

# University Teachers For Human Rights (Jaffna)

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## Special Report No. 3

### The War And Its Consequences in the Amparai District

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## **Preface**

This special report deals with a theatre of the current war about which little is known and little is understood. It is also a theatre in which the Sri Lankan state forces and the Tigers are following their instinctive chauvinism, without knowing where it will lead to. In Amparai District, the southern most of the three districts in the Eastern Province, three nationalisms — Sinhalese, Tamil and the incipient Muslim —are tragically proving the unrealisability of their respective claims. It is also a theatre in which the destructive politics presided over by the Sri Lankan state, where every edifying principle is cast aside for transitory tactical advantage, is very visibly shaking what is left of-civilised life in this country

After the brutal massacre of policemen by the LTTE and a call to join the final battle, the LTTE made a hasty retreat, putting the Tamil people in hot water. While the army and the other forces were being commended for their disciplined conduct by respectable circles in Colombo, anything from 3000 Tamils had been massacred in the Amparai District alone. These Tamils are amongst the most helpless and deprived people in the country, having now suffered a fate not dissimilar to what the Palestinian Arabs suffered in the late 40's, with all its disturbing connotations. Their fate, as our evidence strongly suggests, is to do with dangerous implications of state ideology.

But the workings of state policy, a part of which is to work up Tamil—Muslim differences into murderous fervour, is itself turning an expression of Sinhalese strength in the chauvinist sense, into one of panic and weakness. Ridiculous manifestations of this policy are quite commonly in evidence. A young Sinhalese home guard with his shot gun, was one of a party assigned to protect our convoy through no man’s land. The lad who got into ‘our vehicle was a harmless looking village lad, smiling with shy respectfulness. His weapon was by far no match for those used by Tigers. Far from protecting us, he was making himself as well as ourselves targets. What was this government trying to do with these lads?

On the same day we met Sinhalese refugees in the Eastern Province — ordinary friendly human beings, happy to meet someone to whom they could talk in Tamil, a language almost as close to them as their mother tongue. What an impatient senior military official in the East said in connection with Sinhalese refugees from the East came to mind — “Tell me where they are, I will arrest them and bring them back’ What, arrest Deepani and her little ones and place them on no—man’s land or in a minefield? Are these people in their right minds? Such thinking is not isolated, and belongs to the natural workings of Sinhalese chauvinism. There was anger in official quarters towards Sinhalese who for basic human reasons had to flee their homes.

There is then the violence by Muslim elements which surfaces again and again during the course of this report. Upon closer examination it would appear that this violence is directly or indirectly at the behest of the state. Much anger as well as prejudice is now being directed against Muslims by both Tamils as well as Sinhalese. The latter too are now beginning to feel threatened.

These prejudices are being orchestrated by press reports, which speak of violence by Muslim home guards, while saying nothing about the state forces.

In order to make sure that we are not misunderstood as campaigning against a community, we shall place matters in perspective. There was in the first instance, the provocation of Muslims by the LTTE’s massacre of Muslim and Sinhalese policemen. The state actively directed this anger against Tamils and got Muslims involved in terrible violence against them. This was in turn followed by outrageous massacres of Muslims, particularly the ones at Kurukkalmadam, Kattankudy and Eravur in July and August. There are strong indications that the LTTE was responsible for the first two. The third is attributed to the LTTE mainly by circumstantial factors. But it is generally believed that the LTTE was responsible. See our reports 4 & 5]. According to official figures, 700 Muslims had been killed. This was in turn followed by renewed use of Muslims in violence against Tamils. Sections of those Muslims who had long wanted to marginalize Tamil influence for economic and territorial motives became actively involved. Such motives again run counter to the agenda of Sinhalese Chauvinist- that is to make the East and particularly the Amparai District, Sinhalese. In the course of the state’s tactical manoeuvres amidst the complex motives of different interests, a state of anarchy has descended on the East. The activities of the state forces have become routinely criminal - from getting mixed up with and using petty criminal elements to crimes of a more calculated kind where young men are taken in several tens from refugee camps, never to appear again. During past bouts of violence, some kind of order has been restored in a matter of two weeks or so. How does one explain the anarchy in the Amparai District that has lasted 4 months, where Tamils can neither move around nor are safe even in the Amparai District hospital. It must be kept in mind that LTTE presence in the district is minimal and there has been hardly any fighting here after the massacre of 11th June.

The current criminal violence by Muslim elements must not be seen as something integral to Muslim culture, but as a consequence of lawlessness resulting from an interaction between the long term aims of the state's chauvinist ideology and the destructive politics of the LTTE. The anger resulting from the LTTE's actions has given the initiative to influential sections in

the state machinery, now manoeuvring tactically in the belief of taking advantage of the situation. To place this in context, take the exodus of Sinhalese from Jaffna after the 1983 racial violence. What happened to the Tamils in the South then showed the state at its diabolical worst, which it is trying to obscure today. But why did the Tamil leadership fail to speak up for the rights of the Sinhalese in Jaffna who were an integral part of local life? Were not life and the economy in Jaffna consequently impoverished? Were not Tamils in general happy to see the Sinhalese go, deprived of their livelihoods and property? We now know what the process has done to the Tamils.

Nor is there anything unique to Muslims regarding the provision of lists and information to the forces. Every party that exercised power in Jaffna had no difficulty, obtaining such things.

In the context of such politics, every inducement was given to motives of envy, revenge and criminal gain. The current war was not the first time that able and prominent Tamils were targeted for elimination. When civil servants Panchalingam and Ramanathan were killed in Jaffna last year, it was not Muslims or Sinhalese who were responsible. These and many other killings took place because base elements in Tamil society and the administration itself, were given an opportunity in the context of the prevailing politics. There have indeed been many cases in Jaffna where people have used militant groups to gain unfair advantage in settling land disputes, sometimes leading to murder by proxy.

While the LTTE is bound to prolong the paralysis in Tamil politics, is there no room for a Muslim leadership to assert some form of sanity? Is what is going on in the East really in the long term interests of Muslims? The progress of the Muslim community in this country owes much to its cosmopolitanism. Is it really the Muslim perception that their interests must be safeguarded by seeking disjointed cantons in the North—East? How will Sinhalese feelings be orchestrated when this same logic is applied outside the North—East to Puttalam, Beruwela, Galle and Hambantota? One could almost see deliberate pressure being exerted on the Muslims to prevent the Muslims and Tamils agreeing to a common political settlement. Sinhalese feelings on the whole issue are also being managed. They are being made to think that Tamils suffered in the East because of Muslims taking advantage of the situation — a view that is being given out by the forces and is finding expression in the press. Cynics are saying that the government may next use Tamil militant groups to teach the Muslims a lesson. Unless the Tamils and Muslims are alert, it is quite possible that the two groups which have every reason to get together as brothers, will be used to destroy each other.

It is thus important that every form of international pressure is exerted to put an end to the systematic violations of human rights that are an integral part of the government's politics. At the same time this international effort should be alert to ensure that it does not play into the hands of destructive tendencies amongst Tamils that are being legitimised by the government.

The LTTE is now regimenting life in Jaffna in Goebbelsian fashion. Any form of independent thinking or expression is hounded out as treacherous. Detentions and

executions have increased. Education, once held in high regard is now at a standstill. In consequence there has recently been a large exodus of students and intellectuals when the pass requirement was lifted for two days. Hardly anyone in Jaffna is even remotely thinking of the East. This politics will maintain the East and the rural North as a no man's land, with an angry, deprived, and disinherited people producing children to be massacred or used as shields by the state forces, and in consequence a ready source of recruits for the LTTE. It is important that nothing is done to encourage or help this tendency. Tamils should instead be helped to combat it. This tendency is greatly legitimised by routine shelling, both aerial and land based, by government forces in Jaffna. On 9th October a helicopter fired shell killed about 10 persons in the Chavakachcheri market. The government and the LTTE are both interlocked into each other.

In questioning the stand and actions of the Sri Lankan state, one must also question the role of the Tamil intelligentsia that has one way or the other sustained the politics of the Tigers, with its capacity for wrecking every prospect of peace. The massacres of Muslims and Sinhalese destroyed even the possibility of human contact with people Tamils as well as the LTTE had to deal with placing everyone, including vulnerable families, in a whirlpool of brutality. When foreign journalists for instance, talk of Tigers still in control of most of the territory, it is only so in a destructive sense. It is not that they desire or even have the capacity to protect a single Tamil life. They thrive on provoking reprisals against Tamils. When the PFLT, the political wing of the LTTE, issues figures of Tamils killed in the Amparal District since 1983, their moral right and their motives in doing so must be questioned.

In trying to do some good in this situation, the absurdly hopeless position in which the LTTE has placed the Tamils must be clearly understood. The state is not a monolithic entity, but there is a dominant ideology determining its overall tendency. Nor is the state without its defences. It can say that it went to unusual lengths to reach accommodation with the Tigers. Over several months it had restrained its forces in the face of the Tigers humiliating and provoking them. It had even asked its policemen to surrender to the Tigers. What really happened was not so much the government ordering the forces to kill Tamils, but that a whole state and military apparatus steeped in chauvinism was suddenly faced with a problem for which it was not prepared. In challenging the state on what took place, we appear to be expecting more from the state than from the Tamil leadership that deliberately and knowingly placed the people in this position.

Because of the pressures on the state, both local and international, the state would, in many instances at least, like to minimise civilian casualties and instructions are given to officers. These officers also have simple assumptions based on their chauvinism. They may try up to a point. In dealing with an enemy so provocatively brutal and so callous about its own people, these officers quickly lose patience and conclude that it is right to kill Tamils.

In order to raise issues with the state and challenge particular injustices, there must be people who can organise and act independently. But the Tamils are completely stifled. While some independent views are allowed to appear in the southern press, those in Jaffna have no journals except the three Tamil papers appearing in Jaffna. These only publish the LTTE's version of events.

While denying that the LTTE had killed Muslims anti-Muslim articles are published, leaving an impression that it is right to punish Muslims. So hopeless is the situation of Tamils under the LTTE, that they could hardly reach the state to challenge it. At a simple

level, it is difficult to break through impressions and convince people that the state could have handled the problem differently and constructively.

Finally, we must express our appreciation to those persons and institutions who wish to remain unidentified, who not just helped us immensely, but without whose help the work on this report could not have been done. Many of them were Sinhalese. Some were so fluent in all three languages that it was hardly possible to guess their origins, nor was it important.. Their concern for the suffering people of the East was genuine. These are hopeful signs. While walking with some of them along a wide eastern beach, with the evening twilight and a lonely coconut grove to the west, we saw a sight symbolising the common tragedy that has overtaken many of our young, irrespective of communal boundaries. The tide had just brought in the severed head of a young lad. The small face was pink and disfigured, surrounded by a dense mop of black hair. It was a symbol of evil and also a challenge.

**Note:**Given the nature of prevailing situation we were unable to interview Muslims in the East. We are aware of the brutal alienation they were subject to. Despite the shortcoming, an effort has been made to maintain balance.

## **Addendum To the Preface**

### **Remembering Rajani**

The first anniversary of Dr. Rajani Thiranagama's murder of 21st September 1989, fell at a time when the work on this report was being done in the Eastern Province. Her death coincided with the declaration of the ceasefire between the IPKF and the LTTE, which was hailed as ushering in an era of peace. A year later, we were amidst refugees in the East who had lost their belongings, many dear ones and were in a state of utter despondency. It was under conditions prevailing under an earlier war between the IPKF and the LTTE in 1987, that we had vivid impressions of Rajani's strength of character, vision and tremendous energy. She set about doing what she could, to mobilise the people to defend their interests and to make the university an institution active in defending the people, and chartering a course for the future. One year after she was killed, the entire future of the Tamils has been plunged into uncertainty and gloom. The university has become a defunct institution. Rajani was despairing of the influential section of the intelligentsia, who by selling their names to rotten causes, save themselves, while endangering everyone else — particularly the ignorant and children, who are taken in by an air of respectability. The politics that created this degraded and uncared—for humanity in the East, did not spare Rajani who would have done something to wipe their tears. Feeling a sense of loss amidst all this suffering,) one could not help wishing for Rajani's presence.

In the context of current hatred between Tamils and Muslims, Rajani had been very sensitive to the destructive potential of mishandled communal differences. She kept a watchful eye on the well-being of students from minorities amongst Tamils — the Muslims, Eastern and the Hill—country Tamils. Whenever there were signs of one of them being victimised, she would warn other students, "If you behave in this manner towards them, you will one day find Jaffna isolated, losing its significance as a centre of culture and education". Her fears have come close to Doing realities. It is well to recall what she had written in " the Broken Palmyra" on the Muslim Question:

*“The development of the northern front occurred at the expense of many fundamental tasks of nation building. The blind spot in the concept of the Tamil nation was the question of two large sections of the Tamil speaking people — the Muslims or the Islamic Tamils and the hill country (plantation) Tamils. Tamil nationalism was the ideology of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Historically, it had very tenuous links with the ideology of the Islamic or hill country Tamils of Sri Lanka.*

*The case of the Islamic Tamils spotlights the weakness of Tamil nationalism with clarity. They are a grouping with a unique economic, socio—political structure, and cultural characteristics. Large sections of them live in the East, with pockets of them well entrenched all over Sri Lanka, but isolated from each other.. The cohesive factor binding them is Islam, not Tamil. Not only do they have historical contradictions specific to themselves with the Sinhalese, but have suffered during anti—Tamil “race riots” as well.*

*Though the slogans and programmes of all movements paid lip service to the rights of Muslims, there has never been a concrete programme to realise their goals, or the articulation of their needs and objectives during the process of the struggle. What has been proclaimed is a programme designed by the Tamils for the Muslims. There are immense contradictions and prejudices between Tamils and Muslims, which should have been handled during the years of struggle, a common basis built and an organic cohesion produced. What we have is tokenism, some tenuous slogans, a token presence of Muslims in the movements and the imposition of the hegemony of the Tamils (especially peninsula Tamils) which led to increasing contradictions. Therefore the advance of the Northern front was a facade. Internally, the inner core of the nation was cleaved, and many sections were inarticulate, isolated and in disarray. This situation was successfully used by the Sri Lankan government to increase the animosity between the Tamils and Muslims by even arming small groups of Muslim youths to escalate the conflict.”*

In remembering Rajani, we take up at this point an important message she leaves behind for us as human rights activists. Given the destructive tendencies at work, Rajani was a strong advocate of the belief that the task facing human rights activity in this country was not to just document violations and issue statements, but also to build structures that will enhance and safeguard freedom. This involves a sociopolitical dimension. If one dissociates from responsibility in this matter, even the capacity for the former is quickly lost. It has happened in this country. Though the number of organisations in Colombo dealing with and studying human issues has multiplied, there is evidently little understanding or knowledge of what is happening in this small country — in the East for instance. There are many places where NGO’s have made little impact. Violations are so routine that people are unaware that there are such things as human rights. Whatever credibility the UTHR (Jaffna) commands today owes a great deal to Rajani. What structures did she have in mind? During the last few months preceding her death, Rajani was actively involved with the teething problems of Poorani illam — a home for women in distress — which she helped to found. Apart from offering a home, Poorani illam also aimed at imparting to these women a sense of purpose and dignity, and a will to combat any form of oppression. Happily, thanks to the dedication of Pat Ready and others, the institution has survived and gained in credibility through a difficult year. One of the

speakers at the observance for Rajani on 12th October, suggested that it is because men have shirked and downgraded the labour of caring routinely undertaken by women, that they far more readily become torturers and killers. The salvation of Tamil society today depends far more than ever, on the assertion of the dignity of women, and their having an important voice in determining our future. This was integral to Rajani's vision.

Rajani had often said that if the UTHR (Jaffna) is to gain credibility and trust from the people, its members should be involved in the problems of ordinary people. It is because some members took this seriously that the organisation has survived. It is not an organisation that is well known in public, but it is known and trusted by several people who clearly see the present course of destruction, want to do something and can only do little. It may be more accurate to describe the UTHR (Jaffna), not as an organisation, but as a network of persons with diverse commitments who understand, trust and help each other. It is a structure of sorts, the best possible under a totalitarian dispensation. What the future holds depends crucially on external factors.

## **Chapter 1**

### **THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT' 'S**

#### **OPERATIONS IN THE EAST**

##### **1.1 The general pattern:**

War was declared on the LTTE by the state following the LTTE's atrocities against unarmed policemen on 11th June. The LTTE after saying that it would protect the civilians quickly withdrew from the major towns in the East as well as from the countryside in the Amparai District, almost without putting up a fight. Indeed there has been little fighting, but mainly a great deal of massacres of unarmed civilians by both sides. Both sides have directly or indirectly used civilians as shields. The LTTE was, as always, happy to fire from behind civilians and run away, while government forces have actually marched civilians in front, in a war of ambushes and mine—fields. Both sides have extolled the virtue and heroism of fighting men in song. But there has been no heroism, but only shame, venality and banditry. The shame is even greater on the part of those high up who used the fighting men as tools and a cover, for their own failings. The LTTE's massacres of Muslim and Sinhalese civilians have been dealt with separately [UTHR (Jaffna), Report's No.4 and 5].

On the part of the state, it has unleashed its tremendous destructive capacity, particularly in the East, in a campaign to uproot, beat down and render leaderless, the mass of the Tamil people. This has been done through a campaign of killing and terror. The elimination was more systematic when it came to persons in the community who were educated, in positions, graduates or in university ty arid were essential for the future. leadership and protection tion of the community.

The survivors were driven away, their homes burnt and their goods methodically looted. Muslims turned out to be convenient scapegoats. The story was the same everywhere, particularly in the Ampara District. Pottuvil Kalinunai Akkaraipattu, Veeramunai,

Karitivu, it was all the same. Muslims either provided lists or identified people for elimination. When complaints were made, from the Minister of Defence downwards, the blame was casually placed on Muslims fanatics

The pattern of making refugees flee was again the same in places with large Muslim population nearby. When the Sri Lankan forces moved in during June, people were killed in large numbers, picked up on the basis of lists supplied and most were driven to refugee camps. One way of making refugees flee was to shoot those who moved on the roads in search of food or to regularly harass them by picking up young men from camps, who then vanished. This was the case in Pottuvil. In Veeramunai. and Sorikalmunali which are close to Samanthurai, people stayed despite such harassment. Immediately following the massacre of Muslims in Eravur on 12th August, Muslim hoodlums and homeguards were set up to attack the Tamils in the Veeramunai Piilayar Kovil refugee camp with knives and shotguns at 9.00 a.m. Witnesses saw the police watching from about 300—500 yards away. After about an hour, the STF arrived to call a halt. The STF and police were both about 11/4 miles from the refugee camp, well within hearing distance. The STF offered to escort the people to Thirukkivil, which they accepted. Vehicles were sent. Some vehicles took the refugees to Thirukkivil, while others carried a good part of their goods, including colour television sets, video decks, other electrical items and bicycles to Amparai and the South. Almost the same pattern was repeated in Sorikalmunai a month later. Tamils have thus been driven from many areas in the East. Particularly in the Amparai district, homes of Tamils driven away have been often burnt or demolished, making it difficult for them to return. That their displacement was meant to be permanent can be gathered from discrepancies in the manner in which security forces behaved towards Muslims and Tamils.

In the case of Muslims, the forces have gone out of the way not just to protect their persons and homes, but also to protect their economic life. The forces have helped Muslims to harvest their rice fields, look for their cattle and have co—operated in their normal economic activities. In the case of displaced Tamils, they say that if the problem was genuinely with Muslim homeguards, just two trained men with guns in a refugee camp would have sufficed to keep them at bay. But, instead after they were attacked by these homeguards, the offer from government forces was significantly to ransport them away. Protection was never considered nor offered. Far from being protected, their economic activity was not only hindered by terror, but even their material goods were stolen or destroyed. Tamils in Veeramunai, its adjoining villages, central Camp and Akkaraipattu are angry that after their help was utilised in harvesting paddy fields of Muslims, they were attacked and driven away before they could harvest their own fields. Their fields either remain unharvested or are being harvested by Muslims. Refugees in Thirukkivil can be seen going on bicycles through by-lanes to their fields more than ten miles away and returning with a sack of paddy. They run these risks to give their families some basic necessities.

In Batticaloa town where the army's takeover was smooth, disappearances soon commenced and burning bodies began to appear! The worst was the burning of 27 bodies - on Lake Road. Killing, sexual molestation -and rape went on with -impunity. Another significant —development was methodical looting. - A gentleman in Batticaloa, near - Kallady, suddenly found a soldier on his roof removing his TV aerial. Then went his wash basin, bathroom fittings, electronic goods, new bed sheets etc. A member of the local community who complained to an officer was told that this was being done on orders. Reports of persons being deprived, under threat, of money and jewellery during search

operations, are common place. Seven if claims regarding intercepted messages between officers and their families are dismissed, the extent and the fact that these stolen goods are being transported south, point to high level complicity. Many an Easterner has said the same thing: “They may let us live, but only as savages.”

In the Amparai District, while Tamils were being evicted from one place after the other, there was an illusion that Thirukkivil and its environs were safe because of the personal generosity of the local STF commander. The last eviction was from Sorikalmunai on 18th September. Several tens of thousands of refugees were now gathered in Thirukkivil, Thambiluvil, Kallianthivu, Sinnathottam and Vinayagapuram. On 20th September, the STF started its round ups in these areas. From the 24th dead bodies, some headless, and heads without bodies started appearing along the coast along Vinayagapuram, Thambiluvil and Thambattai. Refugees who often had no change of Clothes had inadequate shelter against the oncoming rains, were hungry and sometimes caught pneumonia, were now stricken with another source of terror. “Whom can we tell these to?”, “Who will do anything at all?” are anguished cries one frequently hears. Picking up of refugees for human shields during operations has also become a regular practice.

## **1.2 Why a war against unarmed Tamils:**

Why was the Tamil community singled out for such punitive measures? The government had an obligation to maintain the law (or what was left of it). Even if the LTTE was identified as the source of lawlessness, what was the justification for identifying the Tamils collectively with the LLTE? As we had pointed out in earlier reports, the government had a lot to do with strengthening and legitimising the LITE's 's claim to being the sole legitimate representatives of the Tamil speaking peoples. The government conspired in silencing all dissent. The government, during the earlier half of this year went a long way to enforce the LTTE 's authority. Policemen were transferred at its request, extortion was overlooked ,—the president and his aspiring son had themselves photographed with LTTE leaders for the family album arms had been given and even the governor for the North—East signed an order releasing 40 vehicles for the LTTE 's use . Why then kill Tamils who under duress had followed the example of the state in paying taxes to the LTTE taking photographs, repairing vehicles, driving lorries, or conducting tuition classes for the LTrE? Did not the Muslims also co-operate and render crucial material, help to the LTTE and co-operate with them in the same manner that the Tamils had? Furthermore, several independent observers have said that had elections been held in early June, five months after the LTTE had gained control of the East, it would have been hard put to win even one seat. Disillusionment with the LTTE had been nearly as far reaching amongst Tamils in the East as it had been amongst Muslims.

If it is argued that the killing of the Sinhalese and Muslim policemen by the UFI'E in June was the issue calling for the punishment of Tamils, there were equally serious matters affecting Tamils for which the state must take responsibility. A few months earlier, the LTTE had killed several hundred Tamil youths from the East conscripted for the Indian sponsored TNA together with members of the CVF, including Muslims, all of whom had surrendered to the LTTE These killings had been done with the connivance of the Sri Lankan state. Did not the government have an obligation under the law to protect children of the nation who had been illegally conscripted? In Thainbiluvil and Thirukkivil alone, the number of TNA conscripts who fell into the LTTE's hands and who were never seen again, is said to number 150 according to local sources. Lawlessness thus did not begin with the killing of policemen. The issue had been distorted because so much had been staked on the LTTE-Premadasa deal that there had been a conspiracy of silence on nearly everyone's part not to question the ugly things that had happened during the year

preceding the war. The Tamils were to a large measure victims of what had been imposed on them.

Why did the government right along choose to ignore the fact that there was serious, if silent, dissent to the politics of the LITE as evident from its constant need for repression, and lump the Tamils with the LTTE? The answer is that while the LTTE? was a prospective ally, it was one force that could be relied upon to work against the democratic aspirations of the people of Sri Lanka in return for power. This was evident in the service rendered by the LTTE to the government at the UN Human Rights commission in — during February. When the LTTE fell out on the other hand, it served the - of Sinhalese chauvinist aspirations to treat the Tamils as a monolith supportive of the LTTE so as to decimate the Tamils as an entity. It is this that explains the military strategy described earlier. It is calculated to give the initiative to destructive tendencies in Tamil society and thus create a rationale for justifiable genocide.

