

# Report No 5

## AUGUST: A BLOODY STALEMATE

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## PREFACE

The UTHR [Jaffna] became better organized over the last few weeks. Information was transmitted until the new military offensive of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, with the aim of relieving the Jaffna Fort. Information with regard to the situation in Jaffna collected by members of the university community together with Pax Christi, was published in our Special Report No.1. We also received help from students in reporting on the situation in the East.

In addition to reporting on events, the current report also gives reflections of our members on issues which will deeply concern those organizations working towards restoring peace. We argue from experience that a ceasefire which merely seeks to end the fighting without the enforcement of human rights and lay the foundation for the people to participate in deciding their future, would only lead to worse disasters. As an organization, the UTHR [Jaffna] suffered its greatest loss when Dr. Rajani Thiranagama was murdered just after the announcement of a ceasefire. The first anniversary of her death falls soon on 21<sup>st</sup> September.

Concerning a ceasefire and the allied question of rehabilitation, we hold that it is important to look into the legitimacy of the parties concerned. We contend that no party can claim

legitimacy unless it arises through a broadly democratic process. In the absence of that the parties cannot deliver the goods they know are necessary, and their moves will be governed by the need to survive in power, whatever the cost to the people. Events in this country bear ample testimony to that.

What we want from our friends is not to decide, directly or de facto, which party represents the Tamils or who represents the Sinhalese. But we would like, and do need help, to establish conditions for people's participation in deciding their future. To act as though a people is represented by persons who regularly perform detestable acts is damaging in many ways. For one thing, such representatives can in practice deliver very little that they promise in their rational moments and frustrate most attempts at helping the people. Another is that such associations diminish the humanity of the people. Once it is assumed that the natural representatives of the Tamil people perform inhuman acts, it is easy to justify bombings and massacres of Tamils. Similarly, to assume that a legitimate government of the Sinhalese can only carry on by regularly exterminating hundreds and thousands of Sinhalese, carries terrible and totally unjustified assumptions about the Sinhalese people. The problem we are posing is not an academic one, but concerns life and death.

In this respect, we must also ask our friends to be alert about the kind of reporting that is done on events here. Tamil civilians are often questioned following the impact of something traumatic, such as aerial attacks unleashed by the state. In their helplessness and anger, people may come out with expressions of support for the only force they see as standing between themselves and the state. Even otherwise in a culture of terror where the people are powerless, it is commonplace and instinctive for people to talk in order to survive. When casual assessments are made about the kind of leadership the Tamils desire, it trivialises both the Tamil people and their aspirations.

On the other hand, to understand the people's feelings at some depth, some of the questions to ask are: Are they moving towards the kind of future they want for their children? Why are people trying to send their children abroad rather than accede to the demand of the leaders to fight to the finish? Is it pure selfishness? Does it help Tamil interests to have themselves identified as supporting the killing of Sinhalese and Muslims?

What went wrong if the Tamils were reported to have desired the departure of the IPKF a year ago and want India to intervene now?

Such questions, to which answers would reveal a complex phenomenon, are seldom asked. It becomes only too easy to assume that people in the third world like to have some peculiar leaders, while for the Germans to have a like Hitler was an aberration. While a concerted effort was made after the second world war to ensure that the socio-economic factors which were conducive to the rise of Hitler do not recur in Germany, the real needs of the third world lie buried below comfortable assumptions.

## ABOUT THE WAR

On the government's part, it is acting with greater license against Tamils than what it would have found difficult to justify in 1987, as the massacres in the East would testify. The unstated policy that is in operation now in the East, is the old one of marginalising Tamil influence through a mixture of terror and state sponsored colonization. The reader should weigh the evidence. The aerial strafing of starving civilians in Jaffna seeking food and shelter

is given legal sanction through curfews. These are not curfews imposed for the safety of occupying troops, but are supervised from the air. Despite the weeks of time available, no moves were made by the government to seek the help of the ICRC and of civilian organizations to organize centres where people can be sheltered and fed without being molested from air or land. In normal times feeding the people of Jaffna requires 100 lorry loads or 500 tons of food stuff a day. Figures available with government will show that only a small fraction of this has been getting through for the last 3 months. It is dishonest for the government to evade this fact by accusing the Tigers of black marketeering. It is plainly inhuman to restrict the movement of civilians under such conditions, whose other alternative is to starve. The description of the bombing as a policy of destroying the concept of a Tamil homeland by bombing the house of Tamils, as a parliamentarian put it, does not appear to be far from the truth. It is hard to imagine how such a policy could have been justified in human terms, even against an alien people.

Visitors and human rights activists from overseas who came to this country were deeply shocked, that local NGO's and churches were carrying on with almost total insensitivity to the fact that their own country men in this small island were being bombed by their own government. They appeared oblivious to sitting on a powder keg themselves, where the lid was being pressed down hard on anger iniquity seething below.

On the LTTE's part, there is reason to believe, that out of tactical considerations at least, the leadership is not keen on news of massacres of Muslims and Sinhalese.

faced with a disillusioned Tamil people, the LTTE has to depend more on overseas publicity of the government's atrocities \_ with which the government, as always, is readily obliging. But what happens on the ground reveals either a lack of clarity in its thinking, or both. The events in Kalmunai during June represent a scenario that has been repeated again and again during the struggle.

Prior to the massacre of the policemen, 11 soldiers in a group that had come to buy vegetables in Kalmunai were killed. The civilian population itself was disgusted with the manner in which their bodies were desecrated and dragged with ropes. They were lying in public places for six days, until health authorities intervened. The LTTE then withdrew knowing well what would happen to the people. The voiceless people, already afraid with their sense of decency violated, were left cowering in their homes and refugee camps, awaiting the inevitable holocaust. A feeling, sometimes unconscious, which guides such actions is that civilian deaths are good for propaganda. The scenario in Trincomalee was similar. What happened was a caricature of the LTTE propaganda leader Anton Balasingam's pledge, "We will not hesitate to take up to arms to defend our people and carry on our aims".

If the government had really cared for the Tamil people or had wished to win them over, the forces should have behaved in a disciplined manner. Then the people themselves would have shared their feelings. Instead, their behaviour sent the survivors running to the jungles, where the LTTE was, for safety. The government itself is instinctively or deliberately following a course of creating conditions for justifiable genocide.

It is no use talking about army psychology. The army as an institution has degenerated with the political culture of this country. Prior to the slaughter of Sinhalese Youth in 1971, the army was evolving under its use in breaking up the Tamil satyagraha in 1961. Its subsequent

history in Tamil areas in the 60's, was one of increasing indiscipline and insensitivity to the law.

What has become evident in the militarisation of the Sri Lankan state during the last decade, and its increasing complacency with indiscriminate killing, is that it now feels itself strong enough to disregard international human rights pressure. This illusion of strength is supported by the approbation or silence of nearly all persons and institutions of influence. This is why the government's efforts to promote the LTTE as every one's common enemy must be resisted. This alluring notion has cast a veil over what is being done to the Tamil people by the state. The fact that the government which embraced and strengthened the LTTE can now bomb the Tamils on the absurd grounds that they are harbouring the LTTE is an example of how external interference can make the people powerless. The LTTE must be confronted for what it stands by the Tamil people. This requires sympathetic external pressure of the kind that will help the people to find a voice in their destiny.

For the moment government will continue in its disastrous course thinking itself strong. The truth is that it is faced with economic disaster, a Sinhalese people tired of war drums and an army showing signs of weariness with the political leadership. [See Appendix II]. The annual cost to the country of the Middle East crisis is put at US \$500 million. The government will go on playing with the war, unable to win and lacking the will to seek a political solution. Soldiers marching through manifolds will not relish the thought that their leaders gave the LTTE 7 tons of explosives, over 2000 AK-47'S, several lakhs of ammunition rounds and several hundred LMG'S. (Karunakaran M.P.in parliament, 19<sup>th</sup> July and other sources). [This makes it even more unlikely that a surrender of arms by the LTTE was part of the LTTE-Premadasa deal as the government has insisted]

The war will be fought on crude, low cost terms. General Ranatunga told a press conference (Island 31<sup>st</sup> August), 'In a populated area an unidentified target taken on by the pilot with great risk'. (To whom?) The Defence Minister added that they still do not have guided missiles. The Minister had earlier made a sensational announcement in parliament that the government was setting up a massive refugee camp in Vavuniya to accommodate the 800,000 strong population in Jaffna. It was announced at the same press conference by the General that the government was setting up a refugee camp in Vavuniya that would take in refugees from anywhere, including Jaffna. The Rehabilitation secretary added that it would take in 5,000 for a start! A rumour spread by the government through a defence ministry press release that the LTTE was preventing food from getting to the civilians, was denied by the ICRC in a rare press intervention. In fact the army had disallowed an ICRC food convoy from diverting from a pre-assigned route to avoid crossing lines of combat at Mankulam(Sun 5<sup>th</sup> September). These illustrate the degree of seriousness about Tamil civilians.

There has for years been a wilful blindness to the plight of Tamil civilians. During the Vadamatchi Operation of 1987, civilians who had constructed air raid shelters were in many instances killed as having done it on LTTE orders. Even officers spoken to could not understand the stupidity of punishing civilians.

Today, when the government says the LTTE is demanding 2 gold sovereigns from people, it does not acknowledge the government's duty to protect people from expropriation. But the context rather indicates that is an additional excuse to bomb them.

When it says that Tamil children are being forced to join the LTTE 's baby brigades, a duty to protect children of the nation from an awful destiny is not acknowledged. But its actions indicate that it feels justified in killing Tamil children.

The direction of the war is not towards victory, nor are there attempts to win over civilians and isolate the LTTE. But it is moving towards creating conditions for justifiable genocide by identifying all Tamils as terrorists. This is the logical aim and culmination of the ideology which was at work during the 1983 racial violence. A great misfortune of the Tamils was to have themselves, from a position of weakness, given birth to an ideology which devalued life of other communities as well as its own.

## CHAPTER 1

### *AUGUST : A BLOODY STALEMATE*

#### CHAPTER 1

#### AUGUST : A BLOODY STALEMATE

#### 1.2 Army the Civilians and the Muslim Dilemma

#### 1.3 The fate of the Political Solution

#### 1.4 The Initiative from the Religious leaders

#### 1.5 An LTTE leader speaks his mind

#### 1. 1 The south : disillusionment with War and Violence

A Canadian academic told a Colombo audience about an experience he had earlier this month during the festival at the shrine at Kataragama in the deep south. After President Premadasa had worshipped at the devale (Hindu temple), a Buddhist monk proposed to have a session in support of the armed forces. The academic left after protesting to him and observed the proceedings from a distance. The monk held the national flag and spoke, while some helpers tried to drum up support. People moved about in numbers. But the crowd that gathered to hear him did not exceed three persons. The academic spoke to many ordinary persons, nearly all of whom had no enthusiasm for the war and many of whom were amenable to a federal solution \_ in sharp contrast to the mood reflected in the press. The academic came to the strong conclusion that the opposition on the war from the poorer majority of the Sinhalese was so great, if passive, that the government will have serious difficulty in working up enthusiasm for it using the traditional appeal to race and religion. He emphatically, that in his long experience, ordinary people left to themselves had a genius for setting their differences. By and large it would be true to say that the notion of race or ethnicity figures very deals with the current national crisis. The view that the crisis is one about human rights, basic valued and basic justice; against which communal differences are being exacerbated and used, is one that is struggling to gain ground. It is also a sentiment that is being voiced by an increasing number of young Tamils and Sinhalese for whom English is not the first language. Nearly all of them have been through the deceptive charm of sectarian appeals to race and religion, and have come out of it with feelings of anger and disgust.

The evidence for the professor's conclusions is not lacking. The allegedly spontaneous banners that came up in support of the armed forces in June are suffering the depredations of the elements with no significant additions to their number. In places in the deep South, these banners needed armed guards to ensure their existence. Contributions to the National Defence Fund, symbolizing the peoples' support, in nearly all known cases required degrees of coercion ranging from the subtle to the blatant. The latter was quite in evidence. The University of Peradeniya which prides itself in being the only national university, gave its employees the dissenting option in contributing a day's wages to the NDF. The option may appear to be cynical in view of the continuing prevalence of burning bodies in its environs. Students of several mission school in Colombo appeared to have no choice. At Manning Market, Wellawatte, an army Lieutenant was seen telling the vendors how much each should contribute. Furthermore uniformed men were behind almost every instance of recent attacks on Tamils in the South. The regular reports in the press of burning bodies in the South also suggest that the government still fears serious dissent in the South.

Any traveller into Sinhalese areas would often come away with the strong impression that they are a people cowed by the terror of the state and the JVP, patiently bearing the humiliation and the corruption that stares them in the face. This makes the killings of some of the most alienated sections of the Sinhalese by Tamil militants all the more tragic. There was prior to June a very good opportunity to break the mould of Sinhalese\_Buddhist chauvinism in Sri Lankan politics. In this both the Sinhalese and Tamil leadership have failed.

## 1.2 Army the Civilians and the Muslim Dilemma

Following the massacre of Muslims at Kattankudy on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) voiced the feeling common to many Muslims, that the government should arm the Muslims to defend themselves. Taken in context, this incident was one in a chain of massacres, where all three communities were victims. By far the most numerous amongst the victims were the Tamils \_ killed mainly by the most powerful armed group in the conflict, the Sri Lankan state. It was over this group of victims that there was a conspiratorial official silence. The silence only exacerbated Tamil feelings of anger and made them susceptible to deliberate attempts by the state to turn their anger against Muslims. [See UTHR (Jaffna), Report No.4]. The SLMC leader, Mr. Ashraff, evidently saw a trap being laid and was to adopt a complex position in the days to come. He later expressed his sorrow over the fate of Tamil victims and said that what he was asking for was that if the government could not protect the Muslims, it must provide them with arms to defend themselves.

The manner in which the government responded to this understandable demand from the Muslims is revealing. The Minister for defence announced that Muslims would be recruited into the armed forces until the number reached their ethnic proportion of 7%. He announced the recruitment of 100 volunteers from Amparai. Most unbelievably, he also announced that the actions of the LTTE had precluded the recruitment of Tamils into the armed forces just now [Island 10<sup>th</sup> August]. Such a position obviously militated against the government's claim that the war was not against Tamils.

Having accepted that Muslims must be taken into the armed forces to protect Muslims, the Tamil community which also suffered grievous loss was being left out in the cold. The government was effectively conceding that it was the business of the LTTE to protect Tamils. It was a move bound to inflame Tamil anger against Muslims. The government must have

known this. This policy must have come under fire and over the next few days the government announced that it would recruit Tamil home guards nominated by Tamil parties opposed to the LTTE to protect Tamil villages. But the damage was already done.

Following the Eravur massacre of 12<sup>th</sup> August, the Muslims appeared to sense something odd.

The SLMC (Muslim Congress) in a statement issued on 12<sup>th</sup> August stated: “The massacre of defenceless Eravur Muslims is raising the doubt whether the LTTE is going ahead with its barbaric attacks on the Muslims with the connivance of the government. “The SLMS is constrained to make this allegation. If we do not do this we will be failing in our duty by our community and people.”

The next few days were to see harassment of the SLMS by the government. The government had evidently respect or concern

for the Eastern Muslims. Any independent expression of their views and interests was no more acceptable to the government than it was to the Tamil nationalists.

While it was right that the leaders of a community should seek the protection of its members, long experience speaks decisively against arming a community. During the last few week even the relatively more sober sections of the press such as ‘The Island’ have been editorially campaigning for the state to arm the Muslims and Sinhalese in the East. The call has also been taken up in parliament by the main opposition party, the SLFP. The racist bias inherent in this call is seen from the fact that when Tamils were victims of blatant state violence in 1983, it was not suggested from these quarters that the Tamils should be armed. The call to arm the Tamils was raised outside this country, and anyone can see what became of the Tamils who once had a promising future.

The government’s arming of communities through creating homeguard units is a patently cynical exercise which only serves to multiply hatred and misery. The following extract from the Sunday Time of 12<sup>th</sup> August describes the effect of this system in the area between Morawewa and Trincomalee where the LTTE moves freely. The extract is the concluding portion of the report on the massacre of 24 Sinhalese civilians by Manjula de Silva:

“Homeguards complained over the lack of ammunition and what they called ill-treatments. At present each homeguard is being provided with only five cartridges. On the other hand liason between army and homeguards seems to be at alarmingly low ebb.

“ Sinhalese settlers living under tragic conditions have become refugees among refugees, for most of them have now been forced to leave places where they have taken refuge. Any adverse move either by the government or the Tigers who only a few months ago mingled with these villagers freely, may well result in a situation where the Sri Lankan security forces will have to guard empty cottages and fields.”

Thus massacres quite often result when suspicion upsets the live and let live equilibrium. This happens when homeguard units are introduced or when the army moves into an area and tries to use the civilian population, in the total absence of political moves to find a solution. Like the TNA, homeguards have been easy targets which served to boost the LTTE’s image. Having been put into service with 48 hours of training, homeguards have often complained that their short guns did not fire. The Minister of Defence has responded by saying that the

these guns had not been regularly oiled. The Minister had at first instinctively resisted arming civilians and has himself given some of the reasons.

