

**REPORT NO.7**  
**THE CLASH OF IDEOLOGIES**  
**AND**  
**THE CONTINUING TRAGEDY IN THE BATTICALOA & AMPARAI DISTRICTS**

[Preface](#)

[Chapter 1.](#) **THE EAST: AN OVERVIEW**

- 1.1 General Introduction
- 1.2 Inter ethnic relations
- 1.3 The consequences of the LTTE strategy
- 1.4 Waiting for the Unknown
- 1.5 The Intrinsic unity of the East

[Chapter 2.](#) **Reports**

- 2.1 Chenkaladi
- 2.2 Eravur
- 2.3 Kudiyiruppu
- 2.4 Batticaloa
- 2.5 Kattankudy
- 2.6 Kurukal Madam
- 2.7 Kaluwanchikudy
- 2.8 (Periya) Kallar
- 2.9 Kalmunai
- 2.10 Karaithevu
- 2.11 Akkaraipattu
- 2.12 Thirukovil-Thambiluvil
- 2.13 Vinayagapuram

2.14 Thandiyady

### Chapter 3. **Reports - Personal**

3.1 Saved by his dog

3.2 Shot by home guards

3.3 Taken from the Eastern University

3.4 Hide and Seek in Batticaloa Prison

3.5 Left for dead in Kallar

### Chapter 4. **The Refugee camp at the Eastern University**

- Vantharumoolai

4.1 The beginnings

4.2 From the records of Eastern University

4.3 How the people benefitted from the camp

4.4 The LTTE and the camp

4.5 The disappearance of 159 inmates

4.6 The General arrives

4.7 The last days

4.8 Refuge in the jungle

4.9 The significance of the closure of the

Eastern University

4.10 A postscript

### Chapter 5. **The Armed Forces**

5.1 The STF

5.2 The army

### Chapter 6. **The Social Fabric and Communal Relations**

6.1 Why did the LTTE turn on the Muslims

- 6.1.1 Majority arrogance
- 6.1.2 Yogi's speech
- 6.2 A note on the origins of the Muslim communities in Ceylon
- 6.3 The character of leadership in the East
  - 6.3.1 The politics of cap turning:  
Myth & reality
  - 6.3.2 Sitting on a powder keg
- 6.4 The land question in Tamil Muslim relations
  - 6.4.1 The beginnings
    - 6.4.2 The 1960's and after
    - 6.4.3 A Tamil perception from Kalmunai
    - 6.4.4 Truth and fiction
- 6.5 Muslim perceptions

## [Chapter 7.](#) **The Eastern Borderlands**

- 7.1 The Borderlands
- 7.2 Massacre of Sinhalese in Athimale-  
Moneragala District
- 7.3 Kantalai
- 7.4 The abduction of Pushparani Chelliah
- 7.5 Massacre at Niedella - Moneragala District

## [Chapter 8.](#) Colonisation - Issues and Non-Issues

- 8.1 Early motivations
- 8.2 Tamil reactions
- 8.3 The flaw

8.4 The current war

8.5 The LTTE and Tamil interests

### [Appendix 1](#) - The human rights agreement in El Salvador

(Press summary)

### [Appendix 11](#) - An appeal by the Council of Hindu

Organisations

## **PREFACE**

The current report is centered on the East and raises issues, which we think are central to the political future of this country. Our inquiries were made mainly on the stretch of the east coast from Vantharumoolai, north of Batticaloa, to Komari, near Pottuvil. In the course of preparing this report, we received invaluable help from some human rights activists in the South, who also gave us accounts of recent massacres of Sinhalese peasants in parts of the Moneragala district bordering the East. Through discussions with them, we were able to gather something of the feelings of Sinhalese settled in the East. At the cost of some repetition of material from earlier reports ([No.5](#), and Special [No.3](#)), our final chapter attempts to clarify the issues surrounding state aided colonization.

Some of the areas covered in [Special Report No.3](#) were revisited. This time we had the benefit of several cordial conversations with Muslims living in the region from Eravur to Akkaraipattu. This helped us to correct some of the imbalance that readers of [Special Report No.3](#) complained of.

The current report is fairly detailed, as some of the earlier ones have been, and may deter the average reader. Given our situation and our capacity, our primary purpose is not only to make an immediate impact. By leaving behind a historical record, we hope that it would influence the development of healthier politics in the future.

We have argued in our reports that at the root of the present political crisis and the spate of human rights violations, lies the degrading feeling of powerlessness which the different communities feel in the face of forces who not just impose upon them, but are often ready to resort to massacres. Though the protagonists, whether the state or a militant group, may temporarily gloat over the powerlessness of the victim, it also turns the alienated young into militant potential that could be moulded. It becomes all the more explosive in a culture where it has become respectable to be insensitive. It has become fashionable in our universities to tell students not to talk about political issues, while young men and women, peasants, soldiers and even children, are giving their lives by the hundreds. For the, perhaps small, minority of students who are keenly aware of the tragedy of their own village, are unable to talk about it in a sympathetic environment, and feel angry about it, secret societies and covert activity become the only outlets.

We have also constantly argued that the state, with its legal obligations and material resources, must make a bold political initiative based on human rights, to break the

ideological blockade, remove the feeling of powerlessness among people, and give them confidence, instead of being trapped in its ugly actions.

Being university teachers rooted in Jaffna, through the experience of our own tragedy, we have found it a necessary part of our special obligation to question those ideological predilections, prejudices and hypocrisy on the part of our own community that have also contributed to this tragedy. Though such unorthodoxy has caused unease, as we have explained earlier, it is a necessary part of the unfolding. Also, we on our part, regard it as meaningless to record violations without going into the context.

**The East :** Sadly today, despite the government's claims to have restored a semblance of normality, there are constant reminders of the state's brutality, potential and actual. Following the incident in Iruthayapuram, a northern suburb of Batticaloa, at the end of March, when 12 civilians were massacred in reprisals, the regional police chief reassured the citizens' committee. He did not refer to any inquiry or disciplinary action. The police officers involved, he said, were being transferred to Mannar, that was incidentally being prepared to receive a refugee influx from India. A month later, end of April, civilians passing a police check point in the area, witnessed two beheaded corpses 50 yards away. Routine experiences of Easterners are variations on the same theme.

In dealing with such a government, in massacring Sinhalese and Muslim civilians, the Tigers have been prepared to pay the price of utterly discrediting themselves as a liberation group, and greatly diminishing the dignity and security of Tamils, in return for longevity.

A climate of terror now prevails among all communities in the Moneragala district, following massacres of Sinhalese civilians. Reprisals against hill country (estate) Tamils in the area, appear consistent with some security officials in the area giving the impression that attacks on Sinhalese were carried out by estate Tamils.

With the government proceeding thus in a political vacuum, we need to take serious alarm at the prospect of escalation. Sheer anger and alienation, rather than any tangible gain, may push many estate youth towards a cause which would only use them cynically.

**The North :** In their state of helplessness and degradation, the Eastern Tamils tend to look admiringly at their Northern counterparts as forming a bastion of resistance. Little do they understand that what obtains in the North is a community with its moral sensibilities shrivelled, groping at survival. Through manipulation and playing on its weaknesses, the community does not question why young children are sent on a suicidal course to give their lives. But in the little room allowed for it to manage some survival tasks, it can show considerable will power and resistance. People set themselves immediate goals such as : take son to Colombo, arrange to stay or go abroad. Come back to Jaffna. Secure house from takeover. Collect son's documents, testimonials, leaving certificate etc. Go to Colombo and so on. Irritation resulting from punitive delays at LTTE and Sri Lankan army check points in Vavuniya, can elicit both strong protest as well as some harsh counter action. The task of catching that day's train to Colombo can be so all consuming, that beating the queue by ignoring warnings of minefields would appear natural.

Persons may carelessly remark that now with the army camp at Mankulam demolished, if the same is done to that at Elephant Pass, the route to Colombo will then be clear. This shows the differences in perception between ordinary civilians on one hand and the children who are

giving their lives for what they think would be a separate state. The obsession of many is with having a clear route to Colombo, which existed before the war, and not to Trincomalee or Batticaloa. Driven to such a level of existence, the community earns increasing contempt from all armed parties.

The people must also ignore the experience of 1987, reinterpret the contrived tragedy of the East, and go in for hallucinations, in order to believe that the LTTE is protecting them from the vindictive ire of the Sri Lankan army. Many would argue that the policemen massacred by the LTTE last June were killed by Sri Lankan forces, The Eastern Tamils continue as refugees because they are lazy as usual, and so on. The politics needs to encourage such illusions.

We have pointed out that it would be a grave mistake for anyone to take satisfaction in the reduction to such a state, of this or any other section of this country. Jaffna has much potential to be tapped for the good of the whole country. Nothing is gained by a politics that turns a section of the people into gelignite.

It must also be mentioned that persons with diverse vocations in Jaffna feel the urge to speak out at considerable risk. One speaker said at a recent public seminar in Jaffna:

"Is it good to lose one's inner freedom and survive for the sake of existence? The war has created a sense of powerlessness which has led to helplessness. Are we being used as pawns in a game of chess? Are the people being victimised?"

The speaker constantly referred to the social impact of the American veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars, to illustrate what was going on in Jaffna.

Glimmers of hope amidst a sea of despair. In the light of experience over the past decade, and the existing political vacuum, what we face now is surely frightening. Looking back over the war, there have been a few initiatives, often by individual officers, which can be utilised to improve the situation.

We have recorded in this report the case of an army unit at Kaluwanchikudy which had set high standards and also a police OIC in Akkaraipattu who attempted the same. Such attempts did help to usher in a benign atmosphere.

There is also the case of the Brigadier who was brought in after a bad experience in Mannar. He promised civilians in Mannar that there would be no further disappearances and that detainees would be treated according to normal rules. His intentions were not doubted, and by comparison elsewhere, his promise was largely kept.

Bombing in Jaffna was mostly stopped when the new defence minister took charge on 6th March. It helped to soften in civilian minds the vindictive face of the government.

We have also seen that good officers can enforce a high level of discipline. Civilian life in Mannar town now goes on normally while injured soldiers are brought to hospital - something unique in the annals of the Sri Lankan army. Things were also helped by the interest taken by the UNHCR, the ICRC and the Indian Government.

But all these are largely isolated instances in a political vacuum. An officer who rises above the general level of political culture deserves high praise. In this situation, which lacks clarity regarding goals, the work of a few good officers and the effect of isolated initiatives soon wear off at the slightest fraying of tempers.

Over the traditional New Year there was some senseless bombing and shelling in Jaffna resulting in civilian casualties. The recent bombing of the repaired ferry at Puneryn had no purpose except to give vent to anger.

When 4 civilians were hacked to death in the Mannar sector on 17th February, even the well-meaning Brigadier became party to a cover up.

There is no momentum leading to disciplinary action against offenders in order to move ahead with confidence building measures. There is thus no option except to launch a bold political initiative. Once the momentum is generated, we are certain that everyone concerned will be pushed into responding positively.

**The Demands : We put forward the following demands pertaining to some urgent issues raised in this report.**

**1. Create institutional machinery using locally and internationally based organisations to further and monitor the observance of human rights. There is an urgent need for the security forces to respond positively to complaints by civilians.**

**In this connection, a press summary of 'Human Rights in Civil War - the case of El Salvador, a statement issued by the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka, is given in Appendix 1. The statement deals with the agreement of July 1990 between the two parties to the Salvadorean conflict laying down a detailed framework for UN participation in the maintenance and monitoring of Human Rights. This precedent opens creative possibilities for both sides to the Sri Lankan conflict. It, more importantly, provides for space to enable ordinary people to express their aspirations.**

**2. Take all necessary steps to convince Tamils and Muslims living in the East that the state has no agenda of its own to change the demography of the North-East.**

**Halt the ongoing process of resettlement of a particular community with state patronage. Ensure that all three major communities feel that their specific needs will be taken into consideration in resettlement and rehabilitation programmes.**

**3. Appoint a committee consisting of persons from all communities to study the question of land settlement and to propose a solution acceptable to all three communities living in these areas, respecting the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of our society. The committee should probe into:**

**(i) The history of re-colonisation and the demographical changes that took place as the result of manipulation by the state.**

**Whether the nature and the working of the present state machinery is biased towards any particular community.**

(ii) Social changes resulting from transfer of lands to particular communities, with no state involvement, and the social forces behind such transfers.

(iii) Social changes resulting from a neglect of economic development in the North-East, such as emigration of a large section of the middle class, and the resulting sense of isolation and vulnerability.

4. The government should come out with a clear equitable policy statement on land settlement, and should take positive action at a high level to ensure that any built up inertia of the state machinery to favour a particular community is broken.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE EAST: AN OVERVIEW

[1.1 General Introduction](#)

[1.2 Inter ethnic relations](#)

[1.3 The consequences of the LTTE strategy](#)

[1.4 Waiting for the Unknown](#)

[1.5 The Intrinsic unity of the East](#)

#### **1.1 General Introduction**

The common mood one comes across among Eastern Tamils is one of resignation and utter helplessness. The humiliation they feel has been rubbed in deep by the frustration they experienced in respect of missing persons, and the dire threats connected to burning tyres with which government servants were ordered to return to work. The Batticaloa and Kalmunai areas each have lists of dead and missing extending over 1000. The regime is not always so harsh now. Sentry point checks are mostly formal and policemen and soldiers could frequently be friendly and human. Yet there is an undercurrent of unpredictability. The massacre of 20 or so Tamil travelers in Eravur on 21<sup>st</sup> February, following the killing of two Muslim homeguards is among several sharp reminders that lives are playthings for the state.

Apart from the fact that people are nearly always questioned in Sinhalese, there is the very visible fact in Batticaloa town, that Tamil and Sinhalese policemen are distinguished by the former being unarmed and the latter armed. This is a humiliation to which Sinhalese policemen were not subject following the recent JVP uprising.

The visit by President Premadasa on 14<sup>th</sup> February did nothing to restore confidence among Tamils. A delegation of Batticaloa mothers wanted the President to look into the matter of 175, mainly youths, removed by the army from the Eastern University refugee

camp on 5<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September, who then disappeared without a trace. The President told them in effect: The mothers of those killed by the JVP are crying. The mothers of dead security forces personnel are crying.....To many people in Batticaloa, this sounded a piece of sarcasm completely evading the fact that the President has an obligation to be accountable. The people also noticed that the President visited Kattankudy where the Tigers killed Muslims, but made no attempt to visit places such as Valaichenai where a large number of Tamils had been killed. The Presidents gift to Batticaloa town of a clock tower based on Kandyan architecture, topped by an ornament of Buddhist significance, only gave further offence. A university don observed, Kandyan architecture may be good in itself. But we have been through an experience after which we see everything through coloured glasses. Could he not understand that?

Coupled to a measure of satisfaction that the LTTE is embarrassing the government, there are very grave reservations about its record. When the LTTE ran away in June after announcing the final battle, deserting the people faced with an angry army, there was both puzzlement and anger. After building heavy fortifications, the Tigers had abandoned the Oddaimavadi bridge ? the gateway to Batticaloa District without a fight. Many expostulated whatever happened to those arms captured from the TNA which the Tigers had displayed in lorry loads. One observer said

that the Tigers had met their Waterloo in Kiran. Their failure to overrun the small unprepared army camp despite repeated attacks, he felt, had changed their psychology. Their policy then evidently changed to concentrating their military strength in the North and to provoking and using the conduct of the forces to turn the East into a source of recruits.

Like elsewhere, the result of the struggle particularly in the Batticaloa and Amparai Districts is paradoxical. A powerful driving force in these areas was to break out of the hegemony of Jaffna and to assert an Eastern identity. The massive participation of Eastern youth in the militancy, it was once thought, would lead to this. Eastern youth are today dying for the Tiger cause in larger numbers than ever before. But the hegemony of the Jaffna based leadership has been strengthened. Myths far removed from reality, concerning the superiority of Jaffna, are current in the East. Common ones are : Our Tigers are rotters. They are only good at settling personal scores. But those in Jaffna are doing a splendid job, sincerely dedicated to a cause, and, We Tamils in the East have no future. We are always cutting each others throats. We have no leadership like in Jaffna. Ironically, the Tigers have been saying repeatedly in Jaffna that it is the Eastern boys who are largely fighting for them, while Jaffna boys were being selfish and are running away. People have become tired and fatalistic, not wanting to talk about what happened (It is all history now!) and not wanting to analyse. Only a few understand that Tiger policy is a well coordinated policy with Eastern cadre doing a good part of the fighting and dying in the North. To enhance and sustain the Eastern mans loss of confidence in his own ability is an important aspect of Tiger politics. When the Eastern University became a large refugee camp where people were learning to take up issues collectively, despite serious ups and downs, and the camp leadership was developing a strong sense of responsibility, whom the people were looking up to, the Tigers forced the closure of the camp without any discussion with the camp leadership. People who were realising some collective strength to fight back, were driven to become helpless fugitives in jungles, unprotected and facing many natural perils in addition to bombing and helicopter straffing. (See report). [[Top](#)]

## **1.2 Inter Ethnic Relations**

The lesson that has been tragically brought home to both Muslims and Tamils is that the two communities are inseparably linked and that a sound basis for coexistence needs to be found. The fear of LTTE attacks on Muslims and Tamil fears of reprisals by Muslim home guards, directly or indirectly backed by the forces, has affected all areas of life. In the rice bowl of the nation, the fields of both communities remain untended. Herds of cattle which used to supply milk are unaccounted for, because villagers dare not go far looking for them. On the road between Batticaloa and Kalmunai, passenger vans belonging to one community drive at break neck speed through villages of the other community, not daring to pause. The bulk of Muslim staff and students do not attend Eastern University because it is situated in a Tamil area, although the neighbouring area is Muslim.

Mutual necessity however helps to build bridges. Kattankudy is a Muslim village heavily dependent on trade. Owing to the security situation, Tamil traders lack the ability to transport goods from Colombo. Within three weeks of the Kattandudy massacre, there were gestures of conciliation. Kattankudy traders have now reopened their shops in Batticaloa town.

In many areas peace committee meetings have been organised by security forces commanders and held in police stations the most acceptable venue for both parties. The exercise has several drawbacks. With the state, ironically in concert with the Tigers, having actually encouraged and used Tamil Muslim differences, its motives are suspect, although individual officers may be sincere. An important draw back is that apart from expressing good sentiments and bringing about some thaw, these committees can determine very little. They cannot give guarantees of safety. At least in the area of expressing goodwill and trying to understand each others immediate difficulties, there have been some successes. A notable failure is Kalmunai.

The resumption of Kattankudy Muslims trading in Batticaloa was aided partly by good personal relations between the community leadership at Kattankudy and the Roman Catholic Church. The Church had also tried hard without success to get the LTTE release three Muslim leaders it had abducted from Eravur on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

But the ultimate guarantee for security rests with forces outside the control of ordinary people, pursuing their own aims. Tamils fear getting back to Pottuvil and Eravur because they cannot predict how the security forces would react to acts of the LTTE. Acts of violence attributed to Muslims have almost never been independent. Muslims on the other hand are looking for guarantees, not from the security forces or from Muslim politicians, but from the LTTE. In town after town Muslims has said that the Tamil Muslim differences would vanish the moment the LTTE states publicly that it would not harm Muslims. The more mature Muslim leaders are extremely anxious to reestablish good relations with Tamils. Our discussions were always cordial. After 9 months of war, the LTTE is seen on the surface as the major actor it shows the powerlessness of all the communities and the destructive power of the LTTE. [\[ Top\]](#)

### **1.3 The Consequences of the LTTE' Strategy:**

From the time it massacred Muslim and Sinhalese policemen at the outset of the war, the LTTE has pursued a clear strategy of attacking Muslims and deepening communal enmity. Even at the time some Muslims reacted in Kalmunai following the killing of Muslim policemen and the arrival of the army, there were no signs of unrest in the Batticaloa district.

There was even a tendency among Muslims here to rationalise the Tigers actions. Yet from the 12<sup>th</sup> July, the Tigers set about attacking Muslims in the Batticaloa district, starting with the massacre at Kurukkal Madam. It is this that argues against the supposition that the initial killing of Muslim policemen among others was simply a mistake by a local leader. The Tigers have stirred the communal cauldron and have used the anger and frustration resulting from government actions to get their recruits. But at what price All creative activity in the region has been brought to a standstill, and the Tamils in particular are on the way to becoming a smaller and fragile community.

While there is a limit to which the state could afford to be seen as working towards anarchy, the Tigers have no such inhibitions. They have cloaked total irresponsibility as a sacred prerogative. Thanks to their adversary, they have been able to demonstrate that they could frustrate anything by anyone else. If they choose to give a guarantee of safety to the Muslims tomorrow, the relief will be so great that if elections are held immediately afterwards, many Muslims would consider voting for them as a survival tactic. Such benefits can only be shortlived. In defying every human norm, the Tigers have also sown the seeds of their own destruction. The longer the crisis lasts the greater the anger against elders, who appear to compromise Muslim dignity to survive. More Muslim youngsters will draw the conclusion that to oppose the Tigers, they must imitate them. With economic hardship and confinement, there are disturbing signs of such a reaction. Posters have reportedly appeared in Eravur threatening those who have dealings with Tamils. Many Muslims are keenly aware what it would mean for the Muslim community. A Muslim leader in Akkaraipattu said vividly: An attack is something that lasts a short time, some die and it is over. What we are worried about is the counter attack. It grows within us and terrorises us, as it happened to your community.

The other danger referred to by both Muslim and Tamil leaders is that while the present state of communal enmity lasts, there will be no political initiative and matters of common interest vital to both communities will be lost sight of. While the Tamils and Muslims are preoccupied with each other and with the security forces dominating most of Amparai District, the state will push Sinhalese colonisation from the west. As it is few Tamils and Muslims are left in the Gal Oya scheme. With the commencement of the war, the few Tamils left in Amparai town and places such as Inginiyagala and Ingurana were killed or thrown out. Pottuvil is now a no go area for Tamils. While the Tigers have used the mad policy of state sponsored Sinhalese colonisation of deprived Sinhalese for mobilisation, they have done nothing to address the issue creatively. [\[ Top\]](#)

#### **1.4 Waiting for the Unknown:**

While the Sri Lankan forces began the war in an orgy of blood, as though they were cooperating in a recruitment campaign for the Tigers, the killing at present is at a low ebb. The occasional massacre still does take place. From mid February to late March at least, those taken prisoner are generally said to be alive. In many cases visits have been allowed. In Thirukkivil Thambiluvil, the last known killings by the STF were about early February. In Karaitivu it is said that most of those taken in are released soon. There is some uncertainty about what happens to the rest. We have no information on developments following the deterioration in Moneragala.

There appeared to be a change of orders and a change of tactics. There are even cases in early March where the STF had warned LTTE suspects and sent them home. These may

have borne some fruit if the government had launched a parallel political initiative to give confidence to the Tamils. But the forces have been sent to do a thankless and frustrating job in a total political vacuum. The forces lack the discipline, and character to match the Tigers destructiveness. They had discredited themselves and hurt the Tamils too deeply. The initiative is thus clearly with the Tigers. Everytime the forces react by punishing the Tamils, they move a step in the direction of defeat.

While the government has over 9 months not made up its mind on a political programme, the process of destruction goes on. Barely three days after we had conversations with Muslim leaders in Akkaraipattu, who were both warm and hospitable, a bomb went off in the fish market killing at least six persons and injuring several more. This coincided with LTTE attacks elsewhere in the East. In Akkaraipattu, both Muslims and Tamils had to put in much creative effort to restore something close to normal relations. Many old friendships had been reactivated and even some inter communal organisations were functioning. It took only a split second for an imbecile bomb to destroy that trust so painfully rebuilt. **The purpose of the bomb was to simply ensure that Tamils and Muslims do not discover strength in working with each other.** In handling the aftermath, the forces have predictably failed, however determined they were to prevent trouble. Local sources said that 23 Tamils had been abducted by Muslim homeguards, not in Akkaraipattu, but in the sensitive region between Kalmunai and Karaitivu. A senior police officer is quoted as saying that he is not aware of such abductions.