This all seems very ironical because there was a large body of Tamil opinion in the East, both tired of the LTTE and very upset over the killing of the policemen. A leading Tamil citizen of Pottuvil told us: “I was very much shaken by what the [ATE had done to the policemen. Many of the Sinhalese policemen were nice young boys. Some of them could hardly write their names in Sinhalese and used to come to me to have money orders written to send their salaries home. By this action, I felt, the L’ITE had degraded the whole race of Tamils. I am even now ready to be killed as a punishment for what was done in the name of Tamils.” There was thus a creative alternative to treat the Tamils with clemency, in accordance with the law, and isolate the LITE politically. This, the government was incapable of.

### **1.3 Aspects of Sri Lankan Military Strategy in the East:**

It has been pointed out that the main military thrust has been to displace and dispossess Tamils, through random firing and knifing as soon as the forces arrived, and then through mass arrests and disappearances, setting up Muslim homeguards and sometimes Sinhalese thugs on rampges and then through looting and destruction of property. It appears that the permitted places of refuge had been more or less chosen before the war broke out. The main refugee concentrations are Thirukkovil - Thambiluvil and Karaitivu in the Amparai District and Batticaloa town, Mandur and Vantharumoolai in the Batticaloa District. These are all near the Eastern coast, and few Tamils are living in the interior. We do not know enough about the situation in the Trincomalee District at the time of writing.

Tamils have been driven out of areas in the Amparai District where their economic life was centred. This included colonies 11, 13, 4, 7, 15 and 6 in Central Camp, and also Malwattai, Walathapiddy, Mallikaitivu, Puthunagar, Kanapathipuram, Veeramunai and Sorikalmunai in the Central Camp police area. Sinhalese who were in Cenral Camp colonies 3, 10, 9 and 26 had left on their own at the outbreak of troubles. Only the Muslims remain in colonies 12, 5, as well as some in 6 and 15. Tamils had also teen driven away from settlements in the Gal Oya scheme such as Inginiyagala by Sinhalese hooligans backed by the police. In July, barely a month after the war, 9 Sinhalese villages in the Central Camp colonisation scheme along the border were administratively transferred from Batticaloa to Amparai District.

When the forces moved into towns in the Amparai District, those picked out for elimination from lists provided by Muslim collaborators were often Tamil government servants and educated persons. In Pottuvi the first on the list was the Tamil Assistant Government Agent,

next a senior Tamil doctor in the local -hospital and third a Tamil head master. The first had a narrow shave,, the second is missing since June and the third was taken by the police in July and did not reappear. In Akkaraipattu, a large number of the 37 or so Tamils eliminated in

the first round were government servants. The same pattern could be seen in Karaitivu and other places. As soon as the army entered Karaitivu, 26 or so educated persons were picked out, thrust into a room and were subject to grenade explosions and automatic firing. Only 3 escaped with injuries.

When it came to Tamil government servants, there may have been genuine, though misplaced Muslim anger, after the LTTE s killing of policemen. This was because during the preceding months Tamil, and even Muslim, government servants, often against their own judgment, had been forced to take orders from the LTTE because of instructions coming from the president. himself. The commanders of the forces knew that these lists were mostly prepared on the basis of misjudgments, vindictiveness and ambitions over territory and power. But a deliberate decision had been made, to act on them. In some instances Tamils on lists had been saved by the last minute intervention of superior officers.

It is not difficult to see a clear strategy and a method behind the madness. The strategy chosen is one which reconciles a misplaced counter-insurgency strategy with the aims of Sinhalese chauvinism. That is why we have argued that genocide is a logical consequence of Sinhalese chauvinist ideology.

#### **1.4 The nature of the Sri- Lankan forces:**

In examining operation in the East the nature of the Sri Lankan forces clearly emerges. Their evolution has paralleled the degeneration of the political forces culture in this country. These forces~ now act without any sensitivity to the law. The police are neither a fighting force nor a law enforcing authority. The army has become increasingly corrupt and undisciplined. It is in this state of affairs that the Special Task Force (STF) was selected and trained by the British SAS as an elite unit within the police force. From the beginning it has been subject to stricter rules and discipline. In having to operate a military policy, the three had to be used according to their talents.

There has been very little actual fighting in the Batticaloa and Aznparai Districts. Corruption in the army and commissions at sentry points had become institutionalised as the 80's advanced. Loot had become one of the significant motivating factors. This too appears to have been regularised as our reports suggest. These attributes had their use in the Batticaloa district when it came to creating a general state of fear and insecurity. In most of the Amparai District, the army was used in the first wave and then the STF took over Thirukkovil-Tambiluvil which has functioned as a place of refugee has been very carefully handled by the STF from the start.

The STF has not generally been associated with random firing, looting, rape and arbitrary elimination. Its methods are to target people on the basis of information, or to round up large numbers and parade them before informers. Those picked up are ruthlessly tortured.. Whoever is released would hardly look human. The rest appear as corpses in various places, some burnt, some without heads and some floating in the sea. This had been the general pattern in the South. Such deliberate terror is combined with gestures of cordiality towards leading members of society and even some material help to the public at large. In this way protest and criticism are neutralised for the present. The STF is compared with the police and the army and is frequently well spoken of, and its repressive purpose is lost sight of in the overall scheme of things. Its

frequent use of civilian shields too is not talked about. Such an image serves a purpose in elaborate *dramas*.

In Veeramunai, the refugee camp was attacked on 12th August by Muslim hoodlums backed by the police. - At Sorikalmunai on the 18th -September, following such an attack the army fired at refugees trying to flee the church. In both cases people felt reassured after the STF came and offered the refugees safe passage. At Veerarnunal it was seldom asked why the STF which was about a mile away from the loud commotion took over one hour to arrive. People quite often said, had the STF not arrived just then, hundreds more would have been killed. Such a division of labour serves the overall purpose.

It is the dominant character of each force as an institution that comes out in its functioning. Where people have lost all hope they clutch onto individual officers whom they regard as decent and different from others. But when one looks closely, individuals with such benign reputations find important uses in the repressive scheme. An officer with such a reputation was put in charge of Thirukkivil Thambiluvil which was designated to take in refugees. For 2 months there was great relief. Then commenced the picking up of people from camps and the appearance of bodies. In the end the nature of the STF as an institution asserted itself, whatever the officer's personal inclinations.

Many officers assured civilians that they would not touch persons who had nothing to do with the LTIE after the outbreak of the war. They themselves offered the reasons. If not they said, they must first shoot President Premadasa and other members of the cabinet who had given the lead and had helped the LTIE tremendously. Even the STF had worked with the LTTE and had protected its leaders. These assurances were tragically breached mostly totally unreasonable ways. A deeply ingrained character of these forces is racism, and besides this there is tremendous pressure on individual officers. A convoy of vehicles conveying journalists and dignitaries went to Thangavelayuthapuram, to the place where the bodies of policemen killed by the LTTE were buried. Three Tamil civilians found on the road were hauled into the last vehicle by members of the forces and were killed. In another instance during the journey, an officer intervened to prevent a civilian from being killed. Others who went along heard mutterings from the men about the officer having to be the son of a Tamil mother. Similar stories are not infrequent. When there is talk about an officer being good with Tamil civilians, there may be complaints and petitions. Some officers have attributed these to Muslim interests. Furthermore careers of officers will suffer unless they prove themselves useful to the aims of the dominant political ideology. In such a political climate whether in military or in administration, individuals do not count.

### **1.5. The workings of Sinhalese chauvinism and its limitations:**

An octogenarian in Thirukkivil who was familiar with the present site of Amparai town in the 1930's described it thus: "There were then precisely 15 Sinhalese families living on the edge of the tank. They did not do paddy cultivation, but cultivated cholam (maize) and kurukkan. They were friendly. I would go there in a bullock cart with a supply of betel, which I gave them, and then hunted venison. They helped me to dry it and I gave them a share. We breakfasted on kurakkan cake which went down with a coconut shell full of honey. Now, large numbers of Sinhalese have been settled on land where once the elephant, deer, leopard, monkey and the bear roamed. I have no quarrel with that and I wish them well. But let us also live! The plight of my Tamil people today is so depressing, that I do not wish to live much longer."

Indeed, what is objectionable to the Tamils here is not that the agricultural potential of the

region was tapped and Sinhalese were settled from the late 40 's. What is objectionable is that the workings of the scheme was absorbed into the political culture of Sinhalese chauvinism and now seeks to deny the Tamils a legitimate place in the region. The state machinery, both administrative and military, is being used to extirpate and obliterate its rich and historical Tamil cultural associations. For the Tamils, a struggle for identity has now become a struggle for survival. The brutality of the Tigers has provided the pretext for military operations by the state of an ultimately genocidal character.

Amparai town, serves as the district capital of a district that still has a Tamil speaking majority, But anyone going through the town will hardly see any sign in Tamil - nearly all in Sinhalese and English. Going eastwards just out of town - one comes across Iraikamam, a Muslim village, where their boards are in Tamil or in Tamil and English. Going North—east towards Batticaloa, a few miles away there is the Tamil village of Malwattai. There is a clear signal regarding the intentions of the state. West of the town is the Gal Oya tank and the agricultural colonisation scheme. In successive waves of anti—Tamil violence since 1958, the Tamil presence in the scheme and in Amparai town has been progressively diluted. The current bout of violence instigated by the forces which has left a large number of Tamil women widowed, may have given the remaining presence a death blow. In the present state of military repression, collecting statistics is probably out of the question. One pointer may be that perhaps the majority, if not nearly all, the male children attending the Tamil Maha Vidyalayam in Amparai town, are now no more. The school had an attendance of 600.

It is not accidental that this process has been aided and abetted by the administrative machinery. It has been moving systematically towards making the district majority Sinhalese. The voting population in the region during the 1989 elections was: Tamil - 48,000, Muslim -240,000 and Sinhalese — 234,000. The Sinhalese voting population was increased by about 100, 000 through transferring a part of Moneragala District including the town of Siyambalanduwe to Amparai and by the recent settlement of Sinhalese colonists in the Mahaweli scheme. After the current war broke out, 9 Sinhalese villages from Central Camp in the Batticaloa District were administratively shifted to Amparai. Some moves made in the 80 's are curious. Pottuvil, a, Tamil and Muslim AGA 's division was broken up and a new Lahugala division was created. This division has a very small population of 1600, most Sinhalese, families. It includes Panama 10 miles south of Pottuvil, which has no direct access to Lahugala. A person from Panama wanting to transact business has now, instead of going just to Pottuvil, has to go to Pottuvil and another 8 miles west to Lahugala. This move was obviously made to facilitate Sinhalese colonisation.

Other moves made since June have the same discriminatory character. The North-East provincial council stands dissolved and its functions are overseen by the governor. Foreign aid was given for improving telecommunication facilities in Jaffna. This is now reportedly being administratively transferred to Amparai. The post of DIG of police for the North-East has been scrapped. A superintendent of police has now been appointed as co-ordinator for the East. He was a UNP candidate at the last elections and has been publicly making statements to the effect that it is public servants from Jaffna who had introduced terrorism to the East. This would appear not only to justify some of the killings by the forces, but also signals a campaign. to replace Tamil public servants holding responsible positions in the East.

This is evident: in the way Amparai, the capital of the district by that name has been handled. Its large Tamil middle class population has again been decimated. From the 50s and 60's, the administration of this largely Tamil speaking district has been Sinhalese, facilitating, state sponsored colonisation of Sinhalese. [See Chapter 4]. Since June, there has been such a state of unchecked indiscipline by the forces, that Tamil public servants cannot function in Amparai.

The seriousness of this can be seen from the experience of injured refugees from Veeramunai at Amparai hospital. Tamil public servants reporting in Amparai are humiliated at sentry points. In this situation, the Tamil Deputy Director for Irrigation in Amparai, and the Regional Director for Health Services have been replaced by junior appointees. The Tamil clerk in the Pottuvil Pradeshya Sabha was killed by the police on 5th October, and there is a clear signal for Tamils not to get back.

What we can see is a resumption with a vengeance, of the course being followed by the state, until India intervened to dictate a political settlement in 1987. It also shows how inadequate the Tamil response has been, particularly the destructiveness of the LTTE.

Sinhalese chauvinism is the ideology of the ruling class which seeks to perpetuate its power through a racist populism instead of addressing real questions of social and economic justice. Genuine democracy is alien to it, and in place of genuine development, it has stifled its people and has lowered the standing and strength of the country as a whole. Its own crises have brought about a state of external dependence, multinational penetration in agriculture, particularly in Sinhalese areas, two parallel insurgencies in the North and South, high military spending and even direct Indian intervention.

Through a mismanagement of its foreign relations, it had pinned its hopes crucially on the oil rich Middle East, itself in a state of crisis, for both economic and military assistance. In seeking to suppress the Tamils in the East, the state was logically led, aided by the Tigers, to stir up Muslim—Tamil enmity, and campaign in the Islamic world that the government was trying to protect the Muslims. This has gone to ridiculous limits. By September, the majority of Tamils in the East were either refugees or were living in fear of leaving their homes. The LTTE's effectiveness had greatly declined. On 20th September following the killing -of 4 Muslim fishermen at sea, Muslim home-guards armed by the government, went into the Tamil village of Puthukudiyiruppu -and killed about 17 Tamils. It had been clear for some time that Tamils had no protection against these home guards. When Tamil political parties complained, the government chose to represent the incident as communal violence. -

But many Sinhalese military and government officials on the ground in the East see it very differently. In the Amparai District, they are conscious that the majority of Tamils and a large number of Sinhalese (eg. Central Camp) have fled. Only the Muslims remain largely where they were, continuing with their economic life and education. Appeals for aid for Muslim refugees are mostly looked upon as fake. The anxiety felt by these officials shows itself in curious ways. A senior Leftist politician in Colombo described a conversation with a leading military official in the East. On the subject of Sinhalese refugees, this official said, "Tell me where they are. I will arrest them and bring them back!" They look upon Sinhalese settlers as soldiers and fail to understand that they are human beings with legitimate fears. The fact is that in areas like Central Camp and Pottuvil, the Sinhalese had good relations with Tamils, and many had intermarried. In such cases, Sinhalese would feel uncomfortable about returning to areas from which Tamils had been driven out, and live with Muslim home guards. Even if the LTTE had been weakened in the East, Sinhalese are bound to have fears of newly fed ambitions of certain Muslim interests. What the government has unintentionally let loose by allying with unruly Muslim elements enjoying unchecked power, is bound to complicate things even further, creating perhaps more determined opposition to the Sinhalese chauvinist agenda. What we see now in Sinhalese officialdom are just the beginnings of panic. One often hears from such officials to the effect, "We like to be fair by the Tamils. But the government is powerless. The Muslims are very powerful. They are in the SLMC, in the UNP and the SLFP and are constantly lobbying with Middle East"

Thus an ideology which sought to assert Sinhalese power in an oppressive manner must again and again find itself cornered into positions of weakness. This has also been the historical experience of the Tamil militancy. That is why basic human rights and principles of justice cannot be dis *regarded with impunity*. Unless there arise Tamil and Muslim leaderships which will talk on the basis of these principles, the future of ‘the East looks very dim.

## **1.6. The Disintegration of the State:**

What is essential for the stability of a state is the respect for human principles and basic laws that have a universal character. When these are maintained the various institutions that function under the state can discharge their functions without the hindrance of narrow loyalties such as party, race or religion. Despite India’s other failings, its considerable success in keeping narrow loyalties out of its civil and security services, has preserved a sense of stability for the foreseeable future. When these principles cease to operate, transient group loyalties and paranoid suspicions become the basis for everything. The state is then on the threshold of disintegration.

In the East of this country in particular, and in the higher reaches of the civil and security services in this country, Tamils are being isolated at every level. In the security services, the Tamil presence had sharply declined over the years. Tamils, whose abilities, training and experience could be used to the benefit of the people in this country, are being shunted into positions of no consequence, wasting their energies in obstacle races. For a Tamil public servant to haggle long hours with deliberately placed obstructions, to get a small quantity of food or medicine into war stricken Tamil areas has become worthwhile labour.

The following illustrates the current plight of Tamil public servants in the East: When the STF came into a town in mid June, most of the people fled elsewhere, though the public servants largely remained. A very senior public servant was pulled out of his office by the STF. An STF man asked his officer (who is currently an QIC of a station) whether to finish him off there itself. The officer replied, “*Eyah loku ekkenek, methana dhanda honda nehe*’ (He is a big man, it is not nice to finish him here). The public servant—waited in the grounds with his captors for the arrival of a South African, Buffel armoured car, which was to take him to his.: / execution. In the meantime a Muslim mob arrived and heaped accusations against him, to the effect that he was a terrorist. The OIC asked them to take him and finish him off. Some Muslims came with wooden poles in, order to beat him to death. A Muslim teacher well disposed towards him, saved him by telling the mob, ‘The STF took him. It is their business to finish him. Why do you want to take on the Muslims the blame for finishing this man?’ The mob had second thoughts and went away.

Shortly afterwards the Buffel arrived. Just then a jeep arrived with an STF officer having the rank of Assistant Superintendent (ASP), who inquired,, who the intended victim was. The QIC replied that he was the .... (He was ignorant of the difference between public service ranks)., The ASP then promptly took him away, left him in a church with some biscuits and aerated water, and thus saved his life.

Following the removal of the Tamil Deputy Inspector General of Police for the North-East, a superintendent had been appointed as Coordinating Officer for the East. This man represents one of the wonders of the Sri Lankan system inaugurated by President Jayewardene. In keeping with the British system public servants cannot seek parliamentary office. This man resigned from the

police, contested in the East as a ruling party (UNP) candidate, was unsuccessful, and was reinstated into public office by a cabinet decision. He has been making public statements, once at the public function for the President in Pottuvil, that it is public servants from Jaffna who introduced terrorism to the East. This campaign launched from high places is in keeping with the evolving tendency to do away with Tamil influence in public life. It also explains what almost happened to the senior Tamil public servant and what actually happened to many Tamil government servants in the East. The policy of humiliating and driving away Tamils in positions from the East, apart from ordinary Tamils, is evident in day to day life.

When the bus carrying public servants for regular conferences in Amparai stops at sentry points, the order rings out, 'Demala baginda!' (Tamils get down!). Muslim public servants remain seated, while Tamils have to get down to be searched.

Once group considerations become the main basis of public life, it is not simply Tamils who would lose out. The cancer must extend to every form of tribal consideration. This was seen in the South during the last two years. During the JVP troubles, at least one Vice Chancellor of a university and several university teachers were placed on hit lists. Because of the anarchy surrounding the state, there is doubt as to who killed Professor Patuwattavithana, Vice Chancellor of Moratuwa University. Irrational suspicion was directed against them, because universities cannot be run like military academies. In the case of the Tamil public servant referred to, he was on a hit list despite the fact that the LTTE had taken him thrice to the jungle for questioning.

In such a situation, the state loses all character. When one asks what the state means to him, he will not be able to point to any stable principle. Loyalty to it would hinge on the ability to obtain personal favours and perks from those in charge. There is no Sri Lankan identity today. Is there any will to work towards one?

The disintegration of the state that began with the state inspired 1983 racial violence & reached new heights during the JVP troubles, has reached a new phase in the East. Because the LTTE provoked undisciplined and brutalised state forces, reprisals were to be expected. But combined with the state's anti-Tamil outlook, what is being encouraged or condoned in the East, is routine criminality. Looting of property has become part of the game. Tamils trying to collect wages for labour, who are successful in trade, or who try to collect money owed to them, have been pointed out to the police as Tigers. It is not that the forces do not know this. The STY when complained to privately often points the finger at the police. What will happen when these forces deal with troubles in Sinhalese areas the next time round?

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE RISE OF THE TIGER AND THE PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE**

#### **2.1 Before June:**

The following sketch which is mainly based on information gathered in the Amparai District traces the events leading to the war of June 1990. It complements accounts contained in earlier reports.

Towards the end of October 1989, the IPKF withdrew from the Amparai District, pretending that the TNA which it had helped to conscript would protect the provincial council administration from the concert of the LTTE and the Sri Lankan forces. The Sri Lankan government termed the TNA an illegal army, while its existence was denied by the EPRLF led provincial administration. On 5th November 1989, at dawn, the LTTE simultaneously attacked the TNA camps at Thirukkivil and Thambiluvil with material help from the Sri Lankan forces. The first was under TELO control and the second under EPRLF central. Three of the LTTE attackers at Thirukkivil were killed. TNA casualties were reportedly higher. TNA conscripts, many of whom who wanted to surrender, are said to have been made to fire at the LTTE under duress. Eventually, the defenders fled. 150 TNA conscripts surrendered to the LTTE from Thirukkivil and Thaxnbiluvil. Many discarded weapons and uniforms of the TNA were found in the area, as their owners fled. The LTTE collected the weapons and took them away in tractors, to Thangavelayuthapuram. A community leader who approached the LTTE regarding the conscripts, was told that they would be released. The LTTE withdrew the same day when two TNA columns, one from Akkaraipattu led by Razik, came from the north. The TNA remained for about two weeks under the leadership of Karunakaran, MP for Batticaloa. During this period, the people were subject to much hardship and harassment.

Then commenced the disastrous withdrawal of the TNA in the wake of the advancing Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE. At Akkaraipattu, the TNA fired at the police before quitting. In Ka.raitivu, the Muslim policemen, about 40, were separated and killed by the TNA. At Savalakkadai, members of the provincial police trained by the IPKF, the CVF, jumped into the lagoon as the Sri Lankan army advanced. 50 of them were mowed down by a Sri Lankan helicopter gunship. The LTTE was-welcomed everywhere with great acclaim, not least by the Muslims.

Tensions within the LTTE however did not surface into the open at that time. The LTTE leader for Thirukkivil— .:Thambiluvil was an Anthony from the locality who commanded considerable popularity, as a person who understood and dealt competently with local problems. Anthony is said to have expressed unhappiness over a demand from the LTTE high-command to send 300 cadre from the East, to fight the TNA in the North. Antony and those close to him, were removed from the region in December, commencing a disastrous chapter.

Mathan who was the next leader for -the area was a disaster. The story was the same in most places in the East - more disastrous than in Jaffna. In comparison with the organization which had a number of thoughtful dedicated people in the early 80's, the weakness of the organization's ideology, and its totalitarianism, had steadily deprived it of cadre who could understand the people and could talk to them. The leadership had only use for pawns. In one of the public discussions in the East earlier this year, a question was posed referring to Amirthalingam's murder, why the organisation was killing educated Tamils. Karikalan, the political chief of Batticaloa replied:

“Why are you so concerned about education? We have cadre with 8th standard education doing medical work treating injuries, and with 5th standard education working in arms factories”.

This was the same organisation that had campaigned about educational oppression in Jaffna. Through its organisation ROOTE, it was trying to get the educated Tamil professional elite in Colombo and abroad, to work for it by showing them a different face. The quality of leadership of the LTTE in the East, and the manner in which people were

spoken to, were symbolic of the esteem in which people were held. In Jaffna, the message was slower in coming. Even those like Karikalán, who perhaps believed in what they said, are ultimately pawns.

The killing of several hundred TNA conscripts was apparently done after some changes in leadership, such as the transfer of Anthony. This grieved easterners very much, because here the Tamils were an endangered, and backward community. When young boys joined the militancy in 1983, they were hardly conscious of group differences. It is often on going to India that they came to know their group affiliation. A community that could ill—afford to lose young men, was now seeing them killed in large numbers for unjustifiable reasons.

The conscripts had mostly carried arms under duress. Only the Sri Lankan government which abetted their killing could gain some satisfaction. The Muslims had approached the LTTE regarding 18 Muslim members of the CVF who had surrendered to them. A reply was reportedly given that they had been taken to Jaffna for training. There had been no further word about them.

The LTTE which was welcomed in Tamil and Muslim areas in late 1989, soon caused grave misgivings. Tiger rule also led to misgivings on the economic side. Taxation was more keenly felt by those who had money, particularly the professional class and the Muslim businessmen, causing them to move out. Almost every one / was hit by the taxation and by the LTTE taking command of certain sectors, such as the timber trade. Those who grew paddy or who collected sea—sand for sale were all subject to taxes. Those having tea boatiques complained that the Rs.500 monthly tax demanded of them was close to their income—unlike their counterparts in Jaffna who did a brisk trade. In some places the LTTE took over from private hands, the cultivation of temple paddy fields. The priority in the direction of water resources was given to these fields over the neighbouring fields. In Thirukkóvil, destruction was caused to neighbouring fields, when after these had been ploughed and sown, tractors were driven over them to plough the LTTE's fields. After the June war broke out, the LTTE withdrew with the keys to the irrigation locks. A local community leader observed, "Whoever came with a gun, whether official forces or liberators, destroyed both the economy and the people".

Many local observers said that the LTTE which commanded widespread support in January and would have made a clean sweep if elections were held, in both Muslim and Tamil areas, had become very unpopular by June. People then regarded them no better than they had regarded the pro-Indian groups in December 1989.