For one thing automatic weapons and proper military training are expensive items which the government is hard put to provide for its own forces. Secondly, with so much political instability and a history of insurgencies, arming civilians is a dangerous option on the long run. During the entire history of homeguard units, they have hardly been of any use in preventing massacres. Their claim to fame rests on their use in reprisal killings under cover provided by the army. While detested by other communities, they were never regarded heroes in their own.

Today muslims homeguards are being deployed in Batticaloa and Trincomalee towns under police supervision. Tamil youngsters continue to disappear. Who gets the blame? Very convenient indeed! On the other hand it is easy to judge what of protection they can possibly provide. The Kattankudy massacre took place while a professional army was stationed in two camps 1Km away. The massacre in Eravur went on for several hours despite an army camp being 1 ½ miles away.

Arming the civilians is thus a poor answer to a real problem requiring a major and courageous political initiative. The political leaders in the East can still do something to improve the situation. At present the parties representing different communities meet the Sri Lankan president separately and pour out the woes of their own community. They come away with solemn assurances and nothing changes on the ground. Their statements too do not reflect adequately a sensitivity to the problems of other communities, and challenge the poverty of the overall politics. Politicians from the minorities have accepted a role where they seek patronage and are seemingly not big enough to speak for all the people of this country. Indeed the fact that no major politician from the minorities has spoken up for the tens of thousands of Sinhalese killed by government forces, can only enhance prejudices that sustain this political culture. The LTTE, despite its pretensions to being a liberation, movement, played this same reactionary game when it allowed itself to be used at the UN human rights commission in aid of the government.

For a start, it will bring a qualitative change for the better, if the Tamil and Muslim leaders in the East get together and speak up for both communities and avoid making separate statements and representations. They must leave no room to be played against each other. Internal killings have left the Tamil community facing a political vacuum. Perhaps it falls to the SLMS leader Mr. Ashraff to try and be big enough in giving the lead for the two communities to together. While he should politically challenge any denial of the rights of muslims, he must also campaign against the use of Muslims, he must also campaign against the use of Muslims in a manner harmful to the Tamils. Such a principled position, would place the Muslims in a strong position, and that would be their best defence. The influence and prosperity of Muslims in this country was not gained by strength of arms. They should guard against reliving the tragedy of the Tamil community.

### 1.3 The fate of the Political Solution

Massacres in the East, burning bodies in the South, disappearances in Trincomalee and the aerial bombing of Jaffna are all belied by one fact - that there is no political initiative that addresses issues of basic justice for the whole country. Since the passing of the sixth amendment, the government has itself connived in the destruction of a Tamil leadership it

could talk to. The LTTE has been very unhelpful in not stating what practical objective it would settle for. The government's own failure to do the obvious continues to intrigue the populace. It is obvious that the ordinary people do not want this war and are willing to be quite flexible. Why does a government that has so much power on paper, being in control of both executive presidency and parliament, not take up a clear position on pressing issue such as devolution, questions relating to land and land settlement, the North-East merger and the sixth amendment?

The government's dithering only makes inextricably worse. It bombs civilians in Jaffna because it has no idea on what to do about Jaffna. To over- run Jaffna militarily would be costly in terms of military casualties and uncertainly over Indian reaction to civilian casualties. Furthermore, holding Jaffna militarily would require tying down at least 10,000 men going by the IPKF's experience. This would be ill-affordable in the event of a resumption of the insurgency in the South. The alternative option is to challenge the LTTE politically by offering a solution which addresses Tamil insecurity and establishing the government's sincerity in its day to day actions. The bombing and heli-straffing is a sign that it is prepared to do neither, while wanting to be seen doing something.

Like wise in the East, while not having a clear mind on anything, it simply follows its chauvinistic instincts when transient military gains enable it to do so. In Trincomalee the old game of encouraging Sinhalese to take over Tamil property under military cover has resumed and so has the game of tinkering with district boundaries. The provincial council settlement is being broken up under cover of military occupation. The Tamil Deputy Inspector General of police of the North-East who was forced to sit in Trincomalee watching Tamil youth disappearing by the courtesy of brigadier Lucky Wijeratne's troops, has now been sent packing, his post having become non-existent.

The only thing the government did in compliance with the LTTE's wishes was to dissolve the North-East provincial council, while not taking a position on the sixth amendment. Ironically the dissolution of the council was accomplished by parliament nearly 4 weeks after the commencement of the war with the LTTE, when the objective seemed to be lost. The scrapping of the sixth amendment, more than being a demand of the LTTE is one from the Tamil people, and indeed of any self respecting minority. It in effect enjoins a minority not to promote separation from Sri Lanka, without imposing on the majority any reciprocal obligation to treat the minorities justly. It's insulting character is evident from the fact that it was passed by parliament in 1983 when Tamils were being murdered and were being driven in terror to refugee camps.

Thus when the President of Sri Lanka calls for international mediation and says that the door to negotiation is still open, quite apart from the LTTE, any Tamil would be at a loss. The problem has been talked about and extensively studied for more than ten years. All negotiations have been broadly within the frame-work of the Bandaranayike-Chelvanayakam pact of 1958. Even on the question of land settlement, the dispute mainly around settlements in large schemes, such as the Mahaveli scheme, where huge investments are involved. The kind of thing that the government is attempting to do in Trincomalee today was completely ruled out. Hence from a Tamil viewpoint there is nothing new to talk about. Instead of showing sincerity and good will the government has reneged on everything over which agreement was reached.

where the Sinhalese opposition is concerned, the government's position is curious. It's officials have admitted privately that they are afraid of the opposition turning down any proposal put forward by the government. It has instead egged on the Tamil groups tending the All Party Conference (APC) to put forward proposals and get them accepted by other southern parties, in particular the SLFP. The SLFP which feels that it was cheated of the reigns of power during the last elections and is challenging President Premadasa's marginal victory in December 1988, does not attend the APC. The APC is an advisory body summoned by the President and has no teeth. The Sinhalese opposition rightly feels that when Premadasa took the supposedly revolutionary step of coming to secret deals with the LTTE, far from consulting them, they were completely left in the dark. The Tamil groups and the Muslim Congress who are now being consulted at the APC were then treated with contempt. They thus tend to view the APC as a gimmick and are in no mood to make life easy for Premadasa. This brings us to an important feature of constitutional changes introduced by J.R.Jayawardene in 1978. While denying a string opposition its due role in the formal power structure, the government has felt a need to seek their consensus in ad hoc bodies like the APC. The result is a weak and indecisive government rather than a strong one.

#### 1.4 The Initiative from the Religious leaders

On 15<sup>th</sup> July a memorandum, signed by several religious leaders in Jaffna was sent to President Premadasa calling for a political solution to the present crisis. It's main import was that for the first time a body of Tamil citizens including such important figures as Bishop Deogupillai, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Jaffna, the incumbent of the Nallur Kandasamy temple and Bishop Ambalavanar, JDCSI, had accepted that all parties were to blame for the current impasse. They also categorically stated that a Federal solution rather than separation, would meet the aspirations of the Tamils. A positive and sympathetic response from the government would have placed the on these leaders to challenge the destructive trend of the dominant Tamil politics. Furthermore, these leaders had stuck their necks out to offer leadership when there was a political vacuum with hardly anyone or the government to talk to.

On 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July, three days after the appeal was made, several containers containing smelly substance, believed to be excreta, were dropped in Bishop Deogupillai's area from the air. The ordinary people construed this to be the president's reply and several of them blamed the religious leaders for the stink. By the close of the first week of August, several churches and religious institutions that functioned as refugee camp had been bombed, and the Bishop himself barely escaped with his life to become a refugee. While these leaders were humiliated and deprived of their role in speaking for the community, the LTTE was able to call forth a massive procession to mourn those who died during its attack to storm the fort. The crowd marched in spite of the aerial intruders. This episode is illustrative of the tragic being pursued by the government, cornering people into supporting destructive extremism.

#### 1.5 An LTTE leader speaks his mind

Addressing a meeting at the University of Jaffna last July, Mr.Yogi, the leader of the LTTE's political wing told the audience:

“Negotiations and ceasefires may come and go, but the fight will go on. We will get Eelam soon.....We will not talk to other groups.....We have sometimes lost ten fighters to obtain a gun. Hence a gun is worth ten lives. Therefore,we will worship the

gun.....Intellectuals do not support us. The educational system must be reformed because it has not taught people to think independently.....You may have ideas, but it is the fighters who can enforce them. Therefore you are subservient to the fighters.”

This is a frank testimony to the poverty of leadership that has cost the Tamils so much in lives, territory, material destruction and social breakdown. Having induced hundreds of young men and women to lay down their lives, it cannot even speak of steady cause. While maintaining Eelam as its formal slogan, it can make astounding turns when the leadership is threatened. Its inability to put forward publicly, a reasonable objective is a liability that springs from its own history and rhetoric.

## CHAPTER 2

### EASTERN REPORT

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#### [N. Mahesan, Batticaloa, 14 th June:](#)

#### [Emmanuel, Mechanic, Batticaloa, mid June:](#)

#### [Sivakadatcham, Governors Office, Trincomalee, July:](#)

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#### [2.9 THE EAST : LATE INFORMATION](#)

#### 2.1 Pottuvil:

Following the outbreak of war, all Tamils were rendered refugees,a large number of them fleeing to Thirukkivil. Towards the end of June the STF command at Pottuvil sent a message through a senior government official, that it was safe for the people to go back and

that they would be protected. The people did go with hesitation and shortly after their return, the STF did a round up and took all their young men away. The people had no one to complain to. The government official who had persuaded them to go had himself remained behind in Thirukkivil. Stricken with terror, the people fled back to Thirukkivil. The young men have since not been heard of.

A grieving mother said, "Oh God, why did I go back to pottuvil? I had three sons and lost them, and am back to being a refugee." The southern press has hailed the return of tourists to pottuvil as a restoration of normality, and have published of tourists on the beach and of President Premadasa switching on a new electrification scheme. The Tamils have become the lost and forgotten natives of pottuvil.

## 2.2 Tamil Casualties in the East:

The following is taken from contributions made in parliament by Tamil MP's during the debate on the Security Situation in the East, 10<sup>th</sup> August.

### Trincomalee District

Mavai S.Senathirajah: More than 2,500 Tamil and Muslims civilians have been killed in the East since the withdrawal of the IPKF. The LTTE had left Trincomalee town on 13<sup>th</sup> June. But on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> when the army and the police entered town, shops and houses were looted and burnt up to Gopalapuram in Trincomalee town. These same forces killed and burnt 60 Tamil persons in city. 23 persons at Chelvanayakapuram, 42 at sittur, 25 to 75 at Thambalakamam and 12 at Chinabay were killed and burnt. Even children 12 and 13 years old were killed.

The soldiers who entered Trincomalee town took a large number of women and about 58 men to the Muttaveli esplanade, and several of them were murdered. Women whose blouses were torn and with their eyes tied were led to the army camp. What became of them is not known. At kattaiparichchan and Mutur, 230 bodies were seen in a burnt state and hundreds of Tamils were missing according to reports.

Mr. K. Premachandran added that persons roaming around Trincomalee in a white Hiace van take more than 2 or 3 persons every day. All inquiries about them prove fruitless.

### Amparai and Batticaloa Districts

Mavai S.Senathirajah: During July 70 Tamils were killed and burnt at the Nintavur Hindu Temple. On 4<sup>th</sup> August (the day following the kattankudy massacre) 49 Tamils including women were killed at Thirakkeni in the Amparai district.

In Akkaraipattu, recently, 37 persons were arrested on the same day and murdered. They were not terrorists but were community leaders, including elders, government servants, Village Headmen and Post Masters.

Mr. K. Premachandran: At Akkaraipattu in Kalmunai, about 7<sup>th</sup> August, over 12 persons from a community of snake-charmers (Kuravar) were killed. Their language is neither Tamil nor Sinhalese, but a mixture dominated by Telugu.

About the 8<sup>th</sup>, 27 Tamils who were travelling from Chavalakkadai to Kalmunai, were killed by the army at Chavalakkadai junction.

K.Karunakarm: On 6<sup>th</sup> August, during an army search operation at Periyakallaru in the Batticaloa district, 29 Tamil were lined up and shot death. On the same day following the killing of over 40 Tamils at Thiraikkeni, some women had been abducted and over 50 persons are missing. Of the wounded, 3 women died at the Karaitivu government hospital. This was done by an armed Muslim gang against harmony between and Muslims.

Following the attack on the community of snake charmers, 8 members with serious injuries were admitted to the Thriukkovil Hospital. The incident where the army cut to death 27 persons at Chavalakkadai in the Amparai district, took place while the Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne was visiting Amparai.

These excerpts listed above were published in 'The Virakesari', but not in the English press.

### 2.3 Killings of Sinhalese:

The Island of 9<sup>th</sup> August carried as its leading item the killings of 57 Sinhalese in two separate incidents. The victims are said to have been hacked to death and included at least 20 women, an off duty soldier and children. The report said:

“On the Mahadivulweva-Rotaweveva road yesterday ‘Tigers’ bombed a private bus on its way from Morawewa to Horowpatana before dragging people out and shooting them at point blank range and running into the jungle. Twenty five persons including 14 women were killed. Seven people with serious knife and gunshot injuries were rushed to hospitals by the police who rushed to the scene of the gruesome massacre...People who escaped death said that at least 40 ‘Tigers’ were involved in the attacked.

“ With yesterday’s massacre tension was rising in the area.

Transport had come to a standstill with people keeping off the roads fearing more raids in the area.

“Another 32 Sinhalese were hacked to death in the remote jungle village of Bandaraduwa in the Uhana police area, Amparai District on Tuesday (7<sup>th</sup>) night. Four others critically injured were admitted to hospitals in Amparai and Colombo.

According to police investigations, terrorists had entered the village clad in uniforms similar to those of the army and attacked the inmates of houses with long handed kathi knives. About one hundred terrorists had taken part in the in human attack the report said. It is alleged that this attack was by the Tigers from a Tiger camp set in the upper reaches of an ancient tank min Nawagirriya, a few miles from this jungle village”.

The report also added that the scene of the incident was visited by senior police officials including Chandra Fernando, D.I.G. Eastern Province and that 30 of the victims were given a state burial attended by two Ministers, including the Minister for Defence.

Two aspects are worth nothing. The Sinhalese being killed are some of the most underprivileged in this country with no particular grievance against Tamils. They are placed in vulnerable situations through the chauvinistic dictates of the state, under political conditions where they and the local Tamils naturally fear each other. State funerals and visits by top officials are a poor substitute for the raw deal given them by the state. The other aspect is the contrast with the treatment given to Tamil victims and the reporting of such.

The Island of 10<sup>th</sup> August reported the killing of 8 Sinhalese living in railway line rooms at Nawagama, a border village 12 miles south of Vavuniya. Nilmini, a 17 year old girl who was injured had died after admission to Anuradhapura hospital. Among the dead were one railway labourer and other who had fled Vavuniya.

These were about the last major killings of Sinhalese reported in August. The Island of 28<sup>th</sup> carried this curious report:

“Four villagers of Dematawewa and Halmillakanda in the Horowapatana police area were abducted by Tigers on Monday (27<sup>th</sup>) and released the same evening ordering them to evacuate two villages within 24 hours. A group of 5 armed LTTEers, who had carried out the abduction had also obtained from the captives information regarding police and army deployments in the areas...” police and army deployments were said to have been beefed up after the incident.

While the LTTE leadership views massacres tactically and has a basically chauvinistic line towards Sinhalese, it would be wrong to blame all killings as coming directly from orders from the top. One must also look into the possibility of there being a strong element of local tensions arising from colonization and traditional fears exacerbated by war and the activities of the army. There have been periods when the LTTE had co-existed with these villagers. The last report may be an indication that following bad publicity resulting from massacres, an order may have gone out to handle Sinhalese civilians differently. Even if that is the case, it is difficult to predict what would happen when there is a qualitative change in the situation.

#### 2.4 More on the Kattankudy Massacre:

In a statement issued by the federation of Kattankudy Mosques and Muslim Institutions, and signed by its secretary Mr. M.K.M. Aliyar it is stated that 101 Muslims were killed and 80 injured during the attack on the two Mosques on 3<sup>rd</sup> August. It also stated that an LTTE member Nagarajah alias Ranjith Appah played a leading role in the attack and that several villagers were eyewitnesses to it.

The statement issued on 5<sup>th</sup> August was in response to denial made by Karikalan, the LTTE's political commander for Batticaloa, and broadcast over the BBC's Tamil service the previous day. The statement, hand written in Tamil, is the kind indignant response one would expect from villagers angered by the denial.

The statement further went on to say that on 12<sup>th</sup> July, a convoy of vehicles with 242 persons and 5 million rupees worth of goods was detained by the LTTE. The villagers, it said,

approached Ranjith Appah who was well known in kattankudy, who in turn promised to release the people. Instead, the statement went on, the people were massacred and the 6 lorries and 4 vans were burnt.

A Muslim public servant from Kattankudy who was contacted vouched for the second incident and said that the list of persons missing is still being compiled and at present number\s about 170. Asked whether the victims were home guards as some have alleged, the public servant said emphatically that they were civilians and that his relations had been among the victims.