This would only further enhance Tamil fears and distrust. To the Tamils, homeguards are simply an arm of the forces. In the incident of 21<sup>st</sup> February near Eravur, where about 20 Tamil travellers were massacred, at least two gun shots were fired and one or more persons in uniform were sighted. There was no attempt to have an inquiry to punish the offenders and to reassure the Tamils that this would not happen again. The late Minister for Defence simply contended that homeguards were not involved, as if that were the end of the matter. The state of mind of Tamils around Kalmunai should be understood. It would take a generation or more for them to recover from the entry of the first army battalion last June. Their subsequent experience is one of continual horror mostly linked to Muslim home guards and their masters. They would tell you today: Do not go on the streets after six, Do not go near the old police station. That is where they behead people. To the outsiders, the burnt out shops of Kalmunai are merely an eyesore. But those who pass them day after day are reminded of corpses and skeletal remains. Whether the information concerning the abduction of 23 Tamils is accurate or not, the authorities have to go far beyond simple denial to the process of the law. It has been brought home to the Tamils again and again that publicising Muslim deaths is good propaganda, but Tamils do not matter for the government. For the Tigers it is the reverse. In the meantime the Tigers have launched a recruitment drive with the slogan of liberating South Tamil Eelam (the East). Tamils in such an environment will seldom see through the cynicism. [[Top](#)]

### **1.5 The Intrinsic unity of the East:**

Barring a new initiative by a force that can give confidence to all communities, the East stands to slip further into tragedy. On a human level, the tragedy of the East is beyond description. Its vast agricultural potential remaining unused is a mere symptom. Communities who had lived together have been split asunder by hatreds. The Tamils have been prostrated by a sense of division. Many families resulting from intercommunal marriages had been broken up. Communities of Sinhalese had sprung up in many Eastern towns in a healthy manner, through normal migration in search of opportunities. These Sinhalese who had

intimate social relations with those whom they lived among, have also been humiliated, killed or expelled.

The Muslims and Tamils spoke the same language, lived with each other and were bound by local customs. The question whether one is Tamil or Muslim is ironical at a time when perhaps the greater volume of literary output in Tamil appearing locally is of Muslim authorship. Tamils must face up to the fact that instead of using much that was common to strengthen existing ties, by giving respect to Muslims for their contribution to the economy and culture, they treated them as an appendage. Attempts to forge only a mechanical unity in the face of threats from the state, such as colonisation, exposed all the contradictions.

The tragedy of the East is one aspect of the corrosive politics that has been the bane of every part of the nation. Despite all this human destruction that is a living reality for the vast majority of people in this country, conventional economic indicators blithely proclaim a growing economy. It is this that would weigh heavily with those powers who mechanically decide the fate of small third world nations.

In order for the Easterners to find a creative means of fighting back, they need to rediscover the history they had forgotten. Today they are dominated by a total sense of their division and worthlessness, coupled with an admiration for Jaffna that was initially a part of the middle class value system.

The truth is very different. Until quite recently the Eastern militant cadre showed a community spirit which ignored group divisions. When this posed a challenge to the leadership in Jaffna, they had to send men from Jaffna to create division and restore their authority. When the LTTE took on the TELO in May 1986, the native born Batticaloa LTTE leader, Kadavul, issued a statement expressing the need for Eastern Tamils to be united and assured the other groups that they would not be harmed. The LTTE leadership had to send Kumarappa and Pottu to enforce the division. Francis, another LTTE leader born in Batticaloa, was very highly regarded and is said to have been against the killing of Batticaloa resident Sinhalese in October 1987. The killings were ordered by the Jaffna leadership. Francis later died a miserable man. Division, mutual suspicion and a feeling of worthlessness in the East are thus integral to the LTTE's strategy, which based on Tamil chauvinism has also meshed with the aims of Sinhalese chauvinism. The organic unity of the East needs to be rediscovered.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REPORTS**

#### **. Reports**

##### 2.1 [Chenkaladi](#)

##### 2.2 [Eravur](#)

##### 2.3 [Kudiyiruppu](#)

- 2.4 [Batticaloa](#)
- 2.5 [Kattankudy](#)
- 2.6 [Kurukal Madam](#)
- 2.7 [Kaluwanchikudy](#)
- 2.8 [\(Periya\) Kallar](#)
- 2.9 [Kalmunai](#)
- 2.10 [Karaithevu](#)
- 2.11 [Akkaraipattu](#)
- 2.12 [Thirukovil-Thambiluvil](#)
- 2.13 [Vinayagapuram](#)
- 2.14 [Thandiyady](#)

## **2.1 Chenkaladi**

The army arrived in Chenkaladi in late July 1990. People fled into the jungle and later ended up at the Eastern University refugee camp. On the first day the army took 8 persons in a round up. They released 3 and went away with 5. Nothing more was heard of them. Three months later information was received that one of the prisoners, Elango, was under detention in the South.

The first army unit stationed at Chenkaladi was harsh. A few days later a two thousand strong army unit arrived. The senior officers were camped in the Methodist Church. This unit was extremely well disciplined and the officers very courteous. Whenever they removed cooking vessels from homes of local residents, they washed them and put them back. Though this unit was there only a few days, people became over confident. The word go around and those who had fled started coming back.

**Eravur Massacre and after:** On 11<sup>th</sup> August a landmine went off in Chenkaladi. Though there were no casualties, the army fired shells and took away 25 persons, including the post master and a technical assistant. Some buildings were burnt. Many civilians fled into the Muslim area (Eravur North). The army did not respond while the LTTE massacred Muslims that night.

As the army began moving towards Eravur from Chenkaladi the following day (12<sup>th</sup>), soldiers stabbed Maruthappu, the sexton of the Roman Catholic Church, and Seeni Podiyar, an 80 year old man. One soldier who was concerned came running into the Methodist Manse premises, collected the boys and pushed them inside, and made the women stand in front. The other soldiers then passed by without bothering to look inside (See [Report No.5](#)). The church was full of civilians things, and 125 refugees were in the church. At 12.00 p.m. Fr. Joseph, the Roman Catholic clergyman brought news of the stabbings. Two soldiers were

then standing sentry in front of the church. At length, a church worker took some water for the soldiers and asked them whether it was safe to move about. The soldiers replied that there was nothing to fear as long as they were there and that they could move about until 5.00p.m. A tractor was arranged to transport the things and the people left for the Eastern University.

The Methodist priest, Rev. Arulrajah, and Fr. Joseph went to the Athiyamalai Roman Catholic Church and made it to Batticaloa the following day by a circuitous route. There they made a complaint to the military authorities about killings by the army. Brigadier A.N.U. Seneviratne denied that there had been killings. The clergymen returned to Chenkaladi with Fr. Diconic from Batticaloa. He and Fr. Joseph conducted the burial rites for Maruthappu. An old beggar lady remaining in the Methodist Church was dispatched to an old peoples home. Nearly all those left in Chenkalady went to Batticaloa on the 13<sup>th</sup>. An old couple, Mr. Kanagaratnam and his wife decided to remain in their home. They were later killed in shelling. [\[Top\]](#)

## 2.1 Eravur

Eravur is a village 4 miles north of Batticaloa town having 37,000 Muslims and 13,000 Tamils living in wards 4 and 5. Tamil Muslim relations had been consistently good and the two communities were integrated, and their economic activities were complementary. The Tamils were chiefly from the service casts such as barbers, dhobys, builders, goldsmiths and iron smiths. In some sense they were better off serving Muslims rather than caste conscious Vellalas. The Muslims were mainly farmers, labourers or fishermen. These categories made up 95% of the Muslim population in sharp contrast to Muslims of Kattankudy.

Apart from the integration of economic and social life, the relations between the two communities were also cemented in educational life. Aligar Maha Vidyalayam in Eravur had eminent Tamils and Muslims among its alumnii, and came first in the island for Arts and Commerce in 1986. It attracts Tamil students from as far as Kiran and Saththurukondan. S. Thambirasa was among its eminent principals. The school has also produced many Tamils who are doctors and engineers. Although recent politics has tended to strain relations, there were leaders on both sides working hard to maintain good relations. In 1985, a Tamil Muslim unity committee was set up with Dawood and Sivanandarajah as joint secretaries. More recently Dawood and Thambapillay who were classmates at Aligar MV were joint secretaries. Dawood was cluster principal of a group of schools in Eravur. Mr. Haniffa the present AGA of Eravur was a principal who had served largely in Tamil schools at Pandiruppu and later at Vantharumoolai Central.

Following the LTTE assuming control in late 1989, Muslim expectations were high. Because of the conduct of groups aligned to the IPKF, the Muslims had provided substantial help to the LTTE. Dawood, together with a number of other Muslim leaders held talks with LTTE leaders including Anton Balasingam and Yogi with regard to Muslim rights in the future political arrangement. These were leaders who had staked the future of Muslims on good relations with Tamils. The LTTE's response was lukewarm on Muslim rights. These Muslim leaders spoke from LTTE platforms and were filmed with LTTE leaders at the latter's Vaharai convention.

**The June War:** Eravur was among these villages which had no record of communal violence on anything approaching the scale known elsewhere. Although the massacre of Muslim policemen had taken place further south and the army was expected in Eravur anytime, the village leadership was intent on not allowing Tamil Muslim relations to

suffer. An elder showed a diary entry, where Dawood summoned a meeting about 16<sup>th</sup> June of the village elders and told them: Do not fraternise with the army. Our Tamil brothers will be angry.

The army which had been ordered to retake the East, went into action without a clear strategy. The army was rushing to Batticaloa from Valaichenai without securing its lines of communication. It moved into Eravur about the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June and moved unresisted towards Batticaloa without setting up a camp. The LTTE then moved back into Eravur.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July (Haji), the LTTE abducted community leaders Dawood, Kazi, M.L.A. Gafoor and Al Haj Ali Mohamed. This happened in the morning. A person who had collected several lakhs of rupees for the LTTE, approached them. Independent efforts were also made by the Tamil Muslim unity committee and the Roman Catholic Church. After a long delay, the LTTE let it slip that the last rites for these leaders could be performed.

Just after the army passed through on 23<sup>rd</sup> June the LTTE had come in large numbers and looted the MPCS and local shops, including Tamil ones. The same thing was going on in Chenkaladi. A curfew was imposed. Mr. Tawfeek, a graduate teacher, who was on the road was tied to a post while the looting went on. Others seen with prayer caps were assaulted. The LTTE had also brought Tamils from the neighbourhood and had encouraged them to loot. The Pradeshiya Sabha (Regional Council) and Public Library were also destroyed. Equipment from the Aligar MV laboratory was carried away. These happened between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June.

One Muslim observed, I was in Jaffna when the forces destroyed your public library. It was a piece of cultural genocide worthy of publicity all over the world. Imagine what we would have felt when the same was done to ours?

The army returned from Batticaloa in late July, about a month later, to secure its lines of communication. Camps were set up in Chenkaladi to the north and in Sathurukondan to the south of Eravur. Patrols used to set off from both places simultaneously and meet in Eravur. Following the Kurukkal Madam massacre of Muslims, there was talk of setting up an army camp in Eravur.

What was behind the disappearance of Dawood and other leaders: A common rumour in circulation among Tamils is that Dawood and others were killed because they had garlanded the army when it arrived. In fairness to these men, it is necessary to examine this claim. Dawood belonged to the class of Eastern Muslims who from humble beginnings rose through sheer hard work. He first became a Tamil trained teacher, then worked for his degree, diploma in education and finally passed the Administrative Service examination. He was also a member of the Eastern University Council. From his school days he had identified himself with the social advancement of Eravur. As a schoolboy he had organised Jinnah library in 1952 which later became the public library. As a community leader, he had staked his diplomatic efforts on good relations with Tamils. He was an experienced man with a sense of history and had seen a number of forces come and go in the space of a few years. It was only logical and in keeping with common sense that he had, following the outbreak of war, cautioned the village against fraternising with the Sri Lankan army. Would such men have suddenly lost their heads to go and publicly garland the Sri Lankan army that was passing through.

This claim about Dawood welcoming the forces is strongly denied by others close to him. Asked whether the villagers welcomed the army, a government servant gave an

answer which carried much conviction. He said, Most people in this village have hardly gone beyond this region in all their lives and do not speak Sinhalese. When the army came, the atmosphere was tense. Soldiers from near my house called out a boy. They asked him for young coconuts to drink. He just stared in fear. They then asked him where the LTTE was. The boy pointed to the jungle. A soldier slapped him. That was how things were. Of course several people gave them water when asked. Does that amount to welcoming the army. It is further pointed out that when Dawood and others were abducted on 4<sup>th</sup> July, the LTTE came to their homes and called them. They came out promptly because they knew the LTTE and did not think they had anything to hide.

What could then have happened Many community leaders, both Muslim and Tamil, will readily admit on the basis of commonsense, that when an army moves in, it is best to establish some human communication. The soldiers are new to the place and are tense. When they make irrational judgements, much damage can result. Thus nearly all citizens committees appointed by the LTTE in Jaffna did business with the Sri Lankan army in 1987 after Operation Liberation, and with the IPKF later on. They even took part in functions. Furthermore, if one had an LTTE connection of some sort, it is better to introduce oneself before an informer does it. These are realities in the NorthEast. The LTTE does not take kindly to any action based on the initiative of persons not under its control.

For the disappearance of these Muslim leaders, one has to look for causes in the LTTE's self inflicted paranoia against Muslims. This is discussed separately.

The\_Massacre, 12<sup>th</sup> August : By early August the cauldron had been stirred. The LTTE had conducted massacres of Muslims in Kurukkal Madam and Kattankudy and had destroyed the very community leadership in Eravur that had worked for the maintenance of good relations between Tamils and Muslims. This leaderlessness combined with anger and fear were natural catalysts towards the creation of anarchy.

Muslims deny allegations that Muslim agents were then at work pointing out Tamil youth to the army. In this atmosphere of growing suspicion, Tamil claims are based on the premise that several Tamil youth were picked by army patrols in the market shared by Tamils and Muslims. There were other factors contributing to the tension. A call had been made by Muslim leaders based in Colombo to set up an army camp in Eravur on the grounds that Muslims were being attacked. Tamils on the other hand had fears of the army based on experience. The anti-Muslim direction of the LTTE had caused several Muslim cadre to desert and return to their villages. News had also reached Eravur that the LTTE had killed five of its Muslim cadre at Kokkadichcholai on suspicion. It is however a fact that Muslims and Tamils did have social and neighbourly relations until 11<sup>th</sup> August.

LTTE cadre arrived in Eravur about 10.30 p.m. on 11<sup>th</sup> August and went about massacring Muslims until the early hours of the morning. They went through the Muslim areas of Surattayankuda, Michnagar, Meerakerni, Saddam Hussein village and Punnakuda, killing 121 persons. Among the worst reported incidents was the cutting of a pregnant lady's stomach. The baby is said to have been pulled out and stabbed. The army based at Chenkaladi 1 ½ miles away, it is said, came in the afternoon to collect statistics.

The soldiers accompanied by mobs then went through the Tamil wards (4 & 5) killing a number of civilians and burning dwellings. The rest fled. (Reports given separately).

The creation of home guard units by the government which went into action two weeks later created an impossible situation for the Tamils.

**The Present:** Eravur is relatively calm today. Muslim elders are very anxious to reassure Tamils and point to Tamils who have been functioning unharmed. They are very anxious to reestablish fraternal relations. One quoted a saying attributed to a Tamil politician that Muslims and Tamils in that region are like coconut and flour in the pittu. However, continuing LTTE attacks on Muslims and a hint of anarchy which the forces have done little to discourage, keep the two communities apart. Tamils go through the main road of Eravur with some trepidation. It is a sad legacy of liberation politics.

The local economic life is at a standstill and the people are living on government rations. 95% of the people who depend on agriculture cannot go to their fields. 36,000 cattle are unaccounted for and over 40,000 acres of paddy land belonging to the village remain uncultivated. Two seasons Kalapoham and Munmari have been missed. Villagers dare not go out to obtain clay for bricks, firewood, river sand and keerai (spinach). Fishermen who used to go to Punnakuda beach 3 miles away to the east dare not go beyond ½ a mile from the village. While Muslims are used by the state for propaganda, little publicity is given outside to their sufferings. Tamils quite often believe that Muslims are well off. Meanwhile the Tamils who used to earn a living by providing services to the Muslims, languish in refugee camps. [\[Top\]](#)

### **2.3 Kudiyiruppu: The Massacre of Passengers, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1991**

News was received that 6 Muslim home guards who went beyond Eravur station road had been shot by the LTTE, killing two. The four injured were sent to Polonnaruwa hospital. The university staff who were operating from Batticaloa, decided to return home immediately. They left Eastern University in two vehicles, a car in front and a Tata bus behind. At Chenkaladi, vehicles were waiting in a queue, from the Peoples Bank up to the army camp. The time was 1.30 p.m. In the queue were vehicles and buses transporting train passengers from Valaichenai to Batticaloa. The AGA, Chenkaladi, drove his jeep up to the camp and went in to ask for an escort to take them past Eravur. The AGA came out and said that an escort will be given. When the escort did not turn up, Prof. Mano Sabaratnam and Dr. Jeyarajah went into the camp to ask for an escort. Two TELO members with guns were then seen coming out of the camp and stopping a van. The van went in front and others followed. Behind the two university vehicles led by the car, was a CTB bus from Valaichenai with passengers from the train which had come from Colombo.

While passing through Eravur, an army picket was on both sides of the road. When passing the police station, Muslim homeguards at the sentry point lightly made a cryptic utterance. They said, Say ta ta (goodbye) and go carefully. On reaching the camp marking the southern boundary of Eravur and the deserted Tamil village of Kudiyiruppu, the TELO escort turned back, presumably on the grounds that it was a Tamil area all the way to Batticaloa, and further that the LTTE may thus attack them. Vehicles then took off on their own. After several vehicles had gone ahead, the university car reached the security post marking the end of Eravur. At this point the Chenkaladi AGA's jeep which had gone ahead came rushing back to the post at full speed, sounding the horn and flashing the head lamps, evidently warning others of trouble.

The university vehicles stopped near the security post. After a few minutes the front vehicle started moving. The university vehicles and the CTB bus followed. The car was about ¼ mile behind the vehicle in front. As the university vehicles came to the bend 400 yards from the security post, those inside saw two men crouching behind bushes wearing camouflage banians of the type worn by the armed forces and homeguards. One was carrying a shot gun of the kind given to the homeguards and the other had a pole. On seeing the university car, they ran back, presumably thinking that those inside were persons of consequence.

A little further on, those in the car saw a man in a T shirt, soaking in blood, running towards the road with a limp, signalling that he wanted help. Three men in sarongs, two with knives and one with a pole were chasing him. The car being full, the driver slowed down and signalled the Tata bus to stop and pick up the fugitive. The bus driver not having seen the man, overtook the car and went. The car driver then took the centre of the road and braked, forcing the CTB bus behind to stop. The conductor helped the injured man on board.

At the same time the driver of the car saw in his mirror a woman in a red sari, chased by other saronged men with knives. All decided that she was too far for them to risk stopping. The driver saw the woman being overtaken and stabbed. The vehicles moved off and reported the incident to the army at the Saththurukondan camp. The soldiers took over the CTB bus and rushed towards Kudiyiruppu, in sharp contrast to the army in Kudiyiruppu.

The van passengers' story : About 40 train passengers were squeezed into a van which had proceeded ahead of the university vehicles. After the final check post in Eravur, the escort left, and the van proceeded on its own. The following story was given by a Jaffna University graduate working in Batticaloa:

I was seated in front with my brother-in-law who was next to the driver. Just before we reached the bend (400 yards from the security post and visible from it), a shot gun was fired, catching the driver full in the face. My brother-in-law became soaked in the driver's blood. The van went straight, got off the road at the bend and after some distance, was stopped by an electric post. The driver had died immediately. Several of us clambered out. I squeezed out through a window. I ran westwards towards the lagoon. As I was running, I tripped against a clump of grass and fell down. This saved me, as just then a pursuer opened fire and the shot went over me. I got up and made it to the shore of the lagoon. Evidently our pursuers had lost interest in those who got away, and were busy with those trapped in the van.

At the shore of the lagoon, I discovered a lady and a 20 year old girl, who had run into the water and whose feet were stuck in the slime. I pulled them out and the three of us walked along the lagoon shore to Thannamunai. I later discovered that my brother-in-law had escaped and was picked up by a bus. As I got up from my fall and was making it to the lagoon, I saw a ball of smoke and realised that the van was being set on fire. I know that about 15 of the passengers with injuries were later warded at Batticaloa hospital. I figure that about 20 dead and injured would have been burnt with the van.

Who was behind the attack: Following the incident, no one was questioned and no inquiry was held. The late Minister of Defence when questioned at a press briefing maintained that the attackers were civilians and that homeguards had not been involved. But the people had seen much and drew their own conclusions.

It is understood that when the AGA reported the matter to the security point on the Eravur Kudiyiruppu border, he was told that this was the boundary of the forces there and that they were not supposed to go beyond.

The attack had taken place about 400 yards from the security post. At least two shots were fired which would have been clearly heard at the post. Not only was no attempt made to offer help, but no attempt was made to stop other vehicles going past their check point.

From the point of the attackers, they had chosen ideal conditions. They had lain in wait in a Tamil area abandoned during the arson and killing that followed the Eravur massacre. Thus their presence was not anticipated. It is logical that they were aware that the armed escort sent by the Chenkaladi army post would stop at the end of Eravur. Who could have given them such information? The attack was significantly carried out from a point close enough to the security post to ensure that the attackers would probably not be disturbed by Tigers. Further, in the Sri Lankan context, it is very seldom, if ever, that civilians had been instigated into violent acts without inspiration from an armed group.

The vehicles from the university had not seen the van that fell victim, because it had gone off the road at the bend and was hidden behind the lush greenery that followed in the train of the rainy season.

The known facts and the cover up by the government led ordinary people to believe that the forces were involved, and that it was, by default or otherwise, part of government policy. [\[Top\]](#)

## **2.4 Batticaloa & Environs**

When the army entered Batticaloa in June, the town did not witness the sensational massacres that took place elsewhere. But people were picked up and burning bodies started appearing at the rate of about 5 a day. The largest single incident in town was the appearance of 27 bodies down Bar Road. Three battalions of soldiers had moved into Batticaloa. One remained and two went back having finished their "job" Brigadier A.N.U. Seneviratne remained in charge of Batticaloa, with Brigadier Karunatileke at Valaichenai. During the early days, the army refused to entertain civilian delegations. A leading army officer is quoted as having said, We are different from the IPKF. They came to maintain peace. But we came to fight. At that stage the LTTE had vanished. Of killing there was a good deal. But of fighting, almost none!

An elderly person gave an experience to illustrate on what delicate threads lives of young boys hung in those days. He was passing an army checkpoint when a Roman Catholic priest who had finished a service came with a boy. The soldier at the checkpoint detained the boy and asked the priest to go. The priest tried explaining that the boy had just come from church worship. The soldier again asked him to go. The priest then appealed to others passing through, This fool does not understand English or Tamil. Can someone tell him in Sinhalese? The layman being a retired government servant went up to the soldier. The latter told him that he had no business here. The old man tried to explain calmly. The soldier being unyielding, the priest darted inside and grabbed the boy from his captors. Within those few moments the boy was already bleeding from two head injuries. The old man said, If someone was detained and you did not get him out immediately, you had to assume that he was finished! This was a commonly held view based on tragic experiences, capped by burning bodies. Often the myth that soldiers are foolish brutes and officers are not too bad, served both sides.

