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Political Killings and Sri Lanka's Stalled Peace

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1. Introduction

Once again a wave of political killings in northern and eastern Sri Lanka is threatening the security of civilians; the violence also threatens their fragile psychological recovery from the

devastating tsunami disaster. Both the LTTE and its rival Karuna faction have carried out violent attacks, but to dismiss these killings lightly as tit-for-tat would be utterly misleading as their forces are far from equivalent. The violence today is occurring at a time when some within the international community, eager to get on with the pressing needs of reconstruction, appear ready to confer quasi-statehood on the LTTE's violently maintained fiefdom.

To encourage this trend the LTTE has sought to sustain its perceived monopoly on power. To do so it has had to downplay the importance of challenges to its authority, while simultaneously eradicating dissenters. This has proved increasingly difficult to carry off gracefully with post-tsunami attention to Sri Lanka at an all time high. To manage the feat it resorted to an old tactic. It accused the Government of using unnamed "paramilitary" forces to carry out killings and suggested that these groups were responsible for the carnage. This had the added benefit of placing all the LTTE's opponents under suspicion, decreasing sympathy for victims of violence and increasing pressure on the Government, with which it was being urged to resume negotiations. Disturbingly, although the LTTE has failed to provide evidence to back up its allegations, leading sections of the international community accept this explanation.

The charge has also been taken up by government opponents, who are intent on gaining political mileage from the violence, regardless of the consequences to the people of the East or the peace process.

In March 2005, a weekend newspaper close to the UNP publicised as a scoop the open secret that Karuna's men lived in companies along the border of the Eastern Province. In response the National Peace Council called upon the Government *'to disprove the allegations regarding its support for the Karuna group immediately and ensure that no such camps are permitted to exist in the territory it controls'*. The NPC pointed out that the *'Cease Fire Agreement between the GoSL and the LTTE in its clause 1.8 prohibits armed paramilitaries in the NorthEast'*, and also that Karuna's group has child soldiers. It is of course appropriate to insist that the government abide by its obligations and to scrutinise the human rights records of all parties, but such questions do not exist in a historical or political vacuum. It has hardly been lost on the people why the UNP, among the several political actors with something to gain from a return to the status quo, would want LTTE control to be restored in the East, and why the peace lobbies and the interests backing it are suddenly concerned about Karuna. The presidential election is due at the end of 2006 at the latest and will likely be decided by a small margin. Intimidation of voters and candidates, murders and ballot stuffing by the LTTE has become accepted as the norm in the North-East (see Bulletin No.36); and the LTTE has long seen the UNP as being the more amenable to its political agenda.

When the Karuna split occurred in March 2004, we argued that it needed an honest approach that would give the people of the East greater justice, ensure accountability and end the inhumanity of child conscription in that region. But the strategy of appeasement of the LTTE (Vanni) introduced by Norway and embraced successively by the United National Front government and the United Peoples Freedom Alliance demanded aloofness from Karuna's uprising, setting the scene for the Vanni faction to crush the rebellion. Instead of creating conditions for a more open atmosphere, where everyone could articulate themselves politically on an equal footing, would-be peacemakers simply helped restore the LTTE Vanni faction's arbitrary rule. Scores of child soldiers under Karuna were killed and leaders who surrendered were executed, some after prolonged torture. Children released by Karuna were re-conscripted into the Vanni's army – a process that continues. Karuna and his followers

were ostracised, their existence and problems denied. Anyone alleged to be a sympathiser could be killed with impunity. The people's interests were ignored and their fate pegged to the ulterior motives of others. Once that wrong became accepted wisdom, everything that followed was wrong and murky.

This report contains details of a number of incidents that are part of a continuing pattern of LTTE violence. We will attempt here to provide a context for the violence that explains why international policies that seek simply to draw the LTTE into the fold will not work. It should be stressed that the immediate necessity is to stop the killings. This requires coordinated action between the Government of Sri Lanka and all international and domestic forces capable of investigating the violence and bringing perpetrators to justice. A commission should be appointed to probe all killings under the CFA -- not only the deaths of high level LTTE personnel. This Commission should be one with credibility, having international members of standing who understand the byways of Sri Lankan politics.

In attempting to address the current situation, some important features need to be kept in mind:

- • The abduction, killing and torture of opponents and even inadvertent dissidents has become part of the established order since the LTTE asserted totalitarian control in 1986. This behavior intensified during the ceasefires of 1987 and notoriously in 1990 when people were off-guard thinking that peace had returned. These victims did not pose an armed challenge to the LTTE.
- • The LTTE's violence could be viewed as a paranoid reaction to the widespread latent anger against its record of murder and oppression, but the main reason for its persistent killing is that it works. The people have been cowed. As for the Southern polity, it helps distract attention from their own abysmal record in the North-East and makes them look better, if not good. Most disquietingly, the international community has come to accept it as a normal part of peacemaking where the LTTE is concerned. The direction of the internationally backed peace process has been to entice the LTTE with the possibility of *de jure* totalitarian control, while helping them to establish it *de facto*.
- • The LTTE's killing, torture and abduction of persons was going on with growing intensity even during the first two years of the CFA when there was no prospect of an armed challenge to the LTTE and everyone was looking forward to some settled order.
- • The LTTE has sought the systematic elimination all real and potential challenges to its self-proclaimed role as "sole representative." Many of its victims posed little obvious threat, but the LTTE's leadership appears intent on preventing future representation from emerging by cutting out anyone with even remote links to its critics. A large proportion of the rural folk, including nearly everyone in the rural East, where the LTTE was a latecomer, suffered a near relative killed by the LTTE. The poorer folk live in terror of their children being abducted. Muslims and Sinhalese have been killed, displaced and terrorised. What the LTTE has not understood is that its own repression is what is fuelling the growing opposition, opposition it is increasingly unable to contain.
- • The truth behind the actions of people the LTTE has killed as 'traitors' is much more parochial than the LTTE would admit. People wanting to lead normal lives and caught between the LTTE's violent disruptiveness, economic hardship and the pressures and

demands of other armed actors have often been driven to what the LTTE would label 'treachery'. Calling someone a "military informant," is not terribly instructive. We must ask not only what organisations the victims had associated with, but why, in what capacity, how long ago, and under what circumstances.

- As with LTTE repression, throughout the conflict resistance too remained endemic. As to when and where it would take an organised form remained a matter of conjecture. The violent and derisive manner in which the LTTE was treating the Muslims during the ceasefire led to upsurges in Muttur, Valaichenai and Kinniya. Muslims in the Amparai District too were becoming restive. Whatever Batticaloa-Amparai commander Karuna's personal reasons, his rebellion had a social basis, as recounted in his statements and implicit confessions.
- Organisationally Karuna is no match for the LTTE. With regard to intelligence, the LTTE is more than a match for the Sri Lankan State. The LTTE has put enormous resources under its chief of international intelligence and scores of trained killers to pacify the East. It is rather like President Jayewardene sending a brigade commanded by Tissa Weeraratne and a coterie of ambitious officers to pacify Jaffna in 1979, when the active militants were a mere handful. In both instances the underlying problem was political. Both were exacerbated by violent repression.

2. The False Dichotomy between Justice and Peace

An imaginative peace process that lays the foundation for pluralism, justice and democracy must challenge narrow the nationalisms that began and sustain the Sri Lankan conflict. Instead the present peace process has inflamed nationalism on all sides by recognising the LTTE's totalitarian claim to sole representation and turning a blind eye to persistent criminality against its own people contrary to the spirit of the CFA.

The LTTE has had extraordinary success manipulating the international community by encouraging a false dichotomy between "justice" and peace. The international community, desperate to keep the LTTE engaged in the peace process, has embraced a distorted view of peace and an inflated threat of large-scale war breaking out. This has allowed the LTTE considerable licence for the violation of human rights and democratic principles.

We call the view distorted because despite scores of brutal political assassinations and persistent child conscription what we have in Sri Lanka is still considered a satisfactory 'peace'. By using the ceasefire as bait, the LTTE has manoeuvred Norway and prominent international NGOs into acting effectively as its diplomatic corps, covering up crimes and laundering its image. At the same time there has been very little effort to leverage the international community's considerable influence to explore the LTTE's own dependence on the ceasefire and take advantage of that dependence to promote human rights.

The continued donor emphasis on condemning Sinhalese nationalism – whose extremism is vocal but non-violent at present, while condoning Tamil nationalism, invites disaster. On 14th December 2004 the Japanese embassy issued a statement on behalf of the donor co-chairs (Japan, EU & USA) expressing "*deep concern about the ongoing JVP-led actions against the peace process in Sri Lanka - and the government of Norway's efforts as facilitator of that process*". This condemnation of the JVP's extremist sentiments and its skepticisms regarding

the peace process travels alongside tacit exoneration of the LTTE's extremist violence and disruption of the peace process. For instance, while the donor community pressured President Kumaratunge to bring the JVP to heel, they did not show much resolve in bringing the LTTE to heel after it walked out of peace talks in April 2003. If Sinhalese nationalists are marginalised while the LTTE is rewarded and feted in European capitals, it sets up a destructive dynamic that has already provoked a Sinhalese backlash against the peace process, and is likely to further fan the flames of Sinhalese extremism

3. The Twisted Corporate Reality in the North-East – A Glimpse of Life under the ISGA

Seldom has a peace process pursued with so much international backing yielded such grotesquely unreal results. Most poignant today is the situation faced by people in the East, who after two decades of violence and neglect were hit by the tsunami. They are now paralysed by an ongoing spate of killings as well, mainly by the LTTE (Vanni faction). The details provided in Appendix I, which we have mostly checked with care but would inevitably be deficient in minor aspects, give us the picture of a full-blown counter-insurgency campaign by the LTTE in the name of peace. It is reminiscent of some of the worst instances of counter-insurgency by the Sri Lankan forces from the 1980s. One recalls in particular the STF's killing of about 80 employees of the prawn factory in Kokkadichchola in January 1987 after lining them up with their identity cards, and the disappearance in 1990 of hundreds taken from refugee camps. They were the wrong people (Eastern Tamils), in the wrong place, at the wrong time; suspected, with good reason, of the wrong sympathies.

4. The LTTE's counterinsurgency in Batticaloa and Environs

Mylvaganam Jeyaganesh (23) was shot dead in the night by the LTTE men near his wife's home in Kaluthavalai (15 Mar.05). A native of Chenkalady, he moved to Kaluthavalai because the LTTE called at his place regularly and harassed those at home asking about him. Jeyaganesh had no connection with any other group, except that his elder brother Sasi had belonged to the EPRLF very briefly. Jeyaganesh also had a friend Segar in the TELO, who left and is now working in the Middle East. This is an example of the logic of counter-insurgency at work: *Someone from this environment who is not demonstrably with us, had best be dealt with as one who is against us.*

Most of those being targeted or killed carry no weapons at any time, and have no apparent connection with Karuna, the leader of the LTTE rebel faction, except possible sympathy; some family, regional or legitimate economic contact; or through sheer accident of history and situation. An important group of persons being killed are ex-militants from groups opposed to the LTTE, some of whom for self-protection later worked with the Army, former LTTE members, and LTTE deserters who surrendered to the Army. These people in general became defunct in any armed capacity and returned to civilian life. Indeed, the LTTE propaganda machine frequently dubs the dead 'paramilitaries' and the rest of the media repeat it indifferently, thus again muddling the true nature of the killings. Police versions, sometimes more than one, are often colourful and misleading.

Local observers place the steep rise in killings by the LTTE Vanni faction as a move by them to undercut Karuna's support after the killing of Kausalyan. An undercurrent of support for Karuna is attributed to his role in paralysing Vanni domination, which cuts across various group divisions and is a widely shared feeling in Batticaloa-Amparai. The facts on the ground are that the LTTE has hardly been able to run its political offices in the government-controlled

area (the Batticaloa office was recently bombed). Its ability to conscript and extort have been greatly diminished, also threatening its clout at negotiations. The killing is therefore born of desperation and in many ways blind.

The killings have recently become concentrated in the Welikanda area of Polonnaruwa District, just outside Karuna's native area of Valaichenai-Kiran. The LTTE's killing machine is under Newton, chief of international intelligence, and the local operational head is Balraj, who is based nearby in Vaharai. Both are Northerners, and thus likely to be more suspicious of Tamils in the East and inviting a corresponding local reaction.

The developments mark another stage in the process of the LTTE rendering the North-Eastern Tamil Homeland the one place Tamils least want to live in. Communal relations with Sinhalese deteriorated in 1956, and from that time the border areas of the East were generally considered dangerous for Tamils. But older ties survived. Necessity aided by an easing of tensions in the latter 1990s helped to revive them. Welikanda had been for example an area of bitter conflict over Sinhalese land colonisation, and the Tamil communities there hung on tenuously during the insurgency when suspicion and reprisal massacres by the Sri Lankan forces were their lot. (See Report No.11 of 1993.)

A change was evident when the LTTE began large scale forced child conscription in 2001. Wealthier Tamils sent their children to Colombo and Kandy. The poor sent their children to largely Sinhalese areas along the border of the Eastern Province. Many more people in Batticaloa felt threatened when the Vanni Forces reoccupied Batticaloa-Amparai after the Karuna split (April 2004) and the killings intensified. This occasioned some displacement to Welikanda. Welikanda today is a hotbed of killings by the Vanni faction, making the older, impoverished local Tamil communities, who barely survived the Government's counterinsurgency operations, the targets of another vicious one – this time by the Tamils' self-proclaimed sole representatives.