One aspect of the reporting which puzzled Tamils from the East was that Ranjith Appah was not a military man to lead an incursion into an area under army control, and had the LTTE wished to deny its involvement it would not have used a man well known in kattankudy who had a prominent squint. Ranjith was chiefly a tax collector. Sources in neighboring Tamil villages have since said that the LTTE was involved and that Ranjith had been present.

It thus suggests itself that Ranjith was a guide rather than the leader and that no though had been given to concealment. The denial was an afterthought following the top leadership's realization of the gravity of the consequences. It is very likely, as the Defence Minister had stated in parliament quoting intelligence reports, that the top leadership had not been apprised before hand.

The attack can then be attributed to localized anger between Tamils and MUslims which the government had used every opportunity to promote. A feature which again puzzled many was the fact that the attack on the Mosques co-incided with the Defence Minister's trip to Middle-East countries, including Iraq and Libya to seek military help in its war with the LTTE. More than 1000 Tamil boys were missing or had been killed in the neighboring towns of Batticaloa, Kalmunai and Karaitivu due to military action organized in such a way that Muslims would be blamed.

The intervention of the state in 1984 to deepen Tamil-Muslim suspicion for its own ends was such that, to local Tamil minds, the sanctity of a Mosque as a place of worship had been diluted. There is a history which complicates reporting in the East. Attacks on Mosques which may come as a shock to an outsider may not sound so extreme to local Tamils.

A Tamil who lived near the Kattankudy, Navatkudah border testified to an experience in 1985. After night prayers at the Mosque a call made over its hailer said that Muslims were being attacked, and called upon Muslims to lay hands on any weapon at their disposal and come to the Mosque in haste. After some time the resident saw an armoured car followed by a crowd. Tamils in the area fled as their homes were attacked. The person leading in the armoured car was identified as piyasena. Piyasena and Upul were two policemen in the Special Investigations Unit who became notorious over the disappearance of several Tamil boys. A senior citizen in Batticaloa who related this incident, said that he had personally gone to the Kattankudy border to retrieve the dead body of a tamil. The fact that a Mosque was used in such a manner does not cast an aspersion on Islam, but testifies to the degrading character of the state's intentions, calling for greater alertness from both Tamils and Muslims. To place matters in context, the manner in which the influence and authority of the Church has been misused during the last decade of our national crisis, is something that should be of great concern to christians. It has diluted the standing of every Church as a holy place.

## 2.5 The Eravur-Chenkaladi Massacres, 12<sup>th</sup> August:

The massacre of Muslims at Eravur was described in the Island of 13<sup>th</sup> August. This was the first of its reports during the war with direct reference to killings of Tamils without the normal adjectives. It is said that about 200 'Tigers' armed with razors and automatics took part in the attack in the villages of Saddam Hussein Village, Pooaikadu and Kalawaichnai in the Muslim division of Eravur electorate. The attack began at 9.00 pm on the 11<sup>th</sup> and went on until the early hours of the 12<sup>th</sup>. Many of the victims are said to have been decapitated.

The report also quoted a TELO source to the effect that 8 Tamils warded in Eravur hospital were killed by armed men who raided the hospital. According to other sources, this incident preceded the massacre. The report added: "At Chenkaladi, close to a rice mill at least 50 Tamils including many women were killed by a gang of armed men, TELO sources further said. The bodies of victims were reported to have been set on fire by the killers, the sources said: "At Sammanthurai, seven muslims described as peasant were shot by Tigers on the same day while 3 other Muslims were killed at Akkaraipattu where many Tamils and Muslims were killed during the past few weeks of bloody violence. The Tigers were shot dead by the police.

"At Weeramunai yesterday (12<sup>th</sup>) morning armed men raided a refugee camp and slaughtered 24 men and women. At least 40 suffered serious injuries. The Special Task Force (STF) men were yesterday scheduled to escort about 2000 Tamils at Akkaraipattu..."

Fr. Selvarajah was among those killed at Weeramunai. Mr. Alagakoon, brother of the veteran UNP Minister, K.W. Devanayagam was knifed to death at Chenkalady. Though there was direct reference to Tamils killed for the first time, the reporting was silent or vague on many questions. The killers involved had to be Tigers on the one hand and unidentified persons on the other. At the time of writing we have (because of our own limitations) received no independent confirmation that the Tigers were involved in the Eravur massacre. According to one source from Eravur, the killers went along calling people in Sinhalese and shooting or killing whoever they accosted. There also some village talk that Ranjith Appah was seen. It appears that the reason for identifying the killers as Tigers is mainly circumstantial. Tigers had been identified as killers of Muslims in many other instances. Even if other parties, such as the state, found it in their interests to kill Muslims directly and blame the LTTE, the risk of being found out and the consequent liabilities were both high. This country has never had a reputation for keeping secrets, no thanks to the press. Whether it is the killers of Richard de Zoysa or the perpetrators of the Anuradhapura massacre, within a matter of days or weeks, the most awkward details become subjects of drawing room talk.

Why did the Muslim Congress say in its statement that "the massacre of Eravur Muslims is raising the doubt whether the LTTE is going ahead with its barbaric attacks on the Muslims with the connivance of the government"? The answer probably lies in what the army was doing. The report quoted also said: "Many bodies were recovered by soldiers who arrived in Eravur from Batticaloa and Chenkalady to help people bury their relatives". The report had earlier said that the attack went on into the early hours of the following day. The massacre which began at 9.00 pm had gone on for more than 3 hours and the army from the Chenkalady-Eravur border area had come the following morning. The explanation that the army is afraid to get out in the nights is human and plausible. If one cannot expect more from a professional army, it makes the recruitment of home guards all the more questionable. The motive has evidently little to do with the protection of the people. Who had been responsible

for the killing of 8 or 9 Tamils at Eravur hospital prior to the massacre? Muslims living with Tamils have asked home guards not to come any where near.

About this time it became clear that the SLMC leader Mr.Ashraff had begun distancing himself from the government, whose kind intentions towards Muslims, became more doubtful. The government signalled its annoyance at the SLMS not towing the line by refusing Mr. Ashraff a seat on the flight which flew Muslim dignitaries from Colombo in to Eravur as part of the propaganda exercise. Ar. Ashraff is a native of Eravur. We call it a propaganda exercise, because not only was similar consideration not paid to the Tamil dead, but also the matter was officially denied. About this time SLMC members in Colombo were arrested and harassed.

In the following days the sun and the Island newspapers claimed that 75 and 89 Tamils had been killed respectively. The official denial was published in the Daily News. Minister Wijeratne said that members of the Batticaloa citizens' committee who had been taken to Chenkalady by the army had failed to find evidence. This is hardly surprising. The truth, as far as we have been able to verify, is that a large number of Tamils had been killed and the rest had mostly scattered. For this reason the compilation of the list of dead persons is still going on slowly, with official hostility rather than help.

On the other hand there is little mystery about the identity of the "armed persons" responsible for killing the Tamils. This happened in the morning after the army found itself able to leave the camp. Men in army uniform had gone house by house pulling people out. One such armed person came into a house and found 15 boys in a bedroom. He asked them to quickly get into the kitchen. He then outside and shouted to someone who made an inquiry, "Mehe Kowruth nehe" ["There is nobody here"]. The 15 escaped later.

A postscript to the incident exemplifies the folly of lying through the media and of denying the obvious. A boy from Chenkalady, now living in Germany, made a frantic call to this country. In a video shown in Germany of the damaged and looted houses that his parents had fled their home in Chenkalady and were living with relatives in Batticaloa. On the other hand, concern for the Tamils and balanced reporting by the state, would have largely eliminated the possibility of biased reporting by either side for propaganda and collection of funds. There is a desultory game being played in the East at great cost to the people by both sides. Its rule is: If you go into one village with a gun, you then go into the next village with a video camera.

## 2.6 Killings and disappearances

N. Mahesan, Batticaloa, 14 th June:

Mahesan from puloly regarded by many of his colleagues as being, by far ,the most brilliant amongst the first batch of science graduates from the University of Jaffna, who were admitted in 1974. Mahesan had little interest in politics and life was a sad one. His family was poor and his father committed suicide when he was to sit for his last paper at the A levels. His results were otherwise brilliant. He obtained 1<sup>st</sup> class honours for his general degree. His knowledge of the subject matter was so through that he spent most of his time in explanations to his fellow students. His family's circumstances made him seek employment in Nigeria from where he proceeded to the USA for doctoral studies in Statistics. Now, being a families man, he returned home before submitting his doctoral thesis. He applied for temporary

employment in the universities of Jaffna and Batticaloa and was accepted in the latter. From Batticaloa he was to travel to Jaffna on 16<sup>th</sup> June to face an interview for a temporary appointment at the University of Jaffna. The war began on 11<sup>th</sup> June and a ceasefire was declared on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Mahesan travelled from Chenkaladi to Batticaloa to reserve a seat on a coach going to Jaffna. On his way back, the van was stopped by LTTE cadre who hitched a ride. This was spotted by an airforce helicopter which followed the van and opened fire. Obviously, the LTTE cadre had seen the helicopter and not expect to be attacked in view of the ceasefire. The passengers took shelter under a tree. Mashesan was killed by a bullet in the abdomen. Such callousness by the air force towards civilians travelling in vehicles was to become a regular feature of the war.

Emmanuel, Mechanic, Batticaloa, mid June:

Emmanuel was a mechanic, who like all motorcar mechanics did not refuse to serve persons with a gun. When the LTTE ran Batticaloa up to mid-June, he serviced LTTE vehicles. Following the army takeover of Batticaloa, soldiers tied Emmanuel, placed a tire over him, doused him with petrol and lit him up. The victim screamed and walked a few paces, before collapsing into a shapeless mass.

Sivakadatcham, Governors Office, Trincomalee, July:

Sivakadatcham from Batticaloa was in charge of transport at the Governor's office, Trincomalee. He was taken for questioning by the army and not seen again. Strenuous efforts by the Governor himself failed to yield results. The Governor, Nalin seniviratne, was himself a Brigadier in the Sri Lankan Army and was senior to Lucky Wijeratne, the Brigadier presently in charge a Trincomalee. The Governor who has reportedly made representations on behalf of missing persons has made little impact on his junior. Amongst leading army officers in recent times, Nalin Seniviratne had a reputation for being against methods which result in large civilian casualties. He is said to have been too intelligent and too human to be a successful army officer in his country,s degenerate political context.

Trincomalee, early August:

A young boy was among a group of 4 Tamils abducted by Muslim home guards and taken to the police. Timely intervention by his relatives who had some influence in Colombo secured his release. The boy, now in Colombo, is sure that he was going to be shot. His companions have since not been heard of.

The deployment of Muslim home guards, operating under the police in Batticaloa and Trincomalee towns, in totally superfluous roles, is seen by the local Tamil and Muslim populations as a not so subtle means of furthering Tamil-Muslim animosity.

## 2.7 Settlement/Reserlement of Sinhalese in Trincomalee

It will be clear from our reports that Tamils in these parts are living in state of terror, with many killed and most of them refugees. The pattern suggests that this is a part of deliberate policy. It come as no surprise that attempts are underway to settle or resettle Sinhalese in these areas, with state aid and promised protection. In the meantime Tamils continue to disappear or live in the disease and neglect of refugee camps. The Island of 22<sup>nd</sup> August carried the following:

“About 250 Sinhalese families who had been almost languishing in refugee camps in Trincomalee town for the past three years, have now been resettled in the villages in the Trincomale District which they deserted due to conditions at that time. The first batch of refugees to be resettled had come from Sirimapura numbering 140...Each of these families was given Rs.1,000 worth of kitchen utensils, other household items and dry rations at a simple ceremony by K.B.Wijekoon, Government Agent, Trincomalee. They were also given items like pillows and mats by the Sarvodaya representative in the Trincomalee District, Anne Dissanayake. Pipeborn water and electricity have been provided to some of the resettlement homes and in the case of others, steps are now being taken to provide them.

“These villagers got aid in the form of cadjans, tiles, cement and other items of building materials from donors in various parts of the island...”

The Daily News of the same day added:

“Minister of State for Defence Mr.Ranjan Wijeratne during his tour of Trincomalee on the 18<sup>th</sup> visited those who had been resettled at Sirimapura. Army,Navy,Airforce and Police Officers and GA Trincomalee, K.B.Wijekoon accompanied him...He went round to see the workmen from Kurunegala District renovating damaged house at Sirimapura on a voluntary basis. They sent here by the Chief Minister of the NW province Mr. Gamini Jayawicrama Perera...”

The blatantly discriminatory manner in which the state machinery is at work shows an instinctive chauvinistic drive towards an objective. Sarvodaya is of course a well-funded NGO, avowedly Gandhian and careful in its diplomacy, but not well known for a position that could be called principled or courageous. Its position on Tamil refugees in Trincomalee has not been reported.

There is no accountability where Tamil representatives can check what exactly is going on. Existing Sinhalese settlements were made under questionable conditions on land encroached with state connivance, often under cover of racial violence. We do not make distinctions between human beings and we live in a world where the movement of human beings and exposure to other cultures is accepted as being healthy. Many Tamils too would welcome Sinhalese living in the North-East under conditions where racial politics had been marginalised and where accountability and equality in the functioning of the state can be secured. At present the conditions are deteriorating very much in the opposite direction. The political motivation can only be termed diabolical by its effects.

Anyone who cares genuinely for these Sinhalese settlers must ask:

Are they placed in conditions where they can live as healthy human beings? Are practical conditions being secured where they can live in good neighbourliness? What are the prospects of their children entering university in a country that boasts of universal free education?

We know that they live in squalor, cynically inducted into a paramilitary culture, hated by their neighbours as much as they hate their neighbours. Indeed at every bout of anti-Tamil rioting, they were encouraged to attack their neighbours under military protection-a treatment which the Tamil groups returned when the IPKE arrived. They are victims of decadent uncaring nationalism. It comes as no surprise that such scheme should be undertaken by the

same state that has killed Sinhalese relentlessly in the South-a state and ruling class equally cynical of the Sinhalese poor as of the Tamil people.

## 2.8 Destroying the Basis of Eelam

The Sunday Times of 26<sup>th</sup> August published a full page article with the title above, by Malinga Herman Gunaratne, author of “For a Sovereign state”, published by Sarvodaya printers. the article concerned the subject of his book, of breaking the contiguity of the Tamil region by planting Sinhalese settlements. The plan of settlements on the Yan Oya and Malwathu Oya was worked out before the 1983 communal riots, by what are described as ‘some of the keenest minds’ in the Mahaveli Ministry, now holding international positions. The secret operation was scuttled by President J.R.Jayawardena whose son supported these settlements. Some senior persons in the ministry, including the author lost their jobs and Gamini Dissanayake, the minister concerned, was reprimanded. The author feels keenly the long hours of incarceration in dark, dank police cells-nothing compared with what his friend Ravi’s paramilitary forces did first to Tamil and then extended Sinhalese boys. The Sunday Times introduces the article as a first person account of the plan...(and in keeping with its editorial suggestions of using military advantage to settle the land questions), whether such an operation cannot still be mounted, this time with official blessings.

The fact that Jayawardene . no friend of the Tamils, had to act as he did suggests that the plan was blatantly loony as it was racist. The plan was calculated to make Sri Lanka a permanent issue in Indian politics, giving India and Tamil Nadu stronger grounds for legitimate leverage in local affairs, than had the ‘83 riots. Indeed, the president’s action suggests strong Indian protest. As past events, as well as today’s, poignantly make explicit, the execution of such a plan requires genocide, at least on a limited scale. The fact that the July 1983 racial violence proved an appropriate setting for the plan make that clear:

“The riots had set the stage for a tide of nationalism. Some 45,000 flocked to the Maduru Oya in search of the promised land...Our first proposal was only to place a few settlers as deterrent against illegal encroachments by Tamil separatists.”

The Tamil militancy was weak at that time, and was in no position to help Tamil encroaches. In fact Tamil victims from the 1977 violence from the South who had settled in Pankulam, were driven away quite simply, by the AGA walking in with a few others and setting fire their huts, shortly before the 1983 anti-Tamil violence. Under cover of this violence several Tamil victims from 1977 in these areas were rounded up, taken to the hill country, and dumped amidst the 1983 violence.

The 45,000 were not moving spontaneously into Maduru Oya with nationalist fervor, as the article later admits:

“We conceived and implemented a plan which we though would secure the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka for a long time. We moved a large group of 45,000 land-hungry peasants into the Batticaloa and Polonnaruwa districts of the Maduru Oya delta. The second step was to make a similar human settlement in the Yan Oya basin. The third step was going to be a settlement of a number of people, opposed to “Eelam” on the Malwathu Oya. He claims that his group was responsible for the Weli-Oya settlement, separating Mullaitivu and Trincomalee districts.

The article also presents a colored photograph of Ravi Jayawardene with Moshe Levy, recipient of the Star of David, suggesting Israeli inspiration behind the plan. It also reminds a person, mischievously perhaps, that Premadasa is the man who threw out the Israelis, much to the chagrin of an section of the ruling party, who looked upon Israelis as good friends. Behind the propaganda thrust represented by the article, one cannot dismiss the possibility of a power struggle within the ruling party.