## **2.2. The outbreak of the June war:**

Several aspects of this have been discussed in UTHR (J) Report No.4. This section will give some additional local information together with some supplementary information gathered later. On 11th June, the LTTE surrounded many police stations in the Amparai and Batticaloa Districts and called upon the policemen to surrender. At Pottuvil, the LTTE started arriving at the police station from 10.00 a.m., one or two at a time-. By about 5.30 p.m. there were about 15 LTTE cadre around the Pottuvil police station. As the situation evolved the policemen anxiously listened to communications on their radio network. The Assistant Superintendent at Kalmunai communicated what was evidently an order from Colombo. He said that the police were not receiving support from the other forces to resist the LTTE. The police were asked by him to surrender their weapons. The LTTE had in turn assured the policemen that they would not be harmed.

The demand that the policemen at Pottuvil should surrender by 6.30 p.m. was made at about 7.30 p.m. This was in turn communicated to the police command. According to Tamil policemen who were at the station, they were reasonably well armed with machine guns and heavily outnumbered the LTTE. They were confident that they could resist the LTTE. The army at Lahugala 8 miles away, and the STF at Arugam Bay 3 miles south, urged the Pottuvil Police to resist., and promised them support. The policemen we spoke to, said that they felt at this point that although they could have easily resisted., in view of the harm that would have befallen civilians, the high command's decision to surrender was a wise one. The fighting at Kalmunai appears to have resulted from policemen resisting against the orders of the ASP. The police at Pottuvil informed Lahugala and Arugam Bay that they were surrendering to avoid trouble. This was about 6.30 p.m. Significantly, several of the policemen were from Pottuvil itself.

When the LTTE was told of this, they reassured the police that no harm would come to them. Some of the Sinhalese policemen were so innocent and ignorant, that they did not know what surrender meant. They wanted to know whether they should come crawling with their arms on their backs. They were just anxious to avoid trouble. The LTTE asked them to drop their arms and come out. The policemen were then put into commandeered buses and taken to Vinayagapuram, with the assurance that they would report back for work at their stations in two days. Vinayagapuram was 2 miles south of Thirukkovil and 20 miles north of Pottuvil. Of the 120 policemen at Pottuvil, 60 were Tamils and the rest Sinhalese and Muslims. To Vinayagapuram were also brought the policemen who had surrendered elsewhere in the Amparai District. The time was about 9.30 p.m. From the confused talk of the LTTE cadre, the policemen understood that something sinister was afoot. Some cadre thought that the Tamil policemen were to be killed and the others would be spared. Others thought the reverse. The policemen were then asked for their names and were divided into two lots depending on whether they were thought to be Tamils or others. Policemen of mixed origin who gave their Tamil name were put into the Tamil group. All policemen were bound, gagged and assaulted.

### **2.3. The massacre of policemen:**

All circumstances surrounding this tragedy, point to it being a consequence of a decision taken by the LTTE leadership at local level, about which the area leaders came to know only after, the policemen had surrendered —i.e. probably after 6.00 p.m. This is important because several Tamil policemen, both those who had surrendered and had been released by the LTTE as well as those who had been on leave, have been murdered by the forces. A number of Sinhalese policemen escaped the massacre because they had taken leave for the poson holiday which fell 3 days earlier. Likewise, a number of Tamil policemen had been on leave. The annual Amman Kovil poosai at Thambiluvil fell on 10th June, the day before the tragedy, and was an event occasioning the reunion of Hindu natives of Thirukkovil and Thambiluvil, scattered over the island. It is now a common assumption amongst the forces that Tamil policemen on leave had been tipped off by the LTTE.

Let us examine the evidence. According to local sources, the decision to kill the non—Tamil policemen was taken after the surrender and caused misgivings amongst local leaders, particularly those who were natives of the area. Like their police counterparts they were concerned about the consequences for the people of-the area who were their kith

and kin. Those who protested were in turn told that if they did not conform, they would be killed. A concrete event which substantiates these sources is that on sensing what would happen to the surrendered policemen, the LTTE leader of Samanthurai, a Muslim town, asked the surrendered policemen to run and get away. They were thus spared. The LTTE leader has not been heard of since then. Ironically, it was the Muslim home guards in Samanthurai, who in concert with the forces, were to unleash a bloody reign of terror on the Tamils in the adjoining also points to a last minute decision. A number of people in this country did sense trouble through other indications. But we may rule out the possibility of the LTTE having tipped off individual policemen.

We have suggested in our Report No.4 that the LTTE high -command was not aware of the decision to kill the policemen. This is given substance by the factor that while this drama was taking place in Batticaloa and Amparai districts, no orders had been apparently issued to the LTTE local leadership in the Trincomalee district. It was on 13th June that the LTTE leader in Trincomalee called on the high ranking police officer with whom he was friendly, used his telephone and talked to him over a cup of tea. The LTTE leader told his friend that they both had their orders, hinting that a parting of ways had come. It was on the 13th evening that the LTTE killed 14 captured police— men and asked the Tamils in Trincomalee to flee.

Who was then responsible for the decision to kill the policemen on 11th June? According to local sources, the person immediately responsible was a high ranking member of the local command known as Cashier. This is also the impression of policemen who were under detention at Vinayagapuram, who saw Cashier.

According to local lore surrounding Cashier, he was a university student who like the late Mr. Pulendran of Trincomalee, was affected by what the Sri Lankan forces had done to his family. The story behind his nickname is again very suggestive of the legacy of the 1983 racial violence. Cashier had once led an attack on a Sinhalese hamlet in Lahugala. He is said to have submitted his report in the form of a cash memo — so many women, so many children etc. Earlier this year, a ship carrying timber from East Asia had run aground off Komari. The cargo of timber was brought ashore by the LTTE and was sold to merchants for a large sum — put at Rs.30 million by local sources. This windfall according to locals, eased their tax burden. This money is said to have been held by Cashier.

Getting back to Vinayagapuram on the night of 11th June, the policemen lay on the ground after being bound, gagged and beaten. A section of their Sinhalese and Muslim colleagues were loaded into buses and taken to Thangavelayuthapuram, to the edge of the jungle near Rufus Kulam (Tank). On hearing the gun shots, the policemen in Vinayagapuram guessed what had happened. Young Tiger recruits too were involved in the operation. Those not taken, hungry and without food, were allowed to ease themselves and marched into a school building. Some of those who complained to their young captors that their knots and blindfolds were painfully tight, had them tightened further. The following day, their blindfolds were removed, and they were given tea and rice for the first time. On the 12th night, the remaining

Sinhalese and Muslim policemen, were similarly taken to the jungle and killed. Even before this, the police at Amparai had started to go berserk, killing Tamils, both their colleagues as well as ordinary civilians. What began as a routinely allowed act of indiscipline, was to soon take the shape of state policy towards Tamils of the region.

## 2.4 Negotiations in Jaffna:

By 15th June, fighting had erupted in the East, but not yet in Jaffna. A final effort was made on this day by the government's negotiator with the LTTE, Mr. A.C.S. Hameed, Minister for Justice. With the earlier ceasefire of 13th June having broken down, the effort being made here was to secure a ceasefire in the North and talk about the East in due course. The following account is from sources close to the Minister.

The Minister landed at Palaly air base, and his party was driven to an LTTE camp 10 miles towards town, in LTTE vehicles. The LTTE leadership was represented by Mahattaya, Balasingam and Yogi. Mrs Balasingam was present. A ceasefire was agreed upon, which was to take effect the following day. It was agreed that they would all meet shortly after 9.00 a.m. the following morning to place the formal seal on the ceasefire. The minister and his party were to return to Colombo for the night. A member of the party observed that the LTTE was cagey about the arrangements for the following day. To questions about essential details for the following day, cryptic answers were received, which betrayed a feeling that tomorrow would not happen. In the arrangements for the following morning, the LTTE wanted the minister to wait outside the base, rather than pick him up from inside as it had done that day. Balasingam cautioned the party that the LTTE sentries may be nervous. A member of the party noticed that Yogi, Mrs. Balasingam and to a lesser extent, Balasingam, were showing evident signs of discomfort and edginess. Mahattaya, however, looked composed. He concluded after the sequel that an elaborate drama was being put on, with which the first three played along without being happy about it.

On the way back to Palaly, one vehicle was driven by Lawrence, who had a weapon on him. A scholar in the party told a Lawrence that he too had a weapon. Lawrence was puzzled.

The scholar then pulled out his pen and told Lawrence, 'This is my weapon. One day you will realise that this is more powerful than your guns. Lawrence did not respond.

Back in Palaly base, the party retired to the officers mess. Half an hour later, a salvo of mortar shells fell into the base without causing harm. About the same time, an airman on the tarmac was hit on the thigh by a sniper's bullet. It did not look like an accidental occurrence of the kind that Balasingam had hinted at. The air plane that was to take the minister's party to Colombo was on the tarmac, and much damage could have been caused if it had been so intended. This was read as a signal for the minister not to return the following day. An army top brass who was present said that the army was certainly not keen on a fight. But that if they were made to fight, they would do so with all force. The minister's party retired to Colombo for the night. Although things looked bad, the minister felt an obligation to return the following day. Owing to the risk involved, he asked others in his party to stay back. When he flew back to Jaffna and contacted the LTTE the following morning, he got the impression that he was not expected. Balasingam who was to meet him, had to be summoned by radio. We do not know the LTTE's side of the story, but in the end the ceasefire was not to be.

What we had gathered falls into a pattern, long associated with the LTTE. It however seems unlikely that the LTTE had made serious plans for a war beforehand, though involved in a game of brinkmanship. This is suggested by its precipitate withdrawal from towns in the East, after acting as though it was going to confront the army. As in the whole history of the militancy, the aim may have been to cover up the blunder and massacre of

policemen in the East, by a bigger one from the point of view of the Tamils. In a crisis of war, the LTTE has always in the past, benefited by the atrocious conduct of the adversary. The LTTE could thus evade accountability.

Where the government was concerned, Mr. Hameed was a moderate, sensitive to minority issues and has used his persuasive powers to try to work out a deal within the framework of the

LTTE—Premadasa understanding. His Task was also a virtually impossible one. The Sri Lankan State's ideology and the instinctive brutality of its machinery have an overpowering influence waiting to assert themselves. Moreover a deal with the LTTE was intrinsically unstable, because-it would only help to suppress the basic human rights of Tamils as well as of the others in the country. With Mr. Hameed having reached a dead end, it was time for the state to do its stuff.

## **2.5. The debacle in the East:**

The LTTE's pull out from Pottuvil on 15th June has been described separately. Almost in every town, the LTTE made it appear as though it was doing a final battle and that the Sri Lankan forces would be resisted to the finish. But after provoking the forces by killing policemen- and by

— desecrating the bodies of the 11 soldiers killed in Kalmunai, from 15th June onwards, the LTTE withdrew precipitately from one town after the other.

In Thirukkivil, the LTTE called upon the people to join in the 'final battle'. Young men with some acquaintance with weapons were asked to man the trenches. About 18th June, the LTTE started pulling out. The young men who had been called out were in a quandary. Whether supportive of the LTTE or not, they had ample reason to fear the Sri Lankan forces and thus had reason to fight. When the LTTE started to pull out, many of them started running towards the jungle tracts to the West. Some were killed in bombing by the air force. Some are still

hiding in the jungle. Those who came back to Thirukkivil, fear of being lived;in. picked d up by the STF on information.

As the LTTIE pulled out, they were leaving behind uncleared bunkers, and the road was lined with sentry points made with painted tractor tires, piled one on top of the other and filled with sand. To protect themselves as best as they could, the civilians started dismantling these. In the past such structures had acted as a provocation to the forces to kill anyone in the vicinity. While they were doing this, an LTTE jeep came and stopped occupants asked the civilians threateningly 'Do you think we are pulling out? Do not assume that'.

Subsequently, the army had arrived at Akkaraipattu (6 miles north) and the STF at Komari (10 miles south). A group of citizens first approached the army. A Colonel Fonseka told them that they must surrender their young persons, but no harm would befall them. Being suspicious of the army's intentions, they approached the STE. After coming into occupation of Pottuvil, the STE commandant, Lionel Karunasena, speaking at the Mosque, said that the STE had given tremendous material help to the LTTE, and if people had to be

punished for helping the LTTE, they would have to be the first to swallow cyanide. He promised that no one would be penalised for supporting the LTTE before the war. These assurances were repeated everywhere by STE spokesmen, including to the citizens of Thirukkovil. The STE advanced into Thirukkovil on 26th June behind a human shield of 200 refugees from Pottuvil. Once in Thirukkovil, the former assurances were forgotten. Up to 20th September, local sources said that 30 —35 persons had been picked up and done away with. From 20th September to 5th October, when rounding up of refugee camps commenced, another 40 are said to have disappeared.

In Kalmunai, Karaitivu and Akkaraipattu — nowhere was there fighting or resistance — the army moved in and killed. Among the people there was tremendous anger against the LTTE. Why did the Ltte behave thus? It is believed, including by officials among the forces, that having got into an unplanned crisis, the LTTE leadership decided on the Eastern pull out to deploy greater resources in the North, where greater prestige was staked. The government claimed that Castro, ~the LTTE's political leader in Amparmi was killed. According to local sources Castro had been seen after the claim was made and that recent events had resulted in a split in the local leadership of the LTTE. They say that Castro is in the jungle, leading a precarious existence with others who had broken away. We have noted elsewhere that earlier in 1990, the LTTE had enjoyed tremendous Muslim support, of which the final threads were cut by massacres of Muslim civilians. Different sources in the East have quoted local LTTE cadre to the effect that the leadership had ordered preemptive action against Muslim cadre. At present these claims have to be treated with some caution. Cashier and his body guard are said to be missing after the massacre of policemen. While the people were angry with the LTTE in June, the

utter brutality of the state naturally drives them to find excuses for the LTTE. One patently absurd story in circulation holds that following the surrender of the policemen, an order to 'dump their arms' was misunderstood as 'dump the policemen'. Others tried to put the blame on individuals like Cashier, with a tragic history. Granting that the leadership did not approve what happened, it is all naturally consonant with LTTE politics. <sup>Why</sup> did the leadership decline in quality? Why did many able leaders from the East leave the organisation heart broken? Why in an area where the position of Tamils was most precarious, did the LTTE remove leaders like Anthony and put in those like Mathan and Cashier? The answers would point to unmistakable destructiveness. The whole phenomenon also shows that while the LTTE used the East as a source of recruits, it was not serious about the well—being of the people.

According to local citizens' committee sources, anything from 3000 of the 54—60000 Tamils in the Amparai District have been killed during the last 4 months. Some responsible persons insist on higher figure. After 4 months of tragedy and the ruinous conduct of the state, the people, most of whom are refugees, have nowhere to turn. After what the government had done to the people with its policemen, soldiers and Muslim Home guards, it has only proved to many angry and helpless people, robbed of their wits that the LTTE was right all along, to massacre policemen, Muslims and Sinhalese. Thus the stage is being set for another act of 'the tragedy. There is the very disturbing news that the LTTE had influenced 50,000 refugees in the Batticaloa district to join them in the jungles and risk 'nave only absolute distrust for the security forces and that they believe that an escalation is in the offing. There is also widespread talk of a massive recruitment drive by the LTTE in the East. The forces are in turn becoming nervous.

After the LTTE exposed itself in June as being totally undeserving of the people' s trust and support, the government in its destructive approach' did everything to rebuild the LTTE as

a force to be reckoned with. Tamil Nadu politicians and other propagandists can argue with deceptive credibility that without the LTTE, the Tamils are finished. But more than those in the North, the Tamils in the East are sure of one thing.. The people the economy and the edifying things of life are being steadily destroyed.. The tragedy of the LTTE is not principally one of demented leaders and of young led astray. It is but one of how a large number of leading persons, often with outstanding scholarly attainments, both at home and abroad, embraced a politics which destroyed their community, and become in turn accomplices in killing their own people.

## Chapter 3

### PEOPLE AND THEIR PROBLEMS

#### 3.1 Living with the STF:

We describe in what follows, the experiences of ordinary people in a town in the Amparai District.

Viewed from a distance, one may have thought that the local STF camp was going to be attacked. There were people in multi—coloured attires surreptitiously walking, crouching and peeping, along the lanes and fences surrounding the STF camp, and yet keeping a prudent distance. Getting closer one would have been surprised to find that they were not guerillas in fancy dress, but hungry looking women in ragged sarees and dressing gowns with faces wasted by sorrowing. Many of them were young, and, often pregnant mothers, carrying not rocket launchers, b babies. More little children, and elderly women

were seated under trees in the sandy lanes, shielding themselves from the scorching sun. Some would let out intermittant cries of agony: “My boy, my boy, they took him four days ago. When I ask about him, they abuse .me and shoo me away as if I were a stray dog.”

Upon inquiry, pieces of the whole weird drama fall into place. These people are mothers, wives, sisters and children of persons picked up, either on information, or in round—ups, by the STF. There is no channel by which they could make inquiries or even find out if the missing person were dead or alive. In the first instance they would come and hang about the STF camp. Sometimes there were literally hundreds. The camp had an open barbed wire fence on one side. Their reasoning was that if the person were alive, they should be able to catch a glimpse of him being taken to the toilet or being served a meal. If they could not catch sight of the person for days and if he were not released, the worst was to be assumed. The best they could do is to fill up an appeal for missing persons given out by the local citizens’ committee and another by the ICRC, and let matters rest there. “Whom can we tell this to?”, “Who will listen to us?” are expressions one hears again and again on the streets.

On 24th September, the STF commenced its round—ups. Refugees who had thought they were safe, having braved and survived many dangers, found themselves being picked up again. Gun shots were suddenly heard, and then screams. It was later learnt that a young refugee who tried to flee out of fear, had been .shot by an STF gun man, who then ran after him and stabbed him. Those who were rounded up were then taken in vehicles to the STF camp. The injured boy was carried in, kicking his legs in great pain. A stream of humanity followed the vehicles with exclamations of “Oh, Muruga”, “Oh Jesus” and “Oh Mary”. Those taken were reportedly paraded before informants. The injured boy was admitted to the local hospital and died about midnight. The routine of rounding up continued in the days that followed. Sometimes one saw

released persons being escorted home by relatives who had been anxiously hanging about. Some of them had parts of their bodies swollen beyond recognition. Others were wet with hair dripping from their heads as though they had been fished out of a dirty drain.

Passing the camp around 6:00 p.m., noises came from the camp as though a game of volleyball was being played, interspersed with noises of screams and groans. Just then one ran into a herd of cattle, mothers licking young calves with maternal devotion, as though in the reddish glow of the declining sun, all was well with the world. It also seemed an inversion of the normal order of things — human beings in the abattoir and the cows outside enjoying the freedom of wide eastern spaces. One was happy, all the same, for those cows and calves.

A little later, the television news brought home one of those contrasts in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. As usual a good deal of time was spent on a religious ceremony, attended by men in immaculate white. Mercifully, the television focus was not on the compassionate one who departed this world 2,500 years ago. The focus was rather on the men in white with clasped hands. They were the gods. Those torturers in the abattoir must be watching these ceremonies in between their labours, and not without effect. To avoid evil karma, they get persons outside to slaughter chickens for them.

The fruits of the STF's labour, the news of which spreads like wildfire at dawn, are such gory sights as would send a chill down every spine. September 25th: Early worshippers at the historic Hindu temple are treated to a headless body and a head without a body belonging to another person, brought ashore by the incoming tide. 26th: Two headless bodies. 27th: Three bodies, two in one location and one in another. One of the two bodies was indentified as that of a person in a village a few miles away and the relatives sought permission from the GS to bury it. A little later, the STF surrounded the area and had the other body interred before it could be identified. So it went on, morning after morning, bodies turning up along the coast for miles. Some in the cremation grounds, with heads and without heads. Almost everyone was overcome by a feeling of depression and helplessness.

A young lady graduate teacher told us: "My brother was taken by the STF. I waited long hours outside with the others. I made a request to speak to the camp commandant, and was ignored. While I was there the ICRC representative came to the camp on a routine visit. I debated whether to talk to her. I gave up the idea because I had heard that prisoners about whom inquiries were made were treated with greater cruelty. Later, the men in the camp stoned us. Some came out with sticks and one with a whip formed by folding a wire, which was swung at me. One old lady fell on the sand, unable to move. One of my slippers came off. I left the other and ran. I returned much later to retrieve my slippers."

"On another occasion, I saw two men in the camp, supporting on a pole what seemed to be a lifeless body folded in two and carrying it away. Good Lord, they must have tortured him to death. A close relation of mine was killed earlier by the STF as an LTTE supporter. Because members of my family are among the few educated people in the area, many people came to us for help. Our home is noted. Do not so much as mention our names. I am afraid that the STF would finish us all."

It is now thought that her brother is not alive anymore. A leading citizen in the area told us: "I heard three shots in the night and woke up. I knew that some innocent persons were being done away with and that there was nothing that I could have done. I could not sleep again. The whole situation weighs heavily on my mind. I live as though I could be killed anytime by one side or the other for doing what I think is right by the people. I have lost the fear of death. My windows

are kept open in the nights and I say what needs to be said.”

When the STF commander took control of the area, he had acknowledged that leaders of the country and senior persons in the forces had extended their full co—operation to the LTTE and that if the past had to be considered, they would all have to swallow cyanide and be punished. He gave an assurance that they would punish only those who had LTTE connections after the day on which the STF assumed control. It was also evident that anyone with anything like serious LTTE connections would have fled by then. Since the STF assumed control several tens had disappeared from that community before the new wave began with the rounding up of refugees. What had they done and what were their crimes? Garage hands who had repaired vehicles donated to the LTTE by the government; a father of a young family who had been paid to give tuition classes to some LTTE recruits; a lorry driver whose services had been requisitioned by the LTTE to transport some stones or wood; policemen who had been on leave to attend the local temple festival when the war began and were afraid to report for duty thereafter, and so the list goes on.

Why these killings? Orders to show more results? Petitions from interested parties? Or is it simply what the STF is all about? Some of the other Tamil militant groups are unable to command the dignity becoming of aspiring leaders. They are trying to use the STF for purposes of revenge, just as the LTTE did in its time. From Colombo inquiries are made in devious ways about certain individuals. On the other hand there are persons with no love for the LTTE, who have protected stranded LTTE girls, because the STF would not have treated them according to the law, but would have simply killed them.

In some significant ways, life under the STF is very much like life under the .LTTE. Criticism and protest is Fcritici.smand~-protest is effortlessly neutralized, though terrible things happen in secret places. Poor women beaten. They may not even have the dignity of worms. But in many quarters, you often hear: “The STF is reasonable, they will not do something without good reason, you can talk to them and they will listen, there is no crime and, robbery...” all of which you heard in LTtE—dominated Jaffna. Little wonder that the STF were sometimes called Green Tigers..

Paddy fields belonging to the temple and cultivated by the LTTE, were harvested under STF supervision. After the temple and the labour were paid, the proceeds were used by the STF commander to buy utensils for refugees. Some logs from illicit timber abandoned by the LTTE were given to a local orphanage. These acts were duly spoken of with high praise.

### **3.2, Hostages for a Human Shield:**

On 29th September, the STF rounded up 4 tractor loads of Tamils around Thirukkivil. They were old, young, lean, hungry, lame, almost of every type you could name. Many of them were taken from refugee camps where they had been assured of security. These persons were taken to Kanjikudichcharu by a party of the STF. After they had been made to get down, the hostages were marched in front as a mine detonating human shield. Others were held close with an arm by STF men on their exposed side, while the other hand held the automatic. At one point the LTTE fired at them. The STF asked the hostages to lie flat along with them and returned the fire.

Eventually, they reached an LTTE camp, where they found 2 or 3 refrigerators, packets of dhal and sugar and some miscellaneous items. The hostages carried these back. Once again the LTTE fired and the STF fired back, without loss on either side. The fact that there were no

mines suggests that it was a minor camp, and that the LTTE presence was sparse.

On returning to base, the hostages were reunited with their anxious families who had been waiting outside the camp. In return for their involuntary escapade, the hostages were sent home with some of the LTTE's provisions. Such things are done regularly, probably on orders from above. In consequence, the people now tend to run on sighting the STF. That has, on a number of occasions, led to tragic results.

### **3.3 The ICRC Visit:**

On 2nd October, ICRC officials came on a routine visit calling on government officials and citizens' committee members. At one point some people approached the ICRC and told them that some of their young men had been taken in by the STF. The ICRC then visited the STF camp. Prior to this, some of the people who had kept vigil outside to catch a glimpse of their near ones, had seen a Buffel being driven to one of the buildings. Young men were then loaded inside and the Buffel was driven out of the camp to Ward 1 in the adjoining village and was parked 2 to 3 hours there for the duration of the ICRC visit. The Buffel returned to the camp later.