The situation has become almost surreal. Contributing to the state of unreality is the ongoing Presidential Commission of Inquiry into killings of members of the LTTE (Vanni faction), whose mandate excludes the bulk of the killings – killings by the Vanni faction of mainly unarmed persons trying to lead normal lives. Meanwhile LTTE leaders are privileged with regular rides on government Air Force helicopters, while blasting their opponents as 'paramilitaries' (mercenaries, in this case of the Government) and instigating mob attacks on the Army in Jaffna. Officially, Karuna does not exist for them. But even the most hardened LTTE apologists are beginning to feel uncomfortable.

The editor of a pro- LTTE website and native of the East reported the shooting (not fatal) of a bar owner in Batticaloa, that he '*appears to be a victim of the current "shadow war" that has claimed many lives in the troubled district*'. Whom is this 'war' (which the LTTE would never acknowledge) against? Persons like the bar owner with perhaps accidental contacts he never bargained for or extortion fees he failed to pay, former militants who visited their families that had already suffered grievously from the tsunami, labourers in a paddy field not answerable for the cultivator's connections, one whose brother was in a militant group a long time ago, and the list meanders on ridiculously.

5. Political Vacuum and the role of the JVP

The tsunami brought home to the keener observers some startling effects of the political vacuum the people of the North-East have lived through for a generation. In particular the

quite widespread sympathy the JVP earned for its tsunami relief in the East, especially in some poorer Muslim and Tamil areas, where JVP activity had previously been greeted with suspicion. JVP cadres came in sizeable numbers and put their hands into menial work, such as collecting and cleaning dead bodies for a decent interment. It was different from the top down relief efforts by most NGOs that people had seen over the years of conflict, and also by the LTTE.

The same Tamil journalist, who was struck by the JVP's inroads, wrote in the *Virakesari* (13 Mar.05), "*Here is the lesson we must learn. It is not enough for Tamil Nationalism merely to mobilise behind the cause of Sinhalese hegemonism alone. Only when it upholds all facets of liberation can it build up a committed base among the people.*" This is a remarkable shift from Prabhakaran to his victims on the Left, underlining the political fragility of a force that behind the façade of Nationalism has taken and taken from the people and given them only misery in return.

Tamil fascism destroyed political activism with a social conscience and the spontaneous mobilisation of the people. These were last massively in evidence at the University of Jaffna in 1986 to protest against the disappearance of the student Arunagirinathan Vijitharan from Batticaloa. What remained was driven underground by LTTE violence. After the tsunami, it fell to the JVP to bring that home to those who had chosen to be blind.

A JVP member in his twenties sent to do relief work in the east commented to his superiors that it was only now that the young were making amends for harm inflicted by their elders twenty five years ago. Of course the JVP cannot begin to be the voice of the Tamil people (less so still the UNP or the SLFP) as long as it ignores the realities of a history of violent ethnic oppression by a state committed to the ideology of Sinhalese supremacy. The record of abuse on all sides is grave and demands a full accounting. To ignore Tamil sensitivities resulting from this legacy and simply talk about people living happily together as equals, is to perpetuate the legacy of Sinhalese supremacy. This blindness led the JVP in early March to the aborted attempt at building permanent houses on crown land near McHeyzer Stadium, Trincomalee, for tsunami affected poor Sinhalese who dwelt in temporary shanties near the market. Of course they needed to be found homes, but doing so unilaterally in an area where the Tamils have faced systematic murder, destruction of homes and deliberate, violent displacement by the State, was thoughtless and misguided.

Whether we speak of Sinhalese nationalism, Tamil militancy, or state-sponsored oppression, Sri Lanka's violent past and present are impeding its future as a peaceful, democratic society. For the LTTE, it is ironic that the results of their counterinsurgency in Batticaloa are very unlikely to be different from President Jayewardene's in Jaffna. At first Karuna's men were deemed a nonentity on the borders of Batticaloa. But when the LTTE kills scores all over the District as his supporters, it creates a very different impression about Karuna's strength and support, even when people are distrustful of his terrible past.

6. Jaffna: The Goons Takeover and Fears of War

There were many bad things about Jaffna. But it also had its good side, which held out hope for the future. It had a strong reform movement from the 1920s. Hard work and integrity were held in high esteem. Much of that was killed off by the LTTE's repression and its corporate ambitions based on total control. For those who valued the good side of Jaffna, the present cannot but bring tears of helplessness. The LTTE did not do any political work as envisaged by the ceasefire agreement. Instead the CFA permitted a virtual takeover of Jaffna by the

LTTE's intelligence wing. Its network serves a variety of functions: providing information necessary to sustain social and political control, and to identify targets for extortion or recruitment. People can be watched minutely and kept in a state of permanent unease, which discourages independent thinking. The LTTE presence in Jaffna has enabled it to coerce civilian participation in regular agitations aimed at harassing and demoralising Army personnel. This last could one day provoke an Army massacre of civilians who had been forced or inveigled onto the streets, thus creating conditions for renewal of war, or for playing on the subsequent international outcry to wring concessions from the government.

A recent instance was the agitation on 4th March after a schoolgirl died in a traffic accident with an army vehicle. Mobs were mobilised and agent provocateurs called out boys from a neighbouring boys' school. Agitation was also launched at the University. For some curious reason, the SLFP political party office was burnt. Army sentry points were attacked with stones and petrol bombs. The Army opened fire near the University. It is something of a miracle that the day ended with just one old man killed.

The visible leader of the agitation was Gajendran, leader of the International Students' Union, master vote rigger and now MP with the highest preference vote. When the LTTE entered Jaffna to set up 'political offices' in April 2002, Gajendran swore that if the Army did not leave Jaffna, 48 000 troops would "fertilise its soil" of Jaffna. He was seen at large issuing orders, and at the burning of the SLFP office. Others assisting him included Mohan and Suthan from LTTE intelligence. Probing deeper into these agitational tactics elicited some frightening facts.

A typical instance here is just the tip of the iceberg. In Kodikamam there was a brawl between a toddy tapper community and another group. The latter took the matter up with the LTTE. The tappers reminded the LTTE that every time they were ordered to attack the Army, they had complied. Because of this they said the LTTE should allow them leeway and leave them alone. Progressive reform movements of a bygone era offered their solidarity and helped the oppressed castes to reassert their dignity and fight oppression in a manner that won them respect. The LTTE's interest was not in dignity, but in recruits and street gangs.

The LTTE's record of ruin inevitably touched Jaffna's much esteemed and painstakingly built system of education. Jaffna University is virtually controlled by the likes of Gajendran and intelligence cadres sent to the University, frequently from the Vanni by the equestrian method, or simply 'horse riding' in colloquial Tamil. Their interest in studies is such that an equestrian entrant scoring nearly zero at every examination comes as no surprise. In the case of one caught cheating the matter was quickly hushed up by the authorities. In one faculty now, six intelligence cadres are well known, while others are less known. Among their jobs is to control the students and to get the University involved in agitation against the Army when ordered.

We pointed out in Bulletin 37 that the LTTE's plans to provoke a war were far advanced when the tsunami struck last December. We now have further confirmation from local observers. The mobilisation of gangs to agitate and provoke the Army was begun soon after the Leader made his Great Heroes Day speech last November. Jaffna's rowdy elements were summoned to one of their 'political' offices to meet Chenkai Aaliyan, an intelligence dignitary specially sent from the Vanni. His overall aims included, intimidation and murder of opponents and elimination of every shadow of dissent. The gangs summoned according to

persons with access to them included ones with such names as Paasaiyoor Gemini Gang, Five Junction Zaheer Gang, Kalviankadu Ancient Gang and Perumal Kovil Vasi Gang.

With the tsunami the LTTE had to abandon any immediate plans of war, but their virtual loss of Batticaloa-Amparai, and the corresponding loss of prestige, remained a major headache. The LTTE's claim to control Batticaloa-Amparai may be compared with what Jaffna Army commander Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne told a journalist about his control of Jaffna at a time in the early 1980s when the Army regularly went out on operations and made arrests. The Brigadier gesticulated towards the perimeter fence of Palaly base and revealed dramatically that his control ended there. Developments in Jaffna suggest that the LTTE again sees pulling off a major military coup in Jaffna (or less likely in Trincomalee) as the means to recover prestige, reassert control over Batticaloa-Amparai and to suppress growing dissension everywhere.

7. Absolute Corruption of Civil and Public Life

We understand from knowledgeable local sources that the LTTE sent a team led by Major Thomas from its intelligence wing to revamp intelligence in Jaffna. This was weeks after the tsunami. Among the tasks was to gather information about the disposition of the Army and to tighten the intelligence shadow over civil life in Jaffna. Persons have been recruited for monthly salaries, said to range from Rs.6000 to 10 000 a month, from government departments, NGOs, teachers and newspapers to submit regular reports, particularly on hints of dissident activity. Some LTTE men have boasted that according to their assessments the Sri Lankan Army in Jaffna is weak, demoralised, and poorly equipped after the tsunami and that they could take control of Jaffna in a matter of days. Gangs and public agitation are meant to wear down the Army and to provoke a major incident at the expense of the public.

The corruption of public life has placed honest public servants under enormous pressure, when forced to perform irregular services at the behest of the TRO. Most public servants and village headmen have taken the easy way out and have also acquired considerable personal wealth. One example is a public servant with a record of corruption in Jaffna that was proverbial and now tipped for an appointment in a world body. In Batticaloa fears have been voiced for the safety of several honest public servants who resisted the LTTE's pressures. The LTTE may find however that the resentment it has evoked with such tactics may prove too much to be crushed by the terror of its intelligence wing.

More remarkable than armed resistance, is the recent show of non-violent and politically mature resistance to the LTTE by government officers in Batticaloa. A number of these officers and civic-minded persons, despite the personal losses they suffered during the tsunami, worked very hard at providing relief to the survivors. Subsequently the LTTE-TRO moved in with the media behind them and started issuing orders to these officers. On 13th March the TRO tried to frame an officer who resisted its attempts to fraudulently acquire relief supplies. This backfired and precipitated a demonstration by local government and divisional secretariat staff, demanding among other things, an end to unlawful interference in the performance of their duties. The people may be silenced, but their gut feeling about the LTTE's coveted internationally backed ISGA is unmistakable (see Appendix I.5).

8. "Paramilitary Threat": a Smokescreen

To maintain its standing with its new international allies, the LTTE has had to maintain tight control over its perceived monopoly on power. In the case of the Karuna rebellion it meant that the LTTE had to downplay the ability of Karuna to act against it, while simultaneously eradicating Karuna's support base. It was a strategy it had long applied to other adversaries. But there was little chance that violence of its scale would go unnoticed – particularly in the wake of the tsunami, which drew unprecedented international attention to eastern Sri Lanka. How better to deal with this dilemma than by muddying the waters? It did so by accusing the government of backing unnamed paramilitary forces and suggesting that these groups were responsible for the carnage. This had the added benefit of placing all the LTTE's other opponents under suspicion, decreasing sympathy for the victims, and increasing pressure on the government, with which it was being urged to resume negotiations.

With the international community pressing for a resumption of peace talks, the LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingham tried to use the killing of Kausalyan, a senior Eastern leader of the LTTE, former MP Chandra Nehru and three other LTTE cadres in February to reiterate an old demand. On 14th February he told the visiting Norwegian delegation led by Eric Solheim that among the things the Government should do to create a conducive environment is to *'disarm the paramilitary forces functioning with the Army or integrate them into the armed forces and station them outside the North-East'*.

The UN Secretary General's selective and uncharacteristic condemnation of the ambush that killed Kausalyan was evidence that the LTTE's public relations exercise was having an effect. The Secretary General's condemnation of these *'callous killings'* appeared to point a finger at the Government – the other party to the ceasefire. The International Working Group, a consortium of INGOs with programmes related to Sri Lanka, facilitated a statement by international relief organisations calling for an end to the killings. This is discussed at length below. This and reports of responsible persons familiar with Norwegian diplomacy both show evidence that the LTTE's lobby was successfully advancing the "paramilitary" line. The UN Secretary General's bureaucratically generated statement bears the stamp of the same lobby. (Indeed, ironically, a few days later, the same SG recommended sanctions against the LTTE for continuing child conscription.)

An SLMM spokesman meanwhile indicating the Karuna faction's responsibility ruled the killings were not a cease-fire violation.

Interestingly, even as the LTTE blamed the Government indignantly for the killing, its websites suggested that it took seriously the possibility of a mole having informed the Karuna faction of Kausalyan's movements.

9. The Reality

Singling out Kausalyan's killing for international focus as against near silence over more than a 100 politically motivated killings by the LTTE makes pragmatic sense if it restrains the LTTE. But that misreads the institutional nature of the LTTE and its apparatus focused simply on one thing: Killing political opponents as and when opportunity arises. Towards this endeavour ceasefires and solemn pledges mattered nothing. Under the CFA, weapons given to its opponents for their protection were withdrawn. The LTTE killed them and blamed the killings on 'paramilitaries' allied to the Army. Appendix I provides samples of such incidents as well as examples of continuing child conscription relating to the LTTE. These speak of the unchanging plight of the civilian population.