The views of the author of this article are not those of an isolated individual of questionable sanity. The publicity enjoyed by his views suggests that influential persons are helping him to by the author and his own article indicate that his views command considerable influence within the armed forces. The author is at pains to disclaim originality for the ideas. It is logical expression of the instinctive chauvinism of the ruling elite. It represents their idea of how a united Sri Lanka can be preserved within their overlordship. Settlers are pawns to them. The author is a planter, a respectable alternative to an army career for mission school boys. An argument offered for these land settlements is land hunger in the South with its vast tea, rubber and coconut plantations. The declining prices of these products on the international market make their continuance questionable, against pressure for land redistribution. To make matters worse, the UNP which held power for over 10 years has even taken over peasant lands in the South and given them over to sugar multinationals for questionable returns. This is how killing disenchanted Sinhalese in the South and setting others in Tamil areas are two sides of the same coin. The author indirectly appeals for support for his plan to the Minister for Defence, himself an ex-planter.

Variations of the author's plan have been in execution for some time without being so explicitly stated. Senior citizens of Trincomalee who have been watching with concern for several years would tell you that. Unfortunately, out of the few able spokesmen the Trincomalee Tamils had, some were killed in political rivalry and a drive for influence by Tamil group within the last two years. Nearly every ministry and every government corporation operating in Trincomalee has been devoting resources to settling Sinhalese, whether directly or indirectly—Ministry of ports, Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs, Ministry of Tourism, Cashew Corporation etc. Thus the plan represents the instinctive thrust of the whole government machinery, inclusive of the armed forces, to the point of becoming institutionalized. Official with sober views have ceased to count, and indeed even Tamil officials who share the anxieties of their fellows, have become integrated into the system.

Genocide is a logical consequence of this ideological thrust though perhaps in a limited form. At some point state sponsored induction of Sinhalese in a politically hostile environment would threaten the Tamils and Muslims, first in the milder form of encroaching on their lands. A ministry by gazette notification designates a piece of land as being taken over either for a tourist resort, to build quarters for employees, for the use of Prima Flour mills or for some such purpose. The squatter colony of Sirimapura suddenly springs up on a piece of land belonging to the municipality. One way or the other locals lose land—it may be personal property, temple property or public property used by locals. Where there were disputes, law courts had long ceased to be of much use, but the Sinhalese had the police, the army and the navy. The Tamil boys in 1983 assuaged their helpless anger by going for training arms by the hundreds. Next, the forces behaved as though every Tamil was a terrorist. At this point we were on the slippery slope towards genocide. During the current war, a close look at events would reveal both a qualitative as well as a quantitative difference between massacres by the state forces and those by the LTTE. The latter reveal a strong component of localized anger and insecurity felt by local Tamils, and have the character of spontaneous communal

violence. The former act on orders from Colombo and the manner in which Muslims have been used strongly suggests a powerful element of per-meditation. Figures compiled by local citizens reveal irreplaceable losses to the strengths of tamil communities in vulnerable places- About 200 killed and missing in Karaitivu, 500 in Kalmunai, 400 in Batticaloa, several hundreds in Trincomalee, next to no Tamils remaining in Pottuvil with the young men taken by the STF. In some places, such as Akkaraipattu, those singled out for killing include leaders of the local community. Then there is the manner in which the state machinery is setting Sinhalese while the Tamils are totally beaten. All this suggests a pattern. It is the only possible logical execution of Herman Gunaratne's plan.

Where it will lead the country to is not hard to imagine. We must question not only the saintly of one individual, but of the whole ruling class.

## 2.9 THE EAST : LATE INFORMATION

Batticaloa, 4<sup>th</sup> September: Three girls were shot dead near the Batticaloa railway station on the 4<sup>th</sup> night. One girl was the sister-in-law of David, member of the TELO. The girl's mother was taken off a Colombo bound bus by the LTTE during July. The dead girl, David's wife's elder sister, had reported the mother's abduction to the ICRC. The mother is since missing. According to rumour, the other two girls are said to have 'misbehaved' with the many.

Batticaloa, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1989: 65 members of the Tamil National Army (TNA) are reported to have been buried in one huge pit at Nallathanni Madu, Muhattuvaram. The victims had surrendered to the LTTE and a were being held prisoners. Prior to burial, their hands were tied and some were alive while some had been shot. Vehicles were then run over the grave. The incident was reported by two independent witnesses and is distinct from the killing of about 75 TNA prisoners shortly after the LTTE took over Batticaloa on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1989, backed by the Sri Lankan Army.

Casualty figures, 7<sup>th</sup> September 1990: Local citizen's committees have provided the following figures of registered Tamil casualties since the beginning of the war: Pottuvil - 260 dead; Sankamanakandy (between Pottuvil and Thirukkivil)- 20 dead; Thirukkivil -9 dead; Karaitivu - 190 dead, 60 missing; Kalmunai AGA'S division-240 dead, 30 missing; Weeramunai, Malwattai and Walathapiddy - 210 dead; 45 missing; Thiraikkeni, Attapalam-57 dead; Amparai- 1203 dead, 256 missing.

Kalmunai - 94 shops looted, 18 burnt, Pottuvil-nearly all Tamil shops and house burnt; Amparai - more than 1500 dwellings burnt.

Karaitivu, June: Following the appearance of 27 headless bodies washed ashore on the Kalmunai beach in June, the STF and the army addressed Karaitivu citizens. The citizens were told that 2 Muslims who had been responsible for these bodies had been taken in with several identity cards. Appropriate action was promised.

## Chapter 3

### MATTERS OF TOPICAL INTEREST

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### 3.1 The Question of a Ceasefire

In a war where killings of civilians has assumed barbaric dimensions, it is natural and proper that any concerned person should wish for an early end to this. Since 1985 many ceasefires have come and gone, destroying hopes of well-wishers. While these ceasefires placed some temporary restraint on the major armed parties, they did not spare the civilians. One could say that most civilian leaders whose presence could have had an ameliorating effect and have imposed some sanity were killed during ceasefires. The situation at the end of every ceasefire had deteriorated so much that people were left longing for the pre-ceasefire condition when seeking a ceasefire, we must also pay attention to what we want to happen during a ceasefire. This needs greater understanding and commitment.

The question is also closely tied to the destructive nature of the politics we describe in the following section. It also concerns the legitimacy of the parties concerned. A close examination of all ceasefire in our context show that the parties agreed because there was a serious challenge to their power and credibility and needed a respite. But there was no change of heart and a commitment to democracy and human rights. The result was tactical manoeuvring to keep power at any cost with its natural consequences. While it is difficult to justify killing political enemies in one's own camp during war because of the demoralisation it will create, it becomes almost the sole preoccupation during a ceasefire. In particular, during a guerrilla campaign, when a group requires the peoples' support in the form of food and shelter, it becomes awkward to be accused of killing a political opponent with a clean record. Such liabilities are minimised during a ceasefire when the group is physically secure.

Thus the LTTE's ceasefire with the Sri Lankan government was marked by political killings of many Tamils, reaching a peak during the early part to this year as the IPKF pulled out. Human rights violations became blatant. The government on the other hand while materially helping the LTTE to eliminate its enemies and using it to goad the IPKF, was free to concentrate on its counter-terror. This too reached a peak during the IPKF pull-out, bringing the total killed to semi-official figure of 40,000. Up to this point the ceasefire was useful to both.

Beyond this point, the emerging information suggests that the LTTE got the bad side of the bargain. It had taken great care not to embarrass President Premadasa. While it made no links with the Sinhalese opposition, the government appears to have been gearing up to use the Muslim and Tamil enmities the LTTE had exacerbated without second thoughts.

Just as people began to talk of peace being restored, repression defended in the Tamil areas. After its spokesmen had made some liberal noises and had talked of perestroika, the group lacked the ability to come to terms with its past- its history of alienating many as 'traitors', and of first of allowing the Sri Lankan forces to advance in 1987 by its elimination of other

groups and then enabling India to intervene legitimately. Both parties had problems of legitimacy with their own people.

The foregoing serves to show that a mere ceasefire without the concomitant enforcement of human rights is meaningless. It is for this reason that even well-meaning talk of an international peace keeping force could be mistaken and counter-productive. The first task is to get the principles right and decide what is to be monitored and enforced. Then it does not matter how it is done provided it is done effectively by competent persons. The important thing is to first get both sides committed publicly to have basic human rights monitored and enforced. Then prevarication and foot-dragging by either party stands to be exposed.

To start with an international peace keeping force would be open to seemingly legitimate technical scruples by both sides. For instance the LTTE spokesman Balasingam has already said that such a force which circumvents India will not be acceptable to it. (Another somersault!) A prominent Indian role will on the other hand give cause for the Sri Lankan government to throw its spanners into the works. Once principles are secured, technical gaps can be bridged with ingenuity. For example, while a prominent role for the Indian army in an international force can be objectionable, there can be no legitimate objection to prominent Indians who have championed human rights.

We know that many NGO's and international groups long concerned with problems here are setting their minds to the problem. While welcoming this we are only saying that it can be done effectively and durably with no greater delay. How it is done will determine the lives and future of the few Tamils left who have been with the people and have taken a courageous stand at this time. Without them there can hardly be a future.

### 3.2 Development Amidst the politics of Destruction

This was a question which confronted us in stark terms between the months of March and June this year when there was a concerted effort by the Tigers to persuade NGO's and the government that this was the time to begin the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the North-East. Many of us felt instinctively through long experience that the aims of rehabilitation and reconstruction were incompatible with the current politics which had alienated, destroyed and made of none effect, the energies and contribution of a sizeable section of the populace with social conscience. The Tamils will need rehabilitation and reconstruction even more urgently after this most devastating of wars. Those who are genuinely interested in the Tamils must ask themselves what kind of process this is going to be, who will participate, who will benefit and whether it will encourage the politics of reconciliation, development and a mitigation of evils. The whole question is also very relevant to the Sinhalese South.

NGO's have been a part of nation life for over a decade. At the start there were conditions where some constructive work in helping communities in need, could have been done without paying too much attention to political developments. Subsequent developments indicate that such conditions ceased to exist some time before July 1983, though from that time NGO activity, both local and foreign, had increased with even churches joining in. Despite

enormous funds poured in, little of permanent value has been accomplished. In this chronic state of conflict, a pattern has set in. Armies and armed groups kill, destroy and create refugees, the NGO's feed. The government has been quite comfortable with ignoring those victims it does not particularly care for. We cannot avoid escaping the fact that confronting the politics of destruction is a necessary pre-requisite of genuine rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The politics of destruction: We shall now explain what is meant by the politics of destruction. This is the politics of tactical survival without deference to morals or principles. Without an honest attempt at finding answers to questions of justice, it perpetuates power by spreading alienation, division and insecurity harnessing the energies and securing co-operation amongst diverse communities for the common good of all, it destroys all constructive energy and good will, and channels all energy into obsessive hatred. Instead of seeking to bring out the best, it brings out the worst in everyone. Those who practice this politics become increasingly trapped into devoting nearly all their energies into surveillance of, and fomenting divisions among those who challenge their power. This is the politics of destruction. With such politics, development is hardly possible.

We have seen how the Tigers have practiced it. Though it brought them power in the short run, it cornered a large number of youth into the logic of the same politics and has made the people powerless. The only thing which dominates the minds of these youth who have faced humiliation and oppression at the hands of the Tigers is bitterness and vengeance. They are prepared to use any means frustrate the Tigers as the Tigers have done to them. With all democratic space closed, only the logic of the gun prevails. It is ironic that at their height of power and fame in March this year, the Tigers needed to hold about 2.000 political prisoners in the most dehumanising conditions, and were unable to be generous. But the media, both local and foreign, called this peace and praised the Tigers and the government.

As for the government, its politics is marked by burning bodies in the South while conducting a patriotic war in the North. Without going for the creative option of putting forward a political solution, it is using the divisions between Tamils and Muslims as well as amongst Tamils making the Tamil and Muslims more isolated and insecure. Ironically, the Tigers to their own disadvantage and by their own inability, deepened these divisions with the connivance of the government.

This destructive politics is also evident in the manner in which the government silenced the entire student movement in the South. In spite of their divisions, the student movement in the 80's became a major voice in articulating genuine grievances arising from corruption coupled with the application of economic programs reflecting western interests and notions of development. Many student activists strongly believe that the government was actively involved in creating divisions which were highlighted by the murder of Daya Pathirana in the mid 80's. The IUSF (Inter University Students' Federation) which was active during 1988 and 89 is characterised as terrorist by some and as racist by others. It may have been mistaken in its ideas and actions. By its selectiveness in condemning terror, it stood

compromised and discredited by the JVP's acts. But there are few grounds for believing that the IUSF was JVP any more than the UNP was JVP.

The fact is that many members of the IUSF knew next to nothing about the JVP. According to their own batch mates a number of students who were killed or have disappeared are not those who threatened their fellows and teachers, but were simply members of legitimate student bodies. We know for certain that a number of IUSF members were open minded creative persons who wanted to do some good. It was a good deal due to their persistence that at the presidential elections, the SLFP put out in its manifesto quite far reaching proposals to devolve power to minority regions. On the question of labour of Indian origin, their position is more generous than the those of the two main parties. These are no small achievements for young persons whose opportunities for interacting with Tamils were limited. Did not the country, at least for its own good, owe it to these young men to have a form of politics that would channel their good will and creativity rather than brand them as terrorists and hunt them down? The fact that several of them living in hiding, having narrowly escaped death at the hands of the state, have themselves not become murderers shows a rare human quality.

The seriousness of the depressing state of our universities where students are silenced to the point of even begin scared of contesting student union positions, is not generally appreciated. The country is being run as though the energies of the young are not wanted. Our poverty of ideas is being exacerbated in addition to economic poverty. While the vast majority of our young are silenced and terrorised, their counterparts from the elite with foreign university education stand to be pushed in to publicity and prominence in excess of their understanding and contribution. The seething anger that lies below the surface should not be underestimated.

The much publicised and costly Gam Udawa 90 exhibition at Pallekele which coincided with the president's birthday is perhaps symbolic of the kind of development that takes place under these conditions. The hidden reality in Pallekele was that several of its inhabitants had been killed and burnt some months ago, following a JVP attack on the local army camp. None of its registered voters had cast their vote at the presidential elections in December 1988. Many Sinhalese harboured strong feelings about the whole affair which was colourfully portrayed in one paper as 'Pallekele Reborn'. A Sinhalese lady in a government department which participated in the exhibition was called up by her boss for an explanation on why she had declined to contribute to the National Defence Fund. She said that if the government was serious about the cause of the soldiers and the fund, it should have cancelled the exhibition and given the money to the fund, instead of taxing those who are struggling with their daily living. To take this position in Kandy required no mean courage.

In the nature of the prevailing dispensation it strongly suggests itself that much of the foreign money that comes as aid reinforces this politics rather than benefit the people. If the government's access to dollars was restricted, it would have had to think seriously before purchasing aircraft and bombs to kill its own people and destroy wealth that cannot be replaced.

One could also discern a strong link between the LTTE's foreign connections and the process of the people becoming powerless.

Development requires accountability, and that cannot be secured here without challenging the dominant politics of destruction.

The need to be firm: In this climate of silence, the responsibility strongly falls on the local NGO's churches and the universities to expose the nature of the destructive manner in which power wielded, in the South as well as in the North. The ordinary people have no one else. A lack of firmness or wishy-washiness would be costly to these institutions as well. Quite frequently, after long discussions, statements are issued which deplore violence; deplore the decline of morals and call for peace and negotiations. Such serve to sooth consciences and satisfy foreign funding agencies, without posing a challenge to the oppressors. Those in power regularly utter the same sentiments. The grim reality is left untouched. But on the other hand those in these same institutions ceremonially associate with those in the state, have tete tete's with them and are entertained by them as old school shams. They may of course tell those in power some things privately, which from experience is of very limited value. In the absence of a firm principled public position on what exactly is wrong, their links with those in power give the ordinary people a very different massage. They form conclusions about whose violence they seriously disapprove of, and become uncomfortable with these institutions. This is partly the cause of allegations, sometimes wild, which have surfaced from time to time. Leadership in this climate is serious business requiring much sensitivity.

#### Pre-conditions for rehabilitation and reconstruction

To begin this process, what the Tamils need is the politics of rehabilitation, which will enable the creative energies of the people to be utilized. For this the people need space to defeat the politics of destruction. Through political pragmatism arising from their survival instinct, the Tigers may show different faces to different people and even voice liberal sentiments. But this cannot be sustained. To cover up their history of opportunism which cost the Tamils dearly, and their alienation of a large section of the population, particularly the conscientious young, they will need to resort to terror. As long as this politics prevails, the Tamils will continue to have an uncertain future. To start economic reconstruction under these conditions to give a superficial feeling that development is under way, will definitely lead to disaster.

To start with all organisations must be allowed to function democratically. Only this will provide space to re-evaluate and identify those tendencies which have become dominant in the social arena. This is necessary to counter the dehumanisation brought about during the course of the armed struggle. We have not gone through a liberating process where by the community could be strengthened with a higher value system. The community has got used to reaching mechanically and people tend to look for immediate alternatives to safeguard their short term interests, such as by going abroad.

It is therefore essential that organisations and individuals who try to look at ourselves self-critically should be protected at any cost. The NGO's and human rights organisations should understand the vital role these people can play in restoring civil society.