**Massacre at Thannamunai:** The next serious occurrence around Batticaloa, took place in Thannamunai, just north of Batticaloa. The exact location was Pillaiyarady, near Sathurukondan. Early in the morning about 7<sup>th</sup> August 1990, a cyclist who had come into town with injuries was taken to the Roman Catholic Church authorities. He reported that the army had moved in and massacred about 200 people and that their bodies were being burnt. When the army was contacted, they denied that such had taken place. After further insistence by civilians, the injured man who was both tired and confused was sent with Colonel Percy Fernando to the area. It was around 3.30 p.m. The man, in his state, was unable to locate the places where dead bodies were supposedly set on fire. The party returned to town a short time later, before nightfall.

The army wanted Mr. Arunagirinathan, chairman of the Batticaloa citizens committee to sign a statement to the effect that there had been no massacre as alleged. The chairman signed the statement and resigned from his position. It was then claimed in the Defence Ministry press briefing that citizens committee members who were taken for an inspection had said that there was no evidence of such an incident.

As things calmed down, nuns from the Holy Family convent and church officials went back to the area to restart the convent and the Boys town. They stumbled into about 100 skeletons.

**Twelve bodies in Iruthayapuram:** Although Batticaloa with its numerous sentry points appeared calm on the surface and there appeared to be a move towards not killing suspects detained, things could hardly be other than deceptive.

On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1991, a police patrol on bicycles through Iruthayapuram was fired at killing one policeman. According to the Virakesari (2<sup>nd</sup> April), uniformed persons arrived that evening and took several persons into custody. On the following morning, Sunday, twelve bodies were found dumped with stab wounds, and some with gun shot injuries. At the time of going to press, 7 bodies had been identified by relatives at the Batticaloa mortuary, whither they had been conveyed by the ICRC.

Iruthayapuram had witnessed a massacre prior to the Indo Lanka Accord. The recent massacre will persuade the people that the Sri Lankan forces are incapable of maintaining order and will add to the furthering of anarchy in the East. The militant strategy is also significant. Civilian cover was used to kill one policeman and go into hiding. There was no strategy or wish to protect civilians from reprisals.

**The Army's trip to Mudalaikudah:** Mudalaikudah (Crocodile Bay) lies in the hinterland across the lagoon from Batticaloa. Access is by ferry. The area is no mans land with no permanent army presence. The villagers are normally left alone. The LTTE comes occasionally. But when the army comes, pandemonium reigns.

A woman described a visit on one such occasion earlier this year. She had entered Mudalaikudah by ferry when gun shots were heard. Then there was panic as people were urged to run for it because the army had come. It was later learned that there had been no confrontation with the LTTE. TELO cadre who came with the army, it is said, had killed some alleged LTTE sympathisers. The woman saw 3 bodies on the road. The army's visit was brief.

**A note on the Army Operation in Vaharai:** In UTHR (J) [Report No. 6](#), (Section 6.5), we quoted local sources to the effect that over 100 civilian refugees were killed when the army moved in during January. When we tried to check this out from leading civilians in Batticaloa, no one was aware of deaths on that scale.

This points to some of the difficulties about getting accurate information about the East. Many persons who used to play a role had lost hope to a point that few are aware with any certainty, about what happens beyond their village or town. Documentation of information is not done at the level of organisation existing in 1987. When it comes to an incident in a remote area, some person who escapes from the noise and confusion would give an impressionistic picture. It is often difficult to go beyond that. Regarding Vaharai, one individual said that he was aware of 4 refugees from one particular village being killed. Refugees in the jungle would have been from several villages. It would thus not be possible to get an accurate picture unless there is an organisation having contacts in all villages actively involved in documentation.

In Trincomalee, people have been so intimidated by security forces, that there is little information on what had happened there. Another angle to this situation is that several persons who used to take risks in highlighting human rights violations have been killed after 1987, both in Batticaloa and in Trincomalee, by more than one Tamil militant group. [\[Top\]](#)

## **2.5 Kattankudy**

During the IPKF presence, the LTTE had good relations with the Muslims of Kattankudy, where they used to take shelter. When the LTTE assumed control in December 1989, the LTTE was said to be extremely well behaved during the first two weeks. Hopes were then very high. But from then on things gradually soured below the surface. The high taxes demanded by the LTTE placed the population which largely depended on trade under strain. The LTTE began taking a repressive approach to any form of independent Muslim activity. There were small incidents of acts against LTTE supporters and subsequent reprisals.

But the local leadership represented by the Federation of Mosques and Muslim Institutions (FMMI) took a pragmatic approach to the LTTE and constantly intervened to smoothen out matters. The FMMI was under considerable pressure from young activists who felt that it was a disgrace to palaver the LTTE unless it was prepared to respect Muslims and recognise their right to some autonomy. The FMMI together with other Muslim leaders constantly put friendly pressure on the LTTE to make such a commitment. At one point, in cracking down on all independent forms of Muslim expression, the LTTE banned the FMMI.

When Yogi visited the East subsequently, the local leaders explained to him the tense situation created by the banning of the FMMI. They told him that they had no wish to defy the LTTE and that they could carry on as before if Yogi officially lifted the ban imposed by the LTTE. This was done by Yogi. But Yogi also maintained a silence on other Muslim demands. However, normal relations continued. Newton, Karikalan, David and Ranjith Appa were among the LTTE leaders maintaining frequent, friendly contact with the Kattankudy elders.

**The June War :** With the beginning of the June War, the importance of Kattankudy to the residents of Batticaloa District increased. With the direct routes leading out of the district becoming closed, the Tamil traders and lorries unable to go out, Kattankudy traders who were able to fetch goods from Kalmunai became the source of food for the entire district. People from outside regularly flocked into Kattankudy to purchase food items.

Jinnah Hadjiaar was a mill owner living near the Manjanthoduwa border, who knew Ranjith Appa. After the outbreak of war, Hadjiaar had innocently told Ranjith Appa,

You must look after the people of Kattankudy and see that they come to no harm. The general tendency in Kattankudy even at that time was to rationalise the massacre of Muslim policemen at Rufus Kulam, together with their Sinhalese colleagues.

The residents of Kattankudy were taken by surprise, when the LTTE came into the village on 26<sup>th</sup> June, imposed a curfew, stood on both sides of the road and proceeded to loot the shops. One person who came out unawares was killed. The looting was part of a pattern everywhere in the district, including several Tamil villages. 93 shops were looted. What offended the Muslims most was that 3 shops adjoining a Mosque and maintained in support of the Mosque, were burnt. The Mosque itself was saved by the people dousing the fire after the LTTE had left. This spate of looting left residents of the district with almost no access to food.

The local leaders had maintained friendly relations with officials in the Roman Catholic Church, to whom they made representations. Within a week of the looting, LTTE leaders Newton and Ranjith Appa came to the village, had a meeting with 15 elders and conveyed their apologies for the mistake. They gave assurance of the LTTE's future good behaviour.

While the Muslims remained hopeful, another blow came on 12<sup>th</sup> July when the LTTE massacred at least 68 Muslims at Kurukkalmadam, 3 miles south of Kattankudy. (See next section for report). Though these persons killed were from Kattankudy, there was then, still a tendency to find reasons for the incident. There was a story around that the LTTE had done it because a Muslim deserter from its ranks had led the army to its Kanjikudichcharu hideout.

**The Massacre of 3<sup>rd</sup> August:** The massacre of 3<sup>rd</sup> August (See UTHR (J) [Nos. 4 & 5](#) for reports), finally persuaded the local people that there was no hope of accommodation with the LTTE. Like the one of 12<sup>th</sup> July, this too was totally unprovoked. The local leaders explained that the secretary, FMMI, issued a statement because there was a great deal of confusion about who was responsible. Among local residents itself there was a story that the army, which was camped at the Araiappattai and Navabkudah ends of the main road, was responsible. The leaders explained that they knew the LTTE and had seen who was responsible.

Just prior to the massacre, Ranjith Appa had gone to the house of Jinnah Hadjiaar and asked for his son in law. The son in law's small son had said that he was in the bathroom. Since Ranjith Appa was a familiar visitor, there was no alarm. When the son-in-law came to meet Ranjith, he was shot dead in the sight of his wife and son. The party then proceeded to two Mosques and massacred over 120 persons at 8.30 p.m. The massacre took place at the time of Sujuth - prostration, the most sacred of moments.

The leaders admitted that there were subsequently isolated instances of mob violence against Tamils. But the FMMI did largely restore calm. Since the Muslims felt helpless, it was decided that they should accept the government's offer to train home guards. One leader explained, We did not want an extremist organisation starting here. So we decided that the FMMI would nominate persons for homeguard training. Whenever the government decides to settle the problem, let them take back the arms they issued. The problem is then off our hands.

While homeguards may have been an expedient to restore calm, as elsewhere, they were of no use in defending the people, but were rather a nuisance to them, an easy target for the LTTE to boost their image, and a source of terror to sundry Tamils within

their reach particularly after an LTTE action. They became a part of the problem. In the sequel the LTTE killed Muslim stragglers. The homeguards responded in similar fashion. According to Muslim leaders 40 Muslim fishermen have been killed in several incidents. Following the killing of some Muslim fishermen last September, persons identified as Muslim homeguards abducted 17 Tamils and murdered them on the sea shore. This happened about 19<sup>th</sup> September, leading to an outcry to ban homeguards.

In the process the boundary areas between Kattankudy and the neighbouring Tamil villages became deserted. Muslims had to abandon the surrounding villages of Palamunai (800 families), Siharam, Ollikulam, Keechchanpallam, Kankeyan Odai and Manmunai (south of Kattankudy). Some of the residents of Palamunai and Kankeyan Odai have now gone back. The rest of the villages are completely deserted. Kattankudy now had a population of 40,000 confined to one square mile amongst the world's highest population densities.

Muslim stragglers trying to make a living by fetching firewood or by doing small business on bicycles, continued to be picked off by the LTTE. In one incident 8 Muslims are said to have been killed near Kallady, on the way to Batticaloa.

In another incident during the first week of December, two Muslim women of ages 65 and 55 went with two young boys in two bullock carts with drivers, to fetch things from their abandoned house in Ollikulam. All six were killed. A small boy of 8 is said to have been killed when his grandmother tried to hide him in her sari. Only 4 bodies were recovered.

**The present :** One elder said that he was not angry, but felt broken hearted about Tamil responsibility for the entire tragedy.

Kattankudy which depends heavily on trade has been hard hit by its confinement. 6000 acres of paddy land in Paduvankarai across the lagoon, belonging to its residents, have been abandoned for 5 years. They have also lost access to their coconut estates situated in Tamil areas.

Bishop Kingsley Swamipillai of the Roman Catholic Church gave the following anecdote to explain how Tamils tend to underestimate the difficulties and anxieties of Muslims. At a peace meeting last year Tamils complained how they have to spend Rs.50/ to go from Batticaloa to Araipattai because they cannot go through Kattankudy. They have to cross the lagoon, bypass Kattankudy on the other side, and cross the lagoon again. We have to spend Rs.500/ to go Valaichenai, because we cannot go through Batticaloa, replied the Muslims, We have to go to Kalmunai and then to Valaichenai via Amparai and Maha Oya. The Bishop added that this was an eye opener to many Tamils.

Among the handful of Muslim students attending Eastern University is one young boy offering Mathematics, acknowledged as brilliant by his teachers. His future is as bleak as that of many of his Tamil counterparts. He comes by van from Kattankudy. Gets down just after Kallady bridge, follows classes at the university's Uthaya Motors premises, and returns without loitering in Batticaloa. His opportunities for further studies are remote.

It is evident that the Muslims are as anxious as Tamils to restore normal relations. The trend of current politics on the part of both the government and the LTTE would be to keep the communities divided.

At the level of NGO's there appears to be little communication between those working among Tamils and those serving Muslims. While the former are largely funded from the West, the latter receive funds from Muslim sources. If there is better communication and a pooling of resources at that level, it would also help to bring some thaw at ground level. It is often the case that the NGO's serving Tamils are often subject to stories about the villainy of Muslims, and receive little information on the difficulties faced by them. This has added to the process leading to a feeling of isolation felt by the Muslim community. [\[Top\]](#)

## 2.6 Kurukkal Madam

On the way from Batticaloa to Kalmunai, there is a village every two or three miles and each has peculiar traditions of its own. Kurukkal Madam lies just south of Araipattai. It is a village where both aspiration and attainment in the field of education are high and many of its present and former inhabitants are in government service or in the professions. The admission figures from the village to the Eastern University are said to be very creditable. As the name suggests, the level of Hindu piety is also high in the village. The militant tradition in the village is said to be low in comparison with the neighbouring villages of Ambalanthurai, Kirankulam and Chettipalayam. About 11 of its members were in the PLOTE and TELO. After the LTTE decimated other groups in 1986, nearly all these persons left the East. Subsequently almost no one from the village joined the LTTE, and thus it experienced little trouble from the forces that came. Understandably, some suspicion and illfeeling was directed towards Kurukkal Madam from neighbouring villages.

The Massacre of Muslims: Following the end of the first week of July, a convoy of Kattankudi resident Muslims was proceeding thither, from Colombo, via Kalmunai. In the convoy were also lorries carrying a large quantity of goods. The convoy was stopped in Kurukkal Madam by the local LTTE group led by Mani a somewhat notorious figure. The captives were herded into a single house. A witness put their number at 60 to 80. It was widely understood that the initial motive was robbery.

How the decision to massacre was taken appears a little involved. A number of refugees from Karaitivu, Kalmunai and Pandiruppu were present at Kurukkal Madam. Muslim informers and helpers were associated in their minds with the widespread atrocities of the Sri Lankan forces. In terms of support and recruitment, however irresponsible, the LTTE had some populist advantage to be gained in the bloody assuaging of anti Muslim feelings. But it is unlikely that a local leader would have taken such a decision upon himself, since there was apparently no clear line at that time about Muslim civilians. Muslim sources in Kattankudy name a senior LTTE leader in the Batticaloa hierarchy as having given the order to kill. The Muslim civilians were later taken out and reportedly killed nearby. Witnesses saw old women and children among the victims. Among the motives suspected by residents is that of putting them into trouble when the army arrived. It was by then clear from what had happened elsewhere that the LTTE had no intention of stopping the army.

Those in Kurukkalmadam left in fear. Many left as refugees wading across water to Ambalanthurai. Several of them came back a few days later.

The army arrives: When the army arrived a few days later, a young man was in his house with his parents. A cyclist on the road, on seeing the army left the bicycle on the road and ran away. The army came into the house and took the young man and put him into a tractor containing six young boys with hands tied and eyes blindfolded, brought

from Chettipalayam. The young man's parents went up and pleaded. The mother was beaten. An officer who came behind released the young man. Later six bodies were found burnt, placed radially around a tyre. The army had also done its usual looting of TV sets and watches.

The local residents had further instances of the Tigers wanting to put them into trouble. On one occasion, a Tiger was standing near a house containing civilians while a patrol was coming, ready to run away. On another occasion a landmine was placed opposite the post office, then containing refugees. The mine did not go off when a patrol passed by. The LTTE later removed the mine.

When things settled down, it turned out that a number of people from the surrounding areas had been killed, while none had died from Kurukkal Madam itself. That strengthened the prevalent religious beliefs! [\[Top\]](#)

## **2.7 Kaluwanchikudy**

Many of the buildings in town were destroyed when the army shelled the area before moving in from Amparai. There used to be a big LTTE camp in the area. The shells were fired from Periya Porativu as the army moved along the Gonagolla Kaluwanchikudy road. There were initially the usual symptoms of Sri Lankan army occupation. But we shall confine ourselves to what happened subsequently, and for a change, to the rare positive side.

The battalion that came into occupation subsequently was commanded by Colonel Halangoda. The conduct of this unit is spoken of with high praise by local civilians and others in neighbouring areas. This period provided the civilians with both dignity and confidence. The standards set were very unusual for the Sri Lankan army.

On one occasion an army patrol as well as the LTTE ended up in the market at the same time. The troops were ordered not to fire for the fear of hitting civilians. The confrontation ended peacefully. In another incident an army patrol was ambushed in Kottai Kallar, south of Kaluwanchikudy. Two soldiers were killed. The army behaved itself and there were no reprisals against civilians. The villagers were asked to tell the LTTE that there was no objection to their coming into the village, provided they did so without arms.

When in mid December 1990, the STF was on a vindictive binge in Kallar and Periya Nilawanai further south, resulting in many disappearances, the army at Kaluwanchikudy was warning people not to proceed south as the STF was on a spree. Colonel Halangoda left earlier this year on an overseas scholarship. Because of a total political vacuum, such achievements are too often shortlived. Good officers, although they can decisively influence the character of their unit, cannot compensate for poor political wisdom. [\[Top\]](#)

## **2.8. (Periya) Kallar**

According to residents in Kallar, the worst incident with the IPKF was the kicking to death of a young boy by soldiers in public view. This happened after the outbreak of the October 1987 war. Later things were quiet. About July 1989, 26 boys from Kallar were conscripted for the ill fated TNA. The TNA was posted in the Methodist Church Community Hall, and were described as not aggressive. Strangely enough, many Tamil youth then took up residence in Amparai town to evade conscription. They were then well received, though Amparai became a death trap the following June.

In November 1989, the TNA confronted the LTTE at Thumpankerni, beyond Palugamam. 7 were killed. The rest, including those from Kallar, were taken prisoner and are missing since then.

**The June War:** On June 16<sup>th</sup>, the day on which the army arrived, a man was hacked to death on the causeway to Kottai Kallar. Five youths, including Suntheralingam, Paskaran, Sasikaran and Gunam, were taken by the army in a roundup and are missing. Subsequently, refugees from Veeramunai, Central Camp, Division 8, Malwattai and Mallikaitivu came to reside at a camp in Kallar. In late July, 35 of these refugees were rounded up by the STF and Muslim vigilantes, taken to the Kallar beach, and shot dead. Local residents were called in to carry the bodies into vehicles.

During those days the STF used to fire at people from a distance without verifying their targets. In September, a CTB driver, Eliyathamby Rasiah and conductor Arumugam Anandan, both from Kallar, on their way to work in Kalmunai, were shot dead by the STF. This happened at 6 a.m. in Periya Kallar. A retired gentleman, Kanthappar Vyramuththu was shot dead while crossing the road.

Kallar used to be a place patrolled by the STF in Periya Nilawanai (Maruthamunai) from the south, and the army in Kaluwanchikudy from the north. The Batticaloa district ends with Kallar. During late September, Sellappah Kanapathipillai (51) a teacher who was listening to the radio in his house with Maruthanayagam, a carpenter, were both taken out and shot by the army. Three relatives who went in search of their bodies never returned. Their bodies were recovered from the lagoon in a decomposed state in Onththachichi Madam. Three women relatives who went to Kaluwanchchikudy to meet the army are said to have been hacked and thrown into a well. The well was later covered up. Three mothers and three sons from Kallar travelling to Colombo by CTB bus in October, were taken at Malwattai by army personnel and Muslim home guards. They are still missing.

**Disappearances in December :** Two days after STF men were ambushed in Panama (about 7<sup>th</sup> December), in the south of Amparai District, the much dreaded white van doing nocturnal rounds, made its appearance in the area. On the first day it drove into Kallar at 7.30 p.m., with armed men in plain clothes. It went away at 8.30p.m. taking away six persons. Among them were the son (O.L student) and son-in-law (newly married) of Mr. Kanagasabai, and three members of the Nadarajah family, including Nadarajah himself, his sbro in law and his son (O.level student). The other was a recently married 27 year old son of Bobby Arulampalam.

Another who disappeared during this period was a graduate teacher Thayalan from Jaffna University. He was taken on the way to the National Savings Bank at Kalmunai. His father, Mr. Tissaveerasingham, principal of Thurainilawanai MV (High School), appealed to the Minister of Education and to the Director of Education, Batticaloa. There has been no response.

Others who went missing during this period are 17 traders from Kaluwanchikudi, Kurumanveli, Eruvil and Palugamam. These persons used to come on bicycles from the north to purchase goods from Muslim traders at Maruthamunai, after passing the STF camp. While this was happening, the army at Kaluwanchikudy was warning people not to go south (See also [UTHR \(J\) No.6](#)).

While this was going on people were wondering why the STF was resorting to reprisals there for what happened far south. The reason now believed by many is based on the discovery that the OIC at Thurainilawanai (Maruthamunai), was the namesake of the

commanding officer at Mankulam army camp, which fell to the LTTE less than two weeks prior to the disappearances.

According to local sources, 76 persons have been killed or are missing in Kallar, since the outbreak of the war. The figure includes the 35 refugees massacred in July. [\[Top\]](#)

## 2.9 Kalmunai

We add to what has been given in Reports 4 & 5. Following the killing of policemen and 10 soldiers on 11<sup>th</sup> June, Kalmunai town was subject to intense shelling by the army. On 14<sup>th</sup> June a responsible person concerned about the Girls Home, Kalmunai telephoned LTTE's Castro as to what they should do. Castro replied not to worry and that nothing would happen. Despite making plans for their withdrawal, they offered no guidance to the civilians. Since shells were falling all around, it was decided to evacuate the Girls Home. Late that night 150 girls and others walked to Karaitivu through Sainthamaruthu, a Muslim area. As the army got close, confusion also reigned in Karaitivu. Lacking guidance from anyone, plans were afoot to walk the girls 12 miles south to Akkaraipattu. This was abandoned when others in Karaitivu advised them to stay put. The girls got back to Kalmunai in July, when a lorry sent with food by church authorities in Colombo, was made available to transport them.

The massacre of hundreds by the troops which came into Kalmunai has been described in earlier reports. All other independent reports give variations on the figures, but the essential facts stand. The list of dead and missing in and around Kalmunai stands at above 1000. The army's attitude at that time is further illustrated by the following incident. The only son of a professional man was taken by the army in a round up. The parents found out the name of a senior commanding officer and went to the camp at nightfall. They took that risk because every moment mattered. They informed the sentry that they would like to speak to the officer named. The sentry put them through, thinking from their middle class bearing that the officer was known to them. They pleaded with the officer. The officer finally replied, I will release him because he is your only son. If you had another son, I certainly would not release him. There was no question of whether he had LTTE connections. All that mattered was that he was a Tamil. In judging the officer, it must be kept in mind that in an affair of low humanity, he came up at least to this level.

The scars and the atmosphere of terror in Kalmunai will take a long time to heal. With the exodus of a large number of senior government servants, the Tamil middle class has shrunk, making the community feel more abandoned. Kalmunai hospital now has no specialists and its medical staff is depleted. One of its last remaining Tamil doctors, a lady, fled Kalmunai, reportedly on receiving a note of demand for liberation tax. [\[Top\]](#)

## 2.10 Karaitivu

At the time we visited Karaitivu, the people were sullen and pessimistic. But it was said that killings of detainees by the STF had reached a very low ebb. STF patrols could be seen on bicycles in lanes, occasionally taking persons for an inquiry while the women screamed. It is said that nearly all those taken would be questioned and released. A few days later, when a bomb exploded in Akkaraipattu market, a number of persons disappeared in an area including Kalmunai and Karaitivu. Although Muslim homeguards are said to have been responsible, they together with the police and the STF are part of the same institution. Pretending that they are distinct, serves well to shuffle responsibility and to confuse. But it at the same time increases distrust and uncertainty.

We correct some figures given earlier. According to responsible local sources, when the army came into Karaitivu in June 1990, they arrested 64 in a round up, and after 2 weeks, released 5. The others are missing. 16 others died when prisoners were thrust into a room and a grenade was exploded. Of those killed in the explosion were Sri Ram, who was due to enter the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, and his younger brother. His elder brother escaped. The total killed and missing in Karaitivu since the outbreak of war is put at about 150.

These sources also gave the number of Tamils in the area killed in 1985 when the STF attacked in the company of a mob, as 19. A further 15 were missing. The damage to property was enormous.

According to local sources, an incident took place in Karaitivu about a month before the war of June 1990. This was the period during which the two sides were involved in a war of nerves. The government had set up a support police station in Karaitivu, manned by 15 to 20 mainly Muslim policemen. One night these policemen were killed. But no one claimed responsibility. The LTTE was in control at that time.