The steep rise in attacks represents the aftermath of the LTTE (the Vanni faction) sending an intelligence team under Newton, Chief of International Intelligence, backed by scores of killers from the Vanni to clean up Batticaloa of all dissident activity. Among those identified as leading the elimination of dissidents are Keerthi, Illanko, Ramesh and Bhanu.

As we pointed out in the introduction the LTTE's killings pre-date Karuna's rebellion, and much of the ongoing violence (the cases of torture and killing in the North for example) is independent of it. The sample of incidents in the Appendix confirms this, and indeed gives the LTTE little credit for being representatives of the people. The LTTE as indicated by Balasingam's statement, has been trying to use Norway and the international community to push the line that all their opponents are paramilitaries (or 'traitors' in Tamil), so as to justify a general attack on all opposition. Again the LTTE's victims in Batticaloa had in general either nothing to do with Karuna or are not armed supporters of Karuna. The mischief is underlined by the fact that key leaders of the opposition from the EPRLF (Padmanabha) (EPRLF(V)) and EPDP had been killed by the LTTE under the CFA well before the Karuna split.

What kind of a ceasefire or peace process is it that allows the LTTE to carryout a full-blown counter-insurgency with its mounting toll of political killings?

Unfortunately the LTTE's utter lack of accountability, its inability make a trade-off between tolerance and acceptability and its dubious support, where people must lie and dissimulate to live, have been virtually ignored by the international community. In fact the LTTE is increasingly dependent on political and financial backing from the international community to suppress the people.

10. Letting the LTTE off the Hook

We have a very influential example in the statement of November 2004 by International Humanitarian NGOs, which was facilitated by the IWG, urging the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to end killings. After mentioning that several of the groups targeted were opposed to or regarded an obstacle by the LTTE, it records that the LTTE denied any role in the killings. With some mild reminders of its obligations, the INGOs commend the LTTE for its expressions of concern. Thereafter any blame on the LTTE is reduced to the small print. The blame is thoroughly confused by pointing to mysterious parties (note for instance, the SLMM's famous references to a 'third party' to skirt unpleasant facts) as the "*leadership of paramilitary organizations including those loyal to Karuna*". They list some recent killings without saying who was responsible, even in instances like the Valvettithurai incident where there was little doubt about the perpetrators on the part of the SLMM or other observers. Finally, in distracting attention away from the LTTE even further the statement conveys the impression that there are several parties including 'paramilitaries' and the Government that are responsible for killings - this in a context where human rights groups clearly recognise that since 2002, more than 90 % of the killings of non combatants in the East and 100% in the North were by the LTTE. In fact, the remainder of killings in the East that are not attributed to the LTTE Vanni faction, can be attributed to the breakaway LTTE Batticaloa faction. Designating one faction as LTTE and the other a 'paramilitary' is another distortion of reality.

In fact, the rather vague use of the term paramilitary to describe the victims of the LTTE is both mischievous and dangerous. This is the term that the LTTE has used to legitimise its killing of political opponents – members of the EPDP, EPRLF and other former militant groups that have now joined the political mainstream, field electoral candidates, and work as democratic political activists in civil society. LTTE propaganda organs such as the *TamilNet* have been using terms such as paramilitary agents to twist facts and justify the killing of scores of such activists, many of whom like Subathiran, Alahathurai and Balanadaraja Iyer were irreplaceable assets to democracy in the North-East. Thus the use of the term ‘paramilitary’ by the NGO community is to entrench the LTTE’s own campaign to legitimise the assassination of political opponents, and is particularly unworthy of organisations that represent Sri Lanka to international decision makers.

In sum, the statement by the international humanitarian NGOs did very little to restrain the LTTE and protest against human rights abuses; rather its overall effect did more to legitimise the status quo. This statement and others like it, may be defended as being tactically calculated to preserve the ceasefire and trap the LTTE into not returning to war. Yet, it does seem that it is the LTTE that has been more successful in using the ceasefire as a trap to outsmart the international community and hold it hostage to an immoral ‘peace’. In fact, to refer to the current status quo as ‘peace’ is itself to distort the term.

11. The Valvettithurai Killings

The Valvettithurai incident referred to above is one where the intended victim survived and two bystanders were killed. That killing in the Leader’s birth-place unmasks myths about the LTTE leader’s standing in his birth place. In stark contrast to reality the LTTE maintains that ‘paramilitaries’ or government forces have carried out all killings under the CFA in ‘government-controlled’ areas. Even while public knowledge is to the contrary, LTTE propaganda and the absence of investigation have helped the international community to turn a blind eye (e.g. IWG statement above).

The circumstances of the Valvettithurai incident, local public agitation, the survival of the intended victim and the fact that he had complained to the SLMM several times, created a problem of plausible deniability to outsiders. As always in such circumstances (as recently in Jaffna), the LTTE resorts to agitation and provocation of the armed forces hoping for the worst. The war hysteria was played up until aborted by last December’s Tsunami.

Under the command of Brigadier Larry Wijeratne (the only military officer to be targeted by a suicide bomber), the people of Valvettithurai and the Army established a relatively easy relationship. Disregarding the LTTE’s repeated warnings, the people played in the Sithampara College grounds near Athikovil and the Army camp. In so doing they played, socialised with the Army, and received refreshments from them.

In Valvettithurai in particular, where the LTTE had built up a myth of universal popular support, it was also trapped in the myth. To take the kind of brutal measures it would have taken without any hesitation in the East would have shattered the myth. Dealing with political dissent in VVT was undertaken circumspectly. The ageing and sickly local TELO senior Sivajilingam never forgot that when the LTTE leader ordered the massacre of TELO members in 1986, Prabhakaran’s minions came looking for him in the same house where he had sheltered the fugitive Prabhakaran from the Police 5 years earlier. Sivajilingam allowed the LTTE to co-opt him for the reward of a parliamentary sojourn and pension.

November 2004: But as Prabhakaran's 50th birthday on 26th November 2004 drew near, things became unbearable. The LTTE's conflicts with the local populace are elaborated in the accompanying feature (see Appendix III). In the run up to the great day, two LTTEers, Mohan and Yarl (Jaffna) Eelavan called on Ponniah Deivendran (32), a family man from Athikovilady. They wanted him to go to the Vanni for an inquiry. Deivendran declined, offering instead to talk to them in Jaffna. The LTTE men left after warning him.

We have verified independently that Deivendran had been to the SLMM three times seeking protection, telling them that he was in danger. The LTTE accuse him of having contact with the EPDP. On the evening of 19th November, while watching a game of football in Sithampara grounds, Deivendran noticed two LTTE men known in the area as Poopalan and Vennilavan approaching him on a red motor cycle and moved to take cover. The LTTE men fired indiscriminately killing two bystanders Sathasivam Kumaran and Rajendran Sureshkumar, both 21, and injuring Deivendran.

Deivendran and the dead lads were taken to Oorani Hospital nearby, which was surrounded by the Army and Police. Colonel Ratnayake from the Pt. Pedro Brigade and the officer in charge of Valvettithurai Police went to the hospital and the next day decided to remove Deivendran to Palaly Base. Although the truth was well-known locally, the LTTE in the run up to the Leader's birthday was faced with the blame for murdering two innocent youth in his birthplace, the very kind of thing for which youths took up arms against the Sri Lankan Army. The LTTE's attempted cover up exposes the role of TNA MPs and so-called 'public organisations'.

It might at this juncture be useful to examine a few press accounts of the incident, which taken in conjunction with the independent testimony of witnesses and observers provide an interesting juxtaposition. *Nitharsanam*, the website widely credited to Pottu Amman's intelligence wing, was the first to report the same day (19th Nov.) that two persons were killed and one injured in indiscriminate firing by two members of the Army's Special Forces who came at speed wearing helmet and jacket, and crucially, *Nitharsanam* claimed that eyewitnesses had seen the gunmen coming out of Valvettithurai army camp. The injured person Deivendran, was named, but no connection was made to the EPDP. *TamilNet* did not commit itself beyond saying that 'relatives' blamed the Army, who denied it. While publishing the statement by Jaffna political wing leader Illamparathy (Aanjaneyar), *TamilNet* was careful to keep a distance. Dated the following day (20th), Illamparathy did not repeat *Nitharsanam*'s claim of witnesses seeing the gunmen emerge from the army camp. His was another rehash of the standard LTTE line: "*How could anyone else have carried out this 'premeditated' killing within 100 metres of the army camp?*" He too did not connect the injured Deivendran with the EPDP. The target audience was clearly the Tamil literate.

As part of the cover up, the LTTE fomented protests over Jaffna against the Army, blocking roads with burning tyres and barricades. Violence was used to stop transport. People trying to get about urgent tasks were intimidated and threatened by youths of around 18-20 years. During the afternoon of the 20th the Army removed Deivendran to Palaly. His account, which was broadcast over the radio, gave the people distant from Valvettithurai and who relied on the Tamil media, a more credible perspective. It was from this point that LTTE propaganda did an about turn on Deivendran and moves were afoot to discredit him.

The Jaffna daily *Uthayan* of 23rd November published a statement by a 'Valvettithurai All People's Front' claiming that Deivendran, hitherto reported as a victim by the LTTE media, was part of a dark EPDP conspiracy to spoil the Leader's 50th birthday. He plotted the murder of 'our sons', it charged, and went away with the Army feigning injury to work this mischief of falsely blaming the LTTE. By an odd coincidence the same issue of the *Uthayan* carried a complaint to Police by the medical officer at Valettithurai (Oorani) Hospital, ostensibly to protest that the concentration of security forces had paralysed the hospital and scared the patients. In contrast to the *All People's Front*, the doctor, K. Mylerumperumal, while affirming that Deivendran was indeed admitted as a *bona fide* patient on the 19th and treated for injuries, protested that the Army removed him about 3.30 PM on the 20th contrary to procedure, without consultation and without having the patient discharged.

TNA MPs were obliged to wave fists and say something appropriately bombastic. Some were almost humorous in their ambiguity. Suresh Premachandran MP said: "*The fact that such atrocities are being staged in public by broad daylight [on the eve of the Leader's birthday] means that there is a well-planned conspiracy behind them. The people must unite to extinguish at the very root these sinister forces goading us towards war by killing innocent youth*". Apparently Sivajilingam, the MP from Valvettithurai, said little. The SLMM knew a great deal, but was silent.

As to who was goading the people towards war, *TamilNet* reported on 26th November, the Leader's birthday, that two soldiers from the Nunavil camp, near Chavakacheri, had been attacked with knives, one of whom was rumoured to have succumbed after being rescued and moved to Palaly. *Nitharsanam*, giving more gory details the next day, claimed at the beginning that 'common people' attacked the soldiers from Military Intelligence who went into the village at 7.00 PM pretending to be on duty, but actually to spy. One, it said, had his hands severed and the other received a cut on his head, and were both said to be in a critical condition. The report added indicatively that the soldiers were attacked by 'persons who had followed them', leaving no doubt who they were. Evidently, the weapons used were swords, the same weapon with which the LTTE chopped and killed a father, mother and their 8 months old infant in the same area in January 2004.

The miscarried killing in Valvettithurai had nothing to do with armed opposition to the LTTE. It is rather to do with the ongoing programme to eliminate all those who challenged the suicidal course imposed on the community by the courageous act of standing for election. In fact the LTTE has killed most of the key persons who opposed them politically. However, they are constantly on the look out for more targets. Why is this significance constantly obscured by the international community and the door kept open for the LTTE to kill with impunity? Some of the answers are to be found in Norway's role.

12. Norway, Paramilitaries and the Karuna Affair

We pointed out in Bulletin No.36 how Norway and the SLMM failed to act after Karuna's rebellion to protect the interests of the people of the East or the children in Karuna's ranks. Karuna had in fact wanted the ceasefire agreement with the Government to continue. He had stopped conscription and had strongly indicated his willingness to move towards international norms in return for some recognition and protection.

After a meeting with the LTTE's Vanni faction on 11th March 2004, Norway's Eric Solheim set the cue for anarchy in the East. His highly politicised statement declared that Norway

would not involve itself in an internal matter for the LTTE 'exactly' as they would stay out of discussions between the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The latter he described as an internal matter for the South and the former, of the North-East.

Solheim would have known that Prabhakaran was not having any discussions with Karuna, whom he declared a traitor and was moving to crush him militarily. The SLMM pretended that Karuna had rejected the CFA and washed their hands off the fate of those under him. UNICEF was silent. The abject and treacherous massacre of scores of children under Karuna is now history (Bulletin No. 36).

One must condemn in the strongest terms the Sri Lankan Government's weakness and complicity. One also marvels that a seasoned diplomat could put forth such a perverse interpretation to the CFA as to legitimise Prabhakaran's corruption of international law, assault on civilian welfare and common decency, not to mention his deadly exploitation of children. According to Solheim's logic above, Prabhakaran was simply restoring order in his own state – 'an internal matter for the North-East'.

It did not take many more equivocations to transform Karuna from being party to an internal dispute within the LTTE to one among a bunch of 'paramilitaries'. In March 2004, the Norwegians took a categorical position in Prabhakaran's favour, making the fate of everyone else in the North-East his internal matter. Today Balasingham and other LTTE spokesmen rave about paramilitaries while their agents target all and sundry opponents. The Norwegians stand by silent and impassive. This is not something the Norwegian people are going to be proud of.