### 3.3 In Parliament

By the end of August there were some healthy signs amongst the opposition. On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August all major opposition groups, including the SLFP, MEP, SLMC, CP, SLMP, LSSP and the NASSP attended a meeting convened by the TELO to demand a halt to the bombing in Jaffna and to get food and supplies urgently to the civilian population in the North-East. Once again, the Opposition launched into spirited attacks on the government's human rights record. Violations in the South had been highlighted during the extension of emergency debate and at question time. The SLFP had for the first time since the outbreak of war decided to vote

against the extension of emergency. The Tamil groups are also voicing concern and are talking about civilian suffering, instead of just bashing the LTTE. The SLMC too seems to have realised that simply going to the government with pleas to help the Muslims, is not just inadequate, but will only help the governments to use the Muslims in as disastrous manner. The SLMC has shown greater sensitivity to the sufferings of the Tamils as neighbours of suffering Muslims, and has recently been critical of the government's handling of the problem, and of its conspire-torial wrecking of the North-East provincial council arrangements.

But given the urgency of the situation in the country, all this is far from adequate. We cannot wait 4 years for elections. The opposition is far from evolving a political consensus on how to find a political solution that will corner the government. It lacks the will to challenge the government by taking the political upper hand. The government is likely to go on by saying that the Opposition can talk while it has the serious business of fighting the war, until total disaster strikes.

Just to take the Tamil parties alone, their position is far from healthy. They have failed to take an open and critical view of their past and have done nothing to challenge the LTTE politically. For the first few weeks of the war, they angered Tamil civilians by being too pre-occupied with the LTTE, and paying less attention to civilian suffering.

During the early months of this year they were wary of the LTTE coming into the political mainstream. They did not appear too taken on the removal of the sixth amendment to the constitution and the cancellation of the Sinhalese 'Sri' from motorcar license plates, simply because these were demands put by the LTTE in its talks with the government. But these were more importantly Tamil demands. The LTTE had made its entry into the so called political mainstream conditional upon the removal of the six amendment. If the Tamil parties opposed to it were willing to be self-critical, they could have challenged the LTTE on its historical and human rights records. But instead some of them lobbied parliamentarians against voting for the removal of the sixth amendment. To do this they had to appeal to the Sinhalese chauvinism of some of the MP's.

In other words they were fighting the LTTE with the same methods of deception and intrigue that the LTTE had used against them when they tried to run the North-East provincial council. On the other hand the LTTE was carrying on not wanting to offend the government in any way. It pulled up the EDF (EROS) for voting last March with the opposition on an Opposition amendment to the Buddha Sasana Bill. Thus the groups opposed to the LTTE were prepared to resort to any means to see that the LTTE was not allowed to do anything as the LTTE had previously done to them. Both were prepared to play into the hands previously done to them. Both were prepared to play into the hands of Sinhalese chauvinism for that purpose, and opened the door for the government to play one against the other. This is why we have said else where that as a pre-requisite for development or any revival of civil life, the destructive politics by which the Tigers have cornered themselves as well as others must be defeated. Make no mistake - if the Tigers try to hold power and run things as they did, there is enormous destructive potential, for what happened in parliament happening all the way down Tamil society Pre-occupation with so-called traitors will take precedence over everything else. A healthy change may be set in motion if the other Tamil groups start by looking at their past and their own past misbehaviour self-critically.

Asked about the president's role in the breakdown of arrangements with the LTTE, a senior parliamentarian replied:

“The president is surrounded by a group of conspirators. There is no evidence to say definitely where the president stood. But what happened does not say much for an all powerful president.”

There was a widespread sense of loss amongst Tamils over the absence from parliament of A.Amirthalingam and Sam Tambimuttu. Many felt that despite his serious faults Amirthalingam was a person who would have been very useful at this time. He would have made a noise and it would have been heard around the world. An Easterner who had worked closely with Sam Tambimuttu said:

“Sam did play his games. But he had enormous credit with international organisations like the Amnesty International. His reports were thorough and splendid. Had he been alive what happened to the people of the East and their sufferings would not have been shrouded in a veil of darkness. They should never have touched him.”

### 3.4 Diplomacy, Finance and Weapons

A curious event occurred in April this year, shortly after the IPKF's departure. The government ordered the Israeli interests section in the US embassy to be closed. This was a sharp departure from the practice and instincts of an influential section of the ruling UNP. The UNP government under President Jayawardena had invited the Israelis as part of a US package to help the government forces - particularly in intelligence matters. The Israeli agencies Mossad and Shin Bet are said to have been involved. Jayawardena's son Ravi was closely associated with the Israeli role. President Premadasa's own sympathies are known to have been very pro Western. This was natural to the large section of the Sinhalese intelligentsia which looked to the West as a counter to India - perceived as the traditional enemy. There was also a substantial section of local opinion which saw Israel as a creature of Western imperialism and saw non-alignment as the correct policy for Sri Lanka. This was reflected in the foreign policy of the Bandaranayakes which found convergence with India's. It was Mrs. Bandaranayake's SLFP led coalition with the Left that in 1970 expelled the Israeli mission in Colombo, in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Some very responsible sources with access to police records of the JVP led insurgency in 1971, formed a strong impression that the JVP was infiltrated, armed and goaded prematurely into action on the calculation that it would be a disastrous failure. It also discredited the first left wing government of Sri Lanka, together with every form of socialism, for a long time to come.

For the Premadasa government, there were other considerations as well. The Arab countries in the Middle-East, unlike Israel, purchased large quantities of Ceylon tea and supplied this country with oil. In addition to this, strong Muslim opinion from within the country was being brought to bear on the government to expel the Israeli interests section, with the prospect of mediating with Arab nation to give Sri Lanka something material for its troubles. There was also some disenchantment within the US administration over its protegee Israel's rigidity on the Palestinian question. According to Sihabudeen Ossman writing in the Sunday Times of 12<sup>th</sup> August, a cabinet member told the SLMC 'that a solution had been found by elevating both the Israeli Interests Section and the PLO to embassy status'. What then decided the expulsion of the Israeli Interests Section which earned an expression of disappointment from the US embassy? Some have suggested that the US was consulted and

its disappointment was only formal. Other diplomatic sources in Colombo have said that the government was very upset when Senator Stephen Solarz from the Senate Foreign protested about its human rights record. It was about this time that the American and Western press carried some hard hitting articles about the government's record, highlighting the murder of journalist Richard de Zoysa. These source regarded the expulsion of the Israelis as a means of hitting back at the US.

When the war with the LTTE broke out in June, despite the government having initially at least succeeded in claiming morality to be on its side, unlike in 1983, western enthusiasm to help the government was not visible. Australia turned down a request to sell ammunition. This may also be related to the perception that India was presently neutralised. By August it became clear that the government was desperate.

In early August Minister Ranjan Wijeratne (Defence and Plantations) set off on a trip to Middle Eastern countries including Iraq, Iran and Libiya with Minister Munsoor (Commerce). It was taken for granted by the press that the purpose was to request arms and military help. The mission failed because Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which came to be known after the minister was airborne, threw everything in the Middle East topsy turvy. In a press conference after his return (Island, 10<sup>th</sup> August), the minister claimed that the purpose of the visit was to explain the 'factual position in Sri Lanka'. He could not visit Iraq because Beghdad airport was closed, as he found out in Cairo. In Iran he met the president and several ministers who 'gave him good hearing'. In Libya he met the No.2 as Colonel Gadaffi had to rush out of Tripoli on an urgent matter concerning the Gulf crisis. They were treated well, but had to leave for Iraq after 1 ½ days. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had not been associated in the mission.

The worst was yet to come. The Sunday Times of 26<sup>th</sup> August reported on the economic impact of the Gulf crisis. If there was no further increase in the oil price Sri Lanka's annual oil bill will go up US \$110 million to \$370 million. Its loss of annual earnings from Kuwait and Iraq alone is \$120 million from Sri Lankan workers' remittance. Iraq which purchased 20 per cent of Sri Lanka's tea is now unable to do so. The war is said to be costing the government about \$1 million a day.

As for allegations that Israel is helping the LTTE, diplomatic sources said that there is no evidence of the Israeli state being involved, except the possibility of involvement by some Israeli mercenaries. In all this, it is evident that the kind of foreign policy evidence the government has been receiving over the years needs to be questioned. Whatever the tactical reasons, one must question the sense of responsibility exercised by those who think that a weak Sri Lanka could drift from the well tested policy of non-alignment, could flirt with shady powers such as Israel, Iraq and Libya within a short space of time, and then come out in one piece.

There is a close link between the will for bold political initiatives at home to secure peace, and a foreign policy that reflects soundness and dignity. The alternative is to play with lives and hold on to power while the nation burns

## CHAPTER 4 LIFE IN THE NORTH

### [4.1 Food shortages - Incident at Uduvil Colony](#)

## 4.2 A/Level Examinations : LTTE & Government Attitudes

### 4.3 Detainees in the North

#### The Release:

### 4.4 The Young

#### 4.1 Food shortages - Incident at Uduvil Colony

Following the outbreak of the war, all food stocks were taken over by the LTTE and were controlled by them. Food that was released through retail shops fetched prices which only the middle income group could barely negotiate. Food was distributed only to people staying in refugee camps. The low income groups with no steady income who were not refugees, such as those in the Uduvil colony, suffered badly.

Recently hard pressed people in the Uduvil colony, who suspected that the manager of the local MPCS (Multi Purpose Co-operative Society) had lied to them, raided the MPCS store and found some food stocks. The angry villagers informed the LTTE. The LTTE searched the manager house and found rice and kerosene oil, which they removed in addition to what was in the store. The manager was taken into custody. The manager pleaded with the people who were well known to him and were from the same area. Out of pity, the young men in the area drafted and signed a letter asking the LTTE to pardon the manager and took it to the LTTE. The LTTE thanked the young men and took them all away to dig bunkers. When releasing them, they were asked to bring their mothers who were at the forefront in the MPCS affair. In the end the villagers did not get any of the food stuff that was theirs by right, and were left feeling very angry that the movement did not care for their well-being. A women from the community said, “We recovered food from a crow and gave it to an eagle.”

The two things to note here are the of humanity from the leaders of a liberation struggle and the discipline and magnanimity of some of the poorest people from the lower reaches of society. Instead of ransacking the MPCS, they went to the ‘authorities’. They were also ready to plead for the miscreant manager.

#### 4.2 A/Level Examinations : LTTE & Government Attitudes

Thousands of students were busy preparing for the A. Level examinations scheduled for August, when the war broke out in June. Ordinary civilian life was shattered in the North-East and in the East, people were living in terror, in refugee camps. When the government announced that the A.Level examinations would be held on schedule, the people felt furious and powerless. The government further announced that people from troubled areas could sit at other center. Given their own disturbed circumstances and the real risks facing young travellers, a very small fraction felt inclined to try this option. By its insensitivity, the government was both alienating and frustrating the class of students whose disillusionment with the LTTE was greatest. The delay in the government announcing a separate examination for the North-East was damaging. The LTTE was on the other hand looking for any means to get students involved in anti-government protests. Its student association organised a campaign against the government’s earlier decision and called for a boycott of A.Level examinations. The students for the most part remained cynical.

Subsequently, the LTTE became excessively agitated at the thought that a few students may go to Colombo and sit for the examination - an option hardly feasible to the majority. Then posters came up calling those who would sit for the A/L's outside the North-East traitors. They together with their families were deemed unfit to live in the North-East and were condemned to exile. The problem itself was not a serious one in comparison with much else that was going on. This action demonstrated the LTTE's inability to appeal to reason and community sense. Its paranoia and insecurity impelled it to rely on terror.

A campaign and march were organised against, "Educational Oppression". When the government announced that a separate examination will be held in the North-East, the fear of a tougher examination was used to continue the same campaign.

When dealing with university students, the LTTE's concern for education was quite the reverse. They were told that studying was futile and were even asked to join the final battle.

The manner in which the LTTE has handled several issues during this war, of which the A.L examinations is one, brings out its true nature. It utilized, thrived on and enhanced the basic selfishness in the society, while frustrating any tendency for reform. Brutality, self-centredness and suicide are responses of different sections of the society to the politics of 'every man for himself'. The LTTE cannot afford to extend its logic of stigmatising those who wish to sit for their A.Levels outside. This would mean terming all those with means who wish to leave the country now because of real difficulties, traitors. Indeed, it would place members of the leadership like Anton Balasingam, who left the country and became a British citizen at a time when the pressures to leave were minimal, in an unenviable position.

The LTTE has never valued independent persons who consciously came back to the country to serve. Some of them have met with cruel fates. On the other hand persons who went abroad for purely selfish reasons and who are willing to do propaganda or make contributions to the merchandise of death have been highly valued.

Even in Jaffna today which faces an acute crisis, there is no attempt at a politics of promoting community sense or of helping the poor worst hit deprivations. Releasing apparently scarce goods through retailers at astronomical prices is a means of making money out of those who can afford, while not seriously providing for the poor. Those who want to leave for Colombo can do so provided they could afford the extortionate transport charges. The legitimate anger of the poor against the Sri Lankan state is also useful, as no alternative has been left to them except to depend on the LTTE. The yawning gap of hypocrisy is bridged by terror.

It is little wonder that corruption had become an integral part of almost every aspect of Jaffna life over the last few decades, with the connivance of the social leadership. The LTTE was an organic growth adapted to Jaffna society. The minority of young men and women who tried to fight this tendency and lost patience, have been often driven to either compliance, madness or hatred.

On the government's part, the insensitivity with which it handled the A.Level candidates in the North-East, is yet another instance of how it is the best friend of its sworn enemy.

#### 4.3 Detainees in the North

Around 2000 persons have been arrested and detained in LTTE camps. Their ages range from 20 to 70. Many of those detained were alleged to have had links with rival groups or the Indian army. They were detained in rooms walled with a space of 6 ft x 1 ½ ft for light and air. Their legs were permanently chained with no locks. Detainees were chained together in the nights before sleeping time. Toilet facilities were limited, with each person allowed three minutes. Drinking water was rationed at half a tumbler a time, and sometimes only poured into the mouth.

A large number of sick persons suffering from a variety of illnesses including, hernia, diabetes, heart ailments etc received no medical attention. Prisoners were called by their numbers.

A detention center was built at Thunukkai, south of Jaffna peninsula, where most of the prisoners were held. Following the outbreak of war, most of them were moved to Chavakachcheri. Some of the prisoners were released recently with each requiring 4 guarantors. Generally, the guarantors were required to have some standing with the LTTE. Some of the guarantors were detained recently after those guaranteed by them vanished from their areas. They were kept with other prisoners for two weeks and then released. Over 1000 are still said to be in custody. While the torture is said to have been intensive, not many were killed.

#### The Release:

During late July, the guarantors were called for a meeting at Tinnevely which was addressed by Salim of the LTTE. He made a forceful speech saying that the detainee to be released were not fit to live in Tamil Eelam, but were fit only to live under LTTE supervision. Several conditions were imposed on those released. They were to sign at Tinnevely every day. No excuse such as heavy bombing will be accepted if they fail. If they were leaving their areas, the LTTE should be informed 72 hours in advance. They should not play any role in public life such as even being a member of a church committee. Any failure would result in the prompt arrest of the person released together with all the guarantors. The guarantors faced a confiscation of 40% of their property if the released person absconded. They were told not to think that a person's social position would be of help and claimed even to have a professor under detention. Not even a severe military situation would enable them to escape, he said, a special unit has been devoted entirely to surveillance and monitoring.

The release ceremony was held in Pandeteruppu, 9 miles from Jaffna. The main speech, made by Puthuvai Rathinathurai, in mellifluous Tamil, was opposite in tone to that of Salim. The speaker headed the LTTE's culture unit. He said that those being released were neither traitors criminals. They had not worked against the LTTE on their own volition. They must be embraced and reintegrated into the society as brothers. When those to be released were transported to Jaffna, the bus was stopped mid-way, and the detainees were told that under no circumstances should they talk about their experiences under detention.

Most of the detainees released were afraid to talk about their experience. Persons close to some of the ex-detainees gathered bits and pieces over several days. One told a friend that he would tell him a long time hence. Some of the physical torture described consisted of the detainee being asked to lie flat and given 40-80 strokes with a wooden pole or being tied stretched and having a rough piece of wood forcefully dragged over the skin. The mental torture was much worse. So bad was the experience of humiliation and injury that this

detainee felt that he was unfit for civilian life and felt like returning to prison. He doubted that many of them would live more than a year.

It was also reported that several detainees at Chavakachcheri were taken to dig bunkers in frontline positions. During air raids some of the detainees were sheltered while others were kept in the open.

#### 4.4 The Young

We have observed that during the current situation, a large number of young persons are joining the LTTE under conditions of brutal alienation created by the government. Boys above 16, the group most disillusioned with the struggle, are regularly taunted by girl propagandists who ask whether their books and studies would save them from the Sri Lankan army. Ironically, experience suggests that this group would be the most vulnerable if the army came into Jaffna.

Many of the boys joining are about the of 12. It is a society where the government has connived at the destruction and humiliation of its leadership, and the people have no one they could trust. Social workers have observed that many of the children, of whose personal background something is known, have motives much to do with some shortcomings in their personal lives, rather than with any notion of liberation. Anguished parents have gone from camp to camp trying to trace their children. After several denials, the child sometimes tells the parents that he or she is well looked after and that they could stop coming.