In what follows, we correct an account given in [Report 6](#), Section 6.5.

**STF round up of Refugee Camp, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1990 :** At 5.30 a.m the STF surrounded the refugee camp at Vipulananda College. Refugees from each village were asked to come out in turn, and were marched past persons described as Muslim informers. 28 persons were taken into custody. The manner in which persons were picked up was reminiscent of what happened in the Eastern University. Of the 28 picked up, 9 were refugees from Attapalam, a Tamil village next to the neighbouring Muslim village of Nintavur.

The STF then moved into the refugee camp premises and surrounded the main school building. Those outside heard a grenade explosion followed by automatic fire and another explosion. It turned out later that 3 LTTE cadre hiding in the ceiling had died.

Of the 28 taken, only one person from Attapalam was released. The rest are missing, mostly without any indication about their fate. Chelliah Namasivayam, one of those detained, is believed by his wife Manonmani to be in Magazine prison.

**What the Refugees experienced:** In what follows we briefly sketch out the experiences of refugees in the Karaitivu camp. The list is far from exhaustive.

**Amparai Town:** A leader from a community of Indian Tamil origin living in Iraikamam Rd, Mihindapura, related their experience. They were mainly Health Department labourers living in line rooms. At 3.30 p.m. on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 3 policemen came to their quarter, opened fire with their automatics, and started setting fire to their rooms. They caught some boys and threw them into the fire. It may be noted that except for the fact that these people spoke Tamil, they were as remote from the Tigers as ordinary Sinhalese.

At 7 p.m. the same evening, they were set upon by Sinhalese mobs. Among those killed were members of an entire family. A total of 70 persons from that community were killed. The survivors walked it to Karaitivu via Veeramunai and Samanthurai.

Although their work is of the most menial kind which few in this country would willingly perform, they are desperate to get back to work. The leader said that he could now make brief visits to Amparai. But whether they could live there remains in doubt. They have been told that they could get back to work at their own risk. The health

authorities are not prepared to guarantee their safety. Those who visit Amparai town are still subject to threatening remarks.

**Muhangala, Ingurana:** At 1.30 p.m. on 13<sup>th</sup> June, a Sinhalese mob attacked them with sticks and poles. Among those killed were 12 children, pregnant women and elderly persons. They walked to Akkaraipattu through sugar cane fields.

**Inginiyagala:** Approximately 40 Tamils were killed by police and Sinhalese mobs.

**Korakovil :** 30 killed.

**Attapalam:** The army rounded up 36 persons on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and killed 8. Out of the remaining 28, 23 were released. The fate of 5 persons is not known. In all, 58 persons are dead or missing. Of this number 22 were abducted by the army while travelling to Colombo by bus. Those in the refugee camp remain because of Muslim home guards.

**Thiraiakerni :** 41 died on 6<sup>th</sup> August when the STF came with Muslim home guards. The one person taken prisoner is missing.

Going through all these stories, one sees that a perverse sense of historical memory justifies any act of violence by any one party. There is no creative thrust by those who know better to overcome this politics of destruction. [\[Top\]](#)

## 2.11 Akkaraipattu

The Police mutiny: Discipline among policemen in the East was bad enough (see [Special Report No.3](#)). In Akkaraipattu, things had become unmanageable when a subInspector was in charge of a A?grade Police station. A new crisis developed when Inspector Vahalathanthri was put in charge of the station. The new Inspector broke all the good traditions of the force. He enforced a strict duty roster, inspection parades and banned the use of liquor in the station. He pulled up his men for getting civilians to dig bunkers, telling them that it was work which they ought to do themselves. His men were also reportedly pulled up for mistreating those under detention. Both the Muslim and the Tamil public saw stars. He later told a group of citizens that some were trying to bribe him. But that his father and grandfather had been in the police force, that he was a Christian (Roman Catholic), and that he thus took integrity in duty very seriously. He announced that he would only meet people officially and would not attend private parties. People spoke of him with enthusiasm and could not believe their ears.

In the night, about 15<sup>th</sup> March 1991, drunken policemen mutinied. Wild firing, mostly into the air, went on for a long time, causing people to think that there was an LTTE attack. Fortunately for the policemen, there wasn't one. The ASP, Kalmunai, had to come with a party to quell the mutiny. Subsequently many of the policemen were transferred. The Inspector told a person that he would take the challenge and continue to do what he was doing.

In a country where policemen have been promoted on instructions from on high, precisely for being corrupt, Inspector Vahalathanthri deserves both sympathy and good wishes.

The unexpected meeting: A man with a familiar face hailed us and proceeded to greet us with touching enthusiasm. He had met us last September when his family were among Sinhalese refugees in Amparai town. He insisted on being the host at a tea shop. As with most refugees, he found it depressing to live on handouts. He left his wife and children in Amparai and had resumed work in Akkaraipattu. Since there were differing versions of the destruction of the Buddhist temple in Amparai, he was asked

for his story. Believe me sir, he said, We saw it with our own eyes. The Tigers came in a jeep on 14<sup>th</sup> June about 3.00 p.m. and stole some of the things in the temple. They took an oil lamp and our sadhus (priest) fan. They also stole a radio cassette presented to the sadhu by the Tamil people in appreciation of what he had done for them. During the Tamil-Muslim clashes in 1985, the Tamils had sheltered in the temple. Later the Tigers bombed the temple which was once the refuge of Tamils.

That gave another element of complexity to the chequered history of the East. [\[Top\]](#)

## **2.12 Thirukkivil, Thambiluvil**

A sizeable refugee population still remains in this area. Most of them are from Veeramunai and Pottuvil. The former are in camps. The main body of refugees from Pottuvil is in Komary. In Thirukkivil, Thambiluvil itself, things are relatively calm. At least for 1 ½ months after the incident in Vinyagapuram there had been no further killings. It is known in one case at least in early March, that a person accused of supplying food to the LTTE was warned and sent home. There appeared to be a change. But for how long

The Tamil policemen from the region who survived, are now in a temporary police station next to the STF camp, on probation. Life is hard for them as local people do not take them seriously, and they in turn feel impelled to do things to show that they are real policemen.

Following the news item of early November on headless bodies, in the Island, no further headless bodies have been sighted. The Amparai correspondent to whom the item was sourced, had since also vanished from the pages of the Island. (See [Special Report No.3](#) for background information.) [\[Top\]](#)

## **2.13 Vinayagapuram**

About the first week of February, the STF at Thirukkivil picked up and reportedly killed two boys who had allegedly supplied food to the LTTE, in hiding around Kanjikudichcharu. Some said that the boys previously had EROS links. In response to this, a dhoby in Vinayagapuram who did washing for the STF was shot dead on the allegation that he had given information to the STF. Having made inquiries as to who shot the dhoby, the STF went to Vinayagapuram looking for two boys Kuna and Kumar. The boys not being present, the STF took their fathers. One man Shanmuganathan had two daughters at home. Having taken the father, the two girls were locked up. The girls screamed. The STF then let out the girls and chased them away. According to local sources, the STF had said, 'When we acted against the JVP in the South, we finished off entire families. But we are letting you go?'. The house was then set on fire. The other man taken was Vadivel, whose house too was set on fire. Nothing more was heard of Shanmuganathan and Vadivel.

It is said that the citizens' committee of Thirukkivil, Thambiluvil raised the matter with the STF. The STF commandant Lionel Karunasena, it is said, appeared to have been upset, and had assured them that this would not happen again. [\[Top\]](#)

## **2.14 Thandiyady**

The origin of headless bodies : Uthayakumar was a young boy from Thambiluvil who was looking for a new life. It is said that he was keenly studying the Bible. Then came the war of June 1990. Young boys were in a panic over the thought of the armed forces coming in. The

LTTE urged them to join the final battle rather than be killed while staying at home. Uthayakumar with many frightened boys followed the LTTE into the jungle. The STF then assumed control promising clemency.

Uthayakumar returned about a month later and was staying at home. He was pointed out to the STF by two informants moving with the STF at that time, and was picked up. One dawn in late July, his severed head and body were found a short distance from the STF camp at Thandiyady, between Vinayagapuram and Komari. His remains were interred by local villagers who had found them. Uthayakumar's was the first in a list of over 30 headless corpses found in the area. [↓](#)

## CHAPTER 3

### ***REPORTS PERSONAL***

#### [3.1 Saved by his dog](#)

#### [3.2 Shot by home guards](#)

#### [3.3 Taken from the Eastern University](#)

#### [3.4 Hide and Seek in Batticaloa Prison](#)

#### [3.5 Left for dead in Kallar](#)

### **3.1 SAVED BY HIS DOG**

Karuppiah Madhavan (40) from Nawalapitiya had married Sothimani of Eravur 4, and was the father of Selvi (13), Illankovan (10) and Senthilkumaran (8). The children were living with his mother and were schooling in Nawalapitiya. He had previously worked as a foreman for the Swedish firm Skanska on the Mahaveli project and later at Puttalam. They were barely settled in Eravur for 7 months. He was last working for Daya Stores, Batticaloa.

On 12th August, the day following the massacre of Muslims in Eravur, the army surrounded his house and dragged out Madhavan with his wife. Both were assaulted. As the army dragged Madhavan to a place 1/4 mile away, he shouted at his wife to run away to safety. The soldiers proceeded to kick him with their boots and assault him with rifle butts. He received injuries on his head and chest and lost some of his teeth. The soldiers inquired about Kuttithamby and Suresh. Madhavan said that he was new here and knew few people. He was losing his senses during the assault as breathing became difficult. Then an officer arrived and Madhavan explained to him in English. The officer asked him to be off or that Muslim thugs would kill him. Madhavan said that he had to go home and look for his wife. The officer followed him as he crawled home on his knees. Instead of helping him to walk, the soldiers tried to hold up his tummy. Finding Manonmani missing, he shouted for her. His voice was mostly a gasp. He went over the neighbourhood on all fours calling his wife. The officer warned him again that Muslim thugs would get him. With injuries on the head, teeth broken, a stab on the chest with a small knife, and boot nail injuries all over, including the abdomen, Madhavan went north at crawling pace, followed by his dog Jimmy.

By sheer force of will, he reached Rameshwaram, which was empty and devastated, at about 2.30 p.m. He was now 3 miles from the Eastern University and physical as well as

mental exhaustion caused him to faint. As he regained consciousness, he noticed that he was surrounded by crows and dogs, eager for his exposed flesh. Jimmy was close to him, frantically barking and keeping the predators at bay. Madhavan observed, "Even other creatures became corrupted by mankind, and had developed a taste for human flesh. If not for my faithful Jimmy, I would have been finished."

He continued, "I then heard the thundering noise of army trucks from the direction of my home in TC quarters, Eravur. I felt better and slowly walked another mile. I met two persons having a drink of coconut. They had come to look over their houses. On seeing me they offered me a drink of coconut and took me to Eastern University on a bicycle. That was the last time I saw my faithful Jimmy. I reached the university about quarter past six. Two days later my neighbours who were in the camp told me that Manonmani had been seen cut and thrown into a well. They had found her slippers and her rolled up sari. Silly girl. I suspected when I asked her to go away that she would not. She must have waited to see what became of me and Muslim thugs would have got her."

Madhavan was hospitalised in Batticaloa for 16 days. He has now aged, is semi-disabled and wears the scars of his ordeal. He is now in the Batticaloa Hindu College refugee camp and is looking for help in starting a small shop. [\[Top\]](#)

### **3.2 Shot by Home Guards:**

Mrs. Thangamma Thavarasa of Eravur fled her home with her family to Vantharumoolai (Eastern University) on 12th August, soon after the massacre of Muslims. On 30th August she left for home with two other women by a jungle path, to look over their belongings. Having walked two miles, they encountered Muslim home guards who were recently deployed, and began to run away. The home guards followed shooting and asked them to put up their hands. The women were then dragged and abused in filth. They were made to line up and remove their jewels. One home guard then proceeded to shoot the pleading women, reloading his gun each time. Thangamma was shot in the chest below the right shoulder and fainted. Selvam Arokiam survived with a shot in the throat and Pamanasom Esamma died immediately. After recovering consciousness Thangamma held her chest wound and walked to Vantharumoolai with Arokiam. On the way Arokiam collapsed. Hearing distant gunshots Thangamma's daughter Thavendri had come hither to find out. On seeing her mother, she shouted Amma and ran to her. She went back to the university and brought help. Both ladies were taken on bicycles and received first aid at the camp hospital. The ICRC took them to Batticaloa hospital the following day. Arokiam died en route.

Thangamma was discharged 10 days later and now lives at 7, Pioneer Road, Batticaloa. She faces many problems common to that area. Her son Thavendran (26), was taken by the STF from Eravur on 5th June 1987 and is missing since then. Her daughter Thavendri formerly worked for Adam Lebbe at Gaya Bakery, Eravur. Adam Lebbe is himself in difficulties and is unable to help. Her eldest daughter Mrs. Sakthivel had lost her husband and has two boys and a girl (11, 10 & 9 years) to mind. Thangamma had also brought up an orphan, now aged 9, for 6 years. Her skill at rolling cigars is profitable in the villages, but not in town. She now earns a meagre sum selling pieces of chewing tobacco in the market at 50 cents a piece. She thinks that dying would have been easier. [\[Top\]](#)

### **3.3 Taken from Eastern University:**

Thavarani Thambirajah (22) has been through much looking for her brother Uthayakumar (23). They are natives of Kommathurai. On 5th September the army surrounded the Eastern University. Thavarani saw her brother for the last time when the boys were separated from the girls. Uthayakumar was one of the 159 taken away after being pointed out by informers. Uthayakumar first worked as church keeper at the Chenkaladi Methodist Church, then at the dispensary of Dr. Ragunathan of Eravur and later with the Director at the Methodist Educational Centre, Chenkaladi. He was known to many leading persons who would vouch for his character. His misfortune may have been that he was known in Eravur.

The family went to the Roman Catholic Bishop. The Catholic Club circulated appeals to army camps. They went to the Morakkatanchenai army camp in early February this year and were given a date to call again. The mother went on 10th February and spoke to an official through a TELO interpreter. She was told that the army had not been able to check yet, and promised to give her further information by post. Nothing was heard. They lodged an appeal with the ICRC on 14th March. Among the children there is one other boy and 5 girls. [\[Top\]](#)

### **3.4 Hide and Seek in Batticaloa Prison:**

During the third week of January this year the army did a round up at Santhiveli and Kaluwankerny and altogether 10 prisoners were taken. They were sent to Batticaloa prison and were beaten on the way. All were subsequently released, two on 1st February and the rest, later. Many of the prisoners were middle aged (35 - 45 years) and had 3 - 6 children. Before their release they had some novel experiences. This was a period during which greater leniency was exercised. It is not representative of what took place earlier or what may come after.

The prisoners were often kept awake by screams in the night. Many of the torturers were said to be Muslim deserters from the LTTE. Sometimes they were driven in a van with tyres and petrol cans and their eyes tied, after threats to burn them, and then brought back after a 5 minute drive.

The ICRC used to come once a week and they used to be shown only a section of the prisoners. When the ICRC spoke to them individually, prisoners were usually afraid to speak of those not shown. Once when the ICRC arrived, 13 prisoners were quickly hustled away by the guards and only 8 shown. When the ICRC spoke to them they made a routine denial that there were other prisoners. But one boy signalled with his fingers. The ICRC visitors also apparently noticed that there were more shirts hanging than there were people. The ICRC left. The 13 were brought back by the guards. The ICRC officials then suddenly returned and took down details of the 13 they had not seen earlier. The prison officials were angry about the ICRC's discovery. They suspected one prisoner who knew English and had with the permission of the guards, helped the ICRC to fill up forms about other prisoners. After the ICRC left, this prisoner was assaulted.

The prison facilities, it is said, were not bad. They were given good food, including noodles. [\[Top\]](#)

### **3.5 Left for Dead in Kallar:**

A young man holding a very responsible job in the East left Kalmunai on 21st June 1990 when army reprisals were at its peak, and proceeded northwards with his younger brother. At Kallar they were stopped by the army, and the younger brother was asked to proceed with some of the others. The young man was then mercilessly assaulted and was left for dead against a fence. After the army left, the owner of the house came to look, and saw a movement of the young man's hand. His people were contacted in due course and he was warded in Kalmunai hospital.

Subsequently, he was taken twice by the police and released after being assaulted. His identity card was also taken. He now has a dent at the back of his head, two fingers broken by the police and hurriedly set in the local hospital, and a voice defect. He was asked to see a neuro-surgeon. But there are no neuro-surgeons in the East and he still finds it difficult to travel to Colombo.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **The Refugee Camp at the Eastern University, Vantharumoolai**

#### **. The Refugee camp at the Eastern University**

##### [4.1 The beginnings](#)

##### [4.2 From the records of Eastern University](#)

##### [4.3 How the people benefited from the camp](#)

##### [4.4 The LTTE and the camp](#)

##### [4.5 The disappearance of 159 inmates](#)

##### [4.6 The General arrives](#)

##### [4.7 The last days](#)

##### [4.8 Refuge in the jungle](#)

##### [4.9 The significance of the closure of the](#)

##### [Eastern University](#)

##### [4.10 A postscript](#)

#### **4.1 The Beginnings**

The army moved from Valaichenai through Eravur to Batticaloa on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, abandoning the areas through which they had moved. The LTTE launched a looting spree around

Chenkaladi and Eravur between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June, emptying the shops and food stores. On 25<sup>th</sup> July, the army came to the Eastern University refugee camp about 5 p.m. 10,000 refugees were in the camp at that time. The army left after taking 5 persons with the help of TELO informants. With the army establishing a camp at Kommathurai, those going south to Batticaloa had to bypass Kommathurai as the army did not permit passage. This became established practice.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August, the LTTE placed a mine in the residential area in Eravur - Chenkaladi. But nothing happened. Another mine was planted on 11<sup>th</sup> August (See [Report No.6, 4.5](#)). The army did not suffer any harm, but killed a few people around the place. One person was shot at point blank range. A cinema, two garages and several houses were burnt by the army.

Following the massacre at Eravur on the 11<sup>th</sup> night, the Tamils killed by the army and mobs included 18 massacred and burnt at the Eravur sawmill. The number registered at the university rose fourfold to 46,000. There was a floating population of about 10,000 who lived in outlying villages, but collected provisions at the university. The camp had to function amidst difficulties caused by both sides to the conflict. Once the LTTE planted a landmine in front. The refugees protested strongly and almost physically forced its removal. The army camp at Kommathurai, half a mile from the university, was among the nastiest. There were several instances of people (including the AGA's peon) being detained, and upon inquiry the matter was simply denied. Once a shell fell into the refugee camp killing one person. When a complaint was made, the Captain in charge simply replied that they ought to ask Prabhakaran. The area came under the command of the Brigadier at Valaichenai, noted for his draconian approach.

Given this situation, the camp, and the university dons and the administration who gave it leadership, had an important role to play. Because the university was an important institution, it attracted international attention. Journalists and NGO's which included the ICRC and the MSF were frequent visitors. The camp, apart from being an information centre, was also a hospital and a food distribution centre for a vast isolated region. Probably responding to pressure, some officials in the administration at Batticaloa expressed anxiety about the large number of persons registered. The camp authorities pointed out that if the administration in Batticaloa had the means to distribute food to the remote villages that consisted the floating population, they were welcome to take over. But since they sorely lacked the means, they would do well to allow the present arrangement to continue. The camp was developing a capacity to create a new social leadership. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.2 From the records of Eastern University:**

In functioning as an information centre, the staff maintained meticulous records of violations reported by the inmates of the camp. The emotional strain involved in sifting through hundreds of individual tragedies can hardly be imagined. The records are also very informative about what was happening. We learn that at least 8 Tamils were murdered in the Eravur-Chenkalady area on 25<sup>th</sup> August, soon after Muslim home guards were trained and deployed. It records at least 40 persons killed and 30 missing during the aftermath of the Eravur incident. 119 persons are recorded missing in a separate list. Those detained in the camp in two roundups by the army (5/9 and 23/9) total 175, nearly all of whom are missing.

We give some samples from the records:

## **Killed**

(25/8) K. T. David (60) of Eravur 4 - Killed by the forces

(25/8) Mrs. Kanapathipillai Santhanam of Eravur 5,

killed by unknown persons.

F.R. Joseph (58), Dental Technician - Assaulted to death while on duty in Eravur hospital.

(16/8) Kasipillai Thuraisamy (85) was at home in Kudiyiruppu (south of Eravur) when he was killed and burnt by a Muslim mob in the company of the forces.

(23/9) Mrs. Thuraisamy Parvathy, wife of the above had witnessed her husband being killed and burnt by the forces. She then came to reside at the University. On seeing the forces again, she fell down and died of shock.

(12/8) K.A. Arasakone (78). Shot dead while taking refuge at the house of Mr. Razak, Chairman (Eravur). Reported by wife Manonmany.

(25/7) Chinniah Thambiraja (42), died in the Eravur market of helicopter firing. (This was the army's second exercise in entering Eravur).

(25/8) S. Ganeshamoorthy (37), died of gunshots and partly burnt with tyre.

Balasundaram, fishmonger. Shot dead while returning from Kaluankerny.

## **Missing**

(16/9) Ramasamy Ranjan (24). Arrested while answering a call of nature just outside the university campus.

(12/8) Kandiah Alagathurai (37). Went to work into the field for Muslims. Did not return.

(15/8) Douglas Silva Gunasiri (34). Went on request to purchase cigarettes at Eravur. Reported missing by wife V.Susheela.

27/7) V Thevarasa (12). Taken by forces on way back to camp with father, after a bath.

(5/6) S. Krishnapillai (45) of Eravur. Went to Welikande to bring firewood. Did not return.  
[\[Top\]](#)

### **4.3 How the people benefited from the Camp:**

It was perhaps too early for the camp to make an impact on curbing the army's excesses. The ICRC which regularly visited the camp was able to help little in this respect. According to camp officials, the ICRC and the MSF did help them a lot, not so much in bringing food and

medicine, but by pressing government officials in Batticaloa to do more efficiently what they should have normally done.

They clarified that the epidemic of diarrhoea in the camp together with a number of deaths as reported in the press is not quite accurate. Many of these people had already fallen sick in the surrounding region and were brought to the camp hospital. If not for the camp, many more would have died and would have gone unrecorded. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.4 The LTTE and the camp:**

The camp officials are firm that the LTTE never demanded food and medicines from them and did not to their knowledge take anything out in large quantities. With the people having largely fled the surrounding villages, LTTE cadre in need of food came to their relatives in the camp. The LTTE had requested some university equipment. The staff refused, telling them that if they were removing things as an armed force, they could not stop them. The Chemistry laboratory was forced open and some chemicals were removed. The pick up truck belonging to the university was also taken away. This was reported to the army as a formality.

The LTTE was also irritated by losing its civilian cover in the surrounding areas. Instead of being sympathetic to the refugees who had suffered much, it became angry with them, accusing them of eating sufficiently, having electricity and watching television, while they were in difficulties outside. Towards the end of August the transformers supplying electricity to the university were blasted. This act was an indication that the LTTE did not approve of the camp and was feeling around for means to make it uninviting.

For the university as an institution catering for the development of the region, the loss of electric supply meant a significant loss. The university's Department of Agriculture was involved in a project to find organic alternatives to weedicides. They had been collecting and storing varieties of fungi with the aim of culturing ones that would attack weeds in rice fields while not harming the rice. Equipment had been provided by British Overseas Development Aid worth 10,000 pounds. Without electricity all this effort of storing went waste. This project has been suspen [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.5 The disappearance of 159 inmates**

Early morning on 5<sup>th</sup> September, the army surrounded the camp and wanted the men and women to line up separately in the grounds. These inmates were then paraded before informers. While the parade was taking place there was an explosion in the auditorium. It was later learnt that some LTTE cadre were hiding under the stage and a grenade of theirs had exploded. Three died and three others were taken away by the army. Of those who were paraded, 159 were taken away. There was much anger over this. A senior member of the university staff said: "The Muslim informers brought by the army simply pointed at anyone they knew. A young boy I knew well and who was taken away, was timid and would not even have so much as spoken to the Tigers." A Christian clergyman who ministered to a number of army officers said: "The whole thing was a sham. My sister's neighbour was a fishmonger whom I knew well. He had no connection with the Tigers. Someone must have been trying to get rid of a business competitor. As soon as I heard about it, I used my influence to try to get him out. I failed. Perhaps I was late." Going through the list of those taken, it turns out significantly that most of them had Eravur addresses. The ages of those detained ranged from 11 to 51.