It is understandable that the STF would not like the IGRC to see young men who were badly mauled by torture or who were designated for elimination. The ICRC knows about the dead bodies and heads that are brought in with the tide. In such instances the ICRC cannot be faulted because it had done all it could do. The local citizens' committee has taken up the issue of prisoners and eliminations with the STF. A private assurance has been given that a list of those alive will be given and arrangements will be made for visits by the relatives once a week.

On the question of eliminations, notwithstanding former assurances, the position seems to be that LTTE activity has been increasing and there are orders from above. When asked, why given the fact that nearly all who are being killed are innocent, the citizens' committee could not demand for an end to these eliminations, a member replied: "The Amnesty International and the ICRC cannot do anything. What can we do?" Lacking solidarity from human rights organisations human in this country and elsewhere, such isolated groups of citizens are forced to conform to the rules of the game laid down by the STF or the LTTE as the case may be. It is now nearly 4 months since the war began. There are several, well funded NGO's in Colombo dealing with Ethnic Studies and Human Rights. But hardly any serious attempt has been made to find but and protest about what is happening in the East. If that had been done, international organizations like Amnesty International and the ICRC would have been able to do their work much better.

### **3.4 Refugees:**

It can be safely said that well over half the Tamil population in the Eastern province are refugees by design. Out of the 60,000 Tamils in the Amparai District, outside Thirukkivil—Thambiluvil, Kalmunai and Karaitivu, few Tamils are living in their homes. Thirukkivil—Thambiluvil has a refugee population of 10—15,000; 3,000 at Komari, and the rest are scattered. In many communities, a high proportion of males have been slaughtered. It is about 10% or more in Veeramunai and is much higher in smaller Tamil communities in the interior parts of Amparai District. The number of widows, orphans and elderly parents who have lost

their sons is significant. The men are often missing or demoralized, it is often the women who go in search of missing boys and who get about trying to find food for the families. A lady who was distributing forms for entering appeals for missing persons found that every woman was asking for not one, but a couple of forms — son, father, brother, nephew, etc. It was so depressing that the lady had to stop. Many of the women were illiterate and the younger ones, often pregnant. There needs to be a radical change in Tamil as well as national politics, if these people are to be made to live as communities again.

Most of the them have had their property looted and have not harvested their fields. The security that was offered to Muslims was deliberately denied to them. They are easily the most endangered and neglected people in the whole island. The Tamil militant groups used them and the government would like to make them disappear altogether.

Given the magnitude of the need, there are few NGO's active here in comparison with say Jaffna. The SEDEC provides some medical aid and some essentials for infants and others. The Ceylon Red Cross has provided some cadjan for shelter, and besides the normal government rations, little else is coming in. Owing to the security situation, no medical attention is accessible for people with serious complaints, which often include the after effects of torture and possible internal injuries.

Many disabilities suffered by the refugees are as the result of a lack of community sense brought about by Taimil politics over the decades as well as by a general disruption of services. Many of the doctors are refugees.

The government doctor at Thirukkivil sometimes visits refugee camps. But this is far from adequate. Private medical care is available. But the refugees have no income and no means of buying medicine or prescriptions. Schools in Muslim areas are functioning. In Tamil areas school buildings are occupied by refugees or are abandoned. Towards Batticaloa, such as in Palugamam, the LTTE has warned teachers not to open the schools. This is not the first time that the LTTE has stated its prestige on keeping Tamil children away from schoolss.

In Thirukkivil—Thambiluvil, teachers report for work in schools at the principal's office, chat for awhile, and go home by 9:30 a.m. No interest has been shown in trying to conduct classes for refugee children. Our politics has been such that even if some conscientious teachers set about trying to occupy these refugee children with something useful, they may be branded traitors helping the government. The lack of community leadership will be more keenly felt here in the East were people are totally helpless without the basic training, like in Jaffna, to look after their interests as best as they could.

*Another group of people who suffer needlessly are government servants and employees of semi—government bodies who are unable to report for work because of very real security problems. It is being said from Colombo in the meantime that the situation is fast returning to normal and that civil administration is being revived. For example, Veeramunai Tamils who worked for state bodies in Samanthurai cannot even get back to their homes. It is a fact that there is no security for Tamils in the Sinhalese areas of Amparai. Early in October, following an incident at Maha Oya, a Tamil dentist at the Amparai Hospital was only barely rescued from being beaten to death by soldiers. Sentry points are much more unpredictable. In other areas of the East, Muslim home guards on the loose have been a source of terror. With the process of the law destroyed, doing anything is a risk. Refugees in Thirukkivil—Thambiluvil from Akkaraipattu are being pressurized to return in order to free school buildings. They are being told that Muslim home guards are under control. But it is common knowledge that incidents are still take place and no one is being punished. There is no one to give guarantees*

*for the refugees to return. In this situation, there is not even a bus service between Thirukkovil and Batticaloa. In cutting the salaries of employees under these conditions, the government has again shown itself insensitive to the plight of Tamils.*

*Resources put into rehabilitation will be wasted unless education is brought to these people and they are democratically organized to look after themselves with a sense of dignity. Sadly, the LTTE itself would look upon this with disfavour as long experience has shown. Without education and dignity these people would remain a disinherited mob only fit to provide recruits and act as cannon fodder. In the absence of self—organization and a lack of self—respect, working with these people can be frustrating. Those doing refugee work themselves would tend to be patronising and rigid. Many people who are themselves both desperate and hungry, would lie and adopt schemes to get two packets of milk or tripasha instead of one. There is then shouting and recrimination. Those distributing relief get upset and the process is greatly slowed down without understanding that whether they cheat or not, the people desperately need what little they are getting.*

*The onset of rains, and the non—availability of adequate shelter would pose serious problems for the refugees. Clothing is also one of their immediate needs. Most have next to none. Housecoats for women, sarongs for men, children’s clothing and some cash will go a long way.*

### **3.5. Orphans:**

In addition to previous conflicts, the current war has left a large number of children orphaned, and a much larger number depending on single persons, mostly women, without means. One frequently comes across widows of the ages of 15 to 22 with a child or two. Many of them have not been to school in a land that boasts of universal free education, and cannot even read or write their names. This is in sharp contrast to Jaffna. These people are a neglected, vulnerable lot, who are easily cheated.

Mr. Thambiah retired as Principal of Saraswathy Vidyalayam, Thambiluvil. A native of Chunnakam, Jaffna, he is a man who has a sense of service and has spent 15 years in the region. He had previously served in Thambiluvil and later as Principal in Pottuvil. He founded a shramadana movement originally intended to reform Hindu ritual practices in the region. His movement had done shramadana work in churches as well as mosques. Owing to pressing Aea~4s.~ his movement took on the task of running an orphanage for The institution is known as Kurukulam, facing the sea and is a walk hundred yards north along the beach from the historic temple.

The institution now houses 25 children, and manages with local funds. Mr. Thambiah’s old students who are teachers in local schools or hold middle—level government jobs are loyal to him and give him crucial help. The current demand on the institution is heavy. Its 25 children were admitted at the beginning of this year. In recent weeks the waiting list has climbed to over 50. Mr. Thambiah is reluctant to take in more for two reasons. One is the limitation in terms of funds. The other is his concern for a high level of discipline. There is a strong need for more institutions of this kind. Mr. Thambiah can be contacted at “Kurukulam”, Ward 2, Thambiluvil, Eastern Province.

A natural need finds its fulfillment in mysterious ways. Shyamala, Sridevi and their elder

brother are orphans brought to Thirukkivil after their refugee camp, Veeramunai Pillayar Kovil, was attacked on 12th August. Their mother was one among 7 women who went to check their houses in Malwattai during July and disappeared. Their dumb father had earlier been burnt at Veeracholai. These children were once taken to the Thirukkivil Methodist Church to collect some relief supplies. On their own, these children started attending evening services at the church out of interest in singing. The Methodist Minister and his wife who were taken up decided to adopt the three. Now, between his duties as Minister and his secular duties to the public at large, Rev. Dayaseelan can be observed puffing up and down the verandah of his manse playing train with the new additions to his family.

### 3.6. The NP and the Detainees:

On 24th September, the NP for the area arrived with the Co—ordinating Officer for the East. During the last 3 months the NP had been bombarded with complaints about missing and detained persons. He had reassured them as best as he could and had helped to perpetuate the apparently mistaken belief that a large number of those taken were being held at the Kondavedduvan security forces camp. It had been promised that the Co—ordinating Officer would produce a complete list of those at Kondavedduvan. On this day, the NP happened to arrive at a time when the STF had just rounded up a large number of persons in the area. At a brief meeting with the citizens' committee, the Co—ordinating Officer said that he is unable to get from the army a list of persons at Kondavedduvan. There was a strong hint that there were hardly any detainees at Kondavedduvan. The NP promised to come the next morning to attend to the detainees taken that day. In the morning, he telephoned the local citizens' committee from Amparai and asked for a list of those not released. The NP arrived in the afternoon, obtained the list of 26 names and went before the anxious villagers.

He then read out the list. It was brought to his attention that some on the list (9) had been released in the morning. "There", exclaimed the MP, "They have already released them." He then went away promising that the rest would be released. Three ladies later asked the citizens' committee whether the MF had really obtained the list from the STF. They had noticed

- that their relatives' names had been read out in the same order in which they were given to the citizens' committee.

A number of people in the locality concede that if the NP tells the people that he is helpless he would not be believed. Moreover, he is dependent on the security forces for his own protection and is unwilling to take up a stronger position. In such a situation a nominally opposition NP is

arguably more useful to the government in covering up than to his own people. Or local observer commented: "Our NP's do not any more talk

about their past militant connections and about the alienation that - -drove them to carry the gun. They have forgotten all that, and talk instead the same language that TULF politicians talked 20 years ago, which do not reflect the seriousness of the current situation." When Tamil MP's regularly visit the East in comfort and security provided by the State and fail to speak out on the grossly harmful and discriminatory treatment of Tamils, it does irreparable damage.

### **3.7. Facing the Future:**

The immediate problem confronting the Tamils in the East is how to restore some kind of normal living and sanity. The most serious obstruction is security and the proven fact that where Tamils are concerned in particular, the security forces of this country cannot be trusted. Their assurances are hardly worth anything. In areas such as Pottuvil, Amparai Town and Veeramunai, there are clear signals for the Tamils not to return. In the present context of leaderlessness, Muslim interests used by the State are calculating on taking over their property. People would naturally try to solve their personal problems by selling cheap and moving to places more secure. In addition to what has already happened, the harassment of Tamils in the East goes on routinely in many other ways. Travel has been made unnecessarily difficult and even persons travelling under government escort have been put down, detained and beaten.

It was only recently that Eastern Tamils and Muslims were coming up in education in sizeable numbers. The removal of such persons, of whom there were only a few in relation to Jaffna, from amongst Eastern Tamils would render them far more helpless. The ease with which the State could pursue a draconian policy in the East owes partly to the fact that both the LTTE and India are far more sensitive to what happens in Jaffna. Ideally, the security of Tamils would require international monitoring.

For international effort to be effective, it would need some active local concern at national level. There has been no serious work in this direction. An urgent need is to locate and ensure the safety of persons such as Tamil policemen and those suspected of LTTE links who may be picked up at anytime and killed. In such cases, there are even persons hiding in jungles.

## **Chapter 4**

### **PEOPLE, POLITICS, LAND & ECONOMY**

#### **4.1. The Historical Setting:**

In giving a brief sketch, one must run the risk simplifying the complexity and beauty of the past. From the little we know, it could be said that any ideology which lays a historical claim on the East, or part of it for a particular language, religion or ethnic group is misplaced. Anyone who does this is trying to impose 20th century perversions on our ancestors who did not - think in these terms. While the claims of Tamil Eelam ideology must be understood in terms of the experience of state oppression, it is.. as misplaced as the aims promoted by state sponsored Sinhalese colonisation and military policy.

During the middle of this millenium the East formed part of the Kandyan Kingdom, but its inhabitants were largely Tamil speaking cultivators and peasantry. Much of the land between Kandy and the East coast was jungle. As one went into the interior from the coast, it was to be expected that people would have been increasingly bilingual or Sinhalese speaking. What is important is that neither was the Kandyan Kingdom Sinhalese, nor the East Tamil in the modern sense.

The contours created by the influx of water, both salt and fresh, blessed the East with its water resources, paddyy fields, chenas, fisheries and its variety of wild animals and birds. In the course of time people were attracted to

places like Kanniya, Pasykuda, Batticaloa lagoon and. Panama. The major influx of Muslims into this region was during the times of persecution under Portugese rule in the maritime areas of the West. The Kandyan king was evidently happy to give them refuge in the East. Muslims were recruited as fighting men by local chief tins and they inter—married with locals. In time Muslims became traders and agricultural labourers, living besides Tamils in villages separated by a mile or two. An element of complexity in the history of the East is testified by what were known as park countries. These were fertile lands near water tanks, once cultivated and later became swallowed up by jungle. The ancient commiunities which cultivated them were evidently displaced by wars or natural calamities.

Earlier during the century, Tamils and Muslims existed in perfect harmony.. Religious differences were of little concern. A sense of trust prevailed. Families of the two communities visited each other during special occasions such as weddings and funerals, and exchanged gifts during festival times. They greeted each other in public as equals. Caste consciousness amongst Tamils was low in comparison with their northern counterparts.

The mainstay of the two communities was farming, cattle rearing, fishing, mat weaving and boutique—level business. The inter-dependence between the two communities was evident in many spheres. Earlier, the crossing between Muttur and Trincomalee accomplished 100 feet long carrying cargo and plying daily operated by teams of Muslim oarmen. This trade was later taken over by sailing boats, operated initially in the 30's and 40' s by Ponnusamy & Veerabahu .Co. of Pt. Pedro. The ferry crossings were also operated by Muslims.

Sailing boats of this type also helped trade links by transporting paddy, coconut and straw from Muttur to Pt. Pedro. Fishermen from the South established “fishing wadis” along the Batticaloa coast in the 50's, from Valaichenai to Kalmunai and Panama, though employing local labour. Some attribute the chronic liquor problem among local Tamils to the influence of these wadis.

Despite serious divergences in economic means, the people managed because the land was bountiful. Much of the population, both Tamil and Muslim, were labourers. Their level of education and aspirations remained generally low. The penetration of Protestant missionary education outside Batticaloa and Trincomalee towns was late in comparison with Jaffna. Take Thirukkivil for instance, which has a sizeable middle class today. The Methodist mission there was established only in 1912. In the early 1950's it had education only up to JSC (std.8) level.

Before the 1940's, nearly all the fertile paddy land from Kalmunai to Panama, south of Pottuvil belonged to 20 Tamil families, who employed largely Muslim labour. Muslims had a reputation for being hard working and reliable. The Jaffna Tamil mudalali 's who invested in the agricultural economy of the East employed mainly Muslim cohorts. There was hardly a Tamil mudalali of eastern origin. The Muslims thus had a position from which to establish themselves as traders at boutique level. Their level of organisation, informal though it was, was higher than that of Tamils. Muslim labourers employed by Tamils, collected milk from the herds of buffaloes used for ploughing and made curd. Their wives cut grass and weaved mats. However, the Muslims themselves lived at little above subsistence level. The educated Muslims were mainly confined to the class of Wanniar Mudaliyars (predecessors of District Revenue Officers - now AGA 's). In contrast with the present, there were only 2 well-built Muslim houses in Akkaraipattu in the 1930's.

In the course of these slow changes, the largest group in the local population, the native Tamils began to feel a class deprived on — -their own soil; - Feelings of antagonism towards Jaffna Tamils-- and Muslims slowly increased. Their feelings may be compared with those of Kandyan Sinhalese peasants during the course of economic changes brought about in the 19th century by the British colonial administration.

## **4.2. The transformation of Economic power from the 40's**

TO understand the context to these changes, in the 40's the important government positions in the East, such as

doctors, engineers and civil servants, were held by Jaffna Tamils. They had their own tribal instincts and priorities like the Muslims. They used their influence in finding jobs for their folk in government service, and thought little about the land. The Jaffna Tamil elite saw their future and economic base in terms of education and government employment in all parts of the country. It was only when this perception was threatened that they gave thought to land, federalism and later separation. At the time of independence, these were far from their thoughts. On the other hand, a few Muslim's held middle level government positions in the East. Because of their origins, they knew the value of land. In the process the native Tamils whose economy was also dependent on the land, had hardly anyone to represent their interests.

During the 2nd World War, the colonial government felt impelled to drastically increase local food production. It was thus decided to convene an emergency Kachcheri at Kalmunai to alienate crown land for rice cultivation. Sir Oliver Goonetilleke appointed M. A.M.A. Azeez of the CCS (Ceylon Civil Service), a Muslim from Jaffna, as AGA (Emergency). Azeez is described as a Tamil scholar and a gentleman, who was moved by the conditions of near slavery in which Muslims in the region laboured for their Tamil land—lords. According to an eminent local Tamil citizen, while top government positions were held by Jaffna Tamils, there were three Muslims, Ahmed (Irrigation Engineer), Ismail (Technical Assistant) Gaffor (Surveyor) - who identified fertile lands which were alienated to Muslims in Pottuvil, Komari and Akkaraipattu. Local Tamils were given inferior lands. At Sagamam, the Irrigation Engineer ordered Tamils off lands they had cleared and gave them to Muslims. Despite the possible tilt in favour of Muslims, the local Tamils also gained in the process.

It is also said that the Tamil landlords for whom life was easy, declined. A story that is related of one of the descendants of the 20 families is not untypical. He owned 30 acres of paddy land and acquired a fascination for new cars. He bought one Hillman car after the other selling his land, and crashed all three cars. He had to later make a living by becoming a CTB driver.

Next came the Paddy Lands Act of 1958 brought in by Minister Phillip Ganawardene. This was a well-motivated act which tilted the control of paddy land in favour of those who laboured on the land. In return they were obliged to give the owners 7+ bushels per acre per season (Rs.90/- at that time). The owners in general preferred to sell and move out. In this way large tracts of fertile land between Kalmunai and Panama passed mainly into the hands of Muslim labourers.

During the 50's and 60's, R.C.S. Cook and R.Rajaratnam, prominent figures in the Co—operative Movement from Jaffna, introduced Co—operative Credit Societies into every village in the East. This, coupled with a guaranteed price scheme for paddy gave an impetus to economic activity. While both communities benefited, the Muslims were more noted for discipline and regular habits in repaying loans. On the other hand, Tamils with their more easy going ways, more often failed to repay loans, were taken to court and had to sell their lands. Drinking was evidently a greater menace to the Tamil community.

The 50 's and 60's were a period during which large tracts of crown land were alienated for cultivation in the North-East. Both the Tamil and Muslim communities profited from this. But in the Amparai District there was a strong tilt in favour of Muslims and Sinhalese, not all of it by design. With the advent of strong political motivations, the Tamils became increasingly deprived, particularly in the Amparai District.

### **4.3. The Impact of the Gal Oya Scheme:**

The scheme to tap the water resources of the region inaugurated by D.S. Senanayake was a rational one. It was in the 50 's that the scheme started to become tied up with the state ideology of marginalising Tamil influence. It is difficult here to speak of a state conspiracy. Even the creation of the Amparai GA's division in 1961, was promoted

not evidently by any Sinhalese, but by the two Muslim MP 's representing the region, who were ex-F.P. The top Civil Servants and professionals on the Gal Oya Board were mostly Tamils. Kanagasundaram was second chairman. Its - mandate was to clear the land, bring it under cultivation, set up industries, settle agricultural families and ensure a comfortable living.

In the course of the working of the scheme, the settlers were mainly Sinhalese from Kegalle, Kandy, Badulla, Nuwara-Eliya etc. and very few Tamils or Muslims from the province itself. One problem was that the Jaffna based Tamil political leadership still looked for its economic base in government jobs, and did little to educate and provide leadership to the Tamils on the importance of land. It was only later in the 50's that the Federal Party made land a key political issue. This coincided with the advent of discrimination in jobs and racial violence. The Tamils in the Amparai district, who are amongst the most deprived, complain that despite their proximity and obvious claims, they were not offered land on the scheme. 20 Tamils were given 25 acres each under middle class settlements. Owing to repeated racial violence over the years and other factors, only one of them, a post master from Kalmunai, remained, at least until recently.

Those settled in the Gal Oya scheme, the bulk of whom were Sinhalese, were given 3 acres of land, loans, implements and seed. The produce was harvested and Purchased by the Board. Thus there was no risk or hardship involved, But for Tamils further East without irrigation, life was hard. They were chena cultivators who planted one crop a year and had to depend on the rains. There were cases of persons driven to bankruptcy and occasionally to suicide when crops failed successively. The plan to provide irrigation for Tamil farmers in Komari by the construction of a canal from the right bank of the Gal Oya reservoir (Senanayake Samuda was not implemented for a variety of reasons, including later Tamil fears of Sinhalese colonisation.

On the other hand many disadvantages accrued to local Tamils from the scheme itself as well as from the impetus it gave to state sponsored Sinhalese colonisation in the region. Panala Oya, was a river flowing into Sagamam tank, benefiting Tamil farmers. A scheme was mooted to dam the river and provide further irrigation facilities to local farmers. What took place in the end was that the river was —dammed further upstream and 600 Sinhalese families were settled by C.P. de Silva in the area, now called Pannalagama. After several representations were made about the traditional rights enjoyed by -Sagamam farmers to the waters to the same minister, a certain quantity was allowed to flow into Sagamam tank. The matter remains unsettled.

Another problem faced by Tamil farmers in the low lying areas close to the sea, comes from the release of water into the lagoon from 67,000 acres of sugar cane and paddy in the Gal Oya scheme. Because of this 15,000 acres of purana (ancient) paddy fields cultivated by Tamils had been inundated. The Periyakalappu scheme mooted under Dudley Senanayake in 1952, would have prevented this. It was an ambitious plan to deepen the lagoon at Periyakalappu to take in the released water from the Gal Oya scheme, and use it to breed fish and provide lift irrigation for neighbouring fields. This scheme was not implemented - perhaps it was not deemed cost effective.

#### **4.4. The Rise of Muslim Influence:**

With the rise in prosperity and economic influence came the Muslim desire for self assertion, and an interest in education. Muslim traders who once operated at boutique level now controlled a large part of the trade in the East with its expanding agricultural economy. Muslim cloth merchants of South Indian origin were also now established in the East. An impetus to this identity consciousness was given by modern communications and expanding consciousness of a larger Islamic world within and beyond the shores of this Island. Muslims were better able to assert a growing feeling in the East, that public servants and teachers from Jaffna were not giving their best to the East, where they had no permanent interest.

During the SO's, the identity of Tamil speaking people promoted by the Federal Party had some hold on the Muslims, despite growing divergences. In 1956 Muslim members Mustapa and Kariappan were elected to the Pottuvil and Kalmunai seats respectively as candidates for the Federal Party, benefiting by marginal Tamil votes. In 1957 they crossed sides to the ruling SLFP. From this time into the late 80's, Muslim political influence was asserted through either the UNP or the SLFP which both put forward Muslim candidates in these areas, and a Muslim member in the cabinet from these areas was generally assured. This political patronage provided avenues for Muslims to obtain better educational facilities in these areas and also government jobs. When Bad-ud-din Mohamed was Minister for Education, Muslims were recruited as teachers on more lenient terms and sent to training colleges. But this facility was not provided to equally deprived Tamils of the region. This patronage also had its limitations which hurt Muslim dignity.

When it came to land issues in the East, it was the Federal Party (later the TULF) that visibly took up the case of Muslims was that connected with the government sugar factory at Ingurana. When the factory was started, considerable lands alienated to Muslims in the 40's at Digavapi were taken over for sugar cane planting. Five years later the land was divided among employees of the factory. This was one of the standard means used to promote Sinhalese settlement. Though a Muslim from the East was deputy minister of lands, he could do little. It was Mr. Amirthalingam of the FP who raised the issue in parliament and the payment of compensation was then promised. The matter remains not fully resolved. When some Muslims were killed during communal violence which erupted in Puttalam and Galle in the 70's, despite an influential Muslim presence in Mrs Bandaranaike's SLFP government, the strongest open protest came from the 'IULF (FP) in the opposition. These experiences provided the impetus for a Muslim political party based in the East, independent of the national parties. This party emerged in the mid-80 's in the form of the SLIMC. While Muslim politicians in the national parties could be manipulated to ensure that Tamils and Muslims are kept apart, the SLMC had the potential to unite Tamils and Muslims on issues of common regional interest. Many of the attempts to discredit and bully the SLA~C should be seen in this light. We have not come across evidence to link the SL.MC directly with current violence against Tamils.