The young recruits are sent into action after rudimentary training lasting about 2 weeks and are often sent for frontline duty. It is said that the causality figures from this group are the older cadre leaving the scene of conflict, leaving the smaller fellows to do sentry duty.

As result of frontline positions being most prone to bombing and shelling, a number of very young persons have been maimed with limbs lost. A large number of them want to leave, but are afraid that their condition would mark them off as victims of summary action by the Sri Lankan forces once they make an entry. According to medical sources, a significant number of these young persons have attempted suicide by playing around with cyanide capsules.

The extent of desertion is not known, but following some desertions in recent times, there have been reports of shaving of heads of new recruits. This was a practice resorted to when the Indian army formed the TNA through conscription - a measure strongly criticised by the LTTE. A number of deserters are in hiding.

With education at a standstill, public meetings and displays of persons in arms function in part as means by which young persons are allured. Sometimes several hundreds are gathered at a public place for 'defence' training. In the course of three hours of physical activity and swearing of oaths, a strong emotional drive is built up. Sometimes a volunteer may be asked to report after several days. There is then little room for second thoughts.

## CHAPTER 5

### *LETTERS AND PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS*

[5.1 Trincomalee District, 8<sup>th</sup> July:](#)

[5.2 Colombo, 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August:](#)

[5.3 Colombo, 4<sup>th</sup> week of August:](#)

[5.4 Jaffna 12<sup>th</sup> August:](#)

[5.5 Jaffna, 7<sup>th</sup> August:](#)

[5.6 The Policeman, Akkaraipattu, mid-August](#)

### **5.1 Trincomalee District, 8<sup>th</sup> July:**

Dear Akka (elder sister) and Thangi (younger sister). This a missive from your loving brother. We scrambled in fear because of the atrocities unleashed by the armed forces at mid-day on Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Siva and his family were killed. The four in our family were also at the same place. I alone am left living. Father, mother and sister were killed. What can we do? Do not be sad. But they are taking away the young boys. I do not have my identity card and am very much afford. If you can, please ask the boss where you are working and try to get me to Colombo soon. I am now staying at the refugee camp at Nilaveli Church. Do let the others know. I had sent two letters earlier.

Your loving brother.....

### **5.2 Colombo, 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August:**

A Muslim lad from Kalmunai in the East was in the class of a Tamil lady lecturer at a Colombo institute. The lad was friendly with the lady and used to approach her privately to have his difficulties cleared. The lady found that the boy had got into difficulties over paying his fees. The reason she discovered was that the boy's parents had hoped to make a profit of Rs.55,000/- from their paddy harvest and send him Rs.10,000/- for his exepeses. But they had been unable to go their paddy land which was in a Tamil village. The lady offered to contribute towards his fees from her salary. But the boy declined. Over the period of Tamil-Muslim tension in the East, the boy ceased to go to her. She ran into him shortly after the massacres of Muslims at Kattankudy and Eravur. She asked him why he had not come. The boy replied that he had many uncleared difficulties, but that he would face problems from his community if he came to her. He said that he had moved out of his room to a shophouse, because the mother of his room-mate from Eravur had come down. His room-mate's father and youngest brother had been killed. On the 12<sup>th</sup> August, someone had called out in Sinhalese. The youngest brother had gone to the door and was shot down. The father ran to his youngest son before the mother could stop him. He too was killed. The villagers said that the LTTE was responsible for the massacre.

The boy was absent from classes for a week and returned later. He said that his parents had been able to harvest some of their paddy under army protection and had sent him money to settle his fees. The Tigers, who had harvested some of their paddy earlier had warned them not to come again under army escort. He added that since the army was not going to be around all the time, the warning had to be taken seriously.

The lady also said that there was a Muslim officer at her bank who used to come out of his way to attend to Tamil customers, while the Sinhalese officers treated them with indifference. This time the Muslim officer smiled from a distance. But did not come forward.

### **5.3 Colombo, 4<sup>th</sup> week of August:**

A Tamil lady met a Muslim boy from Samanthurai who had come to Colombo to try for a visa to go to Canada. He said that some Muslims had been killed at the Veeramunai Mosque. Asked what he felt was behind the troubles, he explained: When two people are in a compound a third person shies stones at one or both of them, and sits giggling behind a wall, while the first two accuse and tear at each other. That is what is going on now. He further added: "Only ten percent can understand that it is instigated."

#### **5.4 Jaffna 12<sup>th</sup> August:**

The bombing during these last few days has been severe. The noise is unbearable and there have been many casualties. A bomb which fell inside Schwartz Lane, by God's grace, did not explode. Many people in that area have just left by van for Kayts. My daughters-in-law left with them with her infant daughter. The people are thoroughly worn down. May god protect us.....Love, amma.

#### **5.5 Jaffna, 7<sup>th</sup> August:**

....Vast number of youth are joining the movement, some as an outlet to their own family circumstances and others deceived into believing that training is for self- defence purpose only. A large percentage of youth are being treated as psychiatric patients - constant bombing and shelling thought this new wave of violence triggers vivid memories for those having seen their loved once killed previously. What will become of this generation? The government proceeds to order new bomber from Italy, now numbering ten. Because pamphlets have been dropped warning civilians to vacate a certain radius, loss of life has been less this time, though property damage has been much greater. The LTTE claim civilian deaths are too low for international propaganda and intervention....

June 25<sup>th</sup> is a date I will never forget. The bombing and shelling began at 3.00 a.m. and continued most of the following day - it was brutal. The pattern seemed to Fort, Palaly, Karainagar and back again. Each time the bombers passed over- head and in many instance, we could actually see the bullets from the heli-firing in Chunnakam market. I was amazed to hear that the bomber pilot's conversation could be clearly heard through the FM 1000 antenna. What was even more disturbing was to hear callous comments in English! One such conversation went as follows: "Do you see the library, go to the second junction, the two storey white building behind the pavilion is the target", and seconds later we heard the bomb around the Fort. Sometimes the response was "completely out" and once the pilot exclaimed, "beautifully done!." I could hardly believe that I was listening to a real life situation and the sick feeling of being helpless to prevent someone's inevitable death moments later.

Another conversation said, :How many bombs do you have left? .....One.....Drop it anywhere you like and return to base (Vavniya)". Then suddenly we heard "I'm too high.... Don't come lower than 5000 feet.....(later).....We're under fire.....Pull out, I said pull out".

At 3.00 p.m. that same day some one informed us that the LTTE was holding a meeting at the nearby school. This was the first of many meetings for gold collections, training camps, refugee camps with an LTTE office on the premises - it almost seemed as if the famous school was being targeted. That evening we decided to build a bunker.

Since all the palmyrah trees are being chopped, there will soon be an environmental crisis, not to mention that this particular tree is the source of food and employment for many.

By early evening the news came that Jaffna was burning and the sky was filled with heavy black clouds. An eerie silence loomed and the spirits were at an all-time low. The looting of shops and homes became rampant that night as people evacuated the area and poverty escalated.....

The LTTE has stated clearly that this is the final fight and that they are not prepared for further talks. Yogi makes such statements that all should worship the gun and not think of peace at this time. Fear of the army marching and a sense of desperation has given the people no alternative but to side with “the Boys” though most have lost confidence in their actions. Everyone longs for peace yet no one has a voice to speak in this silenced nation for fear of not living long enough to enjoy it. I was disheartened to learn that the church, in most instances, feels they do not have a part to play in this process.....

Development projects have all come to a halt and NGO’s are attempting to organise relief into the peninsula under trying circumstances. The Tigers have set up an organisation called the ROOTE to discuss projects and funding of NGO’s in the North. Since people are bound by silence, it will be very useful if more international organisations are represented here than the ICRC and the MSF....

## **5.6 The Policeman, Akkaraipattu, mid-August**

A church worker was travelling to the East when his passenger van stopped at Wellawaya. A man got in who had obviously recovered from a long illness. It became evident from his talk that he was one of the Muslims policemen who had surrendered to the LTTE at Kalmunai, in June and had been taken into the jungle along with others to be killed. He showed the church worker two injuries on his head and one on his shoulder. After being lined up and sprayed with automatics, the executioners had come and looked at them, firing single shots at those who groaned or moved. The policeman said that he had resolved to act dead until everything was clear. He then struggled along to the lonely hut of a Tamil chena cultivator. This man had cared for him and helped his escape.

The policeman who was returning to his native village of Akkaraipattu, said that he harboured no ill-feelings against Tamils. It was the LTTE who had done this to him. On the other hand he was helped by a Tamil peasant. He recalled that the Bible had much in common with the Quoran. He made the church worker promise that he would send him a copy of the Bible, which he hoped to read during his convalescence.

## CHAPTER 6

# **REDISCOVERING THE TAMIL STRUGGLE**

Countless young people took up arms in the North and East to fight for better rights and a just deal for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Different movements sprouted up and grew, all of whom had the same visions and made the same sacrifices. These movements were mobilized along lines of region, caste, personal friendship and loyalty which added fuel to already existing friction. Thus somewhere along the line, these frictions gained a dynamism of their own that turned the whole nationalist struggle into a black farce. The culmination of this regressive trend was the recent grotesque alliance between the LTTE and the government. The nationalist struggle in the process of challenging the State has taken a strong authoritarian turn and has subjugated all opposition and criticism. This has manifested in control of all forms of public and semi-public expression, the infamous internecine warfare and the elimination of “traitors”.

The EPRLE-ENDLF-TELO alliance arriving under Indian subservience turned their wrath upon the people. The LTTE through connivance and terror ruled by suppressing all independent thought and activity. In September 89 the EPRLE imposed a complete ban on Jaffna based dailies. In February 1990 the ban was lifted and the newspapers were allowed to run, on the orders of the LTTE.

In some of LTTE events and functions is a must and any item out and the daily in question pulled up. Independent trade union activity is also banned and a certain trade union was asked to sever its ties with its southern headquarters. In the absence of freedom of expression on the home front, protest has sprung up amidst the expatriate community, especially among the recently emigrated asylum seekers. 33 small journals are published in Tamil from Western capitals, many of whom have voiced their protest at the wanton killing of civilians and the anti people activities of the LTTE. One such journal called "Mother land" based in Toronto was subject to a banning order and the editor threatened with death.

The consequences of dissent and resistance are fatal. Widespread fear is the order of the day. The state of terror as obtains in our society has deep-rooted causes. Jaffna society, fragmented and atomised, has not found a cohesive capacity to look beyond the limitations of its present structural construct. It has since historical times accepted and nurtured trends and tendencies which have tended to preserve a cohesive mid-level hierarchical structure. Jaffna society offers its uncritical patronage to the strongest and probably the least threatening to middle class ideology, thus giving up all right to intitate and criticise. Almost compelled to accept the LTTE as their saviours, they washed the hands off so many others who struck out on the same path of liberation. Today 5000 young people and their families have ended up in Orissa - a land perhaps more alien to the Jaffna person than London or Paris. While May Day tamashas with floats depicting military victory paraded the streets of Jaffna no one seemed to worry about the detainees and the dispossessed-chained, killed or in hiding. PTA detainees and the streets of Jaffna no one seemed to worry about the detainees released from Welikade prison are known to have disappeared.

Women in arms in control of their future may gladden the minds of feminists, but once again this is a paradoxical position. The women's wing of the LTTE military section has evinced a few signs of consciousness on women's position in society today. Their pamphlets appear to verify this. But the LTTE being a conservative and monolithic organisation, the women's wing will not be able to move a certain limited terrain. Their practices are entirely subsumed by the overall ideology of the LTTE. At least, in one instance, their methods of torture had in no way deviated from normal LTTE practice.

In this enveloping state of fear and apprehension of what comes next, the task of any solidarity forum will be to consistently support and encourage people's participation. Any independent action that might come out at present, be it a women's organisation or newspaper activity or environmental, needs the whole hearted solidarity of all interested parties. For only through mobilisation of people's structures can the democratic process be strengthen and society as a whole achieve a progressive dynamism.

## CHAPTER 7

### **REPORTS : GENERAL**

[7.1 Kandavallai : 21<sup>st</sup> August](#)

[7.2 11<sup>th</sup> August](#)

- [7.4 A Refugee Family's Ordeal](#)
- [7.6 Operation Fort](#)
- [7.7 Refuge in the jungle, 16<sup>th</sup> August:](#)
- [7.8 Valaichenai - 23<sup>rd</sup> August](#)
- [7.9 Students missing in Araipoddai, Kandy](#)

#### 7.1 Kandavallai : 21<sup>st</sup> August

The normal route from Vavuniya to Jaffna was blocked, and the Pooneryn ferry was bombed. The route through Kandavalai across the bed of the lagoon - passable by light vehicles and persons on foot during summer - became the high road to Jaffna. On this day one militant who was carrying a gun was also going along with others who crossed that open lagoon bed. One helicopter which was hovering above spotted the boy and gave a chase. The travellers ran here and there for shelter. Two priests were also there. 6 people dived for cover into a bush. The militant boy also ran into the same bush. The helicopter sprayed the bush and killed all of them. They landed the helicopter and took off after a man had stripped the boy's weapon.

The callousness of the government and the army has prevented the people from carrying out their normal lives. The lack of humanity by helicopter gunners is only too commonplace

#### 10<sup>th</sup> August : Chettikulam

25 civilians were dismembered by the army in Chettikulam. They were hacked to death with their hands and legs severed. Among those killed 3 were relatives of Sister Sagunthala, who belongs to the Sisters of Charity in Kollupitiya. The information came from Roman Catholic authorities in the Mannar district.

#### 7.2 11<sup>th</sup> August

A refugee at Madhu said that on the 11<sup>th</sup> the army rounded up 17 men in Vavuniya. Only he had escaped death. The rest, he said, had been shot and killed. It was believed that this incident and the last one were reprisals for the blasting of a bridge, in which some soldiers were killed.

#### 7.3 Thiruketheeswaram, 2<sup>nd</sup> August (From the Veerakesari)

According to the government sources, 5 sentry point which were in the neighbourhood of Thiruketheeswaram railway station, Mannar, were destroyed by the security forces from Thallady camp.

Following this, the security forces, who came in several armoured vehicles surrounded the Thiruketheeswaram temple and fired at random.

They set fire to the 'inn' catering for sojourners and the temple trustee's houses. They also burnt the tractor and the lorry which brought refugees to the temple. They, then opened all the stores and looted everything. They also forced open the rest-houses and searched till noon.

The following day several hundreds of them came again in 3 lorries and were shooting at random in the temple premises. They took away the generator and miscellaneous property belonging to the temple. During the whole operation they did not evince any interest in terrorists.

In the whole operation they neither looked for the militants nor caught any of them.

#### 7.4 A Refugee Family's Ordeal

The letter given below was written by a person from Pankulam, Trincomalee, whose family left that place due to army atrocities and are now at the \_\_\_\_\_ refugee camp in South India. It appeared on the 27<sup>th</sup> Veerakesari. He and his family had undergone lots of hardship since they left Pankulam.

“After what has happened on 15.6.90, my family with other refugees, walked for about 30 miles and reached \_\_\_\_\_ Throughout that part of the journey we could not have either drinking water or food to eat. We stayed there for 15 days. From there we went to Mullaithivu by boat. Through

\_\_\_\_\_ we arrived at \_\_\_\_\_ We stayed in the refugee camp for 3 days. But there also the food situation was quite bad and I had only Rs.25 at that time.

With intention of getting some money I cycled for about 70 miles to Jaffna with my sister's only jewels, a pair of bangles and a ring. There I Placed with a person whom I knew. From Rs.5,000, I came down Rs.50. He could not give even a cent. So I returned back to \_\_\_\_\_ after 15 days. I realized that if we do not get away from that place, we will have to die of starvation. So we proceeded with the intention of going to India.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August we walked 10 miles. On the way a few elderly as well as little ones died of starvation. One night we had to sleep in the jungle. By God's grace we became acquainted with a one footed carter who was generous enough to take us to \_\_\_\_\_ which was a 7 miles journey. There a pot of drinking water was Sold at Rs.2.50. We picked up some firewood from the crematorium and made rice porridge.

On 11<sup>th</sup> August we came to Thalaimannar from where we left for India giving Rs.650 each.”

#### 7.5 The Rural North

The people living in the middle part of the North-East are relatively poor, when compared to the others. Framing and fishing are their main livelihood. This applies to most people from Mannar to Mulaithivu, and from Pallai to Mathavachi. These people were the most affected by the wars that took place in the North-East. In addition to army atrocities, farming and fishing were disrupted. This forced many people to evacuate their place and seek refugee camp or go across to India.

According to government sources, the food that was sent to these people was a small fraction of what was needed there. There were several cases of people who died of starvation without proper medical care or who committed suicide. One such incident was at Palai where 12 in a family committed suicide, among whom 7 were boys and the father was an invalid. This was

reported in Parliament on the 27<sup>th</sup> August by a Tamil M.P. M. Letchumi of Kilinochchi was among those who committed suicide due to starvation. According to Veerakesari of 8<sup>th</sup> August, during June, July, in the Kilinochchi area alone 50 died. More than 150 were injured. On the 24<sup>th</sup> July the government imposed a 72 hrs curfew in Kilinochchi with the intention of putting up an army camp. Kilinochchi was subject to heavy air attacks. Many got stranded in Paranthan. Few persons went missing. Heavy damage was caused to property and agriculture due to bombing. Many animals died to air attacks. Nearly 200-3-- animals were found dead in Kilinochchi.