Everyone felt depressed, helpless and listless. That evening a lorry from Save the Children Fund arrived with relief supplies. A senior don asked for help to unload the supplies and hoped that it would distract their minds. Immediately there was an uproar. People started shouting, "We do not want the supplies. We want our children. Send the lorry back." They wanted the camp leaders to go to the Kommathurai army camp and talk to them. The don explained, "I was here when they took people away. I am not an outsider who had just arrived to go to the camp to verify that this actually happened. The camp officials going is of no use. If you can persuade 36,000 people, we will all go. I will lead you. That will have some effect."

After the initial surprise, people started consulting with each other. The don reflected, "Had we all gone, the army may have opened fire. Some of us may have got killed. But we would have built something. I was waiting, thinking that on the balance they may decide to march. At length a spokesman asked me, "Can you go with the families of those taken?" They were obviously crestfallen. I told them that going with just the families would not have any effect. We then silently unloaded the lorry." [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.6. The General arrives:**

One of the advantages of the camp was the publicity it had received. On 8<sup>th</sup> September General Gerry Silva, who commanded the East, arrived with the ministerial delegation of political party representatives. During the talks, the camp officials raised with the general the release of those detained. The general declined to release them, saying words to the effect that those detained were all guilty. It was then asked whether, since those left in the camp had been screened, he could issue passes to them for their future protection. The general said that this would not be possible as they might tomorrow receive information about a person which they did not have today. The general's evasiveness made people uneasy. Someone asked why not have the army permanently surrounding the camp so that accusations about harbouring the LTTE need not be made. This was thought unfeasible. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.7 The last days:**

The army made a similar raid on the camp on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. On this day fighting had taken place between the army and the Tigers at kaluwankerny, a fishing village 3 miles east. Following this, 500 people from the village came to the refugee camp. Not relishing being alone in the village the Tigers ordered the villagers to get back, threatening penalties. A camp official on hearing this inquired of the Tigers the following day. They completely denied making such an order and said that the villagers could stay on.

On 27<sup>th</sup> September the Tigers abducted the university registrar for a so called inquiry (later released) and about the same time told the inmates of the camp that they must vacate by the 1<sup>st</sup> October. There was no public announcement. The word was passed on to groups of people. Perhaps to avoid questions, the matter was never taken up or discussed with the camp leadership. The latter came to know this from refugees who also told them, "If you ask us to stay, we will stay." A leader explained, "By asking them to stay, we would have got into a confrontation with the LTTE. It may not have done any good to us or to them. I told them that it must be their decision. I was hoping that they would decide to stay. Some said they would stay. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, I noticed that the number in camp had declined. There was the atmosphere of a sinking ship. I knew we were going. We asked for the remaining provisions to be distributed."

The discipline that had held all this time suddenly broke down. The community that was coming together disintegrated. The people, together with the LTTE, started stripping the university. The LTTE brought bullock carts. People took away things which meant nothing to them - chemical balances, micro computers, video screens etc. These gadgets and university furniture started appearing all over the surrounding area. Much of these were later dumped in places and the university is still receiving messages about things found. By 1<sup>st</sup> October the anarchy and panic came to an end. The home of 40,000 persons stood empty. Some of the people found their way to Batticaloa. But the larger number had headed for starvation and perils, natural and man made, in the surrounding jungles. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.8 Refuge in the jungle:**

The following experience related by a 34 year old labourer who left the university camp and took refuge in the jungle, is typical of thousands. He now lives in a refugee camp situated in a school in Batticaloa : “I together with my family were living in the jungle at Mylavedduvan. Apart from the rains, our immediate concern was about being bitten by snakes. (Batticaloa hospital then reported an average of 5 snake bite patients a day). Drinking water was also hard to come by. Food was in very short supply. Some of the farmers in the surrounding area gave us some sacks of paddy. Several people took to trade, particularly those old enough to look harmless and yet fit enough, going to Batticaloa, bringing things and selling them in the jungle. We had to sell a few things we had to survive. When children fell ill, it was a nightmare. It sometimes took 3 days to locate and buy one Disprin tablet. The army later restricted trade by allowing only 10 coconuts and 4 Disprins per person.

“The ICRC used to come at all hours and be of great service. The LTTE used to sometimes bring medicines.

“As the rains advanced things became nigh impossible. We used to be subject to bombing and helicopter straffing by the air force. I saw 7 or 8 persons who had been killed by helicopter fire. A number of people who ran into flood waters during the bombing were carried away. By the end of October we came to Batticaloa town.” [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.9 The significance of the closure of the Eastern University**

##### **Camp:**

One of the versions given out by the Tigers regarding the closure of the camp is that the army was causing persons to disappear, and thus they had to close the camp to prevent more people from disappearing. Since this claim received international publicity, it needs to be examined. The facts we have presented point to the patent truth.

Many more persons were taken away by the forces during round ups of several refugee camps in the East, usually after information leaked to the forces about Tiger infiltration. This happened for instance in Veeramunai and Sorikalmunai. 250 persons disappeared from the much smaller camp at Veeramunai. There was no university at Veeramunai. The camp elders had repeatedly asked the Tigers to keep away from the camp. There was never talk of closing the camp and leading the people into the jungle. The camp was closed on 12<sup>th</sup> August by the forces setting Muslim homeguards on a massacre. That too remained little known. (See [Report No.3](#), October 1990).

Such behaviour by the forces in refugee camps which receive sanctity in international law needed to be exposed. As a liberation group the obligation of the Tigers was to strengthen the people to fight against such things. The two major sets of disappearances from the Eastern University camp were serious matters which apart from the loss, affected the morale of the people and caused much insecurity.

Following the army action on 5<sup>th</sup> September many parents became afraid for their sons and sent them into the surrounding jungles. These youngsters then paid brief visits to the camp, or food was taken out to them. Some of these young in anger, frustration and hopelessness even joined the Tigers. (“Our government would not even let us sit in one place and starve in peace!”).

But the camp also had its strengths because of its international standing. Apart from the services it was providing, it was, through experience, developing a leadership with the will and capacity to fight back. The people were becoming organised and the camp had the ability to draw on some international machinery for its protection. It was because of this that everything that happened at the Eastern University received publicity. It was the obligation of the Tigers as a liberation group to discuss with the people and the leadership how the camp’s standing could be protected. They should have asked themselves in this situation, whether they ought to maintain a presence in the camp, and whether they should ask those who wished to feed them to do it outside. If the camp leadership could say that there was no Tiger presence in the camp, it would have strengthened their case. If this assurance were possible even the ICRC could have been asked to co-operate in running the camp. Maintaining the camp was the best defence the people had.

Never once did the Tigers talk to the camp leadership about the welfare of the camp or how the people could be helped to fight against the army menace.

If it is claimed that the people were asked to abandon the camp for their protection, it should be asked what alternative protection the Tigers provided for them? Did they provide food, medicines, shelter, protection from snakes and aerial attacks by the government? Using the people as pawns they conducted a massive international campaign appealing for help, for people sheltering in the jungles from the oppressive Sri Lankan government.

Going by past experience and from what happened in the camp itself, the Tigers were up to their usual cynicism, killing 4 birds with one stone against the background of crass brutality by Sri Lankan forces: 1. Any organised effort from which the people drew strength and confidence had to be crushed. People ought to be clay in the hands of the Tigers. 2. People dispersed from the camp become civilian cover. 3. Cornered youth are potential recruits. 4. Have an international campaign on the plight of the people.

Campaigning against oppression is a legitimate thing. But it had to be done on responsible premises.

More recently, the LTTE leader Karikalan told a rehabilitation official that they are against food handouts because the people are becoming lazy. He said that people should get back to their villages. His reasons are understandable. We have hardly met a refugee who is not anxious to return to work. When people have no hope and no prospect of ever returning to their homes and leading normal lives, they tend to become professional refugees when this situation is prolonged. How can the Tigers expect vulnerable people to return to their villages

when they persist in a policy of killing Muslims? This also explains their perverse military strategy. By attacking Muslims and using Tamil-Muslim enmity for mobilisation, the Tigers also brought about the large scale displacement of Tamils, causing themselves problems in mobility. This would not have arisen if good relations between Tamils and Muslims had been a part of their political approach. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **4.10 A postscript:**

A number of staff members from the Eastern University felt so dejected that they felt reluctant to talk about their experience. The twisted propaganda about the whole affair was so strong, that a young lecturer sounded as though he would never be believed. For those who had worked hard and shouldered much responsibility, the closure of the camp delivered such a blow as to drive them towards apathy and resignation. In comparison with the detailed information they had at their finger tips covering their period of activity, they are dimly aware of events in their region since then. One could now hardly find anything in the East that can be called an information centre. People have very vague impressions of what happens outside their town or village. What is the good of knowing when the liberators do not welcome those who care?

This experience of the university dons and administration explains the apathy and loss of confidence one sees everywhere in the East as a consequence of “liberation politics”. Sadly, some international figures pledged to protect the interests of the people, have helped the propagation of myths harmful to their interests. The victims have become voiceless.

Many of the younger inmates of the refugee camp who had much to complain of the conduct of the Tigers from the beginning, have been driven by the impressions left by the experience of the government’s conduct to have some sympathy for the Tigers. Their government not only violated the refugee camp, but in addition to their other miseries, bombed and strafed them in the jungles.

Regarding those who disappeared from the camp, a letter was received much later from Air Chief Marshal Walter Fernando of the Joint Operations Command. He acknowledged that about 30 were detained and that they were soon to be released. None of them appeared. A don commented on this angrily, “This letter is a sham. When we talked to General Silva on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 3 days after the incident, he never contested our figure of 159 arrested. Furthermore, there is an agreed procedure for the release of prisoners which the army has without exception adhered to. Those to be released are usually handed over to a group of senior citizens at some place like the (Roman Catholic) Bishops House.”

Air Chief Marshal Walter Fernando is a member of the Presidential Task Force on Human Rights!

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **The Armed Forces**

#### [The Armed Forces](#)

##### [5.1 The STF:](#)

## 5.2 The Army

In previous reports we have been trying to point out patterns in the conduct of the armed forces. The following adds to what has been said earlier.

### **5.1 The STF:**

The STF is a smaller and more closely knit organisation compared with other arms of the forces. It is also a good reflection of the political culture articulated from Colombo. Its methods are patronage, targetted terror and deviousness. Unlike with the army, this makes it extremely difficult to judge individual character among STF officers. Images are carefully cultivated and used for tactical ends. Some are widely known as decent and understanding. Some tough and brutal. Some play fatherly types who are helpless to prevent what happens.

In the episode of headless bodies, an impression was deliberately given that a young officer was responsible. At the time the incidence of headless bodies became frequent in late September 1990, the 'good man' in charge, it became known, had left the station. Comments by officers in the area were devious: "This chap was caught with a grenade. So and so had taken him. You know what would have happened," or "When we old blood do something we think twice. You know these young chaps. They think only once," and so it went on. Later this young officer was transferred out. When people started disappearing around Periyaniawanai, just after the ambushing of 7 STF men in Panama in December, the general talk was that the STF was generally alright, but that this happened because the young officer previously associated with headless bodies was now in charge at Periyaniawanai. This supposition though widely believed was wrong. The young officer was actually in Kalmunai. There were others who thought of this same young officer as decent and helpful.

What happened at Periyaniawanai had a touch of macabre artistry, very different from the predictable reprisals of the army. The STF did believe in terror as its creed and was bound to respond to the ambush in Panama. What happened appears to have involved some planning. It responded two days later in the northern extreme of the STF's area of control for what happened in the southern extreme. The arrival of the nocturnal white van in Periyaniawanai, and the perhaps incidental fact that the OIC was the namesake of the officer commanding the Mankulam army camp when it fell two weeks earlier, gave the incident touches for dramatic speculation. Although more than 25 persons disappeared for unclear reasons, the issue itself became lost. It received no publicity. People who expected reprisals near Panama, once satisfied that there were none, stopped looking. But for the people in the region who received the news from Periyaniawanai by word of mouth, there was a clear message of menace.

The incident for many reasons could not have been unknown to the STF high command. The army at Kaluwanchikudy was conscious of it to the point of warning people not to go south. They would have routinely contacted the STF at a higher level to find out what was amiss. [\[Top\]](#)

### **5.2 The Army**

It is widely known that among a large class of army officers there is reflected a feeling that they had been ill used by the political establishment, in being asked to fight an

'enemy' strengthened and fattened with the blessings of the government over 14 months. When the New Year ceasefire was called off by the government on 11<sup>th</sup> January, a widespread wrong impression was created and to some extent promoted after his death, that this resulted from the late Defence Minister's personal belligerence. The reasons were more complicated. A large section of the army is known to have expressed the feeling that, if the government can settle the matter politically, fine. But the process of asking them to stop fighting one day and resume the fight with a strengthened enemy another day must stop.

The lack of firm principles and direction in the political establishment, appears to have left many officers disturbed. What is their future, what and whom are they fighting and giving their lives for? Would their actions of today be scorned another day? are questions that would cross any intelligent mind. To the thinking of many officers, the war has already been messed up, and what can be salvaged must be salvaged politically. The military can best do a holding operation. The ground reality unlike in July 1987, is one where the army controls little in the North- East. In the East the forces barely control the towns and the main trunk roads. The rest is no man's land. Some of these officers are frank in admitting that it is poverty and not patriotism that brings people into the army. These officers would be generally against antagonising civilians unnecessarily and would not risk the lives of their men on doubtful ventures. The knowledge that the battalion which first went into Kalmunai and indulged in widespread massacres, later suffered grievous casualties to the point of wrecking the commander's career, has also made an impression on them.

Another group of officers tends to believe that the war can be won with more men and material - a political liability for an economically hard-pressed government. This group is looked upon by the former as furthering their careers by feeding the vain hopes of politicians who should be seriously looking for a political solution. This division is influential in determining the company kept by officers within the army.

It is much to the detriment of the army that the press and the politics prevent the ordinary people from thinking seriously about tragic realities. The games played by the government and the opposition, constantly praising the army without addressing issues, costs the country dearly in lives of civilians and soldiers. The army has become a sacred animal which is bleeding profusely. Everyone vaunts its sanctity. But the medicine to stop the bleeding is too dangerous to contemplate. For it will raise too many questions about the legacy on which the present politics thrive.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **The Social Fabric and Communal Relations**

#### [6.1 Why did the LTTE turn on the Muslims?](#)

##### [6.1.1 Majority arrogance](#)

#### [6.2 A Note On The Origins Of The Muslim Communities In Ceylon](#)

#### [6.3 The Character of Leadership in the East](#)

##### [6.3.1 The Politics of cap Turning:myth & reality](#)

##### [6.3.2 Sitting on a powder Keg :](#)

## [6.4 The Land Question In Tamil-Muslim Relations](#)

### [6.4.1 The Beginnings:](#)

### [6.4.2 The 1960's and after:](#)

### [6.4.3 A Tamil Perception from Kalmunai:](#)

#### [6.4.4 Truth and Fiction:](#)

## [6.5 Muslim Perceptions](#)

### **6.1 Why did the LTTE turn on the Muslims?**

#### **6.1.1 Majority arrogance**

The answer has perhaps more than one angle to it and we have tried to answer it in previous reports in terms of the nervousness felt by the LTTE in the face of any form of Muslim self-assertion. The six months of LTTE rule from the departure of the IPKF was characterised by increasing repression against Muslims. If a common question at sentry points today is, are you a Tamil then it used to be, Are you a Muslim? Not only the Muslim Congress, even institutions managing Mosques were sometimes banned. We have also tried to explain the decision to kill Muslim policemen and the successive massacres of Muslims in terms of an interplay between the accumulated feelings of suspicion and hatred that had grown on the LTTE leadership and the populist mileage that was to be gained, by pandering to anti-Muslim feelings prevalent in some areas of the East. These feelings grew rapidly as the state set about using Muslim anger aroused by massacres of Muslims by Tigers.

The expulsion of Muslims integrated into the North made no political sense, except to pander to Tamil feelings in the East. This systematic persecution renders the explanation attributing the whole episode to a mistake by some undisciplined Tiger area leaders in the Amparai District untenable.

What we were told in the course of conversations with Muslim leaders in the East gives substance to what we have pointed to as the main reason. Indeed the narrow totalitarian claims of Tiger ideology would have found it difficult to adapt to any social diversity. Being both numerous and conscious of an identity, the Tigers saw in the Eastern Muslims an immediate challenge to their claims.

But most Muslim community leaders in the East tried to do what many of their Tamil counterparts did twenty years earlier. They were anxious to preserve the economic and social gains of the Muslims and did not want any ruinous extremism. They also had to contend with younger Muslims feeling humiliated and resentful over the conduct of and demands made by the Tigers.

Muslims leaders, many of whom closely identified with the Tigers, constantly pleaded with them to make their position on Muslim rights clear. A document that came up in these discussions was one drawn up in 1987 when several Muslim leaders held talks with the LTTE leadership in Tamil Nadu. The Muslim organisations represented in these talks included the ACML and the MULF. A point on which agreement is said to have been

reached is that of Muslim representation in the projected North-East provincial council. Since Muslims formed 34% of the population in the East as against 5% in the North, representatives of Eastern Muslims asked for compensatory representation to secure their agreement for the merger of the North and East. It is said that the LTTE had agreed to 33% representation for Muslims. The idea was a diluted form of the 50 - 50 representation sought by the Tamil leader G.G. Ponnampalam prior to independence for Ceylon in 1948.

The Muslim leaders say that not only did the LTTE agree to these rights, it translated the document into Arabic and sent it to Islamic nations and organisations. That was in 1987 when the LTTE was in a much weaker position. In 1990 it had become the dominant power in the North-East. According to these Muslim leaders, despite their numerous and apparently friendly talks with LTTE leaders such as Balasingam and Yogi, the latter studiously avoided any substantive commitment on Muslim rights. What suggests itself is the same psychology that moved Sinhalese majority leaders in the past when faced with Tamil demands and reminded of promises. First it was silent resentment from a feeling that 'these people are becoming too much'. The next stage was complicity in communal, violence directed against Tamils - 'They should be taught a lesson', being the governing sentiment of majority arrogance. [\[Top\]](#)

### 6.1.2 Yogis' speech:

The following are extracts from a speech made by Yogi, the LTTE's political spokesman. The speech was delivered at the University of Jaffna shortly after the expulsion of Muslims in October 1990. The arrogance, muddle headedness, and most importantly the similarity to Sinhalese communalist demonology are self evident. This serves to illustrate the foregoing:

"The expulsion of Muslims from the North has resulted in immense shock and amazement among the Tamil people. Why did we expel the Muslims 4000 Tamils were killed in the Eastern Province, of which 2000 were killed by Muslim goons and home guards. Muslims claim that they are neither Sinhalese nor Tamils, but are Arabs. They use this in pursuit of their selfish aims.....They are Tamils. They study in Tamil at Tamil schools. Their culture is not Arab. If it were so their women will be wearing purdah, which is not done here....

"The Muslims form 35% of the East and 5% of the North. In Sri Lanka they are 7% . In the merged North-East they form 17%. The Muslims of the East claim that they are losing privileges due to 35%. Why cannot they see that 5% Muslims in the North are obtaining privileges owed to 17% Thus those who would receive 2% privileges in the whole of Sri Lanka would receive 17% in the merged North-East. But the Muslims in the East do not see this.

"If the Muslims in the East are not concerned about the Northern Muslims, why should we worry about them?

"In the Amparai District 10 Tamils villages are no more... 70000 Tamils there have been uprooted. The news of these atrocities did not come out because no one was left to write them. Why do those who did not worry about 70000 Tamils, now worry about 40000 Muslims expelled from the North Unlike what happened to those Tamils, we did not kill them, rape them or loot their property. We only sent them out.

"Some are worried whether a Muslim Jihad organisation would also develop in the North. Premadasa will not tolerate a third armed power...

“We made several promises to the Muslims. We promised them 35% of jobs in the North-East. We promised them the Deputy Chief Ministership. We promised that the allocation of land will be in proportion to the ethnic ratios in the District. The Muslims did not listen. On the contrary, they joined forces with the Sinhalese army and the Sri Lankan state and set about destroying us....

“Tamil Eelam is a secular state which has no distinctions of religion or caste.... There is no room here for division.

“The Muslims must accept that they are Tamils. They must understand that they are descendents of Arabs who married Tamil women.”

This speech was delivered in the presence of many of those presumed to be intellectual leaders of Tamils and to an audience in the University of Jaffna. By the expulsion of Muslims, the university had lost a sizeable section of its students and some of its very able and popular teachers. Yet, despite the serious questions raised by the speech and the sensitive chords touched in view of the Tamils’ own history as an oppressed minority, the speaker was not even mildly challenged, and no discussion ensued. Is it that all these intellectuals had suddenly become stark blind Or, is it something else It is sad to note that goods, particularly electrical items, looted from Muslims are now being sold at a ‘supermarket’ established at the Jaffna BMC Building, and people are buying. (There is however no electricity). Many are pained by this loss of social inhibition resulting from the politics. Others cynically refer to the selling place as the Jaffna Duty-Free shop.

Yogi’s speech should not be treated in isolation. In 1887, a little over a century ago, Sir Ponnampalam Ramanathan, an eminent Tamil leader, published a paper arguing precisely the same thing - that Muslims are Tamils by nationality and Mohamedan by faith. This paper gave much offence and a paper in response to this was published in 1907 by Mr. N.I.L.A. Azeez, a Muslim intellectual and religious leader. It is evident that for over a hundred years the Tamils have largely refused to respect Muslim feelings and self-perceptions. A common nationality, in the wider sense, needs to be worked for and not imposed by fiat. A Ceylonese or Sri Lankan nationality was once a possibility, but it was not worked for.

The following note, compiled from published material, attempts to shed some light on the rich history of the diverse communities that consist the Muslims of Ceylon.

## **6.2 A Note On The Origins Of The Muslim Communities In Ceylon**

The continual use of the term ‘Muslim’ to describe those whose right of abode, or businesses, or land, or lives, are under attack is confusing. In some contexts it can be taken to imply that communities such as the Moors and Malays, who are almost entirely or mostly Muslim by religion, do not have a distinctive Sri Lankan identity or even Sri Lankan identity as the Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhalese do. A century ago, in 1885, Ponnambalam Ramanathan ‘explained’ in a paper he wrote for, the Royal Asiatic Society, that the Tamil speaking Sri Lankan Muslims were Tamils by Nationality. This simplistic and incorrect view caused offence. Understandably so, even if Ramanathan was not intending to be insulting or racist. But what has recently been said about and done to the Moors of the North and East by the LTTE and their supporters is insulting and racist. It is also based on ignorance.

The great majority of Sri Lankan Muslims are Sri Lanka Moors. Moreover, most of the Sri Lankan Malays are Muslims. As in the case of those who are lumped together as Sinhalese or

Sri Lankan Tamils or Burghers, the formation of these communities took a long period, and is a complex unity of many elements: different waves of immigration, intermarriage, and conversion. It has been suggested that the origins of what came to be called in Sinhala Yonnu (Marakalla) and in Tamil Chonakar (i.e. the 'Moors') were Arab immigrants from Southwest Asia in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, or earlier. For at least a thousand years they have been an important part of Sri Lanka's history as Moors, and not as Tamils or Sinhalese. Their settlement in and economic development of the Northwest coastal region, for example, may have given them a more important role than the Tamils played in what came to be Mannar.