The unhealthy face of Muslim self-assertion, materialised in the form of communal violence against Tamils, who being the smaller group in the Amparai district, suffered most. The violence of 1967 induced many Tamils to move out of towns such as Nintavur, selling the remains of their property cheap. The violence of the LTTE has once again given the initiative to such Muslim elements. Defending long term Muslim interests and preventing the manipulation of Muslims for the short term interests of others, remains the biggest challenge to Muslim politics.

#### **4.5. The economy of the Tamils in the Amparai District:**

We shall just treat some of the salient features. It was when land consciousness became an issue in Tamil politics that active political encouragement was for Tamils to make a living on the land. During the mid-60 's about 500 families from diverse parts of the East settled in Thangavelayuthapuram-Kanjikudichcharu, farming on 4,000 acres of land. They had to rely on chena cultivation because irrigatibn' facilities were not available. They make about Rs .6 , 000 per acre per year from rice, cholam and chillies, an income that could be increased 4 or 5 fold if irrigation was available.

Fear created by the Gal Oya scheme was so great, that year after year the Federal Party leader S. J. V. Chelvanayagam told the local people that in order to save the land, they must reject plans to build the canal from Inginiyagala, that would have brought Gal Oya water to the area. The fear was that Sinhalese colonisation by the state and the prospect of violence against Tamils will come with irrigation. The Tamils had been forced into such extreme defensiveness. The price paid was economic backwardness. Many Tamils we spoke to praised Chelvanayagam' s s position. They feel that if Chelvanayagam had not taken this Tamils today would not have even had the surroundings of Thirukkivil-Thambiluvil as a place of refuge from violence.

An alternative view is held by some leading citizens who support the UNP and the SLFP. They admit that discrimination is a reality and colonisation a menace, but that it is wrong to believe that most Sinhalese leaders want to deliberately harm Tamils. A citizen with UNP affiliations explained a problem they faced when an efficient Tamil Additional GA in Amnparai was transferred and a Sinhalese was put in, making all senior persons Sinhalese. The reason for the transfer is attributed to complaints over his strictness in discipline. According to this citizen, he told Prime Minister Siimavo Bandaranaike this problem, and the difficulties caused to ordinary Tamils who tried to do business in the Amparai kachcheri, in what was a majority Tamil speaking district. Mrs. Bandaranaike is said to have sympathised with the complaint and promised that certain designated positions will always be filled by Tamils - something entirely forgotten today. These persons feel that many in power are willing to listen. While many Tamils here accept that the Eelam ideology has been harmful to Tamils of the region, they are also distrustful of the state's intentions. Kanagaratnam was an MP for the area, who won on TULF ticket in 1977 and crossed over to the UNP in -1978.- Being in the government, he and his successor Ranganayaki Pathmanathan brought many economic benefits to the area, which were appreciated. But in the 1988 elections Ranganayaki received only a few votes.

Kanagaratnam brought in better educational facilities, government jobs and also some irrigation. According to the people, all these taken together revolutionised life in the Pottuvil electorate. Agricultural prosperity meant, a greater demand for education. A. Level students were sent to Jaffna for additional classes. Admissions to university went up sharply, aided by the district quota system. Irrigation meant that there was work the whole year round. Men ceased to idle at home annoying their wives. Drinking and its associated problems declined. There was a general rise of prosperity and self-esteem. This should be taken as an indication of potential.

There is still much more to be done in terms of irrigation. The plan followed by Kanagaratnam was to dam Kanjikudichcharu. The area now irrigated is 2,000 acres along the river, while there is potential for 6,000. Additional canals were to be built in stages using the MP's allocation for development. The work was stalled after Kanagaratnam passed away in 1980. People are generally grateful to Kanagaratnam for his important contribution towards transforming Tamil life in the region. They came to terms with his having crossed over from the TULF into government ranks and maintain that he did nothing to betray the Tamil cause. Many feel at the same time that if not for chelvanayakam, Tamils would hardly have been able to live there. The dilemma has been presented to them in stark terms. With the current destruction and loss of life, their problems are in a very different league.

The other major resource in the region is milk. Cattle here roam freely and rearing them is combined with cultivation. The daily milk collection in thousands of litres at 8 centres in the East is as follows: Kathiravelly - 3, Vaganery - 3, Eluppadichchenai — 15, Chiththandy — 8, Vellavelly — 2, Amparai — 3, Thirukkivil — 8, Pottuvil — 5.

Here again it is felt that conditions were ideal for a milk processing factory, preparing powder, in the East, located -in the Batticaloa district. But the government factory was sited at Pannalai in the Polonnaruwa district, where there was comparatively little milk production at that time. The plant has now been handed over to Nestle and World Bank aid has been secured to boost production. The milk from the centres above is now collected by Milco, a private company, and sent to Ambavelle in the central hills.

During this decade, despite the insurgency, Tamil life in the region had been slowly improving for the better. Not because of any special effort on the part of the government, but routine welfare policies followed for decades, such as free education, were yielding results. Both the Muslim and Tamil communities had produced a significant number of university graduates, teachers and government servants. For the more backward Tamil community, this was crucial to secure prosperity and provide leadership. There was for instance a decline in profligacy and drinking, and a loss of lands and destitution flowing from such. Economic and social life were beginning to

stabilise. The current war has destroyed much of this, and many educated persons were killed.

Apart from the slow changes taking place, there was also a good deal of chronic backwardness. Illiteracy and early marriage among women are fairly common. There is also a tendency in such cases to have more children than they could look after in the sense of providing them with education. In Pottuvil, with a Muslim population of 12,000, there are 1,600 Muslim mothers left by their husbands, divorced according to Islamic law. Such phenomena among Muslims have been on the decline with better education and growing middle class aspirations. Many of the disadvantaged Tamil mothers have also recently been widowed. Amongst such sections in particular the phenomenon of illiteracy, poverty, early marriage and a number of children beyond their means, is bound to continue. Even if the government did not care for the people, a sane government interested in political stability should have been careful not to destroy by its military policy, the stabilising influences painfully built up over decades.

Because of the war the poorer section of Tamils who are now refugees are bound to suffer another significant blow. A large number of them were recipients of Janasakthi (Janasaviya) payments introduced by President Premadasa. These families receive Rs. 2,500/- monthly, a part of it, paid in cash, is used for subsistence and the balance, for purchasing capital, such as livestock and agricultural materials. These payments were to be made for two years, after which previously received benefits such as food stamps, would be stopped. One year ended with September.

Despite earlier skepticism, several senior government officials who operated the scheme said that it was beneficial, and commended the idea. They said that many families have supplemented their incomes by about Rs. 50/- a day over the first year of the scheme's operation.

The poorer Tamils most of whom are now refugees have lost all their acquired benefits. In fleeing their homes which were later destroyed, many of them lost their Janasakthi documents and are not receiving payments. Those receiving payments are able to use the subsistence part of it to survive, but are not building up capital. In a year's time they would be destitute without even the benefit of food stamps unless special provision is made. While the dominant politics of the Tamils would be happy to use this class with its grievances for cannon fodder, for those really interested in them, there is much to be done.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **REPORTS**

#### **5.1 REFUGEES IN AMPARAI TOWN**

Amparai town has two refugee camps overlooking the lake. The Sinhalese camp has 17 families from Akkaraipattu. On 14th June, a rumour reached Akkaraipattu that the Hindu temple in Amparai had been destroyed.

[This was later discovered to be untrue] The local LITE leader, Regan, ordered the Sri Vijayrama Buddhist temple to be blasted. The circumstances leading to this decision are clouded by the fact that Muslims were amongst those strongly opposed to the building of this temple. The Sinhalese community waited anxiously for 6 days and left for Amparai carrying whatever they could. They are now without a livelihood. In Amparai they have organized themselves admirably under the leadership of Jayatilleke

Dias, originally from Peradeniya, and his wife Deepani Daluwatte. While some cook or collect rations, others perform odd jobs and contribute their earnings towards the running of the camp. The education of the children too is taken care of.

Like all refugees, they too have suffered from the war. We also met the mother of Dharmawardene, a policeman of 20. missing after being taken by the LTTE from Mankulam police station. Dias said that they cannot get back to Akkaraipattu unless there is a political solution to the problem. Deepani, who obtained a distinction in Tamil at the O Levels and spoke better Tamil than the average Tamil, was very happy to talk to us upon learning that we were Tamil. She said that she missed her Tamil neighbours with whom she had grown up and had taken part in each others' functions. She was very much pained by what was going on.

The Tamil refugee camp was sited at the Tamil Maha Vidiyalayam in Amparai. This school had 600 children and classes up to the O Levels. We spoke to the refugees within a few feet of soldiers posted there for security. Neither seemed to mind. The camp used to have 30 families, most of whom had gone to stay with refugees in Karaitivu. The 11 remaining families are cared for by their GS, Mrs. Karuna Samaraweera, whom they said is genuinely concerned. One soon became aware that there were no boys, nor young or middle aged men. The women were either widows or fatherless.

Mrs. Malar Kandiah, aged 35, was originally from Anuradhapura. Her family had come to Amparai 40 years ago. Her husband had died of illness a few years back. She said that there was little prospect of running the Tamil Maha Vidiyalayam because nearly all the males above the age of 7 in Amparai had been killed by Sinhalese hooligans with the backing of the Police. This had happened just after the LTTE had murdered policemen on 11th June. She had lost her son Rajendran and her brothers Michael and Lorenz. -She said that they could identify the killers. But they also knew that no one was interested and no action would be taken. When passing them on the roads, the killers still glare at them with their ghastly leering faces.

Mrs. Rajaram was from Inginiyagala, 12 mile from Amparai. There too Tamils have been attacked by Sinhalese hooligans and by police. Rajaram had gone fishing and did not return. On inquiring, his wife was told that he had been taken by the police. The police denied any knowledge of him. In the meantime the army asked all those who wished to go to Amparai under escort to hurry. For the last 3 months she has not heard anything about her husband.

All these widows see little prospect of going back to their homes, nearly all of which have been looted and many of them burnt. With no means they have to look after their surviving children as well as aged parents. They still have some will left to go on living. Their principal need is a means of livelihood. Like their Sinhalese counterparts from Akkaraipattu, these refugees are bilingual and some have even attended Sinhalese schools. They were hounded out with the connivance of the state for an act of the LTTE that they were not even remotely connected with.

Jude Johnson: Jude Johnson (24) was a student of Computer Science in a Colombo institute. He was from a family of Burghers in Kalmunai, descendants of Portuguese who had married locally. His parents spoke both Portuguese as well as Tamil. Johnson had 3 sisters, one of them, Sr. Perpetua, a Nun. Jude was travelling to Kalmunai from Colombo in a night bus on 11th June. The bus had reached Amparai town by 2.00 am by which time news of trouble had broken out. The driver and conductor, both Muslims, said that they were unable to proceed, advised the passengers to find safe places, and parked the bus in front of the Amparai Mosque. Jude, remained in the bus with some other passengers, thinking himself safe as he was a Burgher. An elderly Tamil who had got off the bus a little earlier, said that he had seen policemen taking Jude away. All inquiries made by the family have not yielded results.

A Tamil family's ordeal: Jacintha Ramanathan, a native of Pullumalai was a teacher at the Tamil

Madavidayalam Amparai, living in school quarters. Her husband Ramanathan administered his brother Dr. Nadarajah's extensive medical services and practice. The services included scanning, X—ray and ECG. Jacintha's brother Joseph Chitravelu was a Plywood Corporation executive, who had left Colombo and assumed duties in Amparai 3 months before. The family was a typical well to do Tamil family in Amparai.

On the 12th June evening Ramanathan said that there was tension in town. There was no public word yet about the fate of the policemen taken by the LTTE. The couple decided to move two young boys, a teacher and student, relatives of Jacintha to the house of a Sinhalese friend. The couple asked the boys to tell the friend that they would follow shortly. Another Sinhalese friend of theirs suddenly arrived with his car and asked them to come quickly as there was danger. We omit the details, where over the next 3 days, the Ramanathan couple, the two boys and Dr. Nadarajah were shuffled from one Sinhalese friend's house to the other. The Sinhalese friends were themselves afraid of the police and of hoodlums who were spying. The two boys were protected by a Sinhalese mudalali, who kept them in the jungle and took food for them regularly.

On the 14th, a Sinhalese friend telephoned from Colombo, after getting news from a Tamil escapee, to say that he was driving in to pick them up. They started their journey in two vehicles on the 15th morning, one vehicle belonging to Dr Nadarajah. It had taken Jacintha a while to call the two frightened .boys out of the jungle. They were escorted through the first—check point by a friend who was high up in the police. From there they went through cart tracks to avoid checkpoints, stopping at a river for a long overdue bath, and reaching Colombo at 7.00pm.

Hoodlums had been looking for Dr Nadarajah claiming that he was a Tiger. His wife and children had lived in Colombo since January. All that Dr Nadarajah had left in Amparai was the sarong and bathroom slippers with which he escaped. His People's Clinic, equipment and house were looted and destroyed. Someone close to him observed that Nadarajah once said, 'They did this to me, after all I did for them'. His patients now go all the way to Kandy.

It was later learnt from Chitravelu's neighbours that the police had taken him away with his 9 year old son. As the father was taken away, the boy had run and hugged his father. That had been the last time they were seen. The rest of Chitravelu's family has been in Baticaloa. All surviving members of the family have decided to quit Amparai, if not the island.

## **5.2. POTTUVIL: 11th June to early October**

The incident of 11th June where the LTTE surrounded the police station at Pottuvil and took the policemen prisoner and massacred several of them is described separately. Only a small number of LTTE cadre were involved. Local sources put the number at 15. A large number of LTTE vehicles running up and down impression that a large number of reinforcements were being brought in. For this reason, it is said, the army detachments near Pottuvil did not come out until the 15th. Just after the surrender of the police, the LTTE encouraged local residents to remove whatever they wished from the police station. The LTTE gave the impression that they would prevent the forces from moving in. Some people, mainly Tamils, took away beds and bits of furniture. The forces, mainly the STF and the army, moved in on 15th June. As they moved in the LTTE told the people that they were withdrawing and asked the people to do the same. Almost the entire Tamil population set off on foot northwards towards Komari. The LTTE which had pledged to protect them, reached Komari ahead of them in vehicles. For the people this was the beginning of a terrible ordeal. Of the Tamils who stayed back in Pottuvil, some had a very bad time while others were killed. Having reached Komari, the people streamed out to Sangamankandy upon hearing that the army had reached Akkaraipattu and was to move southwards through Thirukkivil to Komari. When this did not

happen, they returned to Komari thinking it safer there. On 26th June, the STF moved into Komari from Pottuvil. They rounded up 200 men from amongst the refugees in Pottuvil and proceeded northwards to Thirukkivil, using the men as a shield marching in front. They were later released in Thirukkivil.

Towards the end of July, and Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) from the STF in Pottuvil told some government officers at Komari that the Pottuvil refugees were feeding the LTTE at Komari and that they should return to Pottuvil. The message that the people got was that it was safe to return to Pottuvil. They went back to Pottuvil on 28th July. They were asked to keep to a school building on the left (or sea side) of the main road. The other side led to the jungles. By this time several Tamil houses had been looted and burnt. About the next day, a number of refugees attended the funeral of a lorry driver. Seeing that several Tamil houses in that area were intact, the owners asked the police whether they could move back in. 18 families moved in with the consent of the police. Subsequently the male householders were picked up during the night. They are said to have been killed and burnt.

On 2nd August, forces wearing a mixed bag of uniforms surrounded the refugee camp and took away 150 males. 30 of them were later released. What remains of the rest remains unknown. Both the police and the STF denied responsibility for the incident, with the STF saying privately that the police in camouflage dress were responsible. On 7th August, some citizens told the STF that they could not go on like this, asked them to come and see the state of the people, and requested permission to return to Komari. The immediate response from the STF was to the effect, 'So, they want to feed the LTTE again'. Later the STF agreed and escorted the refugees back to Komari.

John Master (45), Principal of Methodist Mission School, Pottuvil, was one of those who returned to Pottuvil on 28th July. He had a brother—in—law who was in the LTTE. On 31st July, having locked up the belongings in his school quarters, he went to his brother's house nearby to have a bath. A Muslim policeman (identity known), first searched his quarters and then came to his brother's house and took him away. No information of John Master has since turned up. John Master leaves behind a non—working widow and 4 school going daughters. Senior officials in the area appear to have tried to obtain his release, but it seems to have been too late.

Most Tamil houses in Pottuvil are said to have been flattened. Even the Roman Catholic church was stripped.

As for the fate of those not released on 2nd August, a local community leader said that during the days that followed, smoke used to emerge from the police ice station and the stink was unbearable. Quite often when people were detained, he said, the police would be seen hunting for old tyres.

Mr. Joseph Krishnapillai is a refugee from Pottuvil. His neighbours were Muslims and his house has been destroyed. A Muslim has offered him a lakh for his property. Joseph says that he will settle for 125,000 since the trouble of going back there is not worthwhile.

Thavarasa, a Tamil fish merchant had resumed his trade for a month, buying fish at Pottuvil and selling it in Komari and Thirukkivil. On 29th September, he was kidnapped in Pottuvil and has since disappeared.

Kalanithy was an orphan from Akkaraipattu, supporting several sisters and his youngest brother, who is a medical student at the University of Jaffna. He was employed as Clerk to the Pradeshya Sabha at Pottuvil and was a refugee in Thirukkivil. He went to Pottuvil on 4th October and made arrangements to collect money owed to him by Gunasiri, a boutique keeper. He went again on the morning of the 5th, collected his salary and walked towards Gunasiri's. On the way, he was reportedly taken by two Muslim homeguards and thrust into a police jeep, that was parked in a by—lane. That was the last that was heard of him. When a senior citizen got in touch with the STF on the matter a senior officer told him that the policeforce is out of control in Pottuvil and accused the police of having killed 160 innocent Tami Is. He also provided the additional information that, in Panama, the police had walked into the

house of a Sinhalese schoolmaster on 1st October while they were watching television, and had killed him, his brother—in—law and the latter’s wife. His Tamil wife had escaped because she was visiting her mother in Thambiluvil. In all this the local people read clear signals for Tamils and Tamil government servants in Pottuvil. Was the police force really out of control for nearly 4 months in Pottuvil, or is a drama being staged?

### 5.3. REFUGEES AT VINAYGAPURAM

The Vinayagapuram Tamil Vidyalayam is now a refugee camp housing families from parts of Amparai district south of Karaitivu. Most of them despair of ever returning home and live in fear of losing their young men. The STF has started picking up people from refugee camps during round—ups as well as for human shields during operations. “Young men run out of fear of being used as human shields on seeing the STF”, the refugees said, “but when they run they are shot”. When one listens to the experiences of such people, it becomes evident the STF is far from being a disciplined force as many believe. We present the peoples’ experiences here as we heard them.

R.Ponnamplam of Thangaveyuthapuram had his two sons Rasendran and Meharasa taken by the STE on 26th September, when they rounded up 5 men. Both sons were labourers, Of the two Meharasa was beaten and released. The beating was done with an axe handle. Rasendran’s body was found later at Manalkadu, Thambiluvil, with marks of stabbing on the head and those from smashing everywhere. This group of 5 persons were taken when they were near a Hindu shrine in the refugee camp premises. The worshippers had mainly been refugees from Akkaraipattu. The STE on arrival asked the worshippers who these 5 were. On receiving the reply that they did not know, the five were taken. Rasendran’s body was identified when it was washed ashore with the tide after evidently being thrown into the sea. [See section 3.1].

Sebamalai from Sorikalmunai: Her son Gnanapragasam, a labourer in Thangavelayathapuram, had a short time before married Premawathie, a seamstress from Batticaloa. The couple had been living in Thangavelayuthapuram until they were made refugees. During an STF round—up on 20th September, the couple had gone for a bath. Gnanapragasam was taken. The mother and wife were keeping a daily vigil outside. the STE camp. A senior citizen had told the STF that Gnanapragasam had no links with rebel activity. He was released on the 5th October with such bad signs of torture that he could hardly walk. He was also urinating blood. For such people, medical care is neither available nor affordable. Their lives are likely to be brief.

Thirunavukkarasu, Labourer from Panamkadu: Went behind the TELO for two days in about July 1989, to escape conscription for the TNA. During January this year, while loading some logs into a lorry, he was pointed out to the LTTE. He was kicked and assaulted with gun—buts. He now has a swollen chest, is in intense pain,&has to keep changing positions when lying down. He was asked by a local doctor to have an X—ray taken. But for security reasons he is unable to go to Amparai or Batticalca. Without work, neither does he have the necessary money.

The subversive BBC About 20th September, five old men, including R. Kanagaratnam and A. Sinnathamby, a beggar, were seated in a refugee hut listening to the 9.00 pm Tamil broadcast of the BEG. The men were generally 60 or above. People in this region have noticeably aged faster. Suddenly STE men rushed in and started attacking them, asking if they wanted Eelam. The old men complained to the Officer in Charge, Thirukkivil the following day. The old men had another visit on the same day and the same treatment was given as a punishment for complaining. The old men felt that the men were angry because the OIC had pulled them up.

P. John: Disabled, having been shot in the arm: His son—in—law Murugan Kanapathipillai went fishing and is still missing after being taken by Muslim homeguards.

Mrs Sinnathamby: Husband, Eleyatharnby Sinnathamby (labourer, 35) was shot dead by the army in Akkaraipattu while going to a shop. He leaves behind two children of ages 12 and 6.

Balasundaram (26, Employee of the Ceramics Corporation): He was in a community of 65 families settled in Manikkamedu before 1958, on the Amaparai-Digavapi road. On 13th June, they fled as refugees as their houses were burnt, and walked 13 miles by night to Akkaraipattu. They were first refugees at the Ramakrishna Mission School, and because of trouble from Muslim hoodlums, moved to Kolavil School (Vinayagar Vidyalayam). 4 persons from the community were taken by the STE during August. Of them, there were indications that K. Seenithamby (19, Highways Dept.), V. Thambirajah (20, Ceramics Corporation) and A. Sithamparapillai (20, Irrigation Dept.), all labourers, are now no more. It is believed that B. Shanrugarajah (16) is still living. It is said that the persons taken had no connections with the LTTE. Manikkamedu had a Muslim presence on two sides and a Sinhalese presence on one. The nearest LTTE camp had been at Varipothanchenai, 2 miles away.

A Mother: Son, S. Thuraivasa (20) was taken by the STE on 20th September and is still missing.

A Mother: Son, Mohan, had been asked to sign daily at the Akkaraipattu STE camp. After signing on 24th September, he was identified as a member of the EPRLF by a Muslim homeguard. He had in reality been conscripted for the TNA last year, and had been kept at the EPRLF camp in Mandur. He has not been released.

A Mother: Son Thamilchelvan (21) a paddy cultivator from Akkaraipattu, was taken by the STF on 27th August while going to his field. The STE brought him home, beat him with the rice pounder (a heavy wooden pole), and shot him dead after they ordered him to run. They then took away his radio and wrist—watch and also his anti—malaria spraying kit, which they claimed was a police uniform.

The 2nd October :A young man who went to collect sea sand was shot by the STE. He had apparently run on seeing STE men.

Veerakutty Kandumani: Her son Selliah Thuraiyasa (23, a bullock cart driver), was taken from their home in Vinayapuram at 10.00 am on 5th August by the Thirukkivil STE. He has since been missing.

A Mother: Selliah Ponnampalam was a member of the Indian trained CVF who was taken prisoner by the LTTE after its attack at Thirukkivil and Thambiluvil on 5th November. He is since missing. She is left with one daughter Thangamani, an O Level student.

Sinnathamby Vellakutty, an elderly father of 8 children from the 4th Colony, Central Camp: His two married children were living in two adjoining houses in the colony. They were involved in rice cultivation and there were a total of 9 persons in the two houses. They were all killed by Muslims after the outbreak of war, and their houses burnt. The dead are P. Kamalawathy, Tharmalingam, Thachchanamoorthy, Kopala—pillai Sinnathay and their children.

Muthupillai: Her son C. Kanagarasa from Sagamam, who went to the paddy fields about 23rd July, was shot by the STE and thrown into a well. People who attempt to work in fields sometimes are shot at by the STE. This is in contrast to protection provided by the STE to Muslim farmers.

A Wife: Husband Samithamby Tharmalingam (60) was shot by the STE on 18th August when he went fishing.

A Mother: Son, Suppiah Rajah, of 9th Mile Post, Amparai Road, was a refugee at RKM (Ramakrishna

Mission) School, Akkaraipattu. He was shot by Muslim home guards while drying himself after a bath. Her husband died of sorrow shortly afterwards. She is now left with the care of 3 girls.

Wife carrying an infant: Her husband Krishnapillai (23, fisherman), left his wife who was about to deliver at the Thirukkivil hospital on 20th August, and then went out to attend to another job and get back to her. He was taken from the road by the STF who were camped next to the hospital. When she left the hospital with her baby she saw her husband as a lifeless corpse.