At the root of the problem is the fundamental tragedy that the Tamils have no home where they have self-respect, freedom and dignity within. It is understandable for anyone fighting against a superior adversary to seek or accept help (within certain inhibitions). That does not deligitimise a cause, or turn its advocates into paramilitaries. The LTTE was once quite happy to act as President Premadasa's paramilitaries without any inhibitions to hunt down Tamil dissidents and other groups. Some of the latter did the same for their survival when Premadasa and the LTTE fell out. Their's is a social tragedy and any worthwhile peace process must seek to rehabilitate them.

Today, under the ceasefire, people staying at home without arms or protection are being killed mercilessly for such things as trying to be a municipal councillor. It is utterly wrong to insult their memory by pinning on them a paramilitary label. Moreover, it is remarkable that thousands have perished in this way without offering any resistance. That is certainly not a situation that can last forever. Under these circumstances the LTTE would view a sizeable section of the population as Karuna supporters, real or potential opponents -- hence the rationale behind its loose use of the term paramilitary.

Were the Norwegians competent peacemakers, they would have addressed this problem with compassion. But to exacerbate it and allow themselves to be used as pawns in the LTTE's schemes does not improve their reputation. We now examine the subtle workings of this Norwegian approach.

The disease in the country was evident a long time ago in the partisan manner in which the State's violations against Tamil civilians were covered in the Colombo media. Once appeasement of the LTTE became the norm accepted by the Colombo-elite, the LTTE was

able to manipulate the same attitudes of frivolousness and indifference to their advantage. *TamilNet* has been a leading player in this game.

13. TamilNet and Paramilitary Journalism: Let a Thousand Traitors Bloom

Alagiah Kirubeswaran (38) of Batticaloa, who was shot dead by the LTTE on 8th March, was a married man with children. He had been in the PLOTE, and later for a time in a section of the group that worked with the Army. He got out of it before or about the time the ceasefire agreement was signed in February 2002 and wanted to go abroad. Meanwhile he ran a passenger van to support his family. Taking alarm when the LTTE abducted three key EPDP leaders just after the Oslo agreement, in December 2002, he finally went to work in Qatar. His family lived in Thiruchenthoor, Kallady, where the tsunami carried away his daughter and wife's parents. Kirubeswaran felt compelled to return to see his family who were refugees at the Paddy Marketing Board store house, where another refugee Dayanithy had been shot dead on 28th February.

Subramaniam Dayanithy (42) was shot after nightfall just outside the TRO office next to Paddy Marketing Board store in Batticaloa and succumbed to his injuries in hospital. A report in the *Island* said that before he died he identified his killers as the LTTE. Here was again a man who was militant by nature but wanted to live a peaceful life looking after his family. Dayanithy was a pioneer freedom fighter from Batticaloa in the group called the Cobras that stole weapons from the Batticaloa Fort in August 1984. He was arrested and went to prison with fellow Cobras Benedict and Sri Pathmanathan. They were all released following the Indo-Lanka Accord in July 1987. Those who were with him in prison said that he was by nature friendly and always ready to help, but was a fighter who would not take injustice lying down.

Under the North-East Provincial Council (1988-89) Sri Pathmanathan was employed as public relations officer under provincial minister Mano Master. After the Council collapsed when the Indian Army withdrew, Sri Pathmanathan was killed by the LTTE. Dayanithy, a native of Kaluwanchikudy, first joined the TELO and subsequently the Razik group, which was absorbed into the Sri Lankan Army, but left before Razik was killed in 1999. He then went to Colombo, and returned to Thiruchenthoor on the Batticaloa coast, where he worked as a fisherman and raised his family, until he was hit by the tsunami.

The TRO office next to the refugee camp regularly interfered with the refugees by appointing TRO officers from among them to wrest control, telling them where they should resettle and appropriating donations sent to the refugees. Dayanithy who would not put up with nonsense soon got into trouble with the TRO, which in turn would have pried into his past. After Dayanithy was killed his wife, we are told, complained to the SLMM of LTTE threats to the family.

LTTE gunmen shot dead Kirubeswaran early morning on 8th March when he waited for a bus opposite the Batticaloa Police HQ, to take him to Colombo and then to fly to Qatar. It was another totally callous and unwarranted routine action of the LTTE's killing machine.

The *TamilNet* report of 8th March began: "*A paramilitary cadre waiting to board a bus to Colombo in front of police head quarters in Batticaloa town was shot dead by unidentified gunmen around 5.10 AM*". *TamilNet* then went on to report the killing of another 'paramilitary' in the Eravur area.

The Island (9 Mar.) reported the same story under the headline ‘LTTE kill two paramilitaries’: “A paramilitary cadre waiting to board a bus opposite Batticaloa police head quarters had been shot dead by LTTE gun men at 5.10 AM”.

The second is a replica of *TamilNet* except for the switch of ‘LTTE’ for ‘unidentified’. Ironically the editor of *TamilNet* was a leading member of PLOTE, now whitewashing the murder of his former comrades trying to lead ordinary civilian lives.

One sees regular examples of journalists in Colombo having become comfortable with the LTTE–*TamilNet* line, often encouraged by the security forces. Take the case of the young victim Sathahsivam Kamalanathan (26) of Ariyampathy, Batticaloa. He was attached to TELO, which had historically a strong local following. The group dispersed after its local strong man Varathan, who had previously worked closely with the security forces, was killed by the LTTE in early 2003. Kamalanathan then drifted to the EPRLF(V) and EPDP, and became a correspondent for the EPDP-owned journal ‘*Thinamurasu*’. The LTTE abducted him in the afternoon of 7th March and killed him that night near the Manmunai jetty.

TamilNet was quick to report that a military informant was shot dead by unidentified gunmen, adding suggestively that he was living close to the STF camp. The *Daily Mirror* then followed with the killing of ‘a man believed to have been an army informant’. The *Mirror* report quoted the Kattankudy police inspector that the victim was an army informant who escaped an attempt on his life some months ago.

The Sri Lankan security forces seem too ready with this kind of information on their ‘informants’. It is true that cadres in groups opposed to the LTTE either fled or were cornered into working closely with the security forces to protect themselves and were sometimes used for counterinsurgency work. The CFA should have enabled them to go home and live in safety. On the contrary, even political parties opposed to the LTTE have been condemned by the CFA and the ineffectiveness of the SLMM to seek even closer protection from the security forces, although they are redundant as informants (if they ever were informants). It is the duty of the security forces to protect those who seek their protection, and not to label them informants after they fail in their responsibilities.

Sometimes the business can become almost comically anarchic. The Government recently categorically denied LTTE accusations that paramilitary forces continued to function alongside the Army. Meanwhile the state-owned *Daily News* reported on 7th March: “Six civilians were shot dead in tit-for-tat attacks between the LTTE and paramilitary groups in the North-East.” Is it confusion of message or of terminology? Getting Colombo circles, to whom ordinary Tamils were always alien, to embrace the concept of unidentified paramilitaries battling it out in the East was too easy a coup by Norway and the LTTE. Just who was involved, or what was meant by the term hardly mattered.

What is being lost in this misreporting are two important facts. First is the safety of tsunami refugees, leave alone the fair distribution of resources, when the TRO is given a hold on these refugees. The TRO-LTTE has been responsible for the murder of two refugees above in Batticaloa. The TRO office next to the camp identified former militants whose families were victims of the tsunami and kept LTTE intelligence informed.

The second is the canard about paramilitaries. Until the split in the LTTE there were no groups militarily opposing the LTTE. None of the other groups was functioning as a paramilitary outfit (doing irregular military service as a subsidiary of the State) after the ceasefire, which is after February 2002. *TamilNet* regularly refers to former members of the Razik group killed by the LTTE as paramilitaries or army informants. That is incorrect. The Razik group was absorbed into the regular army in the 1990s. They are now in barracks in Batticaloa town and visit home under army escort.

14. Governance in Sri Lanka: From the Arrogant to the Ludicrous

On 1st March in the wake of LTTE accusations against the Government, President Kumaratunge appointed a commission comprising two judges to probe attacks on LTTE personnel. Whichever way one looks at it, it is a belated and intriguing exercise in accountability. To begin with the LTTE's complaint is not new. It has regularly blamed the government forces for all killings of political activists and civilians in the 'government controlled' areas. The number is above 150, nearly all of them opponents of the LTTE. Not only was the Government too cowardly to investigate these, it lent complicity to covering these up. Early in the peace process, the Defence Minister under Prime Minister Wickremasinghe dismissed well-founded reports of child conscription by the LTTE as gossip. Following the assassination of senior EPRLF(V) leader T. Subathiran in June 2003, strong evidence was produced identifying LTTE's Nallur 'political commissar Easwaran as the chief operator in the assassination. The Police did not even question him.

Matters did not improve when President Kumaratunge, after criticising Wickremasinghe's management, took personal control of defence. The same month, on 28th November 2003, the LTTE brutally hacked to death 3 Muslim farmers near Kinniya. One survivor escaped to reveal the facts. Trincomalee's police chief SSP Upali Hewage dismissed the atrocity as a land dispute between Muslims and Tamils.

Most bizarre was the Government's attitude to the suicide assassination attempt on Minister for Hindu Affairs, Mr. Douglas Devananda on 7th July 2004. The suicide attack during a peace process was a clear revelation of the LTTE as an institution. The plot involved a woman who had a long association with the EPDP introducing the bomber to Devananda as a supplicant for a job. The bomber was a former LTTE woman cadre who tried to return to civilian life and became very upset after a marriage was arranged and the bridegroom's party pulled out at the last minute.

Following the failed attempt, President Kumaratunge's untimely spokesman Harim Peiris went public to say in effect that the failed attempt was an internal matter, to say nothing of the five policeman killed when the bomber blew herself up: *"It is the LTTE going after a political opponent", he said. "It is that and absolutely nothing else. It [the LTTE] is resorting to violence to kill an opponent; it is not reverting to hostilities."* The opposition UNP spokesman Ravindra Randeniya found in the suicide blast *"evidence that President Chandrika Kumaratunga should take the peace process seriously"*. In getting this hapless girl to blow herself up the LTTE was evidently resolving a legitimate internal matter or was working harder to find a settlement along democratic federal lines!

As for the UNP, it has continuously played the game of thwarting all attempts at a permanent solution, feeding off chaos and anarchy. While gloating over the fact that the Karuna split had

weakened the LTTE, the UPFA government had meekly allowed the Vanni faction to make a bloody conquest of Batticaloa, doing nothing to protect the people and children. Tamils killing Tamils was good news. For the people of the East it was the worst of all worlds. The new priority for the Government and the security forces was to make a show of being very impartial as regards the two LTTE factions. The Government and the STF chief Nimal Lewke have tried to impress the Vanni faction by repeating umpteen times the incident where the STF shot dead a Karuna man after he killed Vanni faction's Jude in Akkaraipattu. One wonders what the Judges on the commission would make of that.

The Tamil people have complained since 1984 that the STF did not know the law. There was never any suggestion that the Karuna man who shot Jude posed a threat to the STF. The STF's brief was to arrest him and charge him in court, not murdering him to score brownie points with the LTTE.

President Kumaratunge's appointment of a commission to look into attacks on the LTTE is a caricature of accountability against the record of a systematic cover up of attacks on all others. The people of the North-East have since the 1970s demanded accountability from Colombo. Hopes that were raised when Kumaratunge came to power were dashed in 1995 when the LTTE unconscionably restarted the war. When Air Force bombing killed about 120 refugees in the Navaly church precincts on 10th July 1995 and 45 civilians including about 24 school children at a gathering in Nagar Kovil two months later, accountability was rudely denied. The LTTE was not blameless in the two incidents. But what stayed in the people's minds was the Government's arrogance. The same trend continued, such as when the STF in 1996 detained two innocent youths in Kalmunai, murdered them, claimed credit and were rewarded for ostensibly preventing the assassination of visiting ministers.

Arrogance had its price. Today imagination has failed; the institutions of state, the Government and the Opposition have been reduced to the Ludicrous.

What can the new presidential commission do? Find out that one military intelligence official or the other kept links with Karuna contrary to orders that were not seriously meant? The perspective is all wrong. The Government must be accountable first and foremost to the people of the North-East, not to the LTTE. The handling of the Karuna split was scandalous from the very beginning.

15. Some Hard Facts

As an institution the LTTE's existence hinges on celebration of personal sacrifice to the Leader's will and military glory, as means to the imposition of absolute control. The deaths of thousands of young and children has been honoured as martyrdom, and peddled as a stimulant to excite the nationalist ego. Prabhakaran rules largely through fear -- fear of external enemies, real or invented, and more importantly at this point fear of LTTE retribution for disloyalty. This fear is projected by constant demonstrations of violence, violent rhetoric and exhibitions of his power over those below him -- most dramatically, his ability to compel suicides. The LTTE's strategy is to maintain the Tamil population in a state of unrest that prevents dissent. During the peace process itself two Sea Tigers were ordered to commit suicide when the SLMM searched their vessel, and another distraught girl was manipulated into the suicide assassination attempt on the EPDP leader.

Whatever the illusions of peacemakers, the people of this country whose lives are on the line understand this reality. The very nature of the LTTE, which is strung together by fraud and deceit, will cause it to crack and crack again, and with every crack comes renewed violence.