The Moors also were prominent in the resistance to the Portuguese forces when they attempted their conquest. They lost much of the influence and prosperity they had enjoyed in pre-colonial times. When the Sri Lankans of the coastal areas came under Dutch rule in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the Moors were persecuted by the Dutch rulers and some of them migrated to the areas under Kandyan rule. No doubt the fact that among their new subjects this community, carrying on extensive commerce independently and successfully between foreign countries and both the coastal communities and the Kandyan kingdom made them the rivals of the Dutch traders. Before the Dutch, and even during their rule, the indigenous community which developed urban centres most in Sri Lanka were the Moors.

The different ethnic groups and nationalities who have composed the people of Sri Lanka for over a millenium, and since then, they have had different characteristics and ways of life. They lived tolerating one another's religions and cultural differences. The language spoken before the 16<sup>th</sup> Century were only two - Sinhala and Tamil. This was because the settlers who became Moors intermarried with the local population, and their descendants adopted the language of their mothers.

The relations between the Moors and the Tamils in different parts of Sri Lanka - the North, the East, the North West etc. - at different times is complex. But at a time when there is a struggle on to end oppression and domination of any ethnic group or nation by any other, it is important for Tamils to resist any attempt to deny the Muslims' separate identity, rights of domicile, economic security, and right to life by groups which have greater military or political power. The Moors and Malays were victims of colonialism, like the rest of us. Since Independence they, like the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Hill country Tamils, have tried to achieve the security and peace they need. [\[Top\]](#)

## **6.3 The Character of Leadership in the East**

### **6.3.1 The Politics of cap Turning:myth & reality**

Too often political arrangements for the East are discussed by people who do not understand the delicate communal relations, their fears, their historcial experience and the manner in which leadership has been exercised. Seldom is any thought given to uniting the communities and give them the confidence to co-exist without feeling threatened. Constitutional arrangements with separate Muslim units violate the economic realities of the East. The matter of SInhalese colonisation also links with the control of water resources crucial to Tamils and Muslims. Sinhalese chauvinist politics which dominates the parliament aims at Sinhaling the East and hence does not look beyond opposing the North-East merger. Northern Tamils see the East through the pan Tamil ideology rooted in Jaffna looking to a monolithic leadership, and prone to see dissent as treachery. To them the East is an exasperating enigma. The Colombo based Muslim leadership to serve its own power interests of patronage under major Sinhalese dominated parties tends to place

barriers between Tamils and Muslims in the East. Examining the manner in which leadership is exercised in the East, gives us some insight into their peculiar problems.

In the 1950's when the Tamils in the East were a more robust community, the pan Tamil appeal of the Federal Party caught on rapidly in the East. It also had a large number of Muslim adherents. This ideology came to be challenged by the weakening of the Tamil community. The small Tamil middle class in the East because of its professional bias had a tendency to drift to Colombo. The Muslim community was becoming stronger through increasing prosperity in trade and agriculture. Sinhalese colonisation was another factor in creating insecurity.

When the Tamils were more confident of themselves, there was much contempt for Muslim MP's who got elected on Tamil votes and then changed over to the ruling party. The term 'Thoppi Piratti' (Turning the inside of the cap out) became a term of contempt associated with Muslims. That prevented any deeper examination of such conduct. As Tamils became a weaker and less confident community, the same phenomenon overtook many leaders of the Tamil community who made a virtue of similar conduct. But the same disparaging epithets were not applied to them with the similar force.

Early Muslim examples were Kariappan and Mustafa. Prominent examples on the Tamil side were Kanagaratnam and Rajadurai, elected MP for Pottuvil and Batticaloa respectively in 1977. Like in many cases of crossing over islandwide, there was much controversy connected with personal difficulties surrounding Kanagaratnam's crossing from the TULF into the UNP. But his subsequent actions earned much local praise and others followed his example. It was an area where Tamils were feeling increasingly threatened and isolated, in respect of land, opportunities and security.

Although most articulate Tamils in the area subscribe to pan Tamil sentiments and regard the realisation of an autonomous Tamil homeland as being necessary for their long term survival, pressing immediate problems push them tactically into different courses. In the Amparai district many Tamils looked upon the creation of Tamil AGA's divisions to safeguard themselves from perceived Muslim encroachments on land, and the creation of local hospitals and schools as difficulties in travel and security increased, as absolutely urgent. These could be obtained only when the MP representing them was with the government. People were forced to think along these lines because the process of government was flawed and discrimination against Tamils a reality.

A resident of Thirukkivil who is a TULF sympathiser said, "Although many of us sympathise with the TULF, what Kanagaratnam did has been justified by events. A Sinhalese MP in the government may have done much more for his area, using ministerial and corporation funds. Kanagaratnam and Ranganayaki Pathmanathan, his sister, brought us schools, irrigation and hospitals through administering the MP's development allocation honestly. For us having an MP who was Tamil was very important. Once an independent Tamil contestant who had a good chance of winning, lost narrowly because key personages in the village worked against him, canvassing for a Muslim member who got elected. When it came to jobs, the few influential persons who worked for the Muslim member were able to secure jobs for their relatives. But others in the village were left in the cold. I had passed my A. Levels and my family was financially desperate. I could not afford to enter university. I had to approach the MP through agents, was sent here and there, to no avail. It was Kanagaratnam who later, upon election obtained jobs for many in the village. But he never let down the Tamil cause."

An elder in Karaitivu who had attended the Trincomalee Federal Party convention in 1956, later associated him with Kanagaratnam and became a UNP member of the Amparai DDC in 1981. He reflected on his role with satisfaction, “We have the sea on one side and on the other 3 sides we are surrounded by the Muslim villages of Sainthamaruthu (N), Samanthaurai(W) and Nintavur(S). For our security and well being, we needed an AGA’s division, a school where our children could study up to university entrance instead of going to Kalmunai, and a hospital. Thank god, these were obtained when Kanagaratnam was MP. We created the Tamil AGA’s divisions of Karaitivu and Aladi Vembu in Akkaraipattu. Where would we have been without these during the recent troubles If we did not have a hospital, whatever would have happened to injured Tamil civilians? I have retired from public life. I can now go away with the satisfaction that I did my part.”

He added significantly, “Mind you, I never let down the Tamil cause. Even as a DDC member of the UNP, I always spoke up for Tamil. When Paul Nallayayagam reported an atrocity where the STF had rounded up and killed a large number of Tamil youth, he was put on trial. I testified as a witness and despite my UNP association, the police were looking for me in Colombo and I had to be in hiding”. Thus behind the politics of ‘cap turning’, one could find instances of genuine sacrifice and nobility.

Whenever there is a feeling of beleagueredness, one does find such politics. If we go back to the period which saw Muslim MP’s crossing the floor, we find similar pressures at work. In the 50’s and 60’s, the Eastern Muslims saw themselves a backward community in respect of the Tamils, and felt that they would remain at a disadvantage if they remained in the opposition with the Tamils. The governments who wanted the MP’s to crossover understood this and used it. This practice became a means of obtaining better services, better schools and even having good teachers transferred to these schools. In the end the Tamils were left feeling that the Muslims had gained an advantage at their expense.

The feeling of beleagueredness among Tamils led to twin reactions. One was a move to seek government patronage to offset the Muslims’ perceived advantage. The other was the growing explosive militancy.

It may also be noted that when leaders of Muslim villages like Eravur and Kattankudy negotiated with the LTTE early last year, their aim in the first instance to secure the distinct economic interests of their immediate community (Eravur depended largely on farming, while Kattankudy on trade). But in talking about the rights of the broader Muslim community, they presented a common front.[\[Top\]](#)

### **6.3.2 Sitting on a powder Keg :**

Behind politics of this kind lies a feeling of fatalism, weakness and paranoia. Each community felt that its world was contracting, it could not trust the other and that it had to grab whatever it could and save it for the future. The cruciality of carving up an AGA’s division corresponded to putting up a barbed wire fence to prevent the world from contracting further through alien advance. The end result was that brokers of power in the East became parties from outside, from whom patronage was sought. Whether it was the Sri Lankan government or the LTTE, a more recent arrival, they had the common aim of keeping the people of the East divided for their purposes.

When a weak people seeks patronage from a powerful force that it cannot influence, and whose overall purpose would not tolerate the liberty of the people, the result is bound to be a feeling of humiliation and anger among a large section. However well founded the expedient sought by Kanagaratnam's ilk, he was identified with a government bent on destroying the feasibility of a Tamil homeland and marginalising the Tamils. It raised many moral questions. Even though the Muslim MP's in the East belonged to one of the main Southern parties, there was skepticism among the Muslims that the government meant well by them. Indeed, several Muslim youth joined the Tamil militancy.

Likewise when Muslim leaders sought accommodation with the LTTE in return for securing basic Muslim rights, it gave rise to anger and serious reservations among Muslims. There were moral issues overlooked. Was the LTTE which was incapable of recognising the democratic rights of Tamils, going to respect the right of Muslims to have independent organisations presiding over their religious and cultural life? Within a few weeks of its arrival the LTTE showed a repressive face towards Muslims. A Muslim elder in Kattankudy, said, pointing to some of his younger colleagues, "When I was talking to the LTTE, I had serious misunderstandings with them".

In the process of this politics, we have on the one hand a set of leaders who seek to avert trouble and bloodshed by desperately seeking compromises that cannot be had, and on the other hand a trend towards an explosive militancy.

A Muslim leader pointed to current peace talks at police stations as signifying the enfeeblement of both communities. Each side would ordinarily pour out a list of grievances against the other. Having security officials presiding places a natural inhibition against pointing to the chief culprit. The leader said, "We have become so small that we can only talk about others' faults. If we change the exercise to one of talking about our own faults and misdeeds, it may then turn out to be more productive".

The East is caught in a vice between the government's ultimate aim of Sinhalese colonisation and the Tigers' bid for power at any cost. Both these are self defeating. The explosive potency of the Tamil militancy in the East is a corollary to the powerlessness of the people. The same process could overtake the Muslims. It is a fatal error to gloat over another's feeling of helplessness.

This is why we have called the Sinhalese chauvinist program of colonisation a mad policy with serious repercussions for the nation.

The origin of problems in the East owed to flawed government and the intrusion of patronage in the sharing of resources. Those who burn night oil in the academic exercise of trying to decide the ownership of the East by reference to historical antiquity, are divorced from ground realities. Their emotive enthusiasm will only contribute towards the disintegration of the nation. They do not even see the gravity of the humiliation of their national army despite its brutal endeavours.

A national policy towards the East should first aim at giving confidence to the Tamils and Muslims, and allow commonsense to smoothen out their intertwined lives. A policy of land settlement and its present momentum should be halted and consensus must be reached to handle the effects of the past.

## 6.4 The Land Question In Tamil-Muslim Relations

There is a very big land question in the Amparai District that pertains to state sponsored colonisation of Sinhalese. (See Ch. 2 and Ch. 8 of Report No.5). This matter straddles the questions of land ownership in Sinhalese areas, state ideology, and the tendency towards multi-nationalisation of agriculture. This problem poses a grave threat to the existence and security of Tamils and Muslims in the area. There is also a less serious land question that has raised tempers and has kept Tamils and Muslims apart in this area, obscuring the common danger faced by both. This sketch tries to explain the problem. It needs to be understood so that the accretion of myths can be cast aside and some agreement reached.

### 6.4.1 The Beginnings:

In keeping with the Jaffna model, the Tamils here oriented their values towards educational qualifications, government jobs and the professions. For those who made it, career advancement first moving to Batticaloa town and then settling down in Colombo. There was no development in the East, as in many Sinhalese provinces. Those with high educational attainments were rare in the East in comparison with Jaffna. The Tamils in the East thus lost most of those persons who should have given strength and stability to the community. It was much later when their physical security was threatened that Tamils came to realise the importance of securing land, to the point of making it a political issue.

But for much of the time until the 60's, the transfer of land to Muslims was peaceful, legal and uncontroversial. The kind of thing said by a Tamil political leader is commonly heard in the Amparai District: "My father in law had nine children and 30 acres of paddy land. He employed a Muslim cultivator, whose two sons worked with him. The second son used to do bird watching from dawn until about 9.00 a.m. He would then catch fish in the lagoon for sale. He started going to school late and just managed to pass his SSC. Both sons are doing well now. The second fellow became a school teacher and owns paddy lands and a fleet of lorries. My father in law has sold all his paddy land and has nothing. He says with satisfaction that three of his children are graduates (who have now left the district) and that he has settled his children. Only he does not say how much he drank".

The one incident of major violence in the 50's was the rioting in Sammanthurai in 1954, that began with a minor private quarrel.

As we had mentioned in [Special Report No. 3](#), the growing economic power of a section of the Muslims set certain trends in motion, which looked at rationally would have been innocuous. It resulted in prejudices and stereotypes which were used by politicians to consolidate themselves. The Jaffna dominated politics of the Tamils never understood the richness of two communities coexisting in the East. Its role was divisive and encouraged animosities. Ultimately all militant groups that were a product of Tamil politics, did mete out collective punishment to the Muslims.

To place the current position of the Eastern Muslims in perspective, it may be useful to compare it with the position occupied by the Islanders in the social life of Jaffna. The offshore Islanders in Jaffna, used to perils of sailing in the past, have been traders for centuries. In recent times their influence had spread all the way from Jaffna town to Galle. Because of their wealth, they have been buying up chunks of residential property in Jaffna, and in consequence of the dowry system have secured professional bridegrooms from other parts of Jaffna for their daughters. By this, there has been a shift towards greater interest in education. Their political outlook as reflected in voting patterns is pragmatic rather than nationalist. Their success resulted in prejudice and stereotyping. There were even sections in

Jaffna who referred to what the Islanders suffered during the army operation last August as deserved punishment. While the Islanders were similar to Eastern Muslims in their dominance in trade, they belonged to the same ethnic group as the other Jaffna Tamils. Nevertheless, they came in for strong emotions and unfair accusations.

But there were some basic unmistakable trends in the East which were closely linked to the economic and social orientation of the two communities. The Tamil middle class had weak ties with the land. The Muslims on the other hand were firmly rooted to the land on which they built their economic life and in consequence became influential.[\[Top\]](#)

#### **6.4.2 The 1960's and after:**

When a section of Muslims became economically active, there was a natural wish on their part to advance educationally and socially. A Muslim leadership representing the above section, similar to that obtaining in other communities, tended to be shortsighted, and was not very sensitive about making the Tamils feel insecure. In a period which was becoming politically charged, the government was only too glad to use its power to divide the Tamils and Muslims. The fact is that for reasons justifiable or otherwise, Kariappar, a Muslim leader, who was elected MP for Kalmunai in 1956 on a Federal Party ticket with Tamil votes, crossed over to the government side shortly afterwards. Tamil feelings were so high that when Kariappar subsequently went by train to Batticaloa, he was prevented from entering. There then followed a colourful exchange of words and much unpleasantness.

It was from this period that myth started getting mixed up with reality, leading to a tendency to put different constructions on even legitimate advantages gained by Muslims. The cause was the intrusion of state patronage, which placed Tamils at a disadvantage. The feeling of being psychologically at a disadvantage was perhaps more significant than the material disadvantage. It induces a tendency towards resignation. It makes people sit back and complain rather than take stock and organise.

Against the background of the government and the police tending to be increasingly anti-Tamil, the list of Tamil complaints grew. They saw themselves at a disadvantage whenever there were local disputes. They felt that Muslims were getting unfair advantage in education and services. Whether the Muslims on the whole gained through state patronage is doubted by Muslims themselves. From the west, state colonisation by Sinhalese was going on. Through state manipulation Muslims lost land in places like Ingurana. Kondavedduvan, a predominantly Muslim settlement in the Gal oya scheme was eventually lost.[\[Top\]](#)

#### **6.4.3 A Tamil Perception from Kalmunai:**

Nowhere are feelings more high than in the area around Kalmunai. In what follows we give in the form of a statement what was said by a retired government servant living in Kalmunai and a few others from the area:

In 1948, the Kalmunai electorate consisted of (1) Periya Kallar, (2) Maruthamunai (Periyanilawanai), (3) Thurainilawanai, (4) Pandiruppu, (5) Kalmunai, (6) Sainthamaruthu, (7) Karaitivu, (8) Natpiddimunai and (9) Senaikudiyiruppu. 1, 3, 4 & 7 were predominantly Tamil. The rest were mixed. Then this electorate was numerically more or less balanced and was capable of returning either a Tamil or a Muslim MP. In 1948 people were not too concerned whether a contestant was Tamil or Muslim. They rather looked to social standing. In 1948 Kariappar, a Muslim, was contested by Kanapathipillai, a retired

Tamil civil servant from Karaitivu. but Kariappar held the prestigious colonial title of Wanniyar Mudaliyar. Thus even Karaitivu largely voted for Kariappar, who was elected.

Sensing perhaps a growth in communal rivalry, Kariappar used his influence to make Kalmunai a secure Muslim seat when an electoral commission set about redemarcating electorates. If justice was being done, the precedent set in the Batticaloa electorate should have been followed in Kalmunai, making it a multi-member constituency capable of returning a Muslim in addition to a Tamil. But what was done could not have been more disadvantageous for the Tamils. The Tamil areas of Thurainilavanai and Periyakallar were joined to the Tamil electorate of Paddiruppu (Kaluwanchikudy) to the north, and the sizeable Tamil area of Karaitivu was joined to the predominantly Muslim electorate of Nintavur. Henceforward Kalmunai was incapable of returning a Tamil member, and the stage was set for politics with a communal colouring.

In Kalmunai town itself things steadily moved to the disadvantage of Tamils. Public land passed into the hands of Muslims. Where the Kalmunai Mosque stands was once public land housing a Tamil colony. The colony was displaced when the Local Board (Town Council) took it over as though for a public cause, and some years later sold it for building a Mosque. But on the other hand when the new Kalmunai courts were built, private Tamil land belonging to Thambirajah, the former Paddiruppu MP, in Division 4, was taken over.

Sainthamaruthu (between Kalmunai and Karaitivu) once had a sizeable Tamil community, that is now no more, although the area is still called the Tamil Division. Zahira College and Mohamed Balika Viyalayam now stand on land once owned by Tamils. Six Hindu temples in the area were destroyed. Tamils had sold the land cheap and had gone away after the 1967 communal violence.

During these same disturbances many Tamils in Kalmunai Division 3 (Divisions 1, 2 & 3 used to be Tamil. Central Division was mixed) bordering the Muslim area sold their land and went away. Muslims have now taken over about half of Division 3. Those persons displaced mostly resettled in Pandiruppu, Onththachchimadam and Aralpattai.

Amman Kovil Road in Division 3 has now been renamed Mosque Rd. The Tamils in Division 3 suffered again during the troubles of 1986 when the STF was in control. On 10 August 1986, the 300 year old Sri Tharavai Sithivinayagar Temple was smashed. This temple is endowed with paddy fields in Kalmunaikudy. This temple was rebuilt and was broken down again during the current troubles.

The Kalmunai Town Council once had a Tamil majority. After Kalmunaikudy was attached to Kalmunai, the Tamils are in the minority. Following the damage done to Division 3 in 1986, NORAD through the YMCA rebuilt 300 houses at the rate of Rs.15,000/- each. Each house was 15 ft by 10 ft with a 5ft verandah. These houses have now largely been destroyed during the current troubles.

Right now Gravel Kuli (pit), a piece of public land in the Tamil section of Central Division, is being given over for Muslim settlement. This would put a lot of pressure on Tamils in the neighbourhood.

Now the Tamils have decided that even if they are chased away by violence, they are not going to sell their land.

On the way from Karaitivu to Akkaraipattu, there are the villages of Nintavur, Attapallam, Oluvil, Thiraikerni, Palamunai, Meenodaikaddu and Addalachchenai. Starting from Attapallam, the alternating villages were Tamil farming villages. Many of these Tamil villagers sold their lands to Muslims and left because they were constantly having trouble

in getting a fair share of the water resources and did not stand much of a chance when it came to disputes. There are now no Tamils left in Meenodaikaddu. [\[Top\]](#)

#### **6.4.4 Truth and Fiction:**

It is not hard to imagine the effect such stories would have had on the younger generation which grew up hearing them. Those from the East who joined the militancy in the early 80's did so largely to defend the Tamils against the Sinhala state. As the militancy degenerated, all groups started giving vent to anti-Muslim feelings. The LTTE now uses such feelings for recruitment in the East, following recent events in areas such as Kalmunai.

What then is the truth? We have pointed out that there was an established trend towards a transfer of property from Tamils to Muslims, which was due to no fault of the Muslims. At the same time with state patronage favouring the Muslims, it is understandable that some Muslims would have made criminal use of it. This is not something specific to one community. The use of thugs and bribed policemen in settling disputes and to cheat the helpless has been practiced all the way from Pt. Pedro to Dondra Head. Like with people anywhere else, many sensible Muslims were against such acquisition of property. While the whole thing is difficult to quantify, while talking to Tamils themselves one gets the feeling that the criminal use of influence is easily exaggerated.

There are certain factors to consider. Much more than Tamils, Muslims tend to live in clusters. If they have a field faraway, they do not put up a house there. They would travel from their cluster village. Thus their wanting to acquire property close to their settlement is understandable. They were then willing to pay a price much above what a Tamil buyer would have paid.

Muslims in Kalmunai were a trading community. It would have been natural for them to acquire property in Kalmunai or Sainthamaruthu. As residential areas these places are crowded and uninviting in comparison with Tamil places such as Kallar or Thirukkivil. It is hardly worth living in Kalmunai unless one is in trade or in a profession. Most Tamils in Kalmunai were either labourers or low ranking government servants. If they could sell off and go somewhere where land was cheap and they could farm, that ought to be welcomed. This appears to have happened.

Looking at the whole thing it is hard to maintain that Tamils have lost. When big land holders sold land to Muslims, they often left the province. When those living in shanties in Kalmunai left, they became economically more productive elsewhere in the region. If we are looking towards a healthier relationship and a healthier politics, it is best to understand the past episode and concentrate on rectifying political mistakes. There is still land in the East for those who have not.

The political leader we quoted at the beginning said quite aptly, that if the Tamils in the East are to have a future, they must produce and they must trade. Also they need to create an economic base that will make it possible for those with educational attainments to remain in the East. Our politics needs to be in such a direction as to secure these while having a fraternal relationship with the Muslims.

We have lots of people producing inefficiently without proper marketing facilities. These people need irrigation, transport and a marketing infrastructure. By comparison, the Sinhalese settled on the Gal Oya scheme were given everything, including loans.

The Muslims have a healthy respect for Tamils and admire their attainments in education and culture. Even Eastern Muslims valued education in Jaffna. Generosity on the part of the Tamils will certainly be reciprocated. Our politics should have used our assets to good effect. Instead we have pursued a politics of destruction, trying to humiliate Sinhalese and Muslims, turn Jaffna into an educational and cultural desert, and use the Eastern Tamils with their frustrations and anxieties as expendable fuel, towards an unattainable goal.[\[Top\]](#)

## 6.5 Muslim Perceptions

**Introduction :** In what follows we will present some representative opinions of Muslims in the East who have thought seriously about current problems. What came out of conversations with a number of Muslims is scattered throughout this report. As many Tamils, particularly those outside the East often carelessly believe, it is far from being the case that Muslims are lording it over the Tamils. Muslims are on the contrary frightened, anxious and their economic life has been to a large extent stalled. Traders too are finding it tough. Because the fields are idle, people have no buying power. Muslims have been compelled by circumstances to seek protection from the armed forces whenever there are festive gatherings in the local Mosque. In the case of Muslim homeguards, it is often fear rather than belligerence that drives them.