Velmurugu Kanapathipillai from Thiraikeni: 12 year old daughter shot by the army.

Other cases given by relatives at the camp: Ravichandran (21, a farmer) from Sorikalmunai was shot by the Savalakkadai army on 22nd September.

T. Nalratnam (19), missing after being taken by Muslim home guards at Akkaraipattu on 11th September.

Kanapathipillai Selvanayagam of Vinayapuram: Shot by the STF while fishing in the river on 18th September.

Kallkutty Karunakaran (17) of Kavadapidy, Sagmam, shot by the STF while working in the rice fields on 9th August.

Nagalingam Sivanadarajah (23) of Vinayapuram, missing after being taken from home by the STF on 5th August.

A. Krishnamoorthy (30), father of 2, has been disabled with a broken hand after being assaulted by the STE on 20th September. Kumaranayagam James Uthayanayagam (30), of School Road, Vinayapuram, missing after being taken by the STF.

We were able to interview only a selection of those with similar problems. It is possible that some of the missing persons will turn up at some future date. What has been presented here can be taken as representative of all refugee camps.

## **5.4. VEERAMUNAI**

Background: Veeramunai is a Tamil town of 4,000 persons adjoining the Muslim town of Sanmanthurai with a similarly large population. The population of Veeramunai is mainly made up of paddy cultivators who also work as labourers for Muslim landlords. Other villages settled by people from Veeramunai include Malwattai, Puthunagaram, Kanapathypu—ram, Veeracholai, Valluthapiddy and Malliathuru. According to persons interviewed relations with the Sarrmanthurai Muslims were relatively good most of the time, though there were localized clashes over land ownership since 1958. There was little support for the LTTE in Veeram—unai, the militant base being mainly oriented towards the TELO and EPRLF, both of which had conscripted boys from the area.

There were some troubles in May 1989 when some Tamil militants, said to be ex—members of the PLOTE, hijacked a tractor and some Muslim farmers for ransom. 4 bodies of Muslim farmers were later discovered. Arising from this, there were some killings and counter killings by both sides, leading to rioting in which damage to Muslim property in Samanthurai was more extensive. Some Tamil houses in Veeramunai were also burnt. Owing to some Muslim policemen having fired at an IPKF convoy, it was said that the IPKF had backed Tamil militant groups. Consequently, when the LTTE came into control of Samanthurai, late last year, it was given a tremendous welcome by Muslims.

In January 1990, following the LTTE's capture of Batticaloa, a senior Sri Lankan military official stopped his vehicle near the GS's office, called a group of citizens and told them that the LTTE is a very good militant group and they must support the LITE. The people were also dissuaded from supporting other militant groups. Subsequently the LTTE came in and stayed in a house in Veeramunai for a few days. Leading Muslims from Sammanthurai then invited the LTTE and set them up in more comfortable

accommodation and the LTTE gained many helpers among the Muslims of Sarrrianthurai. Muslim businessmen also poured money into the LTTE coffers. The motorcycle used by the LTTE leader Kumar (Neethi) was said to have been gifted by Muslim businessmen. Muslim helpers pointed out former TNA members in Veeramunai who were taken for interrogation into Sammanthurai. These were released later.

Many elderly persons in Veeramunai see the present troubles as a continuation of what happened on Tamil New Year's day, 15th April 1954. Veeramunai had then commanded a more extensive area. Two Tamils developed a serious quarrel arising out of festive drinking. The Muslim magistrate from Samanthurai, who came to settle the quarrel was himself stabbed in the argument that ensued. Muslim mobs from Samanthurai which had a much bigger population attacked Veeramunai and burnt nearly all Tamil houses, causing Tamils to flee. Following this incident, about 75% of Tamil residential property was sold to Maslms at very low prices, Tamils thus displaced, founded new villages at Halwattai, Veeracholai, 4th and 19th Colonies etc. The area sold was absorbed into Samanthurai. Veeramunai was thus reduced to a Tamil enclave. There have always been Muslims waiting for a chance to repeat what happened in 1954 and make Veeramunai non-existent altogether. The present incident is seen in this light.

When the LTTE captured police stations in the East, on the 11th of June, and a decision was taken to kill the policemen who surrendered, there appears to have been considerable dissent amongst the local LTTE leaders. The leader of Samanthurai released the policemen he had and told them to run for it. Thus their lives were saved. Following the breaking out of trouble on June 11th, the people at Veeramunai (who numbered 4,000 compared to Samanthurai's 40,000) took refuge at the Pillayar Kovil and the adjoining school. As time went by, they brought their valuables like colour TV sets, video decks, motor and push bicycles and stored them in the temple. They were also joined by people from the neighbouring villages.

When the army arrived on about 18th June, there was no resistance. 13 persons found on the roads were taken, never to be seen again. They were mainly people who had gone to work or had gone to buy things. Amongst those who had gone to work were an electrician and a labourer employed by town authorities.

During the succeeding weeks, the forces surrounded the camp on 5 occasions. 4 times they came in and took persons away. According to senior persons who kept records, a total of 253 persons had been taken away by the forces and there is no information as to what became of them. Inquiries only elicited some vague suggestion that they had been taken to the Kondavedduvan forces camp.

Veeramunai, being situated on the boundary of areas controlled by the STF and the army was unfortunate in that both forces came and searched and took people away from the refugee camp. Sometimes persons released by one party may be taken by the other. In addition to this police and home guards of Sammanthurai conducted their own operations. According to the people it may be worthwhile inquiring after people taken in by the army or the STF, however, it would be utterly useless to bother about persons taken in by the Muslim home guards or the police.

The STF came to the camp on the 20th of June and asked all the males to come out, threatening them that the camp would be shelled if they did not obey their orders. They identified 13 well built young boys and took them away. In addition, several were taken away intermittently by the Muslim home guards or police, totalling about 20. Others have been picked up on the road.

The army came to the camp on 29th June, 56 boys were picked up with the help of Muslim home guards. They were taken first to Karavaddukallu (Almarichchan) school, 5 are said to have been handed over to the Muslim home guards who requested them. Distraught parents of the boys taken away, made inquiries about their sons in army camps as far afield as Kondavaddayr arid Aranthalawa, but to no avail. Such incidents kept happening on a small scale.

There was another operation of rounding up in the Veeramunai camp on the 4th July. The army came again on 8th July. An officer called the people and delivered a speech. He told them that they finished of

the JYP with burning tires, and said that they would do it again. He also said that in Mankulam and in another village there are no males left living between the ages of 15 and 50. He then proceeded to pick up mostly young boys. They were scrawny looking and sickly. One was an orphan. These were the 8 taken away by the army, one reason attributed to this was that 8 boys who were previously in custody had escaped.

Seven women went to Malwattai during July to check on their property, and never returned. On 11th July, 13 women went to Savalakkadai in search of their missing children. They are reported to have been taken by the army stationed there, and there has been no trace of them since.

According to some camp elders, LTTE cadre had come to the camp a few times. These elders had in turn kept warning people at the camp not to have any dealings with the LTTE and to tell any of them who came to keep away. For, they felt that even contact of little significance could be used as an excuse for devastating action. Whenever the LTTE came, information leaked to the forces. There had been three round-ups in one day. This linking of the LTTE to the refugee camp may have played a role in the sequence of events.

On the morning of 12th August, the massacre of Muslims at Eravur had taken place a few hours earlier. Whether news of that had reached Samanthurai is uncertain. The immediate cause used to stir up Muslim anger, appears to be the knifing by the LTTE of two Muslim farmers at Veeracholai. Most sources say that they were seriously injured rather than killed.

At 9.00 am Muslim home guards arrived on the scene. Nearly all of them were well known to the Tamils. They had studied with them, had worked with them and had gone for tuition classes together. V. Kutti, a farmer in his 50's, on hearing gun shots thought that, since these were known people, they were firing in the air. He went out a little later and saw dead bodies. He picked up his little girl Nalini and ran for the school building. His niece Saras remained in the school pretending to be dead. Saras said that the home guards got into firing position on their knees and had fired directly into the people. On hearing the firing, the people rushed to crowd into the temple. The home guards then surrounded the temple placed their guns on the 4 feet high wall and fired at the people. An elderly man who was next to Kutti uttered 'Iraiva (God) and gave his life. There were 6-7,000 people in the temple at that time.

Nearly all the Muslim attackers can be identified. Prominent among them was a 27 year old middle ranking government servant in the Amparai postal department. He gunned down his own teacher, Mrs. Pathmanathan, a graduate and leading lady in Veeramunai. His 18 year old brother, a machine driver was there with a knife. Another wielding a knife was a 32 year old teacher from the Samanthurai Udanga Vidyalayam. Another was a jack of a number of trades, including criminal ones, with the nick name 'He called a ghost'. One was the son of a 'Vatta Vithanai', a head man for paddy lands in a designated area. Another was in the Indian trained CVF.

Next the attackers broke down the temple gates and came in to attack with reaping knives. One swung his knife at Kutti. Kutti moved about with his daughter and held his hand up to take the blow before it picked up momentum and thus shielded his daughter. Once the knife missed Kutti, hitting the head of the man nearby. The man succumbed later. Kutti's knuckles were badly cut, and his girl received a serious head injury. At one stage Kutti kicked his attacker, who then went away.

At the time the attack commenced, a vehicle with men from the forces was seen 300 — 500 yards away. Manysaid, they were from the army. But some camp elders said they were from the Police pointing out that only the STF and police were at Samanthurai. The army was stationed at Savalakkadai. The vehicle went away after 10 minutes. The STF arrived at 10.05am, 65 minutes after the attack commenced. Some tend to believe that the STF may have been ignorant about the attack. The story they were given is that the STF had gone to inquire in to the incident at Veeracholai and had got wind of the attack only on returning. Others point out that there was a huge commotion with the gun shots and screaming, and both the STF and police stations were sited in Samanthurai, one and a quarter miles away. Besides, even in the unlikely event that the police had kept the STF in the dark, not all the STF men would have left the station and there was radio communication.

Upon arrival some witnesses heard an STF man say 'Kottiya Evarai (Tiger is finished) and others joined

him in laughter. Other STF men were genuinely upset and concerned upon seeing the corpses of children, including that of a child cut into 3 pieces. As the attackers tried to flee, two of the attackers with knives were apprehended by the refugees and were handed over to the STF by elders. On being beaten by the STF, it is said that the attackers admitted to having been armed and set up by the police. The elders say they do not know what happened to these two attackers. Others claim that they were released. According to other witnesses, there was no attempt by the STF to pursue these attackers, who had simply walked away from the camp. Some even say they had exchanged hand waves with the STF as they went.

## **The Ordeal of the Injured:**

The STF then went on to transport the injured, many of whom required medical attention of an elementary kind. They were first taken to Samanthurai hospital, where there was a Muslim crowd, making threatening noises and angry gestures. Whether as a consequence of this or otherwise, the hospital staff are said to have been uncooperative. A child died because it was refused water. The injured were then told that they were to be taken to Kalmunai hospital. But the lorry taking 47 injured persons ended up at Amparai hospital. Kutti and his daughter Nalini were among them. Saras, his niece came along to look after them.

About the same time, several Muslims from Samanthurai came to the Amparai hospital and told the staff that the injured are Kottiyas (Tigers) and that they should not be treated and ought to be left to die. A contingent of about 30 soldiers was stationed at the hospital to give it security. Obviously with their connivance, a Muslim soldier among them from Samanthurai, a Lateef, was given a free run of the hospital. Over the next 5 days Lateef was in charge of a macabre operation. Lateef's partner was a bearded Muslim with an artificial foot from Kattankudy, who was a patient at the Hospital. The Sinhalese hospital staff, most of whom genuinely wanted to care for the patients were terrorised. When not on duty, Lateef still came to give his attentions, wearing slacks and a Yovanpura T—shirt.

He and his partner constantly abused the Tamils, saying things like, “You dare to eat our rice and ask for Eelam. We will teach you beggars”. Kanthakuddy, an injured boy of 17 died, after Lateef disconnected the saline drip that was being given to him. Once when Saras asked a nurse for water, Lateef abused her and brought some dirty liquid with which wounds had been washed. The nurse motioned her not to drink, and later brought her a bottle of water secretly. When giving medicines or injections, staff would first look around to see if Lateef or other informants were around. Sometimes they would bring large doses of medicine and would ask them to take it at intervals. Lateef and his partner would sometimes collect left over food and chewed bones and give them to the Tamil patients. These were later thrown away discretely. All help given by the hospital staff was given secretly.

In the afternoons about 3.00 pm, a van would come to the ward. Lateef and his partner would summon a patient. He would then be driven off never to reappear. When summoned, Nadarajah, who was there to care for his wife went with praying hands, and was not seen again. Lateef once asked Saras whether she would like to be burnt with a small tire or a big tire. In the nights he would take the women and children to a lonely part of the hospital, lock them up, and keep the key. This was evidently to prevent them from escaping.

At one stage Kutti was placed on the floor. Muslims, particularly from Samanthurai, who came to the hospital, would abuse him and kick him several times with their slippers before leaving, as they did to other patients. One evening Lateef told him that he was coming with tires that night to burn him. On hearing this, the Sinhalese supervisor who came for night duty, took Kutti to another place and hid him behind some old beds that were stacked against a wall. Next morning he told Kutti, “God saved you this time. I do not know how long this can go on”.

That day, a fair Tamil lady, perhaps a doctor, came to the ward. On finding out about the injured, she was concerned. Kutti told her that they were all going to die and pleaded with her, at least to save his

daughter by educating her and returning her to his relations. The lady then summoned her husband, evidently

Sinhalese, who was a high ranking police officer. He made arrangements for the patients to be transferred to Thirukkivil. As the patients got into the bus, Lateef was seen trying to drag a patient away. The police officer prevented this and slapped Lateef. For some unknown reason, the patients were kept for the night in Akkaraipattu and were returned to Amparai hospital the following day, without being taken the extra 5 miles to Thirukkivil. Arrangements were again made to take them. Some of the serious patients were taken to Karaitivu hospital and others to Thirukkivil. During this process, Lateef and his partner had effected the disappearance of a 13 year old boy and of Sinnathurai, and elder holding the keys to Pillayar temple.

Kutti is now a disabled man who cannot bend his fingers. The little girl Nalini has 16 stitches on her head. They live as refugees in a half finished house at Thirukkivil in a group of 10 families with only 9 surviving men. 4 men and a woman missing.

A girl Ranjani Rasiah who was admitted to hospital with injuries was reportedly taken out by an army corporal. It was later learnt that Ranjani was taken to Keleniya and restored to her elder sister who was a medical officer in the South. Their youngest sister, Subashini, who had come from Batticaloa to inform her parents of her brilliant performance with 6 A's and 2 B's at the O Levels, was killed during the attack.

## **The Significance of the Incident**

We described this incident in some detail, because the facts were readily available, and it illustrates the kind of forces innocent Tamils are up against, in just trying to survive. What is significant about the experience of the patients is not Lateef's villainy, but the kind of institutionalised conspiracy that routinely allows such things to happen to Tamils, even in the leading hospital of the district.

A positive feature of the incident is the attitude of the Sinhalese staff. It is to be welcomed, if through historical experience of their own tragedy, many ordinary Sinhalese have disciplined themselves to distinguish between the LTTE and Tamils as human beings. If Lateef, apparently a mere soldier, had such a free hand, it is because the army connived in it. Nearly all violence against Tamils is eventually traceable to the forces. The incident also points to the extent to which Sinhalese have been terrorised by the forces. Even the senior security official who intervened could only exert limited control over the situation.

## **A postscript:**

It was said earlier that the valuables of the Veeramunai refugees were stored in the temple. The property is said to consist of 30 to 50 lorry loads. The STE escorted the survivors away to Thirukkivil on two successive days. According to a highly placed official source, several of the lorries sent to transport the refugees, were used to transport their belongings to Amparai and the South. Refugees questioned said that they cannot say what happened to their goods as they were not there. However, the police and the STE were nominally in charge of protecting their property which was all stored in one place nearby. It is hardly credible that such a vast quantity of goods could have been looted by local Muslims under the very noses of the police and the STF who were on the alert for the minutest LTTE infiltration. It is safe to assume that there was a division of spoils.

Another blow suffered by the Tamils was that while Muslims had been given government protection to reap their paddy, the Tamils had been positively obstructed. 350 acres of prime

land belonging to the temple and 3,500 acres of land belonging to others remain unharvested. Each acre could yield 10 to 18,000 rupees depending on the quality of land. This means a loss of over Rs 40 million (US \$ 1 million) to the community besides their homes and capital goods. It is habitual for farmers to borrow money when planting and pay back upon harvesting. These people have now lost everything.

One of the main casualties of recent troubles was the ability of the Tamils at Veeramunai to survive as a community. According to the refugees their young men who had come up in life as graduates, teachers and government servants had been singled out for elimination. Up to a point this seems to have served the purposes of the state as well as of the Muslim instigators. Muslim home guards from Samanthurai are said to be keeping a special lookout for Veeramunai Tamils.

About 15th September, 4 teachers from Veeramunai who were refugees in Kallaru and Thurainilavanai travelled by van in an attempt to join their families at Thirukkivil. At Akkaraipattu, their van was stopped by Muslim home guards and the 4 teachers were handed over to the police. The four were Thirunavukkarasu, Ravi, Rasan, and Illankeswaran, a graduate. According to an official indication, two of them allegedly belonged to the LTTE and that further inquiries would be futile. The brother of one of the 4, himself a teacher, was angry about the whole thing. According to him, "Several persons in Veeramunai, including Thirunavukkarasu, were kidnapped for ransom payments by the LTTE on the instigation of their Muslim supporters. Today they are handed over to the police as LTTE men by the same Muslims, who in addition loot their goods."

In this bout of violence Veeramunai has lost about 10% of men folk. Those picked out include a large number of the educated population, very necessary for leadership. The fact that many Tamil communities have been affected in this way is a pointer to the State's intention.

## **5.5. Valaichenai June 11th — August 15th**

At the beginning of the troubles, the LTTE took 75 of the policemen who surrendered at Valaichenai to Kalkudah, where they were shot dead and left in a semi—burnt state. The local people were terrified. Subsequently, the LTTE returned and buried them. The people at Valaichenai were told by the LTTE not to fear *and* that the army would be resisted. About 15th June, a large contingent of the LTTE withdrew from Valaichenai, looting as they went in vehicles over the Oddaimavadi bridge.

But an LTTE presence remained. They would come in at night fall all and leave before dawn.

The army which came from the direction of Polonnaruwa on the 18th June, camped in the Muslim area across the Oddaimavadi bridge. During the days that followed, soldiers stabbed a number of Tamil civilians who tried to cross the bridge and threw them into the river. The bodies were washed ashore down—stream. On the receipt of a message from the army, members of the local citizens' committee including Mr. Jegarajasingam, the president and the Anglican and Roman Catholic clergymen went towards Oddaimavadi to meet the army commander on the morning of the 20th. They were accompanied by two nuns who could speak Sinhala—lese. The soldiers were in a nasty mood. At length they were told that the commanding officer was away and that the president should come alone in the afternoon. As the party reached the other end of the bridge, some Muslims who were standing with a soldier holding a knife whispered something to the soldier. The soldier came towards them asking

‘Demalatha?’ (Tamils?). The Roman Catholic clergyman Rev. Annathas replied, ‘Christian’ and rode past the soldier on his bicycle and asked the others to come quickly.

Mr. Jegarajasingam, a Hindu, volunteered to go alone in the afternoon despite the risks, and talk to the army for the sake of the people. He said that he would first call at St. Theresa’s Roman Catholic Church at 3.00 p.m. The church had by now become a huge refugee camp. Mr. Jegarajasingam left his home in the afternoon and was never seen alive again. It is believed that he was killed by the army.

The army came into town on the 21<sup>st</sup> when it was clear that there would be no resistance. The people had already heard stories of rape and murder. They picked up 18 young boys from the camp, beat them and marched then, forcing them to shout slogans against the LTTE. Two nuns who were there were asked to get into a truck. The nuns refused, deciding to face the consequences of refusal rather than those of being taken in a truck. A soldier referred to the killing of the policemen, abused them for a long time and went away. The boys were taken to the LTTE camp, were forced to break an image of Eelam, lower the LTTE flag and raise the Sri Lankan flag. The LTTE flag was then shredded and the boys were ordered to swallow.. the pieces. In some cases soldiers pushed the pieces down the boys’ throats with sticks and poured water. Three of the boys were later released. What happened to the others is not known.

That evening a high ranking army officer came to St. Theresa’s and ordered the refugees to assemble. He spoke in English and got Rev. Annathas to translate into Tamil. He made his audience shout slogans demeaning the Tigers and praising the army.

Life went on with people being picked up and disappearing now and then. At one point the army withdrew and returned later.

The LTTE took away 4 Muslims from Oddaimavadi who had welcomed the army by garlanding them. The situation in Valaichenai became tense following the Kattankudy and Eravur massacres of Muslims on 3rd and 12th August respectively. Food became scarce when Muslim traders refused to sell food to Tamils. Both Tamils and Muslims feared attacks on themselves — the Muslims from the LTTE and the Tamils from the Muslims. According to a local resident who maintained close contact with leading citizens, the number of Tamils killed in Valaichenai from 11th June to this time was of the order of 150.

## **The last days of Fr. Hebare**

On 11th August, Fr. Annathas telephoned the Bishop’s office in Batticaloa and told the church authorities that the situation in Valaichenai was desperate. Fr. Hebare, a strongly built American priest of 70, volunteered to go alone from Batticaloa to Valaichenai, and duly went there alone on his motor cycle on the 12<sup>th</sup> morning. This was just after the Eravur massacre.

Fr. Hebare had served in Batticaloa for 40 years since his arrival from America, and was a towering figure in education as well as sports. He had taught at St. Michael’s and had later been instrumental in opening a technical college. He was revered by many Muslims who had been his students. Mr. Majeed, Superintendent of Police (*SP*)- and currently Co—ordinating Officer (CO) for the East was his - student. Upon being informed of his last promotion, he had called on Fr. Hebare and had taken him out for lunch.

On reaching Valaichenai and studying the situation, Fr. Hebare advised Rev. Annathas to go

with him to Batticaloa. He was concerned for Annathas' safety as he was a young priest of 30. Annathas declined, saying that he could not leave as long as there were refugees in the church. Fr. Hebare set off for Batticaloa and came back saying that he did not feel like leaving them. The church building was now considered dangerous because of its proximity to the Muslim quarter. During the three days Fr. Hebare assisted Annathas in celebrating Holy Eucharist in the convent building. A lady in religious orders who was present in Valaichenai said that Fr. Hebare's attitude was characterised by fearlessness and a confidence that he would not be harmed. He walked about Valaichenai, visited the army camp, walked through the Muslim areas and talked to Muslim 'children. He opined that they may be able to hold out for a week. During a telephone conversation on the 14th, the diocesan office at Batticaloa said that they were sending a van to evacuate the staff at Valaichenai the following day.

That night an announcement was made over the loud speaker in the Valaichenai Mosque that the LTTE was going to attack them and called upon Muslims to be prepared. In the wake of the Eravur massacre, it is understandable that the Muslims feared an attack. We do not know what was behind the announcement. The Tamils were immediately stricken with panic. They took the announcement as signalling a Muslim attack and started running towards Kalkudah in a massive human wave. So great was the fear that in the morning bits of clothing including men's sarongs were seen stuck on barbed wire fences.

Fr. Hebare wanted to leave for Batticaloa early on the 15<sup>th</sup> morning. The others asked him to wait for the van and go with them. Fr. Hebare insisted on leaving early saying that he had to attend to something at the technical college. Shortly before his departure, the mother of a young boy who was employed at the technical college asked Fr. Hebare to take her son as there was danger in Valaichenai. The boy had come to Valaichenai to see his mother and was unable to return. Fr. Hebare agreed and left with the boy on his motorcycle.

The van arrived later with Fr. Joseph from Chenkaladi. By this time many Tamils had been killed in Chenkaladi. Fr. Joseph with the sextant's help had just buried two dead bodies he had found in his church. When the staff at Valaichenai reached Batticaloa, they found that Fr. Hebare and the boy had not arrived. It was discovered later on inquiry, that Fr. Hebare was last seen in Chenkaladi, turning into a side road to avoid the Muslim area. It is believed that if Muslim hooligans or the army had stopped Fr. Hebare, Fr. Hebare being a strong man would have resisted attempts to drag away the Tamil boy.

Several Roman Catholic clergymen in the area keep mementos of Fr's Mary Bastian, Michael Rodrigo, Selvarajah Savarimuttu and Fr. Hebare, all killed in the performance of their duties and are very conscious of their examples. One hopes that the list will stop there.