## 7.6 Operation Fort

An indefinite curfew was imposed in the Jaffna district, since the 24<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) morning with leaflets air dropped in Jaffna warning people to stay indoors. Since morning air force fighters and bombers have staffed LTTE position in the peninsula while the navy was firing shells from Karaingar. 2000 troops from two battalions were brought to Kayts by air and sea Kayts is one of the Island off the peninsula, 10 miles from the Jaffna Fort, where 50,000 civilians are living. Within 3 days the army moved into Mandaithevu (another Island) and Allaipitty. It was reported abroad by the Tigers that there were heavy civilian casualties at Mandaithevu. At the time of writing the operation to relieve Jaffna Fort is still going on.

The incidents given below are taken from the 'Veerakesari', which were confirmed by other sources.

## 7.7 Refuge in the jungle, 16<sup>th</sup> August:

Revenge killings of the Muslims and Tamils are still going on, even at the time we write this. Most of the Tamil residences in Chenkallady, Eravur and Thannnamunai were burnt to ashes. Many took refuge in a Catholic church at Chenkallady. A Sexton of this Catholic church was hacked to death while several others were assaulted. The refugees found that even the churches were not secure places. They fled to the jungles out of fear. Former M.P. Devanayagam's brother Arasakone, who was a lawyer and a Sinnapoddyar were also among victims who were hacked to death.

Another Engineer Karunakaran and his brother from Eravur were missing. The rest of his family reached Batticaloa. This was reported by the Catholic priest of Chenkallady. He also said that 15000 persons had taken to the jungle out of fear.

With the unrest and atrocities in Chenkallady and Eravur the number at the Eastern university at Vantharamoolai, which operates as a refugee camp was doubled.

According to the ~Veerakesari' of the 25<sup>th</sup>, there were about 25 children, who had severe diarrhoea, at the Vantharamoolai refugee camp. In another refugee camp at Batticaloa (Holy Cecilia College) 5 had diarrhoea. The Red Cross had been helping such people to obtain treatment. It was also reported that the number of doctors in Batticaloa was inadequate to grapple with the huge medical problem.

## 7.8 Valaichenai - 23<sup>rd</sup> August

7 buses left for Colombo from Batticaloa on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, with an army escort. The army escorted them up to Valaichenai and the home guards took over at that check point. The

home guards detained 25 of the passengers including 3 ladies. On the way 7 others were also detained by the army when the buses stopped at the check points.

This was brought up in parliament and the defence minister agreed to take action. Later, it was reported that 4 of them including all 3 ladies were handed over to the Batticaloa army camp, and 50 others to the Batticaloa prison. The remaining 22 of them were not yet released. This piece of detailed information was given by the security forces.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> August it was reported that a vehicle with 25 passengers was going from Eravur to Polonnaruwa. Near Vantharamoolai, it was fired upon by a few who tried to stop the bus. The bus 5 others were injured in that incident.

#### 7.9 Students missing in Araipoddai, Kandy

M. Raviharan, V. Rajendran, Pushpamanoharan, V. Ratnalingam and V. Sothiyavan from Chavakachcheri were 5 students, who were following the Electronics Engineering course at the Araipoddai Technical College, Kandy.

They were staying together in Kandy. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 4 men in black uniforms went in night and put them in their jeeps and drove away. They did not give ear to the land lady's good recommendations about those students. They only said that they were taking them just for an inquiry.

When the news got around the parents went and inquired at the police station as well the army camp at Araipoddai. They denied that they ever apprehended such persons. The anguished mothers came to Colombo and lamented to the C.W.C. officials to help them to find their childrens' whereabouts.

## CHAPTER 8

### *JAFFNA REPORT : LATE AUGUST 1990*

By July end attack had taken on a more indiscriminate and menacing character. Market places, churches and refugee camp became targets. A visitor who spent a number of days near Chunnakam said that gunships never passed that way without firing into the market. Aerial bombing went on quite often for 24 hours a day in different parts of the region. The Italian built Sia Machetti's had been joined by Chinese built Y12's making the number in service in the Jaffna region around 10. The shells fired by the Y12 are said to be much more powerful. A visitor who witnessed a good deal of bombing said, "I saw no evidence of anything other than military installations of some kind being targeted. But the bombs could hit anything within half a mile of the target." People have got accustomed to life in the trenches. The same visitor said: "People normally will not leave their houses. They shelter in trenches until their house is hit. When there is nothing left to be salvaged, they go anywhere as refugees."

The bombing intensified following an attempt by the LTTE to storm Jaffna Fort on 4<sup>th</sup> August. The bulldozer broke down the outer door and the LTTE got in under cover of darkness. A helicopter which was summoned lit up the area with flares, revealing the intruders to the defenders inside. 30 or so LTTE members were mowed down, according to reports.

Jaffna town and its environs have suffered much defacement from bombing. Nearly every church, school and convent in the area has faced various degrees of destruction. Even as far as the Roman Catholic parish of Passaiyoor, 3 miles from the Fort along the coast, people had been evacuated to refugee camps. The Roman Catholic headquarters was bombed resulting in extensive damage. More than ten refugees sheltering in religious institutions were killed in the bombing. Several trees had been uprooted and pockmarks from shrapnel are visible everywhere. The room where Rt. Reverend Deogupillai, the octogenarian Bishop of Jaffna resided was protected from damage by the trees in front. Many of the clergymen's quarters were destroyed.

Leading LTTE persons have one way or the other let it be known that civilian casualties are good for international propaganda purposes, and to enhance recruitment. The government's visible callousness and reports of massacres in the East have been used to mobilise youth into up arms as the only alternative to being lined up and massacred once government troops break in.

Some see multiple purposes being served when the LTTE move in and occupy houses in an area hitherto spared from aerial attacks. With education at a standstill some prominent schools are used for 'defence' training. Whether or not information is leaked, the attraction of the airforce is soon turned on that area. The civilian population is first afraid. After an attack, fear turns to hysterical anger. With the government showing a vindictive face and in the absence of any political force that could be trusted, the LTTE offers itself as their only, but dubious, saviours to mobilize all that anger into destructive energy.

A case in the point is the set of coincidences surrounding the bombing of 7<sup>th</sup> August, damaging Manipay hospital and destroying shophouses a few over many of the functions of the now abandoned Jaffna hospital. Towards the end July there was a significant increase of the LTTE presence in the area. There was then an attempt to big bunkers around the hospital. This was abandoned after the doctors protested strenuously that such proceedings would invite the unwelcome attention of the airforce. Just after the failed attempt to storm the Fort on 4<sup>th</sup> August, a massive meeting was organised in Mainpay to commemorate the LTTE members who died. This was followed by the bombing.

In the meantime exit permits for those waiting to leave had been imposed. The evident purpose was to harass those who wished to go without joining the good fight. Queues formed near Muthirasanthai as early as 3.00 a.m. and extended more than a hundred yards. When a helicopter went overhead, the people would disperse to take cover and lose their places in the queue upon re-emerging. Some would leave at 4.00 p.m. without getting anything done. The procedure could take anything from 3 to 10 days and several appeals. Initially at least, attitudes were hostile. A women who wanted to join her husband was told after rejection that the husband could come to Jaffna and see her. Even girls who had succeeded in getting exit permits were harassed and abused by members of the SLAF after they had boarded vehicles. Sometimes attitudes softened. A girl who was going abroad for university education was told after appealing, "You must us". A van-load passengers was told at the last check point, that all this elaborate procedure was necessitated by spies. Later a total travel ban was imposed on all men women between 15 and 30.

Those leaving for the South now have to pay the extortionate fare of Rs. 1,000/- per head to the van operators to carry them to Vavuniya. Before the war, this journey cost Rs.35/-. Following the outbreak of war, stocks of food and fuel were taken over, and began appearing

at inflated prices. There were no social measures to protect the poorer sections. The campaign for each household to contribute two sovereigns of gold or its equivalent and a son or daughter was aggressively pursued. Those without the resources were taken to dig bunkers in frontline which were susceptible to shell attacks. Like in the South, it was a system where the sons of the poor were the most put upon to give their lives for an obscure cause.

A situation Report sent by Fr. M. E. Pius of the Jaffna Diocesan Human Development Center contains the following:

“Any vehicle on the move be they be carrying the injured, sick, dying, aged, medical aid, essential provisions, emergency assistance, or passengers are shot at by the bombers and helis. Boats plying between the Island taking provisions or refugee are targets for the bombers. The authorities do not understand that vehicles/boats are needed to serve the people to attend to various needs....The flow of essential items (food stuffs) should be in the region of 5000 M. Tons of rice, 3000 M. Tons of flour, 2000 M. Tons of sugar or 40 lorry loads daily for Jaffna alone. Only 5% of the people in Jaffna are served by the supply at the moment. People are already starving. Infants are dying due to want of milk powder. Medicine is in short supply and medical aid is very minimum. Most of the base hospitals in Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu have been bombed and do not function....The situation of the refugee camps is very pathetic. The refugee camps and their surroundings have been bombed very often killing few people. Many are dying of hunger and disease. The overcrowded refugee camps report of infectious diseases particularly diarrhoea and skin ailments. Sanitary and toilet facilities are woefully inadequate. The fortnightly government ration of food had been given only twice during the last two and that too had not reached all the refugee camps. The NGOs are stretched to the maximum in providing relief. No water could be supplied to the refugee camps since the bowsers are being bombed. .... There are now over 327,000 persons in 396 refugee camps in the Jaffna district. People are also pouring into Jaffna from the districts of Trinco, Batticaloa. Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu districts which have their own quota of refugees of about 30,000 families. Due to the lack of normal facilities the whole of the Jaffna population could be considered refugees, 87,000 refugees have reached India. .... Now that curfew has been declared since the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August in the districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu, people on the move towards safer areas because of the bombings can be easy preys to the attacking helicopter gunships and bombers. The curfew imposed by the dropping of the leaflets from planes can be supervised only from the bombers and helicopters. The declaration of curfew is an open licence to kill civilians at will from the aircraft. The main mode of transport next to legging is the bicycle. People travel 60 to 90 miles to bring or sell procure food to the starved population in the Jaffna peninsula. Thousands of bicycles are on the move in and out of the Peninsula day and night through the available entry and exit points. Each bicycle reports back with a bag (sack) or provisions. Even these cyclists have been attacked by helicopter gunships and hundred have been killed. The will to survive urges them on even after such misadventures.”

The following extracts are taken from a letter to the Sri Lankan Bishops, signed by Pax Chirsti activists, Father R. E. Jayaseelan, and Dudley Attanayake.

“The Deputy Defence Minister Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne, informed the Tamil people that the safe areas would be one kilometre (or 3 kilometers) away from the existing army camp; then as the bombers found targets outside these specified areas, he enlarged it to areas outside the Jaffna Peninsula, and even up to Vavuniya. ...Due to the curfew, a ship that brought urgently needed provisions to Point pedro has left port after unloading only two lorry-loads of foodstuffs.

Who will multiply these five loaves and two fishes among these five thousands? Jesus' apostles watch, and insist that he send away the crowd. The militants, on the other hand, have increased the people's hardships by shooting from residential areas and places of refuge, demanding money or gold, controlling the outlets to the peninsula and placing a tariff on certain essential goods. ....No war can ever be won, though one party or the other can claim temporary victories. It is the people of both sides who will be the real losers: the poor of the North and of the South who will pay for the costs of these wars and weapons in the coming decades. .... The Sri Lankan Christian has a tremendous responsibility. He has to affirm the Borrowed Dignity of Every Human Being (Borrowed from the Cross and Blood of Christ). May we affirm this through our lives and open witness (not just through printed platitudes) so that the new Redeemed humanity may rise from the ashes of this War. ....In conclusion, we beg you to be in solidarity with the suffering people in the North and in the South, to encourage genuine dialogue, to search for the truth that liberates, and to conscientize yourself, the clergy and the people of your flock."

## CHAPTER 9

### *THE EAST : LOOKING BACK*

#### 9.1 Eastern Province, Southern Sector : The Events of June

#### 9.2 Tamil - Muslim Troubles in the East, 1979 - 87

### **9.1 Eastern Province, Southern Sector : The Events of June**

In our report No.4, we gave some indication of what had happened in this area. But precise information was unavailable. The following description of event was compiled for this report by a group of university students from that area.

We have already described the fighting at Kalmunai police Station, the death in an ambush of 11 soldiers and the killing by the LTTE of several policemen who had surrendered. What followed has remained largely unknown as the result of an official news black out. These massacres of Tamils, coupled with the highly visible use of Muslims by the security forces laid the ground for succeeding tragedies.

On 11<sup>th</sup> June there was a detachment of soldiers at the Kalmunai guest House which too came under attack by the LTTE. Eight soldiers escaped by sea while an unknown number were killed. Kalmunai town, which was mostly inhabited by Tamil was then shelled by the army from Kondavedduvan, 18 miles away. Of the 28 who were killed, nearly all were Tamils. On 21<sup>st</sup> June, the army advanced from Amparai into Weeramunai. 150 males were rounded up, tied, piled in groups surrounded by wooden blocks on four sides, and were then set on fire.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Karaitivu refugee camp which was set up in a school and was flying a white flag, was bombed from a helicopter, killing 3 and injuring 3. The army arrived in Karaitivu on the 21<sup>st</sup> noon and rounded up all males. 26 of them were shoved into a room and a grenade was thrown, followed by automatic firing. Three of them escaped miraculously. At about 3 p. m. 25 were burnt at Karaitivu junction.

A large number of males were brought into Kalmunai on the same day. Over 250 were tied, shot and burnt. Of those who escaped, one fell into the police station toilet pit, one with burns fell into a well and died and another was admitted to the Nintavur hospital. 3000 were

detained in the Kalmunai Kachcheri, three ladies amongst whom were raped. 100 of them were later taken to Amparai along with the forces who went to attack the LTTE camp in Kanjikuddichcharu. There is no definite information on what happened to them. It is believed that they were used in some way as a human shield. 75 of the detainees at the Kalmunai Kachcheri were murdered during the night. The rest were released. Many shops in Kalmunai were burnt with dead bodies inside them. Some of these shops are Photo Rio, Vel Stores, Uma Traders, Cecelia Recording Bar and Saraswathy Hotel. Skulls were also found in front of Wesley College. During the round up at Karaitivu, Muslim militants operating with the army had reportedly pointed out particularly those males who in time would become community leaders school teachers, university students and even professionals.

There was another round up at Karaitivu on the 27<sup>th</sup>. 75 were taken to Nainakadu and were burnt. 80 were taken from Pandiruppu and what happened to them is not known. There were to more round ups of Neelawanai, Maruthamunai and Pandiruppu. 34 were missing after the first and 40 after the second. During the following days, a white coloured van used to take away persons released by the army from Kalmunai and Karaitivu. A female teacher who went from the Kalmunai refugee camp to ask for food from the GS (HEADMEN) was raped by the army. In due course 27 headless bodies were washed ashore on Kalmunai beach.

Figures of missing persons compiled by local citizens' groups stood at about 4000 for Batticaloa, 200 for Karaitivu, 5000 for the Kalmunai AGA's division and above 1200 for Amparai. Official sources put the number of Muslims killed at 7000.

August end, 1990.

## **9.2 Tamil - Muslim Troubles in the East, 1979 - 87**

The following brief outline of Tamil-Muslim troubles in the East was again compiled by a group of university students from the area. There was suspicion and bouts of tension as would not be unusual between two communities living side by side. From the escalation that can be discerned in this account, it could be seen that earlier troubles were in the nature of minor clashes between rowdy elements on both sides. These differences assumed sinister proportions when the state set out to exploit these differences.

In 1979, Jalaldeen, a Muslim tailor in Akkaraipattu, cut the plait of a Tamil girl at the main bus stand. In the clashes that followed, some Muslims cut off the ear of a Tamil and the Tamils in turn cut the ears of 6 or 7 Muslims. Then things calmed down. In 1981 again rioting broke out after some Muslim boys bathing in the river splashed water on some Tamil girls who passed by on the bridge. This too calmed down quickly.

On 13<sup>th</sup> April 1985, members of the PLOTE in Karaitivu, took car of a Muslim at gun point and also robbed some bags of rice from Muslims. Muslims from Kalmunai and Maligaikkadu came along with the Special Task Force (STF), burnt over 5000 Tamil houses in Karaitivu and killed about 40 Tamils. Hindu temples were also desecrated.

At 10.00 p. m. on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1985, a cry went out over the hailer at the Kattankudy Mosque, saying that the Tamils are coming to attack, and called upon Muslims to come to the Mosque with sticks and knives. Because of the tension in Kalmunai, Tamil boys armed with petrol bombs, knives, swords and a few shotguns, had been guarding the Manjanthoduwa (Navatkudah) - Kattankudy border. Manjanthoduwa was inhabited by a Dhoby (washermen)

community. They sighted an armoured car with rotating lights, leading a group of similarly armed Muslims. Suddenly, the house of a dhoby caught fire. No one quite knew how. The Tamils ran away. The Muslims proceeded to burn houses in Manjanthoduwa while the police armoured car circled the area. The Tamils returned in the morning and set fire to some Muslim houses in Manjathoduwa. Later on 9 Tamils who went into the area to retrieve belongings were hacked to death by Muslims. 5 Muslims who travelled to Kattankudy from Batticaloa, unaware of the disturbances, were killed by Tamils.