We spoke to a retired school principal, much respected by Tamils and now in trade, whose brother had been killed by the LTTE while supervising his paddy field. He was gracious enough to say, “We have always been, and still stand for the Tamil cause. But not for the kind of thing we see now.” Another Muslim who has maintained close ties with Tamils was an Inspector of Schools for English teaching, who retired prematurely because he is unable to travel in Tamil areas. He was having second thoughts about remaining in Akkaraipattu and felt depressed. The building of his new house was stalled, because the builders were Tamil and they were afraid of working in his location. One hears many stories of this kind. The bomb blast in Akkaraipattu in late March was a grim reminder of the ever present mindless menace that kills and poisons minds.

1. The first person whose views are presented is a retired graduate teacher in science. At his present age of 50, he is now in trade. Coming from a family that was prominent in Muslim politics, he was keenly aware of the issues. None in the younger generation, he said, took to politics because they did not have the drive. He called himself a lifelong student who wished to learn about things. It was rather unforeseen to walk into a shop off a dusty street in Akkaraipattu and have a long philosophical discussion. One is struck by the ties of family and of belonging which bind many educated Muslims to their soil. Emigration which is now a strong driving force amongst the Tamil middle class, seldom crossed their minds. They appear content to make a modest living at home. Our interlocutor like many educated Muslims had a deep knowledge of Indian philosophy and his world view was influenced by it. He believed that when we quarrel, we are made to suffer because the driving force behind the universe wants us to learn something. Time, he said, would vindicate and resolve issues. Without understanding the natural drift of things, we fight for lost causes and dissipate our energy. Some people make a highly strung cause out of putting women back where they were centuries ago. But the direction is already set. Unlike 20 years ago, we now accept women professionals and it does not hurt us. Tamils and Muslims have lived together for centuries and despite the occasional set back, they would continue to live together and profit from each other. But social relations and patterns are changing. Muslims

having been educationally backward are being educated by Tamils. The Tamil caste system is breaking up, changing economic and social relations. We must make sure that we do not become emotional and expend energy on causes which future generations would condemn.

This small digression is meant to illuminate his answers. The gist of the conversation is presented in question and answer form.

Q: There is a strongly expressed feeling among Tamils in Kalmunai that they are being marginalised by the Muslims.

A: Of course there is such a feeling. But what lies behind such feelings is not often serious. Here in Akkaraipattu there are such feelings between Muslims in Division 2 and those in Division 6. Those in Division 2 were once of a higher social status. Those in Division 6 felt looked down upon and marginalised. Now those in Division 6 have made great advances and are perhaps on par with those in Division 2. But they still feel marginalised. It becomes a hot issue at election times.

Q: But, there is a widespread Tamil feeling that their residential and paddy lands were acquired by Muslims through actual or threatened violence, by unfair means.

A: I know, such feelings are very well articulated because your community had wide access to education. But that is changing like everything else because you are teaching us.

It is not only here, but such feelings are also being articulated in places like Kandy. Look, where do you find Muslims living in isolation? For many reasons they live in groups or clusters. For this reason if they wish to purchase land and are willing to pay a good price, is that a crime?

I do not agree that Tamils selling land out of fear was a common phenomenon. You must look at what happened to the Tamils who sold their properties in crowded towns such as Akkaraipattu, Kalmunai or Sainthamaruthu. You will find that many of them have used that money to purchase more spacious properties elsewhere. Is there anything wrong in that?

It is easy enough to look back at something that has happened, and put a different construction on it. In fairness you must ask when it happened and why it happened at that time.

One part of this complex process is the caste system among Tamils. A significant number of Tamils living in towns belonged to the service castes. The paraiahs who acted as town criers later became redundant. They sold their little plots in town, and took to chena cultivation - that is burning jungles and using it as manure to grow paddy. After one season of cultivation, they moved on. They did not level the land and develop it. Perhaps they did not have the money. Such lands were sold cheap to Muslims who developed the land. The Tamil Vellalas were not interested in such lands because they had their fertile purana (ancient) fields. Once these service castes ran out of chena land, they found it easier to work as labourers for Muslim cultivators. They were less acceptable to the Tamil Vellalas, whereas the Muslims are a more open society. Is it not fair to look upon this relationship as one that mutually benefits the Muslims and those Tamils who now work for them? Would you call me wicked or arrogant for having a servant to work for me?

You know that there was a tendency among Tamil Vellalas to sell and go where there was white collar work. You may have heard talk to the effect that Muslims were taking

over Akkaraipattu town. you must recognise the contribution made by Muslims to the economy of the area. If not for the Muslims, Akkaraipattu would have been a town with a dwindling (Tamil) Vellala community. You will see that there is often a different story behind what appears upsetting on the surface.

Q: How do you see the present climate of violence between Muslims and Tamils?

A: It is wrong to put the question that way. If we take the last 100 years of our co-existence, there may have been about 10 days of actual violence. There is occasional friction and it gets ironed out. Why should we highlight those 10 days in comparison with the rest of those 100 years when we have worked together, traded and benefitted from our intercourse? In the process we have both realised greater freedom. Some people may advocate reactionary causes for their power. But the present troubles will pass and time will resume its normal course towards greater freedom.

Our interlocutor also reflected on comparisons between Muslims and Tamils. Contrary to myth, he said, the Muslims are not a disciplined community. In normal times, he said, you cannot get them to agree on a single course of action.

He said, "There is very little orderliness in the Muslim community. If you can give the Tamils 50% for orderliness it is about 10% for Muslims. Yours is a community with cultural traditions that have evolved over millenia. Whatever order we have, it is through inbibing of this cultural tradition through inter- marrying. The main force in Muslim society is law and dogma. When these are invoked, it gives us the strength of the mob. Though potent, it peters out fast. Thus in practice there is a lot of division and Muslims are incapable of sustained effort towards a single goal."

2. Our second interlocutor is Eastern Ibrahim, secretary of the Amparai District East Coast Farmers' Association (ADECFA). The significance of this association is that it represents both Muslims as well as Tamil interests and both Tamils as well as Muslims are active in the association. His articles, which are factually informative, regularly appear in the Virakesari and are much appreciated by Tamils in the area. The theme he advocates is the need for Tamils and Muslims to work together against the common danger of state aided colonisation. The name Eastern comes from the name of his shop, now temporarily sited at the Akkaraipattu central bus stand, and has become more or less official. A large number of Tamils are his customers for the likes of honey, gingelly oil, spices and condiments. Each one goes away in the conviction that he or she made a good bargain.

Q: You have been strongly highlighting colonisation by state as the main threat of Muslims and Tamils.

A: The state is determined to make the East Sinhalese. Under such an ideology, there will be no place for Tamils and Muslims. In the Amparai District itself the situation is quite alarming. This was once a Muslim majority district with hardly any Sinhalese (4% in 1920). The ratio of Sinhalese:Muslims:Tamils in the 1981 census was 37:39:24. The estimate for 1991 is 47:34:19. The figures for Tamils includes burghers and Tamils of Indian origin. If this trend continues, Muslims will only form 26% of the population in the year 2000.

Keeping in mind that the rule of law has declined and people are very much at the mercy of violence by powerful groups, looked at from another angle, the situation is even more alarming. Take the main truck route from the western border of the district to the coast. It is 8 miles from the border to Padiatalawa. Then 20 miles to Maha Oya.

Then 36 miles to Amparai town, and then another 8 miles to Digavapi. From there it is only 6 miles to the coast. Up to and including Digavapi, all areas are now Sinhalese.

As long as Tamils and Muslims are engaged in fighting each other, colonisation will go ahead, and both our communities are finished.

**Q:** What do you have to say about a widespread Tamil perception that the Muslims have got the better of them and that Muslims have acquired land by unfair means?

**A:** Generally, Tamils sold land and went away. There was occasional violence, but I do not think that was very significant. Many Tamil villages, including Meenodaikaddu, next to Addalachchenai, have disappeared because the Tamils sold the land and went away. One cannot point to any significant history of violence, in respect of say Meenadaikaddu.

**Q:** Can you say more about what you have in mind when you advocate Tamils and Muslims working together?

**A:** They must work together on a common political program with the clear objective of combatting colonisation by the state. This is where I disagree with much of the politics in the past of both Muslim as well as Tamil groups, including that of the SLMC at present. It has been very divisive.

Though Kariappar was thought to be helping the Muslims, what he did was ultimately damaging to the Muslims. He was angry with the Tamils and the measures he complied with hurt the Muslims as well. He advocated the carving out of Amparai District in 1961 from the Eastern Province, in the hope of having a Muslim majority district. Even then Kalmunai would have been the natural district capital, as it was the centre of population, had an administrative infrastructure, and was readily accessible to most people in the district. But there were few Muslims in the Civil Service, and thus Kalmunai would have normally had a Tamil Government Agent and many of the administrative staff would have been Tamil. Kariappar did not want this. So we ended up with the district capital in Amparai town. Thus the administrative power in the district passed into Sinhalese hands, making state sponsored colonisation much easier. In the district which is largely Tamil speaking it is now very difficult to get work done in Tamil.

You know the outcome. Muslims have now largely left Kondavedduvan, a predominantly Muslim village in the Gal Oya scheme. Even Kariappar's lands there were lost.

You can see what could happen if Tamils and Muslims do not work as brothers. In the light of this, trends in Tamil militant groups are very disturbing.

### **Q: What is your view on the North-East merger?**

**A:** A North-East merger is a must. If we do not have a merger, we do not need provincial councils. Without the merger the East would be Sinhalese by the year 2000 or so.

**Q:** Can you give your views on the sub-councils that are being talked about?

**A:** Utter nonsense! These people who talk about them are involved in a theoretical exercise without taking into account ground realities. Take Akkaraipattu. If you look out of the shop, what you see is the bazaar where we Muslims do business. This is part of the Tamil AGA's division. But we reside in the Muslim division. What would a sub-council profit us if we have to live in one administrative district and have our economy in another? The same is true everywhere in the East. With sub-councils, we may have people living in one

administrative district, having their paddy fields in another and perhaps their water resources in yet another. That would be a nightmare. Those who talk about these things should know how we live.

What we need is a single council with Muslim rights specified and respected.

The two perceptions we have presented show that there is still considerable potential to build good relations on a firm foundation. This also applies at national level. We also see that ordinary people living in a situation can be creative in their outlook and are capable of valuable insights - often more profound than those obtaining in intellectuals who are removed from ground realities.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **The Eastern Borderlands**

#### [7.1 The Borderlands](#)

#### [7.2. Massacre of Sinhalese in Athimala, Moneragala District](#)

#### [7.3 Kantalai](#)

#### [7.4 The Abduction of Pushparani Chelliah, 19<sup>th</sup> April](#)

#### [7.5 Massacre at Niedella, Moneragala District:](#)

The material in this chapter was drafted in close consultation with a Human Rights Group the Movement for the Defence of Democratic Rights (MDDR), based in the South, that is in close touch with the areas concerned. The reports on the LTTE massacres of Sinhalese civilians in Athimale and Niedella were presented by activists who visited the villages immediately after the attacks. [\[Top\]](#)

### **7.1 The Borderlands**

The following sketch gives an impressionistic picture which it is hoped would clarify current issues. We mentioned in [Special Report No.3](#) the existence in the East of what was known in Survey Department parlance as Park Countries. These were fertile lands once cultivated and abandoned to the advance of the jungle, because of war or other calamities, perhaps a millenium ago. That was a time when people had no notion of modern ethnicity and it would be absurd to term them Sinhalese or Tamil. There have also been other communities present on the South Eastern seaboard such as those who were descendents of seafarers presumably from the East Indies (Malaya, Sumatra, Java), whose culture and religion (animism) were unique.

There are also Gypsies (Kuravar) speaking Telugu, who are now Roman Catholic Christians. (See [Special Report No.3](#)).

The East came under the Kandy Kingdom which was neither Sinhalese nor Tamil in the modern sense. Although the Amparai District was largely depopulated in recent times, the state of affairs in some of its purana (ancient) villages give a hint of their history. Among

these villages are Uhana, Komariya, Bandaraduwa, Dhamana, Thottama, Padugoda, Gonagolla and Inginiyagala. Barely 40 years ago, people living in these villages were equally fluent in Sinhalese and Tamil, and several of them sported Tamil names like Selladurai and Sellamma. If not for the aggressive interposition of Sinhalese nationalism, this state of affairs would have continued and any change would have been healthy.

To the West of Amparai District lies the Moneragala District, once the rich province of the Kandyan Kingdom known as Velassa. These rice growing peasants took part in the rebellion against the newly imposed British crown in 1818. In quelling the rebellion, the British largely depopulated the area. The recolonisation of this area began under D.S. Senanayake in the early 50's. Colonists were brought in from hill country villages such as Welimada and Nuwara Eliya. The induction of colonists did not threaten the old residents as there was land. The latter rather prospered as traders and had a labour force at their disposal. They thus became the local elite.

Further North, near Kalmunai, the Central Camp colonies were established about 1952 to 54. Colonies 3,16,18,19 and 22 were largely settled by Sinhalese from the Kegalle District.

Further North, the Trincomalee District was also characterised by a history of human diversity. Although the Sinhalese population in recent times was very small, there had been surviving Sinhalese villages, often closer to the Tamils in culture (e.g. women's dress, water pots made of a copper alloy etc) Their folk memory traces their origin back to Velassa in 1818. Further back in history, the building of Kantalai tank is attributed to Agrabodhi, King of Anuradhapura. The tank fell into disuse with the decline of Anuradhapura about a millenium ago. In recent times Kantalai was a Tamil speaking village until colonisation began around 1952. Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese were given land. In recent times the drive for Sinhalese through administrative means has been more overt.

Violence against Tamils in Amparai during 1958 was largely by the employees of the Gal Oya Board rather than by colonists. Starting from modest positions, several of these employees became rich businessmen. With the commencement of the war of June 1990 the expulsion of Tamils from the Gal Oya Board areas neared completion. [\[Top\]](#)

## **7.2. Massacre of Sinhalese in Athimala, Moneragala District**

Athimale is a village in Velassa 5 miles west of the Amparai District boundary, adjoining Pottuvil. Following massed attacks in Mannar and Karainagar, the LTTE had by indications banked on a ceasefire by the Sinhalese - Tamil New Year - 13<sup>th</sup> April. The government forces had signalled their lack of interest in a ceasefire, which they suspected to be disadvantageous for them, by resuming limited bombing in Jaffna, and firing shells from Palaly, killing two women in Colombogam, about the time of festivities. That Tigers would attack Sinhalese civilians had also been widely anticipated by the government.

Until the terror bombings of 1986, attacks on Sinhalese civilians had been rationalised by regarding colonists in the Tamil provinces as a paramilitary arm of the government. The attack on Athimale and on other parts of Moneragala lacked even this justification. They were simply easy targets.

Athimale is a reasonably well to do farming village with about 350 persons. It had a police post commanded by a Sargeant, with 12 men. For a few days before the incident villagers had observed armed men dressed in shorts and jungle green shirts in the vicinity. This

was conveyed to the police. The police took little notice, evidently because false alarms were a regular phenomenon. On the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> April, shortly before the incident, a young man reportedly told the police about the presence of intruders. A skeptical policeman gave him a whack and sent him off.

About 5.30 p.m. a party of armed persons approached the village along a track leading to it from the jungle. The first persons they accosted were two young men on bicycles proceeding to look over their rice fields. They were stopped and hacked to death. There was no alarm since guns were not fired. Further down the track the armed prowlers encountered Jayasundera (60), father of 7, a respected farmer and village elder and also a reputed snake-bite physician. He too was similarly done away with. A man tying his cow met with the same fate.

By the time the attackers, said to be about 20 in number, reached the village, it was nightfall. They ignored the first few huts which were quiet and walked into the 5<sup>th</sup> where two neighbouring families had got together for the festive evening meal. There were two husbands, their wives and five children in all. The two men were ordered to face the wall and an attacker swung a sword at them. One man after receiving an injury, sprang out of the hut before the second blow came. He ran towards the police station. Alarmed by his screaming, others in the village started running in panic. The attackers then proceeded to cut the remaining man, mothers and children, in the hut.

A man from another hut had started running, leading away his expectant wife and 3 children, the eldest of whom was a boy of 7. This family was accosted by a group of 5 armed men who killed them all.

The first hut was set on fire with the dead and the dying inside. A girl of 5 with a piece of her ear cut and cut injuries on her body, crept out of the burning hut and lay down under a papaw tree. Subsequently, she crept further away. In the morning other villagers spotting caked blood under the papaw tree, found this girl unconscious, having turned blue during the cold night. She is now warded in hospital, an orphan.

Having finished their hacking of humans, the attackers raided a chicken coop, and their choppers got to work again. The headless chicks were taken away in sacks in addition to cooking material such as onions. The attackers withdrew, evidently in no hurry, placing at least 3 Johnny mines at the bends at locations with a high probability of someone stepping on them.

The injured man who went to the police, got there by 8 p.m. grabbed a gun and threatened to go himself. The police told him that they could not go just like that and appealed for help from Siyambalanduwe and Arugam Bay. A police party from the former and an STF party from the latter reached Athimale police station by midnight. They set off at 4 a.m. when a Buffel armoured car arrived. It was considered too risky without the armoured car because of the mines.

In the morning Piyadasa, the local co-op manager lost his leg after stepping on a mine while walking with the police. The search drew a blank. Later in the day a mine clearing operation was done in the area.

It has been customary for some time now for persons in isolated villages in the area to move into the jungle for the night.

No one doubts that the attackers were the LTTE, having free movement in the jungle belt from Kanjikudichcharu. The mines used were of the kind normally used by them. After such massacres, the LTTE is usually silent, neither accepting nor denying. But its

propaganda machinery overseas would argue, using discrepancies in the reporting that the government or someone else was responsible. Any self-respecting liberation group would not merely deny being responsible for such atrocities, but would express horror on principle and show by its general conduct that its behaviour is far superior to the forces opposed to it. [\[Top\]](#)

### **7.3 Kantalai**

In Rajaela (King's Canal), Colony 94, in the Kantalai scheme, people were out on the streets late into the night to observe New Year festivities. But underneath the conviviality, there was an air of foreboding. Kantalai lies on the Habarana-Trincomalee road. At each dawn, route clearing patrols march along the road between Kantalai and Habarana. Some of them are ambushed. It is only after 8 a.m. that the road is opened to traffic. By common consent it is accepted that being on the road outside town after 4 p.m. is dangerous. On normal days the town is nearly empty by 4 p.m.

According to village leaders, they will not be attacked in the immediate future as there are still settlements on either side of them. Many of these settlers work in cane fields. But one day, they are sure, when the adjoining settlements have been attacked and dispersed, their turn would come. They are skeptical about the ability of the forces to defeat the LTTE. They think the LTTE would survive, and one day the Sinhalese would be pushed down to Habarana.

In support of their skepticism, a villager spoke about his having been in the police station when a radio message from a police vehicle, attacked out of town, was received. The police left the station after 20 minutes. By then the attackers had fled leaving behind two dead policemen.

The settlements were formed about 1952/53 and now the third generation of Sinhalese are living there, with ties to the land which they developed for a livelihood. After some discussion, several of them agreed that the Tamils had a problem. But the government had brought them there having told them there was land, and moreover, were not after all Tamils living in Sinhalese areas? they had never been warned that there would be trouble of this kind. Although they see little hope in the future, they think it is the responsibility of the government to salvage the mess. [\[Top\]](#)

### **7.4 The Abduction of Pushparani Chelliah, 19<sup>th</sup> April**

Pushparani (26) a final year Dental student at the University of Peradeniya was to sit for her final examinations. A native of Karaitivu, she left on the 3.30 p.m. bus from Kalmunai, which started late at 5.00 p.m. The bus stopped at the STF check point at the 17<sup>th</sup> mile post past Amparai town and all the passengers were asked to get down. After being checked, the passengers got inside the bus. They were asked to get down again on the pretext that there was a bomb inside. This time Pushparani was given a lot of attention. She was questioned closely about her personal details. After a delay of about an hour, the passengers were asked to get inside and be seated. The bus was then sent off.

Barely two miles away, about 9.30 p.m. the bus was stopped by armed men. The men got into the bus and made straight for Pushparani who was seated near the rear, and dragged her out. The driver was ordered to proceed. The bus then stopped at Siyambalanduwe and a complaint was made to the police.

Nothing more has been heard of Pushparani. [\[Top\]](#)

## 7.5 Massacre at Niedella, Moneragala District:

20<sup>th</sup> April. Rumours of an LTTE presence had been about for some time. Nimali Rajapakse (21) a pre-school teacher was at home about 7 p.m, when her younger sister Malkanthi came running, asking others to hide. Just then they heard gunshots from across the field. From their experience during the JVP troubles, they recognised the firing of an automatic. Once more, after a long interval, they took off to hide in the bushes with some of their close relatives, until it was past dawn. The attackers had come from the direction of the river. The occupants of the first house, P.R. Gunapala, his wife and two children (5 & 3) escaped by climbing a tamarind tree. In the next house 75 yards away, two children Thakshila (5) and her brother Ratnayake (2 ½) were beheaded. Their father escaped, but the mother is warded in Badulla hospital with a neck injury. Those in the following house escaped by hiding inside the well.

From the house across the stream from Nimali's they first heard hammering on the walls followed by the screams of a mother, " Oh! my children, Oh! my children". Then silence. It was discovered later that the mother and three children, Radhika Priyantha (6), Dhanushka Sampath (4) and Surangi (2 ½) had been killed.

M.M.Dharmasena (30), a farmer, thinking that the noises he heard were firecrackers, went out to investigate about 7.30 p.m. Hearing a gunshot from the neighbouring gem merchant's house, he ran back home. His wife, who had already hidden with her children inside bushes, called softly to him. They lay hidden until dawn. The horn of the car next door was sounded for about 20 minutes, which alerted many.

Dharmasena's brother escaped while his wife and two children had been beheaded. His brother went back to the scene and let out a loud cry. He ran into the jungles when someone shined a torch. The wife's gold chain was taken, while the children's earrings had been removed by tearing the ears.

W.M. Premasiri (25), cultivator, had a similar experience. He lay hidden with a group of 30. He first took the firing to have come from the army. When it was quiet, his brother Jayatileke went home to investigate, when he was chased by two women. He escaped into the jungle losing his clothes on the way. About 12.30 a.m. three vehicles, which they took to be army vehicles, sounded their horns. No one risked leaving their hiding places. The vehicles went away. The attackers were said to be dressed in military type uniforms.

In the morning Premasiri found 6 shiny empty shells and a katty (traditional knife, used for lopping branches). Nine persons, including 3 women and 5 children, who were gathered in a house for a ceremony had been killed by cutting blows aimed at the back of their necks. An ear on one side was also cut. The attackers had removed chillies, flour and torch batteries. Ananda, who was hidden with A.M. Punchibanda (30), his wife and 4 children, went towards his house on a Land Master tractor to check on his family. He was shot dead on the way.

The attackers also killed Kuruwita Mudalali, at whose house they had stopped to drink tea.

The 22 human victims were buried in a mass grave at 3 p.m. the following day in coffins brought by the STF. Included among the victims were two new born calves that were beheaded.

Prior to the burial, 15 soldiers had come in two trucks. Some officers in a jeep were driving up and down. About 2 p.m. a red car arrived with its horn blaring. Then the car left followed by the military party. The frightened villagers were left to cremate the dead with whatever flammable material they could gather.

Who was behind the massacre?: In 7.2 we referred to the confusion and panic prevailing in the area. When the villagers were probed about details such as times and juxtapositions, there was confusion. Persons in the village claim that some of the attackers spoke fluent Sinhalese. The gem merchant had been individually summoned, it is said, by an attacker who spoke good Sinhalese. The attackers had come in two or three groups, some of whom it appears, were women. Nimali Rajapakse, for instance, who says she heard one of the attackers say in Sinhalese, There is no one in this house, maintains that some of the attackers must have known the village. This is also the opinion of Dharmasena, who adds that even villagers sometimes lose their way in the area.