## **5.6 Sorikalmunai : 16th September**

Sorikalmunai which adjoins Chavalakadai, are both 3 miles across the lagoon into the interior from Kalmunai. The village is predominantly Roman Catholic with a population of about 3000. From the beginning of hostilities in June, the villagers became refugees at Holy Cross Church. Their professions of paddy cultivation and lagoon fishing were largely disrupted. Life went on with people being occasionally picked up or shot by the army. The road leading out of Sorikalmunai was overlooked by the army detachment at Chavalakadai. The community was very much dependent on their parish priest Fr. Selvarajah Saverimuttu, aged 30 and ordained barely 4 years ago. He took up problems of the villagers with the forces, as he had done with the IPKF earlier, organised prayer meetings when someone to Kalmunai on 11th July to discuss food rations for refugees under his care. While returning he is said to

have fallen into the hands of Muslim home guards, on the look out for those providing leadership to the Tamils, and was killed. From that time the refugees at Sorikalmunai became much more helpless and vulnerable. The army from Chavalakadai used to come to the road at 8.00 a.m. and take pot shots at anyone within sight.

On 12th September, the army came to the church and took away 7 men. Subsequently Muslim home guards arrived, peeped into the church through the windows and asked if they had arms hidden. The refugees cowered in fear and the home guards went away. On the morning of 16th September, the army with Muslim home guards arrived in trucks, armoured vehicles and motor cycles, surrounded the church and took away 28 males. The refugees were both leaderless and thoroughly frightened.

At mid-night the same day, Muslim home guards arrived and forced their way into the church. According to the people, they were backed by members of the forces. It is common knowledge that these home guards never venture out on their own. They started molesting women. Some were grabbed by their hair and were beaten against the floor. They then abducted 12 women and made their exit. The following morning, the STF arrived to drop 3 boys from a party they had detained earlier. The boys had injuries including fractures. On learning about what had happened during the night, some STF officials came, promised to look into the matter and promised protection from that night. But no one arrived that night and the people spent another night in fear.

When morning came (18th), the people decided to flee, either to Karaitivu or to Thirukkivil. One group, including old men and women stumbling along with the help of sticks was sighted by the army at Chavalakkadai who fired two shells. The shells fell a few yards short. Some of the people retreated screaming to Sorikalmunai while others kept moving to Thirukkivil. The witnesses we spoke to included women and elderly men.

The women who had been abducted included pregnant mothers. Some of them had made their way back to the church in the morning, while others with their clothes rent had been abandoned about the place. Others had to take clothes and fetch them. Holy Cross church and Sorikalmunai were finally bereft of the community who had sung praises and worshipped there for generations.

Those who had been afraid to leave on their own were finally escorted away to Thirukkivil and- Karaitivu by the STF on the 18th. A press statement by the defence ministry made one of its mind boggling announcements about 19<sup>th</sup> September. The army at Chavalakkadai, it said, had killed 17 LTTE members who were planting-land mines (Veerakesari, 20th September). To the people of Chorikalmunai, it was a message about the fate of their 28 young men taken away by the army on the 16th.

## **5.7 Thangavelayuthapuram - Kanjikudichcharu**

This is a settlement close to the LTTE's major jungle hideout in the Amparai district. It has about 500 Tamil families and was established in 1965. R.W. Ariyanayagam, a Federal Party activist was among those who had encouraged people to settle there. There was a fear that if not, irrigation facilities at Gal Oya will be extended into that area, bring state sponsored Sinhalese colonisation with it, and additional insecurity for Tamils. The land has no irrigation facilities. The people there are essentially poor farmers doing chena cultivation, besides some other crops and minding cattle.

Though the army moved into that area in large numbers on 16th June, there were not many casualties. The people had fled as refugees to Vinayagapuram and elsewhere when the naval shelling commenced and hence escaped the brunt of the army's entry. But many of their cattle died in the shelling, houses burnt by the army and the coconut trees and unharvested crops destroyed or damaged by elephants. As refugees, they are now penniless. They had left behind some old folk who could not walk. Of them, it is said that the army shot 1 and burnt 2 others with their houses.

Members of this community originally came from parts of the Eastern Province such as Senkudiyiruppu and Mandur. Among them, there are also Tamil families from the deep South, mainly of Indian worker origin, displaced during the 1977 racial violence. One of them is Komalam Anthoipillai, a spirited young lady, aged before her time like most ladies from these parts.

During 1977, she had been at Tissamaharama near Kathirkamam (Kataragama). When the violence broke out 535 Tamil families from that area were refugees at Rithigama. They were then given Rs.350 per household and offered transport to any safe area of their choice. They went to places such as Thirukkovil, Akkaraipattu, Kanjikudichcharu, Vavuniya and Anuradhapura. The former MP for that area, Mr. Kanagaratnam, found places for 11 families at Thangavelaythpuram.

In recent times, father was assaulted to death by the IPKF while returning from a clash with the LTTE at Kanjikudichcharu during 1988. She is now separated from her brother who is stuck at Thurainilavanai. Her family is entitled to Janasakthi (Janasaviya) payments. But her husband is such a nervous wreck that after once being threatened by the STF while passing the Thirukkovil camp on his bicycle, he is afraid to go and collect his Janasakthi cheque. Furthermore, because they are refugees they are unable to invest for the future using Janasakthi benefits.

Komalam was scathing about the corruption and routine humiliation of the poor. She said that whatever money comes in as relief, they get next to nothing. Those with influence get money that they are not entitled to, she said. But people of her position could stay in queues for days and go home empty handed.

## **5.8. The Gypsies (Kuravar) of Alikampai:**

Amongst those who have suffered greatly without having even a remote connection with the conflict are the Kuruvar community. Earlier they used to roam the country as gypsies doing things like snake charming for a living. These people have relatives settled in Tambutteagama near Anuradhapura. They still speak Telugu as their mother tongue, though their grown up members speak and write Tamil. The first person to organize them into a community was Fr. Gottfried Koch, a German priest belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. During the mid—50's, Fr. Koch collected several families from diverse parts and settled them at Alikampai, near Akkaraipattu. They were given paddy lands and were transformed into an agricultural community. In time the community became Roman Catholic Christians and worshipped in Tamil. The church built a school and employed Yovan Master to teach them up to Grade 5. Yovan Master, now 79, says that it was tough going, but they caught on fast. The school was later taken over by the government. The work was continued by FR. Dias who knew Telugu and is being continued today by Fr. Noel.

The relatives of this community in Tambutteagama still do snake charming for a living besides some

vegetable cultivation. One man from Thmbuttegama said that Sinhalese are far more appreciative of snake charming skills rather than Tamils and Muslims. Some of the older folk at Alikampai still practice snake charming. The tribal character of the community is still evident. When a younger man tries to answer questions, the older man would demand that he be silent and continue with the answer. As a people they are lanky and smart. The construction of houses for, this community at Alikampai was commenced under Fr. Dias with aid from the Ministry of Housing, then under Prime Minister Premadasa. They also have a fierce sense of personal loyalty. Once two Kuravar had an argument over who was greater — Fr. Koch or Fr. Dias. When it became heated, one of them threatened to release his snake. The people at the bus stand fled in fear. The people themselves admit with disarming frankness that because they were regarded the lowest of low castes, none of the militant groups ever came near them. They had voted for Kanagaratnam and Thivyanathan in turn but had not even the remotest connection with the Tamil militancy — except that they have curious Tamil names like “Palkudiyar” (milk drinker) and “Kochikayar” (chilli man) besides Annadurai and other Telugu names. The community is a favourite with Roman Catholic clergy who ministered over them, because of their discipline, charm and loyalty.

Education is still new to the community, but some of the girls attending the convent at Akkaraipattu are doing extremely well. A clergyman pointed to a girl who was in JSC (Standard 8) class at the convent. She left to get married. The nuns very much regretted losing her, as she had shown a tremendous skill in singing and dancing. Now she nurses an infant, dressed like any other tribal mother. Besides planting their own rice fields, these people work as labour for Muslim cultivators and as watchmen, preventing sugar cane fields from being attacked by wild animals.

Alphonsus, who trained as a Roman Catholic brother was an educated member of the community. He later married and performed the functions of being a preacher as well as the manager of their own cooperative society. His leadership was very important to the community. When there was disagreement over a decision to be made, Alphonsus would stand up and speak a few words in Telugu. Then hearty agreement would be quickly reached.

In early August these people had just helped the Muslims to harvest their fields and were preparing to harvest their own. The LTTE attacked some Muslims near the 8th mile post. On 7th August at 11:00 a.m., Muslim home guards and other hooligans came to Alikampai in 18 tractors and in other vehicles. Alphonsus was dragged out of his home and taken away, and was never seen again. Eranna and his wife, Ariyamalar, who had a young infant were just preparing to eat when the attackers came in. One of them swung at them with a harvesting knife, injuring both husband and wife. He was stopped by another Muslim from proceeding further. Eranna attributes this to the presence of the baby. Ariyamalar's cousin, Krishnampillai, was killed in the attack. Sankaran was cut in one eye and has lost his sight in that eye. Vellaimunayan, an elderly man suffered a deep cut in his head and back, and is now mentally abnormal. In all 7 were killed and 12 badly injured, before the attackers left at 1:00 p.m.

Many of the attackers were known to the community and can be readily identified. Eranna recognized his attacker as one who hung about the Akkaraipattu market. So was the one who saved him. Some were identified as sons of Podiayars (cultivators of large tracts of paddy Land), merchants and Vattavithani's (a person handling disputes amongst cultivators in a given division).

Masakka is an old grandmother in the community, a very persevering conversationist. She carries a collection consisting of an old ration book, a savings book, some exercise books of her grandchildren who studied arithmetic in school and got nearly everything right, and a *coloured* photograph of her son displaying a python to some foreigners. She switches between Tamil, Telugu and Sinhalese with ease, and says that she even spoke English to Cucku Father. Others say Masakka is wonky. But she says some profound things. She said, “These people who committed this violence think that they are hurting us. But they had really hurt and wounded God, who is watching from above.”

The community now live as refugees in Kalliyantivu, just below a tank in the outskirts of Thirukkivil. Beyond a wide expanse of water and flat agricultural land are the distant blue hills of Moneragala. The main reason for their being there is that the school building can be used to store whatever paddy they had been able to rescue. The land is low and their little tribal huts flooded once the rains commence. Some of them go regularly to Alikampai on bicycles, to bring home a sack of paddy at a time. They had contacted

Muslims who are yet to pay them their labour charges. The Muslims wanted them to return. But the gypsies are unwilling to go. The Muslims had lost valuable labour and are uncertain about security for their own economic activity. But why were these people, whom everyone knew had nothing to do with the LTTE, attacked? The main motivation is perhaps to dilute the non-Muslim presence in the area and to acquire additional land. Again, there seems to be considerable dissent among the Muslims on the desirability and feasibility of such aims.

### **5.9. Akkaraipattu:**

Akkaraipattu is a town inhabited by Muslims and Tamils. Over the years, a kind of boundary had been established. When the army arrived on 24th June under the command of Colonel Fonseka, the people were already in refugee camps — The Roman Catholic Church, Alaidy School, Ramakrishna Mission School, etc. Subsequently, the refugees went home. On 25th June, the army did a round-up and took in 37 persons with the help of Muslim collaborators. Many of them were government servants — Grama Sevakas, teachers, a physical training instructor, postmaster, etc.

Mrs. Santhanapillai from Ward 7 said that the army took her brother, Kanapathipillai Sriskantharajah (35, Mechanic) and Sivasekaran Naguleswaran (20, Goldsmith). The relatives of the detained, including Sriskantharajah's wife, then went to the army camp which was based in the hospital, holding a white flag. The army told them that the detainees had already been transferred to the Kondavedduvan camp. 'This was the beginning of the illusion that many of the hundreds detained were being held at Kondavedduvan, keeping many relatives in hope. The situation in Amparai precluded any Tamil from going to Kondavedduvan. Another story circulated later that the detainees were held at the Hardy Technical Institute, Amparai.

Markandu Suntharalingam (22, Goldsmith) and Kandiah Puvaneswary's son, Nallathamby Kannathan (27, Technical Assistant, Buildings Department, Kalmunai) were picked up by the army at the Roman Catholic Church on 24th June, soon as they arrived. There is no trace of all these persons.

Mrs. Saroja Devanayagam, a GS in Akkaraipattu, whose husband was also a GS, took a letter of appeal signed by parents of missing persons and handed it over personally to President Premadasa, when he visited Amparai about 2nd July. There has been no response to the letter.

Puvaneswary's other son, Nallathamby Han Ram (18, Goldsmith) was taken by the police on 30th July. She is hopeful that the boy is alive. She had been assaulted and abused, whenever she had approached the police to make inquiries.

Nine persons were taken in by the army on 4th July — including Chitran Kanagaratnam (32) and brothers, A. Suresh (Welder) and A. Elango (A Level Student). The rest were students or garage hands. These persons have also been missing.

Mrs. Murugesu from Attalachenai said that her husband and son, Uthayarsan (17), together with Arunthavarasa and another employee were burnt by Muslims together with Union Mill.

In all about 150 persons are missing from around Akkaraipattu. There is a rumour that some of the

detainees taken earlier were burnt at Nintavur. The police are often said to take detainees to Pachchaipalli, after which they are not seen.

There is considerable anger amongst Tamils against Muslims. Tamils allege that Muslim home guards tie the hands of Tamils, putting some weapon into their hands, and then hand them over to the army as Tigers. The LTTE killed 14 Muslims in that area during an incident in July.

In late July, Muslim interests led by the Podiyars (cultivators of large paddy fields) were responsive to peace talks with Tamils and leaders of the two communities held talks. Subsequently, Tamil labour was used to harvest Muslim fields. Several things happened at about the same time in the days following the massacre of Muslims at Kattankudy on 3rd August. The LTTE attacked some Muslims near the 8th mile post, the harvesting of Muslim fields was coming to an end, and Muslim home guards received new weapons on 6th August. On the day they received arms, the home guards shot a Tamil mother and child in Akkaraipattu.

Just after the harvested paddy was brought in, the same tractors were used to carry an assorted band of Muslims to attack the gypsy colony at Alikampai, killing 7, and at the same time driving Tamils out of Kannakipuram. In former times, a Muslim village had stood near Kannakipuram. After they had worked as labour for Muslims, the Tamils and gypsies had been driven out before they could harvest their own fields. Members of the local citizens' committee attributed territorial motives for these attacks. No interest was shown in peace thereafter.

A few days later, the LTTE dragged one or two Muslims out of the local mosque and shot them. About the middle of August a cry went over the hailer at the mosque that Muslims are being attacked and that they should be ready. The Tamils fled Akkaraipattu. Those who started returning a month later found in many cases the timber and roofing removed from their houses and their fruit and coconut trees chopped.

Many educated Muslims have expressed to Tamil friends that they find conditions depressing and are making plans to move to Colombo. A number of middle class Muslims are reportedly extorted by Muslim home guards on the grounds that they had paid taxes to the LTTE earlier.

Persons who visited the local STF camp said that STF men regularly talk abusively of Muslims in the presence of Muslim home guards under their direction. They say things like: "If a Muslim spends five rupees offering you a cup of tea, that means he is going to point out a Tamil to you as an LTTE person for summary dealing."

It is not that the Sri Lankan forces were so unintelligent that they killed hundreds of Tamils on the basis of such information. They got the kind of information they wanted and were happy to act on it. The ideological pre—sumption on which they were acting implied that killing Tamils was essentially a good thing.

With military pressure lifted from Jaffna and with reports of the LTTE moving cadre into the East, a new phase of the tragedy is evolving. During August security was provided for the Muslims to harvest their paddy. In early October, some Muslims who went near the jungle in search of cattle were said to be missing. It is also reported that one man in an STF search party was also injured, and was taken away by helicopter.

## **Chapter 6**

### **MUSLIM UNREST**

Wherever one meets Tamils in the East, signs of enormous anger against Muslims soon become evident. "We can

live with Sinhalese,” they would say “But never with the Choni.” Choni is a corruption of Chonakar, the term by which Moorish refugees and traders were known in these parts. On the part of the Muslims, they have had a sense of insecurity for a long time. Their relations with Tamils have been going through a tortuous course that has become increasingly tragic. In trying to understand this, we trace below some recent developments. These have been pieced together by talking to people in the East.

The late 70's and early 80's were a period characterized by numerous student bodies active particularly amongst high school students. These centered around the causes of Tamil freedom, Tamil dignity and a Tamil national homeland. Their activities were mainly literary and several plays were produced and acted on these themes. Those who gave the lead in such activities became popular figures both in school as well as in the village. Students who formed links with Jaffna for high school and university education became important figures in what were loosely termed “student organizations”. Large numbers of Muslim youth were caught up in this enthusiasm because they studied in the same schools with Tamils and shared many of their grievances. This was the high tide of such essentially non—violent political activity. Mainly because of personal links, these student organizations became incorporated into the EPRLF in the early 80's. The main interest at this time was in political work.

After the 1983 anti—Tamil violence, when militants were recruited in large numbers and sent to India for training, the EPRLF and TELO were the main militant organizations present in Amparai District. The EPRLF had a considerable Muslim following. India had provided arms and training, but when it came to other necessities; the militants had to live off the land. The leaders, once steeped in ideals, did not know how to deal with the situation. The organization had grown through indiscriminate recruitment, and there were hundreds of hungry young boys with guns. Robbery became a ritual, while the leaders turned a blind eye. With the merchant class dominated by Muslims, this indiscipline amongst the militants awakened old suspicions among Muslims and developed resentment. The State began using this in 1984 to foment communal divisions between Tamils and Muslims. At this point, the Muslim Jihad, a militant group sponsored by the State, and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) under the leadership of Ashraff emerged at about the same time. Several Muslims left the EPRLF and formed the core of the Jihad.

The State had a tactical use for the Jihad. But it was very uncomfortable with the SLMC which was threatening to deprive the main southern parties, the UNP and SLFP, of their Muslim support. In trying to create and use a division between Muslims and Tamils to dilute the claim for a Tamil homeland, the State was also giving a boost to a separate Muslim nationalism with its own set of grievances as well as ambitions. The State had also unintentionally created strong opposition from another quarter, to its ambition of making the East Sinhalese through State—sponsored colonization. In time a muted call for an autonomous Muslim—dominated Amparai District emerged. In trying to use Muslims against Tamils, the State was playing a game which had disastrous consequences which exposed not just the weaknesses of the Tamil nationalist ideology, but even more, the unreality of Sinhalese chauvinist ideology. The story, as at present, remains unfinished. Until the mid—80's, the strategy in Colombo was to neutralize the Muslims by offering them positions and patronage within the two main parties. With this done, the Sinhalization of the Amparai and Trincomalee Districts through State—aided colonization was simply thought a matter of time. Events have taken a very different course today, sending tremors of panic into the ranks of Sinhalese chauvinism, apart from the discomfiture of the LTTE's ambitions. The bloodletting one witnesses today appears to have no respite.

The next major episode in the story was the arrival of the IPKF in 1987. All Tamil militant groups were harsh with the Muslims at this time for their perceived former support for the Sri Lankan forces in their campaign against the Tamils (see Report No. 5). Once the EPRLF, TELO and ENDLF were vested with authority under the IPKF, these groups became chiefly associated with the harassment of Muslims. The main incident during this period was the communal riots in Samanthurai where the greater damage was suffered by Muslims. During this period, the LTTE was hiding in the jungles. Support for the LTTE grew amongst both Muslims and Tamils because of the misconduct of pro—Indian groups. Muslims became perhaps the most important source of material help for the LTTE. This was aided by several factors. There was less IPKF patrolling in Muslim areas. Also, there were a number of Muslims

who regularly went to the jungles to collect firewood for sale as well as to fetch illicit timber. During this period, the LTTE recruited significantly amongst the Muslims. When the LTTE came into the open as The IPKF withdrew towards the end of 1989, the size of the LTTE's Muslim following took people by surprise.

Observers in the East say that the LTTE was welcomed more enthusiastically in Muslim areas than in Tamil areas. It is even said that if the LTTE had contested the Muslim Congress at this point, it would have made a clean sweep. At this point the support, as in Tamil areas, was largely emotional. The LTTE failed politically to create objective conditions for this support to be durable. It characteristically underestimated its advantage and adopted a course of repression rather than one of generosity. This set off a familiar chain reaction. The LTTE banned the SLMC rather than challenge it politically. Any sign of self-assertiveness on the part of Muslims was dealt with brute force. Tamils disagreeing with the LTTE were subject to similar repression. But when it came to the Muslims, it deepened the feeling of separateness both amongst the Muslims as well as amongst the LTTE cadre. The repression also spread the impression that the SLMC were the legitimate representatives of the Muslims while the LTTE were intruders.

The LTTE's intrusion into the economic life of the region alienated Muslims even further as it did a large number of Tamils. The Muslims who collected wood and illicit timber from the jungles suddenly found themselves cut out of business as the LTTE monopolized this trade. These were the very Muslims who had previously fed the LTTE. Taxation was resented by Muslim traders in particular. How the LTTE's paranoid resentment of Muslims had grown between January and June, was exemplified by the decision to kill Muslim policemen along with the Sinhalese on 11th June.

The killing of policemen hit nearly every Muslim village in the East, particularly in the Amparai District. There was genuine cause for anger. Subsequent developments were influenced by several factors. These are spontaneous communal violence, the State's use of Muslim resentment, reprisals by the LTTE, the use made of the situation by a section of Muslim interests, and not the least, the failure of Muslim leadership. Some of these have been dealt with in earlier reports. We shall take some of these.

### **The Role of the State:**

In its bid to defeat the LTTE militarily, the instinctive thrust of the State was to reduce Tamils to a state of subservience through a mixture of terror, murder, displacement and deprivation, so as to accomplish its ideological aim of a Sinhalized East. The LTTE's actions for a time helped the State to portray its actions as protecting the Muslims. The use of Muslim home guards to attack Tamils proved useful in view of the State's past notoriety in its dealings with Tamils. These are discussed more fully elsewhere (see Chapter 1).

### **The Role of Muslim Sectional Interests:**

This must be viewed in terms of the destructive politics that the State has chosen to preside over. This has been discussed in Report No. 5. In looking at everything tactically and ignoring principles, a situation has been created which brings out the worst in every person and every community. The Muslim home guards who are being armed and used against Tamils consist of lumpen elements interested in loot and violence for its own sake, as well as middle class elements seeking to expand Muslim influence finding temporary concurrence in the aims of the State. In this Muslim landlords who are anxious to take control of Tamil paddy lands and residential areas would find common cause with those wanting to clear the Amparai District of Tamils to make way for a Muslim-controlled district. But this would run counter to the agenda of Sinhalese chauvinism.

**The Failure of Muslim Leadership:** A long-standing reality of the East is the necessity of Tamil-Muslim cooperation for the prosperity of both. Any leadership whether of the Muslims or of the Tamils which ignores this, has failed both. They frequently live in adjacent villages, have to move amongst each other to get to their paddy fields and their economic life is inter-dependent.

This has been recognized by able Muslim leaders in the past who had exercised commendable statesmanship in maintaining good relations between Muslims and Tamils. Tamils in general speak of Mr. Majid, the former MP for Samanthurai, with respect. They say that whenever there were differences, Mr. Majid personally undertook the risk of going into Tamil areas to 'talk and settle differences. That kind of leadership has been greatly missed this time. At a time when there is no Tamil leadership, the Muslim leadership has failed to overcome the mess made by the LTTE and the Sri Lankan State with superior statesmanship. The proper role for a Muslim leadership mindful of the long-term interests of the Muslims, would have been to ensure that Muslims are not used in a manner harmful to the Tamils. The Muslim leadership has instead allowed the situation to drift with a momentum of its own, making it suspect of complicity. While both Muslim and Tamils have been killed, addressing mainly Muslim grievances at a time when the vast majority of Tamils are refugees and victims of State terror, helps to distort the true nature of the problem. It has also deepened anger and suspicion against Muslims and against the SLMC in particular. Whether SLMC is a victim or protagonist remains a moot question.

The SLMC seems set to watch the Muslims go on the same tragic course along which the TULF took the Tamils. Many things were outside the control of the SLMC as they were with the TULF. But timely principled stands based on justice and a respect for other communities could have done much to maintain a minimum degree of sanity. Like the TULF, the SLMC gained Muslim votes by articulating genuine Muslim grievances and playing to feelings of group exclusiveness, without putting forward a tangible programme with a serious commitment. It too, 'like the TULF in the past, stands paralyzed between the expectations it created and actual possibilities on the ground.