The prime movers of the present peace process expect everyone else to cooperate in their unrealistic mission to keep Humpty Dumpty together. Everyone is asked to embrace the appeasement scheme at the core of their crisis management strategy to ensure that the LTTE remains the LTTE, the sole negotiating partner. In reality everyone will take steps to protect themselves, their institutions and to minimise losses against the next outbreak of war or localised violence, whatever the public posturing imposed on them.

This is why an honest approach to the Karuna question and to dissidents in general, placing the interests of the people and their rights first, would be the most honourable and least damaging. The alternative we are seeing now is murky, shameful, costly to the people, endless and extremely dangerous. What are the practical steps that can be taken?

16. An honest approach to the dilemma

In the name of a peace, we have accepted for three years as virtually legitimate and unavoidable, rampant child conscription, unrestrained and unchecked murder of political opponents, institutionalised terror and one party rule and now a full-blown counter-insurgency in the East. The last in Solheim's logic is an internal problem of the North-East being resolved by the LTTE's chief of international intelligence! While the CFA allowed the LTTE to open political offices in government-controlled areas, it is an open secret that these premises have become dens of armed killer squads and torture chambers as the recent scandal in Vavuniya reveals. The one thing they were not about is democratic politics.

How slavish and unimaginative this approach to peace can be is evident in an argument put forward by some leading peacemakers to place the LTTE in charge of tsunami relief in the North-East because 'they are in control'. Here is a suggestion that control usurped by terror should be rewarded with resources to enhance it. The LTTE's access to tsunami camps in Batticaloa through the TRO cannot be separated from the murder of two breadwinners of tsunami-affected families.

The recent detention in the Vanni of Jeyadevan, the leading LTTEer from London, an unsuspecting dissident, brings into focus the extent of the LTTE's success in commandeering the religious lives of Tamils living overseas, their institutions and the incomes of these. Extending the logic, we may ask governments of countries with large Tamil communities to channel all social services and benefits to them through the LTTE, because 'it controls them'.

There is something clearly wrong in this line of reasoning. The main plank of appeasement is the contention that this grotesque state of affairs is a worthwhile price for avoiding war. Indeed, we were on the verge of war last Christmas Day, hours before the tsunami struck. The temporary reprieve at such terrible cost owed nothing to the ingenuity of peacemakers (see Bull.No.37).

It has been our contention throughout that the situation cannot be rectified or peace restored without placing the people foremost and to insist on the primacy of certain basic values. The people look to the State to ensure this and to start being a responsible state. For too long has

the Sri Lankan State been a thuggish state. Because of it the State has lost the initiative to such an extent that the West and Japan dangle 4.5 billion dollars at us, while their experts experiment their discredited theories as through we were a zoo.

While the President's commitment to federalism is reassuring, it would not be a solution amidst anarchy and without cementing the will of the people to live together, a will that was amply in evidence during the tsunami. We need not search for federalism as if to reinvent the wheel. The hard won 13th Amendment is there to be implemented and reformed. Why it has not been used all these years to devolve power to the North-East and to identify the problems, is one aspect of the perennial disease of lack of timely will and wisdom in the South. Cementing the will of the people to live together means restoring a sense of justice, and accountability for wrongs past and present.

The immediate problem of accountability is to stop the killings. A commission should be appointed, not one to score brownie points with the LTTE, but to probe all killings under the CFA. The Commission should be one with credibility, having international members of standing who understand the byways of Sri Lankan politics. For too long has the international community turned a blind eye to Ceasefire killings not wanting to know who is doing what. Pretending that one cannot know has enabled, for example, the International Working Group to commend the LTTE for its meaningless commitments, and go on pretending that one cannot know. If one is interested enough one can know with fair certainty and time will make matters clearer. (See Appendix II for some examples).

In the absence of an institutional framework to check the killings, we need to form tentative conclusions and make them public. While killings by the Karuna group have brought a new element of uncertainty to the East, they are an outcome of killings that were already going on with impunity. When one has in the name of peace rationalised unarmed politicians, ex-militants, their supporters or journalists being gunned down, and legitimised an undemocratic approach, gun-law becomes the only means, ultimately futile, of assertion and deterrence. This evil must be reversed.

For the ordinary folk there is no difference between the cadres of different groups. They are neighbours and even siblings. Through the appeasement of one party, the peace process has demeaned and rendered sub-human all the rest. These are the very evils the hard fought international conventions and covenants tried to put behind us. It is time to give killers notice that they cannot carry on business as usual behind farcical denials. Political freedom must be guaranteed to all on the same footing. To this end we welcome, although belated, remarks of the EU Commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner in Colombo on 8th March, when she called on the LTTE to:

- renounce violence;
- respect the Ceasefire Agreement of February 2002;
- restate their commitment to the principles stated in Oslo Declaration of December 2002 to find a federal solution within a united Sri Lanka;
- stop recruitment of child soldiers;
- give breathing space in the North and East to political parties and people who have a differing opinion.

The important question, however, is, does the international community have the corresponding will to give life to such opportune words? We pointed out at the beginning that

the LTTE kills with impunity because it has worked, particularly given the international community's readiness to cover up for them. Take for example the IWG statement and the UN Secretary General's selective condemnation of the killing of an LTTE man, and then ironically proposing sanctions against the LTTE for child conscription at almost the same moment. The latter probably happened because of the accident of the LTTE entering the lists along with several other child abusers being dealt with by the UN bureaucracy. While the phenomenon of child soldiers is intimately linked to impunity and political killings, there has been little recognition of the connection, and no hint of the LTTE being taken to task for the latter in any effective way. Indeed they are feted in European capitals.

The wider question of accountability is tied to the huge dead weight of impunity, which the Sri Lankan polity as a whole carries with it. Few Sri Lankan politicians or intellectuals showed strong convictions with regard to impunity. The horrific impunity the South witnessed in the late 1980s forced many to talk about it. That wave brought Chandrika Kumaratunge to power in 1994. By 2001 several army officers answerable for disappearances had been made ambassadors. Talk of impunity was at an end. Colombo's elite was relieved.

Colombo's power elite believes that it needs impunity to protect its interests, even though it has left the country in a limbo of permanent crisis. An important element in former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe's appeasement of the LTTE is the realisation by the entrepreneurial class in Colombo, and the successful LTTE-supporting global Tamil elite, that July 1983 was an aberration and they are soul mates after all. Moreover, they could amicably carve up the country's spoils between them. The supporting globalising interests that have funded peace activism in Colombo have further corrupted the quality of discourse and the current silence on human rights compared with 12 years ago is deafening. The heavy price to be paid would not be borne by the North-East alone.

One wonders if the old SLFP and JVP have grasped the significance of this state of affairs. It is clear why the Sri Lankan ruling class has been hostile to Sri Lanka ratifying the Rome Statute and joining the International Criminal Court (ICC). Although impunity has been an adjunct of state power since the Jayewardene presidency, it will not be to the benefit of the SLFP and the JVP in the long run. The change of government in 1994 was in many respects a freak event.

It is curious that while the EU have been urging the Government and LTTE to talk about a democratic federal solution, they have hardly put in a word urging Sri Lanka to join in the International Criminal Court. Membership of the ICC would change significantly the quality of discourse in Colombo and pave the way for that necessary ablution – of coming to terms with the past. The LTTE for its part will find it difficult to carry on as before if Sri Lanka joins the ICC. If Chandrika Kumaratunge has the vision to ratify the Rome Statute in her remaining months as president, that would be something upon which she could look back with pride.

Appendix

Appendix I: Violations in the North-East

- I.1. Victims of Murder and Disappearance resulting from LTTE action
- I.2. LTTE cadres killed and injured
- I.3. Cases of Grievous Injury to Persons by LTTE Action
- I.4. Conscription of Children

I.5. Torture, Harassment, and Other Instances of Violence

Appendix II Instances of Obscured Killings

Appendix III Behind the Valvettithurai Incidents (19th November 2004)

(Translated from Thenee.com)

I.1 Victims of Murder and Disappearance resulting from LTTE action

Note: Unless there is some specific reason we will not speculatively identify the deceased as Karuna supporters as is frequently assumed in reporting. The question is as meaningless as asking people in Jaffna in the early 1980s whether they supported the militants. Of course there was widespread sympathy for the idea of militancy as a reaction to the violent obduracy of the State, even though many had deep reservations about what the militants were actually doing. There is good reason to believe that a widespread undercurrent of sympathy for Karuna in Batticaloa is in evidence, from Tamils with all kinds of past affiliations and the Muslims, if only because he has rendered the oppressive LTTE machine largely non-functional.

16th March: Welikanda: Kandiah Pathmanathan (25) was shot dead by the LTTE Vanni faction as he came to the road about 10.00 PM from his home in Maruthankadawela, Welikanda. His body was found in a drain. His original home is in Ward 5, Vaharai.

16th March: Thambirajah Jegan (21) of Mankerni, north of Valaichenai was shot dead while riding a motorcycle in Thurainilavanai south of Batticaloa, in the same manner and in the same area that Jeyaganesh was killed the previous day, by killers following on a motorcycle. *TamilNet* added charitably, “His girl friend, who was at his side when the youth was pronounced dead, told Police he had no links to the LTTE or any of the paramilitaries working with the Sri Lankan armed forces in Batticaloa.” But then qualified it suggestively, “Kalmunai Police, however, said the killing was clearly not a private matter.” According to local sources, the deceased had been in the LTTE and left.

15th March: Mylvaganam Jeyaganesh (23) was shot dead in the night by the LTTE men near his wife’s home in Kaluthavalai. A native of Chenkalady, he moved to Kaluthavalai because the LTTE called at his place regularly and harassed those at home asking about him. Jeyaganesh had no connection with any other group, except that his elder brother Sasi had belonged to the EPRLF very briefly. Jeyaganesh also had a friend Segar in the TELO, who left and is now working in the Middle East. *TamilNet* was quick to pronounce him a ‘paramilitary’. The *Island* described him as a suspected ‘paramilitary’ cadre, but quoted a police official saying, the ‘Vanni faction had demanded Jeyaganesh’s help to track down his brother-in-law, believed to be an active PLOTE cadre accused by the Vanni action of being a paramilitary cadre’. The *Daily Mirror* said, “The victim, who was the organiser of PLOTE in the area (Kaluthavalai – far from home), had resigned following LTTE threats. The threats continued even after he had resigned. Security has been tightened in the area after the incident.” According to a police report cited in the *Island*, Jeyaganesh was accosted and shot by a six-member gang as he came out of a crowded restaurant in Kaluwanchikudy with friends. Our information is that LTTE persons on a motorcycle accosted him, when he too was on the road on a motorcycle. The killers first flashed their headlight on his face and then shot him.

14th March: Two LTTE gunmen who went to the village of Karapola in Welikanda about 10.00 PM, one in military uniform and one in civil, called out two youths Gunasekaram Subramaniam (21) and S. Selvanathan (22) and shot them dead close to their homes. The two

according to local information were working on paddy land taken on rent by the splinter LTTE Karuna wing in Thivuchchenai. LTTE organs (e.g. *TamilNet* quoting the Police) called the killers ‘an unidentified armed group (or persons)’. There was earlier some confusion due to talk in the area that the killers had accused the deceased of supporting the LTTE. Our sources checked this point several times and confirmed that the deceased were regarded locally and by Karuna cadres as being close to the latter. They are not in any doubt that the killing was done by the Vanni faction. All three local communities protested at the funeral calling upon the State to stop gunmen from roaming the area and shooting people. Some civilians expressed displeasure to journalists about the presence of Karuna’s men in the area. This aspect was picked up by the *Sunday Leader*, which visited the area and gave the presence of a company of Karuna’s men in the area under Mangalam Master wide publicity on 20th March. The following morning (21st) before sunrise, an LTTE party (reportedly from Vaharai) attacked the area. Early reports spoke of at least two LTTE men killed and three defenders injured. Four civilians, including a five-year-old child, were injured in the fighting. Karuna’s men numbering a few hundred are said to be in companies along the Eastern Province border according to local sources.

9th March, a Muslim auto rickshaw driver, Abdul Hameed Rahim was abducted by LTTE gunmen north of Valaichenai, Batticaloa Dist, in the evening. His two passengers ran away and complained to the Police and SLMM. Hameed’s body was later recovered with bullet wounds.

8th March, around 5.10 a.m. Mr. Alagaiah Kirubeswaran, 36, a former member of PLOTE, was shot dead while waiting to board a bus to Colombo in front of Police headquarters office in Batticaloa town. The victim, who works in Qatar, lost a daughter and both his wife’s parents in the tsunami and had returned to see his family who were refugees.

7th March: Mr. Velautham Ilankaswaran, 25, was shot dead in the street at night by the LTTE in Savukkady, Thalavaai, near Eravur, north of Batticaloa.

6th March: S. Kamalanathan (27), a former member of TELO and provincial correspondent for the Tamil newspaper, ‘Thinamurusu’ published by the Eelam People’s Democratic Party (EPDP) was shot to death late in the evening by the LTTE after being abducted in the afternoon. The victim’s body was lying by the roadside wearing his motorcycle helmet, but the motorbike he had been riding was missing.

6th March: In Pankudaveli, the LTTE killed Rathinakumar (34), former village headman Muthulingam’s son.