The attackers appear to have been around until 3 a.m. at least. This time, the army and police had come shortly after the police at Okkampitiya were alerted - just after mid-night. But there was no confrontation. The attackers had looted food supplies needed for jungle survival. amongst the incongruous things they did, in one house they took the women's and children's clothes, but left the men's clothes strewn about.

One indication that the Tigers were involved was their standard signing off by strewing Johnny Battas (soap sized mines that blow off the foot that treads one - a Tiger invention). Several of them were discovered in the mine clearing operation, including two in Nimali's garden. The person who went to the Okkampitiya police and returned with 4 policemen at mid-night, had stepped on a Johnny mine and is now in Badulla hospital with an amputated foot. This man is a full time SLFP worker who offered to walk ahead of the policemen as the latter were afraid. This is of significance in view of allegations hinted at by the government, suggesting that the SLFP was playing a sinister role and creating a scare.

Though the people strongly suspect the Tigers, there is also much confusion. One story in the village holds that a JVP killer from the village had told the police upon arrest, that there is a combined party of 250 JVP and LTTE in the jungle. The villagers are themselves cynical about everyone. When the JVP insurgency was on, the village was suspect. Some of the shot guns in the village were taken away by the JVP. The police then retrieved the balance.

The aftermath: Panic was rife in the Moneragala district after the massacre. As it was, many villagers were spending their nights in the jungles. As soon as the news reached Okkampitiya the following morning, the shops closed instantly. A Tamil boy raised by Sinhalese who had said that he had seen someone running off into the jungle, was taken away by the STF, despite pleading by his Sinhalese family.

At Buttala, at 4 p.m. (21<sup>st</sup>), a crowd of 5000 gathered at the police station in search of protection. Two Tamils travelling in a bus were pulled out and assaulted. Unconfirmed reports said that Tamil workers at the Pelwatte Sugar Factory had been attacked.

The Island of 25<sup>th</sup> April, said, quoting a police spokesman, that two Tamil tea estate workers were killed by a mob at Badalkumbara on the 22<sup>nd</sup> night, and that line rooms occupied by Tamil labourers were burnt at Badalkumbara and neighbouring Rambukkana. It added: "Unconfirmed reports indicated that an undisclosed number of Tamil workers had been seriously injured... A large number of Tamils living in the area had sought police protection fearing further attacks, the officials said. The report further said that no further incidents were reported after Monday night and that the police were intensely patrolling the area. A military spokesman in Colombo was quoted as confirming the communal unrest, but adding that the police had the situation under control.

For the villagers in Niyadella itself there was no assurance of any further protection beyond the promise of shotguns from the Chief Minister of Uva. In terms of its present military and political framework, the government had no answer. In a further twist to the developing tragedy, the Hill Country Tamils of Indian origin, appear to be getting dragged into this mess involuntarily. Dinesh Watawana, writing in the Sunday Times of 28<sup>th</sup> April, quotes a defence official in Colombo as saying that: About 30 suspected LTTE terrorists were believed to be mingling with estate labourers disguising themselves as estate workers. The killers believed to be in groups of twos and threes are said to be hiding in different estates. With their weapons hidden in nearby jungles, the terrorists have, on several occasions, assembled together with weapons to attack Sinhala villages.

The recent attacks on civilians were not in operational areas. This shows that a group of terrorists have infiltrated into Sinhala areas to create havoc, a military official said.

A senior STF official in the area was more forthright when he told a very responsible person that they did not believe that the attack was conducted by the LTTE. He suspected that the attackers were estate Tamils.

The STF's reasons for saying that are understandable. They have more or less maintained that areas under their control have been cleared of the LTTE. If otherwise, their peculiar methods and professional competence will be put into question. The recent attacks on estate Tamils in the area must raise the disturbing question of what kind of security they would enjoy in the light of such suspicions becoming common currency.

We know from past experience and the progress of the current war, that the methods of the government forces can only result in hopeless deterioration, adding to alienation and intensification.

**Further Reports of Attacks on Estate Tamils:** At 11.00 p.m. on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 12 attackers entered an estate owned by the Edna group in Kumbukkanna, in the Parawilawatte division, and set fire to 14 line rooms built by workers themselves, and a further 4 constructed by Edna group. 32 workers were injured. The estate is 6 miles from Okkampitiya.

1500 up country Tamils live in an estate in Srigalawatte formerly owned by the Upali group and presently under Janavasa. Since there is no work on the estate, the community depends on 150 workers who travel to Moneragala town to do a variety of menial work, as seasonal workers. 100 of them were attacked and had to spend 3 days in the jungle without food before trekking back home. The community is now without means.

100 seasonal workers used to go from Koslanda estate to work in sugar can fields owned by the Pelwatte Sugar Company. These workers were beaten and had to shelter in the jungle.

A south based human rights group which visited these up country Tamils with the aim of providing relief, was unable to confirm reports of killings. The Ceylon Workers Congress visited the Edna group estate in Kumbukkana.[

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **COLONISATION-ISSUES & NON-ISSUES**

#### **8.1 Early motivations**

#### **8.2 Tamil Reactions**

#### **8.3 The Flaw**

#### **8.4 The Current War**

#### **8.5 The LTTE and Tamil interests**

### **8.1 Early motivations**

The colonisation issue with its accumulated destructive inertia has become a major bugbear of SriLankan politics. The blind vigour with which the rival claims of Sinhalese and Tamil nationalisms were pursued have set in motion other phenomena which have further distorted the stated aims of the conflicting parties. The claim of Sinhalese nationalism in its extreme form held that the whole country is sacred to Buddhism and belonged to its vanguard, the Sinhalese. All other inhabitants of Ceylon were aliens who had to be subjugated, lest they exceed their rights as guests living at the sufferance of the Sinhalese. Whatever the original intentions of the colonisation programme, from its early times the aim that there should be no territory that could be called Tamil, became a part of its conscious agenda. The following excerpt from a speech attributed to Ceylon's first Prime Minister, D.S.Senanyake, addressed to colonists in Padaviya, is self-explanatory: "Today you are brought here and given a plot of land. You have been uprooted from your village. You are like a piece of driftwood in the ocean; but remember that one day the whole country will look up to you. The final battle for the Sinhala people will be fought on the plains of Padaviya. You are men and women who will carry this island's destiny on your shoulders. Those who are attempting to divide this country will have to reckon with you. The country may forget you for a few years, but one day very soon they will look up to you as the last bastion of the Sinhala."

The excerpt quoted by M.H. Gunaratna was related to him by Davinda Senanyake, D.S.'s grandson. The exactness of the quotation may be in question, as D.S. appears to be addressing modern sensibilities rather than ones current in his time. However, what his grandson understood of his motivations is significant. (The quotation is from p.201 of 'For a Sovereign State', by M.H.Gunaratna, Sarvodaya Publications).

Hidden below the violent rhetoric of this ideology was also a defensive aspect, talked about by apologists for the ideology. The Sinhalese Buddhist elite saw in neighbouring India, the vision of which was dominated by the large southern state of Tamil Nadu, a potential menace. They saw in Indian merchants in Colombo, Tamil government servants and other professionals in Sinhalese areas, and even in the hapless plantation labour of Indian origin, an alien conspiracy to disinherit the Sinhalese. As Sinhalese scholars have themselves written, the ideology appealed to different sections of Sinhalese at different

levels. The Sinhalese elite who came from the merchant class felt threatened by competition from Indian rivals who established themselves under the mobility provided by British Empire. The ire of Kandyan peasants who often lived in poverty at the edges of British owned estates, was directed against the ill treated labour from India. The lack of economic development, and a large number of young chasing limited government jobs, further exacerbated the growing communalism. If in a Sinhalese village, the station master, the medical practitioner and the post master happened to be Tamils, they would have appeared very powerful in the village context, while being of little importance overall. All these ingredients helped fuel myths that motivated the ideology. In the train of this massive emotional force, the land owning class in the South, the owners of large estates and those whose positions depended on these, found in colonisation of Tamil areas a ready means of obviating the natural demand for restructuring the agricultural economy of the South.

With developing trends in the world economy, the maintenance of large estates producing cash crops using necessarily poorly paid labour, was becoming outmoded, particularly when a large quantity of foreign exchange was spent on importing food. There was thus a need for a long term national policy to dismantle all except the adequately profitable estates, and transfer lands to food production by individual farmers. To the vested interests in the plantation economy, colonisation appeared a neat way out, which also tied up with the thrust of Sinhalese nationalism. It is no co-incidence that many of the early Sinhalese colonists in Amparai were drawn from areas such as Welimada, Nuwara Eliya and Kegalle, where the plantation economy was dominant.

The former Mossad officer, Ostrovsky says on p.68 of his controversial book, 'By Way of Deception': "The Sri Lankan government was worried about unrest among farmers.....so it wanted to split them up somewhat by moving them from one side of the island to the other". This is not something that Ostrovsky would have easily imagined. The theme was familiar to Israeli's who were establishing para military colonies of Shephardim Jews on the Palestinian West Bank. We are not saying as alleged by Ostrovsky, that the Mahaveli project was a fraud designed to obtain large international loans for other than agricultural and developmental purposes. But the author of 'For a Sovereign State' gives a detailed account of the Mahaveli Ministry's covert involvement in the Maduru Oya settlement, the extent of Israeli influence remains an open question.

## **8.2 Tamil Reactions**

Economic developments during the British colonial period saw the integration of Ceylon into an economic whole with a network of roads and railways. Consequently, people from all communities left their places of origin in search of economic opportunities. Many Tamils became established in the South. Likewise Sinhalese became established in the North-East. In Jaffna itself, Sinhalese became renowned as carpenters and bakers. The Tamils had tended to look upon the whole country as places in which to live and work. The Tamil voters rejected the newly formed Federal Party in the 1952 elections. It was to be another two decades before its leader Chelvanayakam would be acclaimed a prophet. The incipient colonisation schemes were not taken seriously at that time. In contrast with 5 years later, there was an increasing demand in Jaffna schools for the teaching of Sinhalese as well as Sinhalese teachers.

It was the 1956 election campaign based on the Sinhala Only that gave the Federal Party its predicted legitimacy. The 1958 communal riots saw the first wave of mass exodus of Tamils from the South. With this, the concept of a Tamil Homeland which had not existed in 1952 had come of age. In its train came the concept of a Tamil Nation held together chiefly by the experience of common oppression.

This fruit of their own actions further incensed the Sinhalese ruling class. Government policy was now consciously directed towards breaking the concept of a Tamil nation through colonisation. In the course of reorganising the administration in the 1960's, the Eastern province became divided into three administrative districts - Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai. It is significant that although Tamils were in the majority in Trincomalee at that time, it has never had a Tamil Government Agent.

The adoption of separation as a slogan by Tamil nationalists and increasing involvement of the state in anti-Tamil violence marked the spiralling escalation of the ideological conflict.

On the one hand while Tamils were in fact becoming weaker, those wielding state power started seeing Tamil conspiracies everywhere. M.H. Gunaratna, a planter who held an important position in the Mahaveli Ministry, describes in his 'For a Sovereign State', how Tamils holding government positions were viewed. State power was thus channelled into what were viewed as counter conspiracies against Tamils.

The Tamils on the other hand experienced the oppressive reality of state power from discrimination against Tamils in university admissions in 1972, subsequently heightened by the 1983 violence and its aftermath. By its clumsy handling, the state not only destroyed the economic and emotional foundations of one nation, but gave the notion of the Tamil Nation with a National Homeland a new moral legitimacy. What was worse, the notions' adoption as a tool by India, gave it an invincibility.

### **8.3 The Flaw**

The Tamil nationalists felt a powerful emotional drive to root the concept of the Tamil homeland in historical antiquity. They thus simplified the complex history of comings and goings of waves of diverse migrants over the centuries, the shifting boundaries of ancient kingdoms, and posited instead a Tamil kingdom which it was claimed had existed from ancient times. One of the main planks of the argument was that the early British colonial administration and several other colonial writers had regarded Ceylon to have been made of 3 distinct regions, two Sinhalese and one Tamil, the latter covering more or less the present North- East. Between Sinhalese and Tamil academics, there arose a partisan argument on this point, which had little relevance to a modern problem.

On the other hand the Tamil Left largely wanted the colonisation issue addressed from the perspective of the needs of the people concerned, than from that of historical abstraction. By the early 80's most of them were swallowed up by the rising nationalist tide - many becoming ideologues for the nationalist cause.

The emotional needs of nationalism and its insistence on simple dogmatic historical assertion, resulted in a fatal trend. These needs also led to the destructive concepts of alien, intruder, purity etc. It placed the Muslims, although Tamil speaking, in an insecure position. There was also a new ambivalence towards Sinhalese, even when they had lived in the North-East for generations and were integrated into local life.

Had the manner of colonisation by the state been challenged from a human rights standpoint, it would have united the Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese in the East. But the contradictions in the nationalist approach left it open to attack. By 1984, the state with its resources and manipulative ability, was in the business of fomenting Tamil-Muslim enmity.

The current spate of barbarity against civilians is the logical outcome of the two contending nationalisms, where extremists with a similar mental outlook have gained ascendancy on both sides.

#### **8.4 The Current War**

It has been widely commented upon that the current war is also characterised far less by military ingenuity than by a series of massacres and counter massacres. The LTTE's provocative actions were meant as we have observed, not to protect Tamils, but rather to enhance its destructive capacity using the state's barbarity. The manner in which the government forces have been used points to the same ideology at work with its accumulated inertia which needed no explicit planning.

During the week following the outbreak of hostilities on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1990, Tamils were attacked and expelled from Amparai town and the interior villages about the Gal Oya Scheme. Once the forces were in control, the next stage of expulsions took place in August. Muslim home guards were set up to attack the Tamil refugee camps at Veeramunai and Sorikalmumai. The Tamils were thus expelled from the next line of Tamil villages in Central Camp, to the eastern seaboard.

In the Trincomalee district, there is once again a situation where a draconian regime prevails. People are scared to talk about the disappeared. No one has dared to keep records. No young Tamils are living outside town. Those outside have fled as refugees to the North and to India. Any young person coming back is very likely to disappear.

Significantly, the army brigadier who was in charge of Trincomalee at the outbreak of war and enjoyed public confidence, was immediately replaced by Lucky Wijeratne. The latter was killed in a landmine explosion. The brigadier currently in charge of Trincomalee was previously in Mannar where about 9 persons arrested by the army in Talaimannar disappeared. This became a major issue as India and the UNHCR were preparing to use Mannar to receive refugees who had fled to India. The brigadier's talents were then considered better suited for Trincomalee.

The emerging pattern is broadly consistent with the agenda sketched out in 'For a Sovereign State'. These people are so blind that they do not see recent history repeating itself. They are once more making a case for an Indian role.

#### **8.5 The LTTE and Tamil interests**

The LTTE is now waging its war with recruits who are the product of tragic circumstances and deceit. They have no creative outlook or any perspective of the long term interests of Tamils. Their anti-Sinhalese, anti-Muslim or anti-state gut feelings are simply used in a destructive orgy. Under such circumstances massacres come naturally. It is also the LTTE's experience that it is such conduct that the government will be responsive to. For it frustrates the government by exposing its inability to protect Sinhalese civilians. This brings about legitimacy for such actions, as many Tamils begin to argue that only such massacres press the government to think about a political solution.

But the resulting process cannot be so simple. It also sets in motion so many other corrosive trends. It certainly enhances the Sinhalese chauvinist position. The chauvinists would argue

that they were always right about the Tamils being calculating, deceitful and evil intentioned, and that the only way to deal with them is to crush them. Unless a political party is very mature and farsighted, and able to rise above such a destructive tide, it will also be sucked in. We can see this in the SLFP. Last August it showed some signs of understanding the plight of ordinary Tamils. In its recent statements it is not thinking of the Tamils at all. It is rather playing the accustomed chauvinist card, calling for more support for the armed forces. The LTTE's actions thus cannot lead to a healthy political process. In the meantime its very destructiveness is eliminating the socio-economic base for the Tamil struggle.

Very often Tamil intellectuals are harsh with Sinhalese human rights activists charging them of ineffectiveness, indifference and even communalism. Whatever the justification, in several concrete instances, groups that sincerely try to put forward the Tamil case to Sinhalese villagers are frustrated by actions inspired by Tamil chauvinism. The brother of a woman activist in Niedella was one of the victims of the LTTE massacre reported in Chapter 7. She, in her distress, exclaimed that she was not going to talk about understanding Tamils again. By destroying the possibility of human communication, it is Sinhalese chauvinism that is reinforced.

The LTTE's actions thus actually serve to distort the wishes of Tamils. From our extensive conversations with Easterners, they are not saying that they do not want Sinhalese living there. Nor are they saying that the agricultural potential of the East should not be developed. They have lived happily with Sinhalese and would welcome Sinhalese coming there and contributing to the economy under healthy conditions, in the normal course of events. What they are opposed to is ideologically motivated colonisation by the state backed by explicit and implicit violence.

The Tigers' brutal massacres give the opposite impression that Sinhalese have no right to live in the East. This drives Sinhalese in turn to ignore Tamil fears and see the problem in terms of the simple question, 'If Tamils can live in the South, why should we be killed for living in the North-East?' The perceived unreasonableness of the Tamils once again enhances Sinhalese chauvinist ideology.

Whichever way one looks at it, we see that the only way to unfold this developing tragedy is to break the hold of politics based on Sinhalese and Tamil chauvinism, which are locked into each other.

## APPENDIX 1

### The Human Rights Agreement in El Salvador

#### (PRESS SUMMARY)

The Civil Rights Movement in a recent statement draws attention to the agreement on human rights arrived at between the government and the armed opposition of El Salvador, with the mediation of the Secretary General of the UN.

The agreement also covers such subjects as arrest procedures, preventing enforced disappearances and abductions, prohibiting incommunicado detention, prohibiting torture, ensuring habeas corpus, freedom of the press and freedom of association.

The Agreement provides for monitoring by the UN. What is remarkable is not only that such an agreement has been reached while the parties are still at war, but that the Secretary General of the UN is now seeking to implement the agreement before a cease-fire is negotiated; an operation for which, as he himself states, "no precedent exists in the annals of the United Nations".

Meanwhile, negotiations with UN participation continue between the parties on a number of other issues including the armed forces, the judicial system, constitutional reforms, economic and social questions and monitoring by the United Nations. Important progress on electoral reform has been made by an Inter Party Commission.

These developments illustrate dramatically the importance of the role that a neutral body such as the UN Secretary General's office can play in a situation of civil war.

#### **APPENDIX 11**

### **AN APPEAL BY THE COUNCIL OF HINDU ORGANISATIONS**

A statement issued by the Council of Hindu Organisations and signed by its president Yogendra Doraiswamy and its secretary S.P. Nadarajah was published in the Island of 11th April 1991. In prefatory comments it stated :

"On June 11th 1990 renewed fighting suddenly erupted between the Government of Sri Lanka and the L.T.T.E. in the North-East province. No public statement was issued, either by the Government or the L.T.T.E., as to the issues discussed and the points of disagreement during the fifteen months of warm and cordial relationship that preceded the renewed conflict.

Nine months have passed and there is no indication of a cessation of hostilities. Destruction of persons and property is taking place on a large scale. Though the Government had announced at the outset that this war was not against the Tamils but only against the L.T.T.E. every month innocent civilians are dying by the score and a large number of public buildings and private houses are being destroyed. Refugees numbering one million are eking out an existence in very poor living conditions.

Normal life is at a standstill and people are suffering great hardships and untold misery. The North-East province is turning into a waste land, a scorched earth and many people are leaving the area in desperation".

Proposals: The following proposals were then put forward after arguing that present troubles are largely a result of the failure to implement the Indo-Lanka Accord.

"As advocates of a united Sri Lanka, where every citizen should enjoy freedom, equality and justice, we wish to suggest a package of proposals to alleviate the situation in the North-East province and restore peace and normalcy. The Government of Sri Lanka:?"

1) to announce an immediate cessation of hostilities. the L.T.T.E. to respond positively.

2) to ensure that sufficient supplies of food, fuel and medicines are sent regularly to the International Committee of the Red Cross, who in co-ordination with the Government Agent,

will distribute them.

3) to announce that it would fully implement without delay the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 29th 1987.

4) to nominate an Interim Council for the North-East province in Consultation with the parties who were elected to the North-East Provincial Council. The Interim Council should proportionately comprise representatives of parties elected at the Provincial Council elections. The L.T.T.E. should be invited to join. Subjects assigned to the Interim Council should also include law and order, education, health, land development, relief and rehabilitation of refugees. The Interim Council should function till the Provincial Council comes into being after a free and fair election.

5) to initiate negotiations with the L.T.T.E. after the cessation of hostilities takes effect. This should lead to laying down of arms and reciprocal measures by the Government. A practical approach is necessary in this regard. The Government of Sri Lanka is the other party to this conflict and cannot expect to supervise or monitor the cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms. A neutral force is, therefore, necessary for this purpose. An Indian Peace Keeping Force could be invited for this operation as India guaranteed the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 29th 1987. If India is unable to send a Peace Keeping Force, then a friendly country like Canada, Australia, Sweden or Norway could be approached. Arms should be laid down by all militant groups, home guards and private militias. Simultaneously, the Sri Lankan Government should close down all security forces camps established since 1977 and the security forces in the remaining camps should be confined to their barracks. This applies to the North-East province. It was with the 1977 General Elections that the fight for Eelam started and the T.U.L.F. was returned in large numbers on this ticket. The Government took counter measures by opening new camps and sending large contingents of security forces to the North. The status quo ante should be restored as at 1977.

The Police should maintain law and order as in normal times and early action should be taken to hold Provincial Council elections. Opportunity should be given to the Provincial Government and the Council to function without let or hindrance. The Peace Keeping Force should remain till the Provincial Government had been in office for a period of three years.

Any issue like the question of linkage of the former Northern and Eastern provinces, may be raised after the Provincial Government had been in office for three years. Such questions could be settled by negotiations between the Centre and the North-East Provincial Government. Time will play a role in viewing the problem in its correct perspective."

The appeal concluded by requesting the government and the LTTE to come up with the necessary courage and statesmanship to overcome mutual suspicion and distrust created by long years of bitter conflict. It added :

"We have made these proposals in the firm conviction that their implementation would not only restore peace, human rights and democratic institutions, but also would set in motion a process which would create mutual trust and understanding between the two peoples".

## **DISAPPEARANCES IN MANNAR**

*About mid-night on 20th January (0000 hrs 21st), some vehicles approached Talaimannar village. Subsequently there were knocks on several house doors. Those who opened the doors were blinded by torches flashed by the intruders. After looking over the inmates, certain persons pointed out were taken. The others were threatened to remain silent, and the intruders left. In all, nine persons, including one woman, were taken. After dawn, the villagers went to the army camp at Talaimannar Pier, 1 1/2 miles away. The army denied any knowledge of the incident.*

*The officer-in-charge of the camp was known by his nickname Chamakkoli (Mid-night Cock) because of his habit of being active at mid?night. Previously in late December, the entire village had been ordered to assemble at the local church at mid-night. No one was then taken. The Brigadier then in charge of Mannar made no bones about his inclinations. During his public relations exercises he used to boast about knowing how to deal with terrorists, and how he had presided over the killing of 3000 terrorists where he had been posted in the deep South, during recent JVP troubles. NGO's were warned to be careful and that he had seen from a helicopter, their vehicles being used by terrorists. Given the sensitive nature of Mannar as a prospective refugee settlement, following the disappearances, concerted pressure from NGOs resulted in the Brigadier's transfer to Trincomalee.*

*The Officer-in-Charge at Talaimannar Pier was also transferred. The new OIC visited the village and gave an assurance that such unfortunate things will not happen again, and wanted the villagers to report if anything happened. The new Brigadier gave similar assurances to the public and promised the families that he would inquire into the fates of those taken.*

*So far the families have been told nothing despite having applied through various channels, including the ICRC. Leading persons who knew those taken are convinced that they had no involvement with the LTTE, but only may have had relatives in the LTTE.*