Conspiracy stories that are current about Muslims in the East are reminiscent of those about Tamils in the late 70's: How Tamils got together and cooked public examination results; how they would not sell land nor offer water to drink. As it was fashionable then to portray the Tamils as a monolithic entity, so it has now become of Muslims. The strength of the Tamils was then exaggerated several fold until the racial holocaust of 1983 proved how helpless they were. There is a similar tendency now to exaggerate the strength of the Muslims, both by Sinhalese as well as Tamils. This illusion is fed by the freedom given to armed Muslim hooligans by the State for tactical reasons, as well as by the State awaiting its hoped for economic and military aid from Islamic countries in the Middle East. Even Sinhalese who are instruments of this policy are becoming anxious, and are saying that the government is helpless.

The current, drift and failure of Muslim leadership can only spell violence and disaster for the Muslims, similar to what the Tamils suffered in 1983. The Muslim politics and the LTTE's intransigence have pushed the Muslims into an alliance with Sinhalese chauvinism, as had the TULF's politics and the Sri Lankan State's violence pushed the Tamils towards a dependence on India. Sinhalese chauvinism which guides the State by its nature will not tolerate Muslim self-assertion, and is as violent as it is weak.

Furthermore, the alignment of forces in the East is unstable. The LTTE cannot be defeated by brute force, the anticipated black gold from the unstable Middle East may prove to be elusive and India may decide to crack the whip at any time. It will be tragic if there will not arise a Muslim leadership which will articulate a principled position. -

The Current Realities: In representing the Muslims as-a monolith, a pop theory is that though there is a unity of purpose, for tactical reasons different Muslims are assigned to have a foothold in every power bloc, and that all abide by decisions taken in the mosque. Similar things were said of Tamils until Tamils actually started killing Tamils. It is an insult to any community, to suppose that it can be led in an authoritarian manner towards self-centred and unprincipled goals without serious dissent.

It is a fact that many Muslims are unhappy with what is going on. While the anger created by the actions of the LTTE and the promise of loot, enrichment and power held out by the Sri Lankan State to certain Muslim sections have given the initiative to these sections, basic decency and hard material realities are beginning to assert themselves. Many educated Muslims, like their Tamil counterparts, see a bleak future and have expressed a desire to move to Colombo.

Behind all this violence, a large number of personal friendships have remained unshaken. Even where physical contact is not possible, Muslims have written letters inquiring about Tamil friends, and are helping them to get their basic necessities as well as money. Muslims in villages adjoining Tamil settlements such as Natpiddymunai (adjoining the Tamil villages of Senaikudiyiruppu and Manalchenai) and Maruthamunai (adjoining Periyaniawanai and Pandiruppu) have maintained their traditional good relations with Tamils.

Muslims in trade and transport have to regularly deal with Tamils and have to pass through Tamil areas. Some of them have told Tamil acquaintances that after what had happened, they do not know how to face Tamils. Pottuvil is a town with a Muslim majority where the main trade route runs through the Tamil towns of Sangamankandy and Komari to the north. In Pottuvil, Muslims have been used in violence against Tamils, and many Muslims are understandably worried.

Not only has the brutality of the State further alienated the Tamils, the LTTE's jungle hideouts in Kanjikudichcharu remain largely unpenetrated. Muslim paddy cultivators and cow hands cannot go on depending on armed protection from the State. Tamil labour who have fled as refugees are being sent word by Muslims to return) with the promise of protection. Though some Muslim interests appear to be thinking and acting in terms of a Pakistan solution to the East, this would be infeasible and unthinkable as it would be bloody. Because of its own weaknesses and contradictions) - the tactical alliance between the Sri Lankan State and its Muslim allies will come to an end, and the Muslims will be left feeling more isolated. If the situation is to be saved, there is an inescapable need for Tamil statesmanship that will seek reconciliation and justice with the generosity rather than revenge and subservience.

## Chapter 7

### REPORTS: PERSONAL

#### 7.1. The Fate of Policemen Between the Lines:

On the 11th June and during succeeding days, the LTTE in an act of criminal madness killed several hundred Sinhalese and Muslim policemen who had surrendered. The Tamil policemen were released. The fragility of the State resulting from its ideology, and its paranoia, have prevented it from adopting a sane, rational and considerate policy towards Tamil policemen who were released by the LTTE or who are unable to report for work because their colleagues would have killed them. The real problem of these persons, who in nearly all cases have been loyal to the State, has been simply ignored. On the basis of instructions or otherwise, many of those caught have been done away with.

*Here are some cases of policemen who were at Pottuvil police station on 11th June. They were confident of being able to fight the LTTE. But they surrendered on orders from the police high command:*

Thiruchelvam: Native of Kalmunai. Caught by the army, pointed out by Muslim home guards between Akkaraipattinam. 20th June.

Singarajah: Native of Akkaraipattu and earlier stationed there. He was pointed out to the army at Akkaraipattu by Muslims on 20th June.

Rajasekaran: Native of Pottuvil. Caught by the STE on being pointed out by Muslims shortly after being released by the LTTE.

Ravichandran & Manoranjan: Both were natives of Pottuvil, staying with Pottuvil refugees at Komari. They were pointed out to the STE by a masked informant.

All these persons are believed to have been killed. On 24th September, 3 policemen were apprehended by the STF during a round-up at Thambiluvil. They were Gunaratnam (attached to Amparai), Rasiah (Valaichenai) and Kamal Vajithasiri Jayatilleke (Amparai). All three were natives of Thambiluvil and had come home on leave to attend the local Amman Kovil festival on 10th June. The war had begun while they were on leave. Nearly all Hindu government officers from Thirukkovil—Thambiluvil come on home leave to attend the festival. In the case of police officers, the official thinking seems to be that the LTTE had tipped them off regarding the commencement of war.

Our examination of the circumstances of the war (Chapter 2) strongly suggests that such a presumption is absurd. In the case of these 3, relatives have hung about the local STF camp for days and have seen no trace of their sons, nor have received any word from the STE. Other inquiries point to the worst having to be assumed. The case of Kamal Vajithasiri: This case illustrates some of the unique human problems encountered in the area. Kamal was one of 3 sons born to Jayatilleke, a Sinhalese farmer from Panama, south of Pottuvil and his Tamil wife, Jayawathy, from Thambiluvil. The other sons were Saliya Jayasiri (23) and Vasantha Indirasiri (21).

Jayatilleke died of cancer, and Jayawathy died of heart failure a few months later. The 3 sons were adopted and raised by Jayawathy's younger sister C. Poopathy, in Thambiluvil. Poopathy had 10 children of her own. Thus she and her husband, a paddy cultivator, raised 13 children with difficulty. Fortunately, the children did quite well in education, and the family came up. Two of Poopathy's daughters became teachers, one of them graduating from Peradeniya in 1986. Jayawathy's 3 sons grew up as Tamils, speaking and studying in Tamil. The family was now comfortably in the middle class league.

Saliya Jayasiri joined the police and just finished training as a Sub—Inspector. Kamal Vajithasiri joined as a Reserve Police Constable. The 2-were anxious-that Vasantha Indirasiri, who was good in his studies, should be helped to qualify as a doctor. He was duly supported as an Advanced Level student in Jaffna. Poopathy's husband died 2 years ago. But this was a time she was having a rest from her cares.

Kamal Vajithasiri came home from his station at Amparai on 10th June to attend the Amman Kovil poosai. taking short leave to obtain medicine. Because of the prevailing tension, or because she wanted his company, Poopathy made him spend the night at home. On the 11th morning, the troubles had begun and Kamal could not return. Since then Kamal, though having a Sinhalese name, was regarded a Tamil he remained at home in view of what was being done to Tamil policemen.

Kamal's elder brother, Saliya Jayasiri, reported at Amparai police station on 12th June to assume duties as Sub—Inspector on completion of training. Nothing more has been heard of him. Poopathy said that if he were alive, he would have contacted them.

Kamal was picked up by the STF from his home, when Thambiluvil was rounded up on 24th September. Nothing more was heard of him, though Poopathy and some of her children hung about the STF camp for days.

Other inquiries have elicited a hint that he would not be seen again. One circumstance concerning the family was that it was a closely knit family, and there was at least one member of the extended family who had close contacts with the LTTE. Suthakaran (18), a Grade 9 student, and son of Sothimani, a sister of Poopathy's, was picked up by the STF on information shortly after its arrival in June. Suthakaran who is said to have been friendly with the LTTE, is believed to have been killed. The fact remains that Suthakaran could not have been more than an ordinary supporter, because he stayed at home. The STF's attention to the family was drawn about this time.

That Kamal Vajithasiri knew some LTTE cadre is not disputed. Even President Premadasa and the STF knew many of them well. According to Poopathy, when a relation (not a first cousin) in the LTTE had earlier wanted to see Kamal, he had declined saying that it would amount to disloyalty to his profession. At worst Kamal and his brothers may have kept company with LTTE cadre who were in school with them in earlier times, before joining the police. Such things are normal in villages. That the LTTE would have tipped off Kamal about plans to kill policemen is preposterous, because even LTTE local leaders were taken by surprise. Again, Kamal who knew how to use weapons, had stayed at home by choice, rather than go to the jungle with the LTTE.

One story that appears to be believed by the STF is that soon after the war broke out on 11th June, Kamal was seen in the trenches carrying arms with the LTTE. The LTTE had called upon youths to join in the final battle, had importuned many to come out with them, and had then precipitately pulled -out leaving them high and dry. Suppose Kamal had joined them, one has to see what his position would have been if he had not. Kamal had a Sinhalese name. The LTTE had just killed Sinhalese policemen and were in an importuning mood and knew that Kamal could use a gun. It is not inconceivable that for the sake of his safety, Kamal's own relatives would have advised him to pretend to the LTTE that he was joining them and get away at the earliest. The significant fact is that Kamal was staying at his home and not with the LTTE.

Those with a license to kill, such as the STF, tend to see ghosts everywhere and in time give those ghosts flesh.

The cases of policemen who can still be saved calls for urgent action.

## **7.2. Crushed Between Walls of Steel:**

What follows is the story of a poor family that is typical of several hundreds in this region. They were oppressed and treated like dirt by every armed group that arrived — their local would-be liberators, their saviours from across the Palk Straits as well as those who would destroy them to-unite Sri Lanka.

Nagamani Valliammai (45) and her husband, K. Kathiramalai (60) from Thirukkivil South are labourers in the dairy trade. In Tamil, they describe their profession as "tying cows". Their eldest son, Vipulanantharajah who was 17 in 1985 was in the same trade. One day during 1985, he did not go in the morning to untie a calf to feed on its mother because of a tense military situation. Thinking it safe in the evening, he ventured out on his bicycle at 4:00 p.m. to go where he had tied the calf. He was picked up by the STF from Kondavedduvan at Vinayapuram, after they smashed his bicycle. During the weeks and months which followed, Valliammai did the usual pilgrimage, making inquiries at the STF camps at Batticaloa, Kallady, Kondavedduvan, Eravur, Pandiruppu and Pallaiadi, without hearing anything. About a year later, the Ceylon Red Cross gave her Rs. 3,000. But during that year she had spent several thousands on her son's account in addition to the time lost in agonizing and waiting. She had to pay for her son's borrowed bicycle smashed by the STF. In the absence of any accountable legal process, she had to pay money to persons who promised information about

her son.

Her second son, Paskaran, also in his late teens was taken by the EPRIF on 5th June 1989 while he was buying jak fruit at a shop in Kallianthivu, Thirukkivil. This was a part of the Indian—sponsored conscription process for the Tamil National Army (TNA). Once again, Valliammai resumed the same pilgrimage. She inquired at 3 EPRLF camps in Batticaloa, then at Kala— wanchikudy, back to Batticaloa and finally to Mandur. At Mandur, she spoke to 2 EPRLF leaders, Peththamby from Akkaraipattu and Thevu from Thambiluvil. Thevu beat her with an aamanangu stick and kicked her. Others who were there said “Shoot the boy and give her the corpse.” Valliammai had little choice but to ask them to keep her son and went away.

When the LTTE attacked the Thirukkivil TNA camp on 5th November 1989, Paskaran was taken prisoner. Once again, Valliammai went on a pilgrimage. This time about Thangavelayuthapuram in Kanjikudichcharu, trying to meet LTTE leaders. But she could not talk to anyone. In December, Mathan was appointed LTTE leader for her area. One day that month Mathan was going on his motorcycle when Valliammai stopped him on the road and inquired about her son. Mathan dismissed her saying “He fought against us. We have shot him.”

During March, Valliammai went to Jaffna and asked to see the big man. She was sent to some LTTE personage. On asking to be shown her son, the big man said sternly “Does he exist for us to show him?” She was then asked to hand over a photograph of Paskaran, register his name as missing and go away. Hoping to apply a little more pressure, Valliammai sent the father to Jaffna in April. The father came back after an almost identical experience.

Valliammai is now with here surviving four daughters. The two elder ones (24 and 19) are married. The other-two are in school (Grade 6 and 8). Her husband is mentally depressed and does not earn a living. Valliammai scrapes a living by baking hoppers (rice cakes topped with sugared coconut milk).

### **7.3. Veeracholai:**

Sivamani, a young mother from Veeracholai, not more than 22 years is married with 2-- children One of here elder brothers, Jhavarajah, went out to buy provisions in June and never came back. Its is believed that he was killed .

She and her relatives were at the Veeramunai Temple as refugees.

Sivamani’ s sister—in—law, Mrs. Kanapathipillai, went with 7 other ladies in the morning during July to see their house and to bring some things. They never returned. They later heard that they were taken by the Muslims and later their bodies were heaped in a paddy field and burnt. A few days later Kanapathipillai, Sivamani’ s elder brother, was shot by the army while he was having a bath in a pond nearby. His body was found and they buried him. Sivamani now has the responsibility of looking after Kanapathipillai’ s 2 children in addition to her own 2 as well as her parents.

Her younger brother, Vinayagamoorthy, who lost his I.C. went and stayed with her husband at Thurainilevanai which is her husband’ s native place. On the 31st day of Kanapathipillai’ s death, Vinayagamoorthy went to a temple with flowers to do some religious rites for his deceased brother. On the way he was caught by Muslim home guards in early August. On that day 7 others were also taken from that area. One captured among them was a person from Chavalakadai. He was beaten and was asked to crush a bulb and eat it. He did eat it and was left at Kanchikuddichiaara Hospital in a state of immense pain. It is believed that he will not live long. It is said that some Muslim home guards were prepared to show one or two of those captured in return for money. In many cases it is meaningless because most of those who were detained- are no more in this world.

Sivamani, with a hungry looking and blank face, didn’ t even have the strength to talk. She wishes that it

would have been better if they had killed all of them together. It seems unreal for them to think of rebuilding their lives again.

#### **7.4. Malwathai:**

Pakiawathy Sivarajah in her mid—30's is a lady from Malwathai who is the only girl in that family with 3 other boys. She is married with 2 children. Her husband deserted her sometime back. She and 2 other of her brothers have some visual defect from birth. Ponnuthurai is the only brother who was normal and married to a Muslim girl, Navila, and staying with Pakiawathy and her parents for the last few years.

They were refugees at Veeramunai since July. On 29th July the army raided the Veeramunai Temple camp and took Ponnuthurai along with several others. For months Pakiawathy has been trying to find out about her brother. But all inquiries have turned a blind eye.

#### **7.5. Veeramunai:**

Selvarajah Veerakuddy (18 years) was one taken from the refugee camp on 20th July. Later Selvarajah's father was shot at the Temple camp on 12th August while his brother, Tharmathas, was injured and taken to Amparai Hospital by the STF. Tharmathas (14 years) is also missing. The mother, Parvathy (45 years) is with the only son alive at the Thirukkivil refugee camp.

#### **7.6. Panangkaddu:**

The STF came to Akkaraipattu in July. A. Manimehalai and her sister are both widows and were staying at a school at Panangkaddu as refugees in August. While the STF from Akkaraipattu was passing through Panangkaddu they caught 20 young men. One among them was Thayaruthy, who was the brother of Manimehalai. Manimehalai's parents are very old and she has been going to the Akkaraipattu camp without any respite.

#### **7.7 Sorikalmunai:**

1. **Mr.Silva** (Sep tember-- 2 22nd)-nd~>- Mr. S ilva Silva was a Sinhalese well known to all at Sorikalmunai because he is the only one who could-speak well in all 3 languages. He came there nearly 40 years ago as a government officer who was in charge of the houses built in that colony. He married a Tamil girl and was settled there. He had 6 girls and 2 boys. His elder son was already married. After his retirement he put up a small boutique and his sons also joined in his business.

Being a Sinhalese he didn't have much difficulty in bringing food items passing the army camp. Some army and Muslims had falsely accused his younger son of giving food to the Tigers. In August the army had taken away the younger son. It was learnt that he was dead.

Mr. Silva was popular among the villagers for having acted as a spokesman whether it was during the IPKF's time or the Sri Lankan army's time. It made the Muslims and Sinhalese angry with him. Following the round—up at Sorikalmunai people left the College and the Church for various neighbouring villages. Some came down to Thirukkivil through interim paths while several others went down the slimy water of the Chavalakaddai lagoon and gone to Pandiruppu. Mr. Silva, being a Sinhalese, thought that he could go down the only main road which connects Chavalakaddai and Kalmunai with his elder son. They never reached Kalmunai. It is believed that both of them were hacked to death by the army and their bodies were burnt.

2. **Peterpillai Thirasapillai** had 6 children with 3 boys and 3 girls. The eldest boy was caught in a rounding

up done by the STF in 1985 and was killed. One of their daughters had some mental disorder and died. The 3rd girl's husband who had links with TELO was killed by the LTTE. People of this village took refuge in the Fatima College and Church then fled from Sorikalmunai to the neighbouring villages, Paddirippu and Kalmunai after males were taken and the women raped around 18th September. Peterpillai's 2 other sons, Francis and Alphonses, had to flee through the Chavalakaddai lagoon with other youngsters. The story is that these 2 boys were caught by the crocodiles and were killed. Another boy who escaped came and related this story.

3. **Joyce** is a young girl who was working in some rehabilitation organization. Joyce has 4 other younger to her in the family. Her brother, Jeyaratnam (19) and uncles, Rasadurai Mariyadas and Rasadurai Singarasa were 3 among those who were taken. People have fled that place within a week to the neighbouring villages out of fear.

### **7.8. Teacher to the Tigers:**

Mr. Pathmanathan Thambirajah aged 28 years was a clever student from Thambiluvil. He completed his GSC at the University of Batticaloa and could not continue his studies due to his financial difficulties.

He had been working as a labourer as well as a teacher giving tuition in chemistry. Later he married a girl from Thirukkivil to whom he gave tuition and settled there. Her people didn't like this much and it depressed him a lot.

En March this year the Tigers wanted him to give classes to their boys who were at Kanchikuddichiara and Kokkedichoalai. He was given Rs. 5,000 in advance. He accepted it because he had little say on these matters. Some say his financial difficulties also made him to agree. For a month or two he gave and taught chemistry to those in the jungle. There were two others who used to give tuition in other subjects. Then came the war and everything got disrupted.

The STF moved into Thirukkivil on 18th June There were two EPRLF informants who were helping the STF to identify some of the villagers. When Pathmanathan was taken and identified the STF was told that he conducted classes to the Tigers. Probably they misunderstood this and thought this was military training. He was killed. This happened in early July.

### **7.9. Yogeswary (4th August):**

Yogeswary Perinparasa (26 years) is a native of Batticaloa. She has two children with ages 10 and 8. Her husband is a driver as well as a labourer. The family came to Thirukkivil in 1987 and they have been staying here since then.

On 4th August the whole family was taken away blindfolded and hands tied by "Baabu", a former member of the EPRLF and the masked informant in that area. They were taken through a compound and the wife managed to run away. The husband tried to help but in the process Baabu caught Perinparasa and left others.

After 3 days Perinparasa's headless body was washed ashore near Konrakallappu near Thirukkivil. Coconut estate superintendent of Koarakallappu fortunately knew Perinparasa, took the body, and helped Yogeswary to bury the body.

Perinparasa was a driver as well as a labourer. He used to work at the superintendent's estate. Yogeswary is at Thirukkivil without any means for a living.

A Refugee at Thirukkovil (20th September): Selvarajah Kannapathipillai from Akkaraipattu in his fifties is an attendant working at Kanthanai was at Akkaraipattu when the troubles broke out. Because of the atrocities done by the army and the home guards, people were scared to stay at Akkaraipattu. By late August the people came to Thirukkovil and Thambiluvil. Selvarajah couldn't get back to work and was at Thirukkovil as a refugee. He has been going and signing at the AGA's office which is close to the STF camp. Selvarajah knew the STF commander when he was working at Augoda in 1985. So he has been helping the STF occasionally to buy some things they needed.

On 20th September while he was at the refugee camp he was shot by an LTTE boy. He escaped with only the bullet stuck in his forearm. He managed to go to Kandy and was treated at the Kandy Hospital. Now he is back with his people at the refugee camp at Thirukk.vil.

### **7.10. Vinayagapuram:**

Arulanathan Croose, a young boy in his early 20's is from Sorikalmunai and is the youngest in the family of 6 children. He left got married to someone at Vinayagapuram and settled at Thangavelanthapuram which is 2 miles from Vinayagapuram. He has a child but his wife is down with some mental problem since the child's birth. Arulanathan's main livelihood is wood cutting and selling.

Last year on the commemoration day of Kuddimany and Thangathurai, Arulanathan and a friend of his must have come quite late from the jungles in their bullock carts. They did not realize that the soldiers of the IPKF were hiding by the roadside. The soldiers caught up Arulanathan, tied his hands and hit him so that one of his teeth came out. He pleaded with them that he doesn't have anything to do with the LTTE. But they took him to their camp and the following day the parents and sisters ran to the IPKF camp and cried that Arulanathan was innocent. Eventually he was released.

Since the break of the June 1990 war and Thangavelanthapuram being the place where police personnel were taken done away with, he had immense fears about being there. But people were staying at Vinayagapuram because it was still a safer area when compared to several other Tamil areas.

In mid—September the Tamil areas including Vinayagapuram were rounded up by the Thirukkovil STF. On the 20th when Vinayagapuram was rounded up, Arulanathan just ran away into the jungles with 2 or 3 measures of rice, coconuts and salt. He used to say that his experience with the IPKF taught him the lesson not to get caught and beaten. Many believe that one beaten by the forces couldn't live long or would not have the money to attend to medical treatment. Arulanathan prefers to get shot by the soldiers and die rather than getting beaten as well as to see their parents struggling to release him. He came back briefly after 5 days when the food was over. He is hanging on in the jungle because the search operation is still going on.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Observations and Comments on Report No.5**

#### **3.2 Development amidst the politics of Destruction, p.27:**

A reader has commented that the reference to the IUSF can be misleading and would sound insensitive to those who faced the terror and threats of the IUSF. The reader further adds: "Whoever killed Daya Pathirana, the anti-racist stand of the ISU posed a serious threat to the JVP's bid to take over the student unions. The

JVP proved later that it did not shrink from murder.

“The IUSF was not elected student body, but an activist body. Of course,” it articulated slogans by which it attracted able and well-intentioned young men from rural areas to campaign for it. But it was a body controlled by JVP elements, and their capacity for terror determined its whole direction. The IUSF should also shoulder moral responsibility for those students it used and who were later killed.

“Whether the IUSF was positively responsible for the devolutionary package in Mrs. Bandaranaike’s presidential election manifesto is questionable. The forum was convened by Kumar Ponnampalam, and it would have been out of place for anyone to oppose devolution in that forum. The real test is whether positions regarding devolution or about labour of Indian origin have been internalised into the life and feeling of the movement. For example, the concept of a Tamil speaking nation has been long held in Tamil politics. But the efforts to feel for such an entity and understand the Muslims have been superficial. When it came to the crunch, even massacres of Muslims have been widely condoned. There was a time when Tamil militant groups addressed leaflets to ‘Our Sinhalese brothers’ or telling soldiers that they are our brothers and there is no cause for them to fight Tamil groups. But we know how shallow these were and how easy it became to condone attacks on Sinhalese. Such slogans are purely tactical and had no life.

“There have been a number of internal documents of the JVP which reveal their narrow nationalism. Let us take one concrete instance of how seriously the IUSF felt for the Tamil problem. In recent times it had closed universities in the South using terror, mainly appealing to chauvinistic feeling, demanding that the IPKF should be withdrawn. Some of the incidents were very ugly. While the Tamils too had problems with the IPKF its arrival was legitimised by the gross mishandling of the Tamil issue. If there was serious concern about the Tamils, a clear alternative to ensure the security of Tamils should have been spelt out. This was not the case.”

**8. Jaffna Report:** There was reference to the aerial bombing in Jaffna of 4th August around the Jaffna Fort, evidently to prevent LTTE reinforcements from joining the attack to capture the Fort. Bishop Deogupillai of Jaffna did not leave his residence as stated there. Others had left, but the Bishop insisted on staying on.