5th March: Welikanda, six people were killed including R. Selvarajah, Wijesuriya (a Sinhalese), and four Muslims: Segu Meera Lebbai, Mohammad Hussein, Mohammad Haniffa, and Saruthambi Jesma. Several others were injured including a small child and a teenage girl. The killings, reportedly done by an eleven-member gang, took place in the houses of Mohammad Hussein and Wijesuriya. The gunmen were identified by the Army as being from the LTTE. *TamilNet*, rather than cite an LTTE denial as one might have expected, referred to undisclosed police sources as blaming the rival Karuna faction. Confusion was confounded when some news reports came up with more police versions such as an LTTE contract killing over a land dispute. We have verified that this was a routine LTTE attack on former militants. The principal target was Selvarajah (alias Sando) who was earlier in the PLOTE and then with the EPRLF at Chenkalady. He later married a Sinhalese girl in

Welikanda where he settled. Being a native of Valaichenai (across the district border), the LTTE would have suspected him of affinity to Karuna. The harsh generality of the attack is believed to be a warning to villagers suspected of Karuna sympathies. This was also a time many people from Batticaloa and Amparai Districts gather in Welikanda for harvesting.

5th March: A mill employee Mylvaganam Periyathamby (27) was shot dead by the LTTE. The assailant was identified by local sources as Arjan. Periyathamby's brother Sutharshan was killed by the LTTE 2 months earlier.

5th March: Kandasamy Chandiran (32) of Main St., Chenkalady, was abducted by the LTTE and shot dead.

5th March, Mylvaganam Pulenthiran, 26, a suspected member of the Karuna Group was shot dead in Vanthaarumoolai.

28th February: Subramaniam Dayanithy (42) was shot after nightfall just opposite the TRO-LTTE office adjoining the refugee camp in Batticaloa and succumbed to his injuries in hospital. He was a former militant who sealed his fate by raising issues with the TRO. His wife later complained to the SLMM of LTTE threats to the family.

20th February 2005: LTTE gunmen killed Vanniasingam Manoharan (45), of Muthugal, Karupala, Welikanda, and injured Vinayagamoorthy Jeyakanthan (35) of Senaiyoor Karupala, Welikanda, while travelling on a motorcycle, late morning. The latter was admitted to Polonnaruwa Hospital. Karupala, a Tamil village across the border from Batticaloa District experienced a reprisal massacre of 38 civilians of the locality on 30th April 1992 after the LTTE massacred civilians the previous night in the neighbouring Muslim village of Alinchipotana. Today these villages are at the receiving end from the LTTE Vanni wing owing to their proximity to Karuna's home base in Batticaloa North.

3rd February 2005: T.Muregusu (27) of Pattalipuram, Mutur, was tortured and killed by the LTTE police in Sampur under Siranjeevi (apparently over a private issue that no one complained about), and his body was dumped near a tank 200 yards away. The local people later smashed the police station.

30th January 2005: A youth was shot dead in Negombo early last morning at about 2.30 a.m. The victim was identified as Benedict Reagan (aged 23) from Jaffna. The killers had fled on a motorcycle and the items found in the trouser of the youth, the Police said, indicated that he was a member of the LTTE. About this time, the Police in Badulla arrested a person believed to be an LTTE cadre with a pistol at the Badulla bus stand.

I.2 LTTE cadres killed and injured

5th March, around 10:00 am, Pushparaja, a member of the LTTE was killed in an ambush in an LTTE controlled area near Kirumichchai, north of Batticaloa. The LTTE accused the Sri Lankan Army of carrying out the attack. The SLA claimed the attack was carried out by "rival LTTE men," meaning Karuna's forces.

27th February: Three LTTE women cadres, including Kuvani, the women's political head for Batticaloa-Amparai, travelling in a trishaw were shot and injured south of Akkaraipattu. The LTTE accused the STF as having set up the attack. The LTTE later accused Johnson

Jeyakanthan, an LTTE deserter whom it spotted in Kalmunai of the shooting. According to other sources, Johnson had worked for the Army after deserting the LTTE in the 1990s and later went to the Middle East. He came to see his family after the tsunami in late February. and was spotted by the LTTE who followed him. Sensing danger, Johnson sought protection from the security forces. Then the LTTE started the story, which, going by the *TamilNet's* account, was lacking in substance.

15th February 2005: Sabanathan Sasikumar, identified by the Army as a member of the LTTE (who denied it) was shot dead by gunmen in Kommathurai North of Batticaloa.

7th February: E. Kousalyan, head of the LTTE's political wing for Batticaloa-Amparai district was killed in an ambush on the highway to Batticaloa in the Punanai area. Three others, Major Puhalan, Major Senthamilan and Second Lt. Vithimaran, were also killed. Ariyanayagam Chandra Nehru, former TNA MP for Amparai district, who was seriously injured in the ambush succumbed in hospital subsequently. Two policemen in Chandra Nehru's security and another LTTE cadre, Suthakaran, escaped with injuries.

February, 4, 2005 A youth was shot dead near the Vishnu Kovil, Valaichenai, Batticaloa. The youth Sinnathurai Devadasan alias Nivesan is believed to be a member of the LTTE. He was riding a motorcycle at about 11.45 a.m. yesterday towards a place called 'Puli Pinda Kal' and was shot dead near the temple. (EPDP News) *TamilNet* identified the deceased as Mr. Sinnathurai Thevathas (28).

I.3 Cases of Grievous Injury to Persons by LTTE Action

25th March: Arumugam Manalan, described by *TamilNet* as '*a person believed to have links with a paramilitary group in Kommathurai*', was shot and injured in Vantharumoolai, 9.00 PM.

11th March: Three PLOTE cadres were among the injured when two intruders on a motorbike lobbed a grenade into the group's office in Batticaloa town, Friday afternoon. The injured admitted to Batticaloa hospital are: Balasubramaniam Baheerathan (Rathan), 45, Thambirasa Balasunderam (Kanthan), 41, and Nagamany Sivarajah (Vellai), 44 and Baheerathan's son Lakshikanthan, 15. The condition of Sivarajah and Balasunderam was grave.

9th March, Wednesday, Christy Gnanasothy Sellapillai (36), a bar owner, was shot and grievously injured in, Urani, Batticaloa town about 8.30 PM. *TamilNet* quoted the Police to the effect that Christy '*appears to be a victim of the current "shadow war" that has claimed many lives in the troubled district.*' He was rushed to Batticaloa Hospital. Gunmen who arrived in an autorickshaw had called out the victim from his home and shot him.

8th March: Assailants believed to be from the LTTE attacked the elderly couple Dilip Dharmaraja (67) and his wife Punithavathy (60) of Kaladdy Rd., Kokkuvil. The couple was warded in Jaffna Hospital. Their son-in-law is reportedly a police officer in Colombo.

7th March, evening, near Kaluwankerni, Valaichechenai, Sivarasa Ravindran (28) was shot and injured by LTTE cadres and was moved to Polonnaruwa Hospital.

5th March: The LTTE shot and injured Ganeshalingam Kandiah (25), member of the PLOTE and father of 3, who out of dire poverty was on his way to the People's Bank in Batticaloa Town, near the ICRC to pawn jewellery.

2nd March: The LTTE shot and injured the youth Poopalapillai Harithas, late evening, at Ariyampathy, Batticaloa. Harithas had reportedly ignored summons to report to the LTTE. He was admitted to hospital in a critical condition.

18th February: The LTTE about 8.00 PM shot at and injured a former PLOTE cadre Babu traveling in a van near Vavuniya.

6th February 2005: Former LTTE member badly injured: Kannappan Arulappu (25) of Sinna Uppodai, Batticaloa was a member of the LTTE and after the split in the LTTE left the movement and returned to normal life. Last week he was kidnapped by an LTTE group under the Batticaloa deputy head Ram and detained at a camp in Vellaveli. At the camp he was subjected to torture by the LTTE. On Sunday while trying to escape from the LTTE camp he was shot at by the LTTE and severely injured. He has been admitted to the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital with gunshot injuries. (EPDP News)

5th February 2005: LTTE men chasing after an escaped conscript Varan near his home in Illakaithurai, Trincomalee District, opened fire on the unarmed escapee, injuring Kalithas.

24th January: A Tamil youth identified as Jegan (32), was shot and injured near 33rd Lane in Wellawatte, Colombo 06 on Monday night by unknown gunmen, security sources said. According to hospital sources Jegan received two gunshot injuries in his right chest and is undergoing medical treatment in the Intensive Care Unit at Kalubowila Hospital. The victim is a former member of PLOTE, rumored to have had links with Army intelligence. Lately he was quite inactive and was known to hang around in Colombo quite drunk.

25th January: Jegatheeswaran (32) of Periyaniavanai, north of Kalmunai was shot and injured in 33rd Lane, Wellawatte, Colombo, and warded in the intensive care unit of Kalubowila Hospital. The victim's father was reportedly shot dead by the LTTE when he was a village headman in Periyaniavanai.

I.4 Conscription of Children

We learn that over the months of January and February 2005, the UNICEF, received more than 60 cases of child conscription by the LTTE, which going by past indications may be about a quarter of the actual. The first case below shows the kind of thing that is still routine in the LTTE-controlled area. Both the case of Thavarajah Jeyarajah below and the one below it give an insight into the continuing human tragedy in the Batticaloa District.

26th March: A number of reports surfaced of children abducted by the LTTE escaping and surrendering to the security forces. One was Rasalingam Ketheeswaran (17) of Nelliady, Jaffna, surrendering at Muhamalai. According to the Army, three children taken from the Mandan refugee camp in Akkaraipattu escaped and surrendered to the STF, according to whom one of their friends did not make it. According to local sources, tsunami refugees from Batticaloa District regularly call at LTTE offices in Thirukkivil-Thambiluvil inquiring for missing children whom they suspect have been conveyed by the LTTE to their jungle base in Kajikudichcharu to the southwest.

22nd March 2005: Child mother separated from child (2): Sivakumar Svendrini, a young mother of seventeen (17) with her two year old son Anburaj, was staying with her grand mother Sinnathamby Sella (65) in Kaithady, Jaffna District. About mid-March she was taken away by Women Tigers waiting at Kaithady Junction, upon her return from a visit to Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Subsequently, her husband Sivakumar lodged complaints with the Chavakacheri Police and also reportedly the Human Rights Commission. On 22nd March, Svendrini conveyed a message to her grand mother's home, that the LTTE had kept her the past few days, and are willing to release her if her father's brother Sivam, who is a member of a political party opposed to the LTTE, were handed over to them. She also wanted her mother J. Pathmavathy who resided at 310 Hospital Rd., Jaffna, informed. The family went to the SLMM office the same day, but were asked to come the following day as it was past 5.00 PM.

18th March 2005: Thavarajah Jeyarajah (14 years – born 17 Apr.1990) studied up to Grade 6 in Sathurukondan and lived with his widowed mother Velmurugu Thangamalar. Jeyarajah set off to Eechanthivu on the morning of the 18th and had to pass the LTTE sentry point at Palakkadu, near Karaveddy. The LTTE man Soundararajah Gunam who was in charge of this sentry point abducted Jeyarajah. On hearing about it Thangamalar went thither and demanded her son. Gunam replied that each home must contribute one fighter for the 'final battle', which is about to begin. Thangamalar has complained to the SLMM and UNICEF. Thangamalar was to call again at the UNICEF office on Monday 21st March, but she did not turn up.

Early March: A frightened looking boy of about 13 years arrived at a home in Puliyantivu, Batticaloa Town, and asked for his mother who worked there as a domestic help. It turned out that the boy was an escaped LTTE conscript desperate for his mother's protection. The people of the house became frightened, particularly in the light of ongoing killings, and chased him away. The boy was later seen wandering about the bus stand. His fate is not known.

1st February 2005: Kanapathipillai Anurudhparasath, a 14 year old boy from Vipulananthapuram, Valaichenai, who was abducted by the LTTE and taken on a motorcycle, was rescued at an army check-point. The same day the father of Miss Nirosha Sivaratnaraja (13), of Kovil Veethy, Kurumankadu, Vavuniya, complained to the Police that the LTTE had abducted his daughter. About this time, LTTE teams were visiting houses in the suburbs of Mannar, demanding even that children of 8 and 10 should join them. (EPDP News)

I.5 Torture, Harassment, and Other Instances of Violence

27th March: The body of Nadarajah Gajendran (26), shot dead in Eravur, the scene of several recent killings, was brought to Batticaloa Hospital. His identity card indicated that he was originally from Kannankuda. Local sources believe that the Karuna wing was responsible.

26th March: Arumugam Nagalingam (40) and Sivalingam Paskaralingam (16) were shot dead in the night inside the LTTE held part of the Batticaloa District at Iralakkulam. Accusing the Special Forces of the Army, an LTTE spokesman quoted by *TamilNet* described the deceased as '*persons who had volunteered from the Sithandy village to help us stop the plunder of sand and timber from their area*'. A report in the *Island* suggested that the two were travelling in a tractor along with Vanni cadres when attacked by Karuna forces, who in the past few days had been active in the area.

21st March: Segulebbe Razeek (43), a jeweller, of Oddamavadi was shot dead while he struggled with a gang outside his house in Meeravodai, about 9.30 PM. A daughter, among his three children, who came out was also shot and injured. We have insufficient indicators to name the party responsible.