Following the LTTE's war with the IPKF, in December 1987, Muslim and Tamil LTTE cadre from the locality demanded large sums of money, amounting to several lakhs of rupees each, from Muslim businessmen in Kattankudy. Two Muslim supporters of the LTTE were shot dead allegedly by members of the Jihad. The LTTE took away 15 jihad suspects in a van and demanded that the remaining Jihad members should surrender. Again suspected Jihad members shot dead 6 Tamil labourers employed in Kattankudy, one of whom was an LTTE supporter. The Jihad consisted of Muslim homeguards trained and armed by the state during the last 3 years as a counter to the Tamil insurgency.

As a reprisal, the following day the LTTE stopped a passenger coach from the Hijira company at Navatkudah, carrying passengers from Colombo to Kalmunai and Kattankudy. 30 of the Muslim passengers were killed. The 15 suspects who were taken in earlier were also killed. Earlier during September, some LTTE cadre were also behind the burning of Muslim shops in Kalmunai. It can be seen that the LTTE as early as 1987 had adopted Sri Lankan army traditions in its dealings with Muslims. The totalitarian demands of its ideology led to poor quality of leadership in the East. Able local leaders such as Kadavul and Francis were driven to isolation while those amenable to Jaffna control were brought into prominence. The lack of democracy in the LTTE and its insensitivity to Eastern problems and to the vulnerability of Tamils there, laid the foundation for a major disaster.

### 9.3 The East : What the People feel

For the Tamil and Muslim people of the East, it is a time of major reappraisal. They have been victims of intrigue. The people were the victims of every move by the powers around. Following the IPKF inspired conscription campaign which was widely resented, for those not subject to Tiger suspicion and victimisation, the Tigers for a time appeared to offer them dignity. Tamil passengers could go past police barriers in the South, simply casting the logs aside while the police looked on. Such people found it an exhilarating experience in contrast to the memories of 1983. Tamils appeared to be strong for once a tragically shortlived illusion.

But when one looks closely, irresponsible and cynical as it was on India's part, views on the conscription for the TNA in the East are more complex. Some Tamil villages in the East which felt most threatened by adjoining Sinhalese and Muslim villages, sent their young voluntarily to the TNA. In some ways the TNA was the direct result of the government's failure in its pledge to devolve power to the provincial council for the North-East, and most importantly its failure to appoint the promised police commission for the North-East. The SLMC leader has blamed the present tragedy on the security vacuum created as a result, out of deference to the LTTE. The LTTE with its power base in Jaffna failed to appreciate how the Tamils of the East had been cornered by events into depending on India. It simply branded as traitors all those who had dealings with the Indian state, something that it had itself done very prominently not long ago. In conniving with the Sri Lankan government to

dismantle the prospects of a healthy provincial council for the North-East in control of its own security, the LTTE had removed the very basis for minimising dependence on India. To many in the East, the LTTE theoretician Balasingam's pledge made in Jaffna on 18<sup>th</sup> May, that in the event of the government failing to do justice to them, they would 'not hesitate to take up to arms to protect our people and to carry on our aims', would seem a black farce. The LTTE simply took on the police and army sometimes killing them, and then withdrew from population centers, leaving the people at the memory of advancing forces in a vindictive mood.

A very eminent scholar with close connections in the East had this to say: "I talked to some of my highly placed friends. They said that every gain made during the IPKF presence has been lost. The Tamils had been relatively secure and the coastal path from Jaffna to Trincomalee and Batticaloa was clear. I do not know how we are going to recover from this. People continue to disappear. A good deal of Tamil property in Trincomalee has been taken over. All Tamils in the residential area of Orr's Hill have been driven out. People are even afraid to complain about missing persons. The provincial governor is sympathetic, but he is helpless.

"People in Jaffna fail to appreciate what the IPKF meant to the people of the East. True, had a nasty experience. But a price has to be paid for taking on an army. But in the East, many Tamils and even Muslims, have a good word to say for the IPKF. Do you realise what it was like for the people of Trincomalee during the dark days of 1983? The Sri Lanka forces, particularly the navy, went on a rampage. People were cowering in their houses. Suddenly, the house caught fire when burning oil soaked rags were thrown in. When they tried to escape being burnt to death, they were shot as curfew breakers.

"You people in Jaffna cannot understand the gravity of the problems confronting the Easterners. When there is trouble, you find it relatively easy to find places to stay in Colombo or even to go abroad. How many from the East have facilities to stay in Colombo?

"The government has gone back on every pledge made to the Tamils and has dishonoured every which will take every opportunity to ensure that the Tamils get nothing. The LTTE played into their hands. Take the EPRLF- led provincial administration. They were elected, though in a process which was as unsatisfactory as the presidential and parliamentary elections. They were, with their serious faults, willing to surrender their arms work within the framework of Sri Lanka. But the government failed to honour its pledges. The Chief Minister is blamed by the government for declaring a state of Eelam. But he did this only when the flood waters were at the gates, when the LTTE backed by the government was creating a situation where he had to flee. Instead of sympathising with him, the very government which let him down scorned him and poked fun at his discomfiture. That evinced a deplorable human quality very distant from statesmanship. What was one to expect in a deal between the LTTE and such a government? With all their somersaults and their hypocrisy, the LTTE can out saying that the government had betrayed them and the Tamils. The government in turn would oblige by proving them right."

A Muslim government official from the East, expressed a feeling shared by many Tamils. He felt that the LTTE was not serious about raising their eastern recruits to leadership positions, where Jaffna influence was dominant. There was a tendency, he said, to use local Muslim and Tamil recruits as frontline material.

An eastern citizens' committee figure, not unsympathetic to the Tigers, became reflective as the disastrous was progressed. He said, "I wonder, whether at this rate, the Tamils have a future in the East." While saying that the Tigers had made sacrifices, he known to him, who had been bypassed or had been victimised with what he felt were undeserved allegations. He voiced strong feelings over the other Tamil groups and the SLMC, whom he thought were trying to use the Sri Lankan army to re-establish their influence. He added, "If the Tigers were not serious about the East, they should have left us alone."

## APPENDIX I

### LET USE ELIMINATE ALL QUARRELS IN THE NAME OF RELIGION

Jaffna Diocesan Commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue,

Church of Our Lady of Refuge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cross Street, Jaffna

8<sup>th</sup> August, 1990.

We representatives from the above religious organisation together with our people express how shocked and grieved we were to hear the brutal and inhuman killings of our Muslim brothers and sisters on the 4<sup>th</sup> august at Kattankudi. The nature of killings in defiance of the basic human value of love, compassion and mercy really depress us.

Though the Tamils and Muslims have many differences for long years, the Tamils and Muslims have been living together side by side as one nation. Our desire is that this unity should be strengthened for the benefit of both communities. But unfortunately the continuing high rate of killings appears to threaten this unity.

Muslims' search for autonomy and dignity never was viewed by the politicians with good intentions. But they always approached the Muslim question in terms of their short term interests. Hence the problems have been exacerbated. The ill motivated use of the differences between the Tamils and the Muslims also has escalated.

Therefore we strongly feel that the relationship between the Tamils and Muslims which is already weak, should not be weakened further, by the acts of any force. We also demand that the East ceased to be used as a battle ground for political intrigues of forces for whom the people of the East are of marginal interest.

All four religions that are being practiced in this country teach the same basic principle to love one another. But it is very distressing to see that the recent violence that has been unleashed on the people is justified according to their religious affiliations.

We pray that the dignity of each religion should be preserved. Also there should be unity among all.

Therefore we strongly condemn the recent killings and we appeal to all organisations to work hard to bring about a better understanding between the Tamils and the Muslims.

Signatures:

1. Maharaja Sri S. T. Shanmuganathan Kurukkal, Temple Trustee, Maviddapuram Kandasamy Kovil.
2. Fr. Jeyaseelan, Our Lady of Refuge, Jaffna.
3. Rev. Henry Victor, Theological Seminary, Christu Seva Ashram, Marathanamadam.

### *A SOLDIER'S POINT OF VIEW*

We present below an extract from an article published in the Sunday Times of 26<sup>th</sup> August. The author is Lieutenant Colonel sunil Pieris who is credited with raising the commando unit in 1979. The author is a graduate of Camberly Staff College in Surrey, England. He made a surprise retirement from the army in 1988, for personal reasons. The article evidently reflects feelings shared by his army colleagues about the political leadership, and strikes a note of pessimism. It also brings out the lack of enthusiasm in the country for the war and the plight of the soldier. It can be usefully compared with our assessment based on an intellectual commitment that human rights are fundamental. This intelligent, but hawkish, view does not hold out a practical programme for a politician grappling with a worsening economic crisis. The author is also a mission school educated Anglican Christian.

Where are we going?

The 'war' has been going on for nearly ten years. From the time Inspector Bastianpillai and his party disappeared in 1979, the killing of thirteen soldiers in 1983, the war had gradually gathered momentum.

The frequency of attacks has increased. From the safe haven of Jaffna where the separatist movement had popular support, it spread its wings of terror swallowing up district by district till finally engulfed the Northern and Eastern provinces.

The government never having mapped out a long term strategy employed the defence services with no clearly defined objectives. The defence services on their part, were content with piecemeal, stop-gap action and this went on till plans got underway for Operation Liberation.

Two Brigades-minus took on Vadamarachchi on two fronts with the Special Forces forming the anvil. A limited operation incurring heavy casualties finally left the army with a dozen or more detachments spread around Vadamarachchi. The military plan was to be supported closely by the public sector machinery in restoring life back to the area.

This never happened and the entire operation was a political failure. It wasn't much time before the entire picture changed colour when the Indian Peace Keeping Force(IPKF) relieved the Sri Lanka Army from its role in the North initially, and long after, in the East.

What then have we achieved to date in this war which had raged the last ten years? Today we hold Palaly and Elephant Pass, Jaffna fort Paranthan and kilinochchi, Mankulam, Vavuniya and Keyts.

Doesn't one see an inconsistency in the political approach? - it is compromise and negotiations in one moon, confrontation in another- EPLRF and Provincial councils during the summer, LTTE and the Indians during the winter.

The question that occurs to my mind is, does one know where we are going?

The present crisis evolves a new dimension to the military approach in grappling with the problem. At no stage has the country lost ground as we have today. This has brought the army to fight and capture ground or territory.

In the past, to use military phraseology, it was search and clear (destroy) and the like. But now it is a war of attrition to regain lost territory, to restore government and exercise control.

How well equipped are the defence forces and how well prepared is the nation to face? The defence forces in this country have never found their place in the sun. They had to be satisfied, through successive governments, with whatever was left over after disbursement to other Ministries. Now at the brink of war and with past experience there perhaps is an awareness of reality but would it not be prudent to phase out a build-up and make a long term plan whilst scoring in a battle of containment?

A troop build-up of a hundred thousand, armoured regiments with medium tanks, artillery with long range area bombing capacity, air support with armoured helicopter gunships and armoured personnel carriers for the infantry are realities for the war of today.

The Sri Lanka defence forces have to date performed miracles compared to some of the not so sophisticated armies around the world. With small arms, helmets and flak jackets the soldiers have performed incredibly well to achieve the results to date.

For the obvious reasons good leadership of the officers, and the will to fight by the soldiers, the defence forces have maintained the momentum of the war which broke out in June.

The question is how long can the army maintain this momentum? How long will the regularly reported high morale last? How many more casualties will the nation accept? I have heard officers soldiers say this war is for a chosen few and we will never see its end.

How true is it that casualties once recovered will want to get back to the front? What has the nation got to offer those limbless hundreds, the casualties in the hospitals, the Heroes of peace?

Is the nation still behind the armed forces? Or is that the initial fervour in June is now fading the banners and posters that came up on the walls in the city? Is soldiering only for the outstation lad, the less affluent and the school drop out? Ask the question, how many from the Colombo schools have joined to fight in the front?

Isn't it the right time for national conscription? -shouldn't every mother feel proud to send her son to the front to fight for sovereignty and territorial integrity?- irrespective race, creed, affluence, political influence and education, every mother's son within a prescribed age group should throw his lot in with the nation.

This will not only meet a military requirement but will unite the nation dispelling differences between political parties and other unwritten differences in society.

It is futile to attempt to dissect the economic equation, but economists would best know it is prudent to throw everything into the war and see the end of it or drag it on, bleeding the country gradually till we enter into an invocable situation.

The credit tea sales to Iraq and the loss of employment in Kuwait will not help the country to survive the crisis. Nor to mention the possible assistance that may have been forthcoming from Iraq.

There is little doubt that the armed forces are presently locked in a stalemate. Can the troops in Palaly break out and link up with the Jaffna fort? It took the Indian army seven days on five fronts with 18 battalions to reach the fort. The LTTE is probably better entrenched, now in large numbers and equipped for a protracted confrontation.

What is possible North of Vavuniya? The area up to Paranthan is dominated by the LTTE. Two miles out of Mankulam and Mullaitivu is enemy territory. Can one even guesstimate the time frame, with the available resources of manpower and machinery, within which stability could be restored? Is no change in the political requirement a consideration for the military appreciation?

Hold a line from East to West and fight a protracted war imposing economic sanctions and choking the LTTE by converging over a period of time. It will help the government to effectively de-link the Eastern province and seek a mandate. The armed forces will have the opportunity of buying time to reorganise, re-equip and re-motivate the men. Above all, it would frustrate the LTTE, provided the supply lines are cut off.

### APPENDIX III

#### THE I C R C

Our last report (No.4) presented some views about the role of the ICRC shared by several of our southern friends, particularly because they were relevant to the issue of the safety of Tamil prisoners. The main intention was to provoke thinking on the matter rather than to give a thoroughly researched conclusion. We emphasise that our friends are responsible persons, who are sympathetic to the plight of Tamils and some of them have taken a stand in confronting the National Defence Fund. Also, while being positive about the role of the ICRC in the current war, they feel that the ICRC could have been more effective in the South. As for killing of prisoners by the forces, opposition members have raised questions in parliament during the past few weeks. Only the extent seems to remain in question.

Another group of friends has expressed strong protest over the piece. They have said it was unbalanced and have made the following points: The ICRC is experienced at tracing prisoners not officially accounted for and because of the confidentiality observed by the ICRC, the state has no difficulty in making un-official prisoners official. Prisoners not known to exist have been traced while looking for others and once identified by the ICRC, prisoners are fairly safe. The Amnesty is in the first place not allowed into this country and can only publicise information without necessarily being able to save prisoners. They said that the ICRC has saved many prisoners and hoped the people would not be discouraged from making representations to the ICRC. They also denied that the ICRC could not be blamed for the killings which followed their arrival as they needed time to set up a machinery. Criticisms of the ICRC they felt was damaging as many Sinhalese chauvinists would like to get rid of the ICRC, and are saying that it is helping the LTTE.

On the other side, it is maintained that there is little danger that the ICRC will be seen as pro-LTTE and that the ICRC was seen to be more useful to the government. This was owing to the fact that the ICRC reported to the head of state - President Premadasa. It was the government they say who derived propaganda mileage from the ICRC presence and not the

LTTE or the JVP. The president was able to point to the ICRC presence to suggest that little was amiss on the human rights front, while no substantial change had been effected. In the meantime they say, some NGO's who were closely watching the government's conduct, became less disappointed expectations. They say that this situation would have been rectified, if instead of leaving the initiative with the government, the ICRC had, through the press, told the public what to expect and what not to expect. Unreal hopes were fed when the government was able to give the impression that all was going to be well because the ICRC was here. This was put to the ICRC by a group of university teacher who met the ICRC. These persons far from being hostile to the ICRC were only hoping to make it more effective. Some of them routinely advice students on how to make effective use of the ICRC when their fellows get into trouble. The ICRC's denial through the press of the government's claim that the LTTE was preventing the ICRC from taking food to Jaffna, is the kind of thing that will enhance faith in its impartiality.

In the meantime, undeserved use of the ICRC to boast the government's image, can come not just from the government but also from quarters committed to liberal democracy. This comes in the wake of a breakdown of civil society through terror and confusion among those who believed in liberal values. Recently, President Premadasa was the chief guest at the annual sessions of the Bar Association. The President of the Bar Association in his speech heaped almost unqualified praise on Premadasa - as sharing their values, having the highest regard for the judiciary, and the associations appreciation of his respect for human values. The same speech praised the government for having invited the ICRC in response to a call by the Association. It was also a speech which was diplomatically balanced. It hoped for a resolution of conflicts by negotiation rather than by violence and spoke of lawyers having been killed or threatened for appearing in Habeas Corpus and Fundamental Rights cases.

But in the reporting of this by the state media, it was the praise of the president that was prominent, and the latter was reduced to virtually small print. The casual reader would either read the praise, become angry and form his suspicions about the ICRC, or would take it that all was well.

That is why we have argued that it is futile for essentially powerless individuals to think that the state can be changed through flattery and diplomatic dealing, however well-meant. Such diplomacy naturally leads to complacency and insensitivity.

In such a society, where even nominally independent and influential civilian bodies have been reduced to ineffectiveness through a climate of terror, there is a greater need for international organisations like the ICRC to make sure that their role is not misunderstood.