing a sense of pride in work and service by allowing these to become secondary.

How do we assert ourselves as people when no one dare take a stand on the many pressing issues? As individuals or small groups in our neighbourhoods, places of work, unions or associations, we must question our past, understand where we went wrong, and rediscover our principles. We must be conscious of the message of past experience, that in standing up for others we also stand up for ourselves. This course requires courage; and, no other is open to us. We have tried to play safe in the past. The result was mass murder from several sources. Non-combatant civilians too became unarmed front-line troops facing the wrath of advancing armies.

The future looks even more bleak, with the rapid growth and consolidation in southern Sri Lanka of forces of narrow political vision. This opens the door for further involvement by external forces. Let us not remain forever unprepared and continue trapped in the logic of passivity - hoping against hope that someone else will bring us deliverance.

This statement was signed by a large number of academics from the University of Jaffna. Given below are those who had signed it up to 31 October, 1988.

01. V. Arumugam (Education)
02. K. K. Arulvel
03. Miss. S. Arulanantham
04. Balachandran (Geography)
05. P. Balasundarampillai (Professor of Geography)
06. A. J. Canagaratna (English)
07. V. K. Ganeshalingam (Professor of Zoology)
08. P. Gopalakrishnan
09. M. R. R. Hoole (Mathematics)
10. Miss. S. Indradevi
11. S. Kandiah (Botany)
12. Mrs. P. Kanthasamy (Linguistics)
13. K. Kugabalan
14. A. Kanapathypillai (Geography)
15. Miss. K. Kandasamy
16. R. Kailainathan
17. P. Makinan (Mathematics)

18. M. A. Numan (Linguistics)
19. P. Pusparatnam
20. S. V. Parameswaran (Professor of Physiology)
21. N. Perinpanathan (Economics)
22. Rev. G. F. Rajendran (Zoology)
23. R. Rajmohan (Philosophy)
24. K. Rupamoorthy (Geography)
25. S. T. B. Rajeswaran
26. N. Sivapalan (Chemistry)
27. A. M. T. Savarimuttu (Botany)
28. R. V. S. Sundaresan (Botany)
29. K. Sritharan (Mathematics)
30. Mrs. N. Selvarajah (Zoology)
31. S. K. Sitrapalam (History)
32. Miss. C. Sinnarajah (Hindu Civilization)
33. V. Sivasamy (Sanskrit)
34. A. Sanmugas (Tamil/Linguistics, Assoc. Professor)
35. S. G. Sivagurunathan (English)
36. J. Sathiadas (Statistics)
37. G. M. Sebastiampillai (Sociology)
38. S. Sathiaseelan
39. Miss. S. Subathirai
40. M. Shanmugalingam
41. R. Sivachandran (Geography)
42. Miss. A. Saverimuttu (English)
43. A. Thuraijah (Professor of Civil Engineering)
44. Mrs. R. Thiranagama (Anatomy)
45. W. Venkatesh (Zoology)
46. P. Vinobaba (Zoology)
47. Mrs. C. Vamadeva (Hindu Civilization)
48. M. Vedanathan
49. Miss. V. Veeragathy (English)
50. Miss. S. Vasuki (Philosophy)