18th March: Jeyarajah Raju (25) works for the bicycle parking facility at Batticaloa Hospital, the income from which under the ceasefire has been taken over by the LTTE. He was shot and injured in the stomach on his way home near the Batticaloa air base in Veechukalmunai. The report in the LTTE web site Nitharsanam.com datelined 18 Mar. 6.10 PM pointed the finger at the PLOTE saying that the injured party identified one of the two assailants as Allen of PLOTE. *TamilNet* which put out a report more than 3 hours later (15.42 GMT) described the victim as a '*paramilitary cadre shot by an unidentified gunman*'. According to our sources, the shooting at the soft target was done by a PLOTE man, in revenge for the bomb thrown into the PLOTE office a week earlier.

13th March: Araiampathy: Another TRO scam: A protest by local people that officials of the Divisional Secretariat had sequestered good tsunami relief items for private gain hit the headlines. The unruly protest was called after some persons dug up apparently hidden items such as sugar, lentils, cooking oil and panadol. Mr. Sivanathan, the second highest official was identified as the culprit and humiliated by pouring oil on his head and stuffing dried fish into his mouth. The STF dispersed the protest. The truth began to emerge when the staff of the Secretariat stood by Mr. Sivanathan. Some expired relief items were in fact buried for disposal in the presence of public health officials after being certified by them. Mr. Sivanathan's problems started when the TRO asked him for food stamps and relief items to be turned over to them irregularly. Sivanathan, reputedly a scrupulously honest man, refused. The burial of items, their discovery and the rent-a-mob was staged by the TRO to teach him a lesson. After it backfired, *TamilNet* and other LTTE websites took down the story and pretended there was some misunderstanding. The LTTE dissociating itself from the staged affair, provided opportunity for officers in district secretariats and local government to launch a protest from the clock tower in Puliyantivu on 22nd March, demanding security in the performance of their duties, identification and punishment of offenders in Araiampathy and the cessation of unlawful interference in their work. The latter applies principally to just one party! The problems with the LTTE go back to the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. Many of these government officers and some Eastern University academics, did dedicated relief work despite the loss of home and kin some of them suffered. The LTTE-TRO, which was largely passive at that time, came in subsequently with the media, started issuing orders and moved to appropriate the whole effort. Now the relief work and distribution of items is going very slow because of obstacles placed by the LTTE, which is applying pressure on the others to hand over everything to them. The spate of killings has also made people reluctant to transport items into the area.

9th March: Rajasingam Jeyadevan, a 49 year old British resident and founder of Eela Pathieswarar Temple in UK and a long standing top level LTTEer was released after being tricked into coming into the Vanni as a valued benefactor with a promise of meeting the bigwigs and detained for two months in humiliating circumstances. One of the purposes, apart from his having fallen foul of Balasingam, was to force him sign off the temple to the LTTE. A circumstance that led to exposure was that Jeyadevan's father-in-law Ponniah Markandu who learned about his son-in-law's plight from another detainee, Vivekanandan, who was allowed to return to England, died of a heart attack. The father-in-law learnt that Jeyadevan was being held hostage pending Vivekanandan effecting the legal transfer of the temple to

LTTE front-man Seevaratnam. Being driven to an extremity by the loss of her father and news of her husband's deteriorating health, Jeyadevan's wife Manchuladevi went to the British authorities and to well-wishers. While the mainstream Tamil media declined to touch the story, the Asian Tribune and TBC, London, made the matter well known and much talked about. On 12th March, an anonymous caller told TBC Director Ramraj that publicising such news would cause his wife to 'wear white' (i.e. become a widow). Jeyadevan's story is just the thin end of the wedge, leaving to the imagination the horrendous unrecorded fate of thousands of the LTTE's detainees who never came back (see Reports 9 & 10).

7th March: A party identified as led by locally notorious LTTE gunman Sivakumar late in the night opened fire at the homes of former EPRLF members Mohan and Sankar in Thimilathivu in the outskirts of Batticaloa. While the houses were pockmarked with bullet holes, Mohan and Sankar escaped unhurt and reported to the Batticaloa Police.

5th March: Rape and Robbery of Refugee returnees from India: Many Tamil refugees who have raised their families in India are desperate to return. Their children have grown up and frequently have obtained degrees. It is relatively far easier for them to find suitable employment in Sri Lanka. Why they have to travel the 20 or so miles in this absurd and hazardous fashion is a longer story. About 50 refugees including 27 women came by Indian fishing boats and were dropped on a sand bank off Talaimannar as is usual now. Normally fishermen would see them and inform the Navy who would pick them up. In this instance 5 men who came with swords and guns robbed them and raped some of the women. The next morning, upon being informed by fishermen, a local parish priest brought the Navy and picked them up. When the crime came to light, the LTTE media were quick to accuse the Navy. Local opinion was divided, but was generally inclined to holding the Navy the prime suspect, while admitting the possibility that local fishermen, Sinhalese fishermen who frequent the area from further south or some party involved in smuggling could also be the culprits.

However as days passed those who were sharp were struck by some very unusual peripheral factors. The LTTE, which now starts an agitation at the drop of a pin for minor things, was very quiet. Public interest in the matter was hardly discernible. The Police produced 22 naval personnel for an identification parade on 15th March, but the victims did not want to take part in it.

One is reminded of the case of two women, Sivamani and Vijikala, who were arrested raped by personnel from the CSU (Police) and Navy in March 2001 (Bull.25). Under pressure from the Police, the Magistrate issued a detention order whose only purpose was to cover up rape. The case eventually moved (though the culprits appear to have escaped) because of the interest taken by the Mannar Bishop, Rayappu Joseph, and the Justice Minister, Batty Weerakoon. Unlike the present case the earlier one made news only after the Bishop intervened. Public distrust of the security forces is well founded.

The difference today is the deafening silence in a situation of raucous, instant protest habitually instigated by the LTTE over far less important issues. The Bishop too has not been seen to show much interest in this case, given his recent sensational public intervention to defend the LTTE flag as the flag of the Tamil Nation. After a week's silence the issue cropped up again in the LTTE media when the victims failed to go for the identification parade on 22nd March, with renewed suggestions of intimidation by the Navy. What it suggests rather than intimidation by the Navy is the absence of support for the victims from a civil society that takes its cue from the LTTE.

We learnt in the next few days from knowledgeable local sources that one of the victims (presumably Mrs. Rajitha Rajan (25)) was taken to the Navy camp and identified a naval man as a rapist. That still left unexplained the question of local passivity. Locals explained that in this instance they are happy to let the law take its course (which by past experience is doubtful) and that the LTTE is in no position to stir the populace. The last straw in the deterioration of relations was when the LTTE opened fire on fishing boats from Mannar on 17th February, leading to irate local folk attacking the Mannar LTTE office. Sea Tiger leader Soosai tried to cover up their true motives by taking the line that they had acted on representations by Vidathalthivu fishermen to stop dynamite fishing. The Bishop too tried to fudge the issue by suggesting that the problem was caused by Indian fishermen intruding into local waters. The Mannar fishermen pointed out that the LTTE was not interfering with dynamite fishing by fishermen elsewhere. The Bishop reportedly promised to take it up with the LTTE and so far nothing has happened. By being seen to lean towards the LTTE, the Bishop's credibility has also suffered.

5th March: Muthulingam Rathinakumar (33), former village headman Muthulingam's son from Pankudaveli, Batticaloa Dist., was abducted by the LTTE in Koduwamadu.

4th March: Miss. Thurshika Nagenthiram, 13 year old student at Vembady Girls' College was knocked down by an army driver and succumbed to her injuries in hospital. The driver was duly detained by the Police. Rather than give this death of the young girl the dignity it deserved, the LTTE launched an orgy of provocation. The SLFP party office near the school was burnt. The LTTE MP Gajendran was seen jumping over the school wall and being at the centre of the disturbance. Attempts were made to burn three army vehicles, army sentry points were attacked and petrol bombs were thrown at the Army – again sure signs of the LTTE's work behind a civilian shield. In army firing in one area, a 65 – year – old civilian man was killed. During the melee, a reporter was injured, according to whose testimony he was assaulted by the Army.

3rd March: Street hawkers in Muniappar Street Jaffna were badly assaulted by an LTTE party led by Cheliyan, political commissar for the town. Their crime was not to have closed down business the previous day and participated in the demonstration demanding supreme status for the LTTE leader. About 35 of the 100 or so hawkers were Muslims trying to restart life from scratch after being humiliated, expropriated and expelled from Jaffna by the same Leader in 1990. A Tamil hawker was admitted to Jaffna Hospital.

2nd March: Thiyagaraja Rasalingam, who was abducted and held at the LTTE's Vairavapuliyanakulam camp near Vavuniya, complained to the SLMM upon release that he had witnessed several detainees being held and tortured in the camp contrary to the CFA. The LTTE blocked the SLMM team that tried to enter the camp and acted threateningly towards them, forcing them to sue for police protection. Another detainee Rasathurai Selvakumar escaped from the same torture camp midday on 7th March and surrendered to the Vavuniya Police. He had previously, according to local reports, first been in the LTTE and then the TELO. The same LTTE office was bombed early morning Monday 28th March, causing injuries to at least 3 persons.

2nd March: PLOTE leader Sithathar Dharmalingam complained about the experience of Kathirkamar Yogeswaran, French citizen and brother of former PLOTE leader Uma Maheswaran, who visited Jaffna after 24 years. The LTTE took his passport and harassed him and his relatives for his not having contributed to their cause, which includes killing PLOTE

members. Finally his niece Jeyarani Varatharaja was made to stand surety to his making good the arrears of 8640 Euros at 30 Euros a month.

17th February: Sea Tigers opened fire at fishermen from Pallimunai off Vidathalthivu damaging 3 boats. Pallimuani folk stormed and attacked the LTTE office in Mannar Town. According to sources on the ground, in a bid to cover up the shooting, Sea Tiger Leader obtained letters of request from fishermen's societies in Vidatthal Thivu asking him to take action against fishermen from Pallimunai using dynamite in fishing.

5th February 2005 the LTTE abducted a youth named Nallathamby Sritharan (26), a graduate owning a computer, who resided in Eravur-Div.5 and cultivated paddy in his 10 acre plot of land . He was abducted when he went in search of labour to harvest his field, according to local reports. (EPDP News)

5th February: Mr. Kumaraswamy Thirukumaran (26) of Puttur east in the Achchuveli police division reported missing since 29th January 29 was found dead Saturday and his body was recovered from a bush near Kottuthanai. Achchuveli Police handed over the body to the mortuary of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Relatives later identified the body as that of Mr.Thirukumaran. According to the Police, a bicycle was also recovered from the scene where the body was lying.

28th January 2005: Pt Pedro About this time a person named Kannan, from Thumpalai, Point Pedro, was working at a textile shop. There was an argument between him and another person named Sritharan and later changed in to fisticuffs. Kannan was later called to the LTTE office by a sea tiger cadre named Anbalagan and was tied to a post and beaten with a wire. Three others were also beaten similarly at the same time. On release of these youths Ambalagan had told that they would have to meet this type of beating if they fail to join them. (EPDP News)

9th January, three persons were killed and thirty-eight persons injured in a grenade attack on a tsunami funeral house in Vahaneri about 9.00 PM. The three persons killed were: P. Nahenthiran (38), Tirusan (8), and N. Ananthan (24). All media reports were unclear about the cause of the attack. The Army described it as a religious clash within the LTTE, while *TamilNet* was silent as regards the cause. Our inquiries elicited the response that the incident resulted from differences among auxiliaries of the LTTE Vanni faction. Two men who escaped from the scene and surrendered to the Police at the exit point into the government-controlled area identified themselves, wrongly according to our sources, as Karuna's men.

Appendix II

Instances of Obscured Killings

Subramaniam Muthulingam (45), an engineer from Perth, Australia was murdered in Colombo on 9th September 2002. **Jeyadevan's** recent ordeal throws light on this earlier killing that was never fully explained. The two incidents taken together provide a clearer picture of the LTTE's use of violence to control Hindu Temples abroad, important sources of funds and centres of social cohesion, as well as the tactics they use to punish individuals who attempt to resist them.

In Special Report No.16, we provided some strong circumstantial evidence pointing to the LTTE as the perpetrator. In particular we described Muthulingam's resistance to the LTTE's bid to take over a temple in Perth:

A refusal by the Murugan Temple in Perth, where Muthulingam was a trustee, resulted in sustained intimidation by the LTTE. Muthulingam left the temple committee...The Sri Lankan Police investigations, not unexpectedly, faded away into silence. Moreover, in the recent months, Muthu's family too has refused to state their suspicions (either way) in public. They have changed phone numbers, and most of them, including his widow, have gone into self-imposed incommunicado...It is strongly rumoured among the Tamil community in Australia that it was the LTTE that killed Muthulingam, or was at least complicit in the killing.

The silence of Muthulingam's family, their refusal to pursue the murder, and their decision to isolate themselves all suggest that they believed Muthu had been killed by the LTTE. When the LTTE kills someone, the loved ones are given little choice except to burrow into the earth and be silent for their own safety since they too are marked by the stigma of a traitor. How different it is when someone associated with the LTTE is killed. Then the matter is given much publicity so as to arouse public indignation against enemies and traitors.

The difference between how the LTTE dealt with Muthulingam and with Jeyadevan is instructive. In both instances the LTTE's objective was to acquire a temple and its income, one in London and the other in Perth. Jeyadevan's ordeal which is described in detail by D.B.S. Jeyaraj in the Sunday Leader and by Ramraj in the Asian Tribune and TBC reveals the horrendous extent to which the LTTE would go to accomplish its objective, confident that the British and Australian governments would do little about it.

Jeyadevan, a leading LTTE activist from London was tricked into visiting the Vanni, detained in prison for two months despite his deteriorating medical condition, and interrogated on false testimony obtained from other LTTE supporters in London as a pretext for the proceedings. His companion Vivekanandan was sent back to London with the message that Jeyadevan would be released only after the trustees effect the legal transfer of the temple in Alperton to an LTTE front organisation. Even after it was accomplished the promise of release was not kept. It required the unprecedented step of the family and well wishers going to the British authorities, pressure from Jeyadevan's Labour Party connections and finally a warning from Scotland Yard to British-domiciled LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingam to effect the release.

Jeyadevan's is not an isolated case. But it is the first we know in some detail that shows how the LTTE treat their geese that lay golden eggs. It is a sordid tale of corruption, internal rivalries and jealousies in an organisation heavily dependent on its global support base, which is becoming increasingly top heavy and unwieldy. Some of its global actors who hold dark secrets and keys to the organisation's dealings have also acquired their own agendas and lobbies, and a sense of inordinate power.

When dealing with those whose status and social importance is based on their services to the LTTE, they could be arm twisted and humiliated in the Vanni to bring them to heel, and the LTTE can be fairly certain that they would be more compliant afterwards. They could be depended on to wear a synthetic grin and carry on as before in society to keep up appearances

that they are even more part of the blessed circle. Drastic measures can on the other hand be damaging to the network.

With persons like Muthulingam who did not like the LTTE to begin with and who had shown sustained resistance, killing would seem the most appropriate course for the LTTE, as it would also serve as a warning to others. Jeyadevan's ordeal tells us how angry the LTTE must have been with Muthulingam. One does not expect the Australian Police to conduct investigations in the Vanni. But they could gainfully seek out accessories to Muthulingam's murder from among the LTTE's minions in Australia.

Kumaravelu Thambaiiah (40) was an academic in the Eastern University. He was gunned down by two callers at his home in Batticaloa on 24th May 2004. Journalist **G. Nadesan** was gunned down six days later on 30th May. Circumstances and deliberate misinformation caused considerable confusion with regard to both killings. Forty days after Karuna's rebellion was crushed, on 21st May, the Karuna wing issued a statement in which they warned of action against agents (traitors) who assist the Vanni wing. Thambaiiah's murder came three days later. *TamilNet* advanced the suspicion against Karuna by claiming wrongly that '*Thambaiiah was evicted from Batticaloa by the renegade LTTE commander Karuna [and] returned when the Karuna group withdrew from the Batticaloa region and normalcy returned*'. The following day, Kausalyan, the head of the LTTE Vanni faction's political wing praised Thambaiiah and demanded a full investigation by the SLMM into his killing by 'anti-national elements'. The LTTE also helped to organise his funeral in Asikkulam, Vavuniya, and its Vavuniya political commissar Gnanavel spoke at the funeral. Several writers in web sites sympathetic to Karuna were taken in by LTTE propaganda and their writings reflected this.

The *Asian Tribune* gave a different line that was largely lost: "*Professor Thambiayah was said to be a close confidante of Colonel Karuna Amman and both of them had a very friendly rapport. It was learnt that yesterday (23rd) and day before yesterday, Kaushalyan the head of the political division of the LTTE in Batticaloa – Amparai Division summoned the Professor and demanded that he to reorganize the Eastern University located at Vantharamoolai along lines favorable to the LTTE led by Velupillai Prabhakaran. It is learnt that Professor Thambiayah showed great reluctance....*"

When Nadesan was killed, the Karuna wing was immediately suspected. Again some confusion resulted when the LTTE Vanni wing moved in to appropriate him by draping a Tiger flag about his corpse, leading to his family objecting and having the flag removed. While some expatriate writers supportive of Karuna almost suggested that Nadesan got what he deserved, those who long knew him (e.g. EPRLF, EPDP and other journalists) were respectful. The following extract from an article by D.B.S. Jeyaraj in the *Sunday Leader* throws further light on both these obscured killings:

" There is an eastern school of thought which believes Nadesan was killed [on 30th May 2004] due to the last article he wrote for the Virakesari of May 30. He wrote about the growing pattern of violence in Batticaloa in recent times. He was critical of Karuna and skeptical about the recent appointment of Gen. Shantha Kottegoda as overall operations commander for the east. Nadesan counted the number of killings in recent times and expressed concern over the future. Tragically, Nadesan himself became the next casualty. The Karuna faction's 'neruppu' website outlines the reason for Nadesan's execution. It says that Nadesan went to Kokkatticholai on the Western shore and met with LTTE Eastern Political Commissar, Kaushalyan. It says that Kaushalyan asked for Nadesan's cooperation in building

up the mainstream LTTE in Batticaloa and that Nadesan agreed with the rider that Karuna should be removed. This alleged meeting is given as the reason for Nadesan's killing. The last time I spoke to Nades was in early May. So I am not aware of such a meeting. Family members however say Nadesan never went to "Paduvaankarai" (Western shore) on May 30. From my personal knowledge of Nadesan I do not think he would have ever agreed to support the Tigers in that manner. He was neither a complete believer nor a naïve fool to have done so. My own suspicion is that Nadesan was marked for death after the killing of Eastern University Economics Professor Kumaravelu Thambiah.

The Thambiah factor

The Tiger mouthpiece Tamil Net and other LTTE media have projected an impression that Prof. Thambiah was killed by Karuna's men. TamilNet stated that Thambiah went to the north after Karuna's rebellion and returned only after Karuna went away.

The truth however is different. Thambiah though from Aasikulam in Vavuniya was married in Batticaloa and was for all practical purposes an Eastern Tamil. He hated Jaffna hegemonism and was in the forefront of the pro-eastern school of thought at the Batticaloa University.

Thambiah never went to the north after Karuna's rebellion in March. He stayed put in Batticaloa as he had nothing to fear from Karuna. Thambiah fled to Colombo and then to Vavuniya only in April when Karuna left Batticaloa and the pro - Pirapaharan LTTE men took over. He feared death at their hands because of his Karuna leanings.

Distortion

He later got "clearance" from the new Eastern Tiger Leader, Ramesh and returned to Batticaloa. The pro-Tiger media succeeded in distorting reality and projected a picture that Thambiah had been killed by Karuna's men.

Thambiah was killed by Pottu Amman's operatives despite the clearance given by Ramesh. The LTTE after shooting Prof. Thiruchelvam and government agent Mounaguriswamy issued statements condemning the attacks. In the same way the Tigers raised a big fuss over Thambiah's shooting too. Kaushalyan wanted an inquiry. The ever obliging peace monitors were ready.

Most Batticaloa people however know that Thambiah was killed by the Tigers. The contrasting manner in which the LTTE dealt with Nadesan's killing and Thambiah's killing demonstrates who killed whom. Thus my feeling is that Karuna's men killed Nadesan in revenge for Thambiah. Both were northerners who had married and settled down in Batticaloa."

Appendix III

Behind the Valvettithurai Incidents (19th November 2004)

- Translated from Thenee.com

Deliberate provocation by the Tigers has been exposed. After Tiger thugs shot and killed two youths of Athikovilady who were playing football in the Valvettithurai Sithampara College grounds, the Tigers themselves incited demonstrations against the Army, burning tyres on

roads, and bringing all activity to a standstill. The Tamil people have not been deceived by this blatant falsehood. The people of Valvettithurai and the youths who played football have beyond any shadow of doubt identified the LTTE thugs responsible for the killings as Poopalan and Yarl Eelavan, a Black Tiger attached to LTTE intelligence in Jaffna.

The intended target of the killers was Ponniah Deivendran (32) who was associated with the EPDP. It was when the injured Deivendran tried to escape that the killers in pursuit shot and killed the Athikovilady youth at play. The dead were Sathasivam Kumaran and Rajendram Sureshkumar.

Athikovilady lies 300 yards north of Banyan-tree (Alady) Junction, which was Prabhakaran's birthplace. Many youths from Athikovil (Ancient Temple) had in the 1980s joined the TELO, owing to Kuttimani (a TELO leader) having been a native of that place. When in 1986, the LTTE turned its guns on the TELO many Athikovilady youths were among the victims. Later during the LTTE's internal crackdown on the followers of its one time Deputy Leader Mahattaya, a number of persons from the area were among the hundreds who disappeared. Beneath the surface there was burning anger against the LTTE at Athikovilady.

The recent killings arose from different causes. The pious among Valvettithurai folk objected to a 50 foot cut out of Prabhakaran being erected at Muthumari Amman Temple (for his 50th birthday) that would have dwarfed the temple's deity. Erecting cut-outs and commemorative decorations for persons to tower over the deity was considered a bad omen by the local folk, who regarded Muthumari Amman their traditional protector.

Once before an attempt was made to erect a monument over the deity to Arasan, a local sports star from the Rising Sun Club who had met with an untimely death. According to local lore, the resulting dissension was so severe that it led to the disastrous exposure of local smuggling rings, and thus drove the village into very hard times. A section of the populace therefore held that to erect a 50-foot cut out and give the Honourable Leader, Mr. Prabhakaran, greater esteem than Amman, would be to invite hitherto unknown plagues on themselves. These objections and attempts to stall the erection arose spontaneously. What role, if any, Deivendran played here is not known. However the Tigers had warned him several times.

There were also apart from the cut-out affair, other causes for friction between the people and the Tigers. The Army camp lies close to the Sithampara College playground. The Tigers had repeatedly warned the local folk not to play in that field. The youth of the area as often disregarded these strictures and continued to play in the field. Occasionally the soldiers too participated in the games and treated the others to biscuits and soft drinks. The soldiers were also regular speculators.

As time went by, it began to dawn on people who came into contact with Valvettithurai that there was no quarrel or ill-will between the Army and the people of the area. This was a remarkable development considering that the starting point of the Tamil Eelam struggle may be identified with the friction resulting from the setting up of the Valvettithurai army camp to check smuggling. This was done in 1960 by the caretaker government of Dudley Senanayake. One may wonder if fate had decreed that the end point of the Tamil Eelam struggle would also be the Valvettithurai army camp.

The new revelations of the absence of enmity between the people and the Army in Valvettithurai, made a mockery any notion that the National Leader's birthplace was land sacred to him. As the drama of the approach of his golden birthday grew in heated intensity, so did anti-LTTE feelings at local level in his birthplace. There is also another reason. Valvettithurai folk lived in close proximity to India. Because of the LTTE's assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the clandestine trade, which was the backbone of local prosperity, suffered an unprecedented reverse.

Unable to stomach the growing anti-Tiger feelings, the LTTE deliberately contrived the recent incidents. Within a few minutes of the recent killings, local Tiger tail-catchers who were scattered here and there were stunned into paralysis. The cutouts erected for the National Leader, were uprooted and thrown down. In the same spontaneous upsurge, anti-LTTE demonstrations quickly spread to the neighbouring areas of Thickam, Polikandy, Pt. Pedro, Udupiddy and Nelliady.

With their renowned cunning, the Tigers too commenced protest activity and attempted to deflect the blame for the killings onto the Army. To give substance to the charge, they urged their 'tails' to provoke the Army, hoping that the Army would lose their cool. At the start the Army ignored the protests taking it for granted that they were protests against the LTTE. But the very next day the Tigers persistently rammed down their version through their unchallenged steamroller media to pin their killing on the Army.

However, the cover-up further exposed the Tigers, even if for a time the picture was confused with anti-LTTE demonstrations in several places and LTTE-instigated demonstrations in others, with different versions circulating as a result. It may be recalled that when 13 soldiers were killed in a landmine attack in Jaffna, in 1983, Mr. Kandasamy of the Tamil Information Centre in London told the Guardian that the attack was a response to the Army raping some girls from Jaffna University. Thus this utter falsehood received much credit around the world. This time however, the lies circulated by the pro-LTTE Tamil media fizzled out like a damp squib.

The ordinary people have always been more progressive than revolutionaries. The killings in Valvettithurai Sithampara College grounds came on the heels of spontaneous uprisings against the LTTE in Gurunagar and Mannar. The people in turn became increasingly conscious of the Tigers' savagery and the role of the pro-LTTE media in protecting those who are destroying the Tamil people and falsifying their deeds. There can be no peace for the Tamils until the Tigers are disarmed. The developments exhibited in the clearest light how the pro-LTTE media in Sri Lanka have grown fat on a commerce of lies. Beneficent changes can take place in society only when the spontaneous struggles of the people synchronise with the conscious direction of the revolutionaries.

The people eagerly await the new twists in the National Leader's next birthday address. This is not to receive enlightenment, but to get some idea of his next subterfuge. What good can come to the Tamil people from this Great Heroes speech?

The political fallout from the Government and the Tigers sitting at the table not just leaves the people disillusioned about the Tigers, but also alienates the people from the Government. It is because of this pre-eminent truth that peace talks repeatedly run into a rut.