

THE ELUDING PEACE

(An insider's political analysis of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka)

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(Courtesy, *Sunday Island*, Colombo)

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Publishers Note

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his book is being published in response to numerous requests received from research
holars.

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for ASSEAY

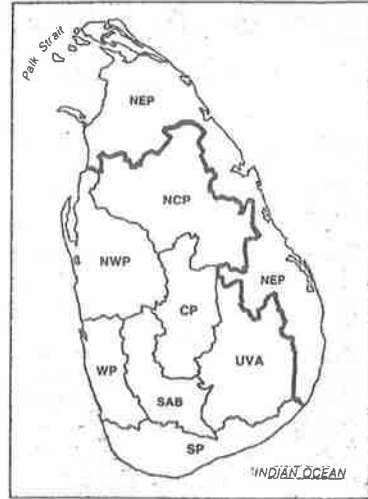
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In this report "the Northeast" refers to the area presently consisting of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Amparai administrative districts.

Sri Lanka



Provinces of Sri Lanka

- NEP — Northeastern Province
- NCP — North Central Province
- NWP — North Western Province
- UVA — Province of Uva
- SAB — Province of Sabaragamuwa
- CP — Central Province
- WP — Western Province
- SP — Southern Province

Sri Lanka, showing administrative districts

Strategies of the TNA

There is speculation that the next withdrawal may take place from Mannar rather than Batticaloa as was expected. Perumal, EPRLF leader K. Pathmanabha and IPKF GOC, General Mukat visited the Amparai District on Sunday.

It looks as if the EPRLF and the Indians don't want a clearcut withdrawal pattern to emerge. Public and cadre morale may be a major concern. Despite Perumal's stated ignorance in his *Virakesari* interview, the TNC, Tamil National Council, comprising the EPRLF is working out a plan to defend itself in the Amparai district. The district may be divided among these groups for that purpose. Holding its area against a possible LTTE onslaught will be the responsibility of each group.

The very fact that the Indians are actually talking often about leaving and signing documents that effect has got the TNC leadership seriously worried. Even though all the TNC's 'public' leaders have called on the LTTE to join the mainstream they are all now planning survival strategies in a no-IPKF context.

According to well informed sources, moves are afoot in Batticaloa/Amparai to deploy the 'Tamil National Army' (TNA) — the force mentioned by Ratharajah Perumal at his Colombo press conference (Oct. 4) and described as 'illegal' by the reigning Minister on Wednesday — in the Amparai district. The first batch of the TNA has been undergoing training at Kaluwankerny, a coastal village in Batticaloa off Chenkaladi.

The TNA to be moved into Amparai will comprise 11 groups, each having 105 combatants. Out of this number, six groups will be for EPRLF bases, two each for TELO and ENDLF and one for PLOTE. PLOTE is a new addition, not being originally part of the TNA that is now being formed. PLOTE has been given a position because they have held the Malwathai area against the LTTE since 1988.

The TNA will come under the direct control of the TNC and not any individual group. The TNA

commander in Amparai will be 'Khalid' of the ENDLF, one of the late Uma Maheswaran's trusted men, who is from Trincomalee. He left PLOTE in 1986 with Paranthan Rajan, the present ENDLF leader, to form the ENDLF. Khalid may have been given the post because of his proven ability as a good commander. He is a veteran from Lebanon. He was trained by the PELF of Dr. George Habash and took part in operations against the Israelis. How he will handle the TNA in Amparai and the natural contradictions that may arise there remains to be seen. It also remains to be seen how he will lead his troops in combat if and when they have to face the battle-hardened LTTE.

The TNA appears to be India's attempt at a solution to the petty squabbles that undermine the sustained combat potential of any consistent and strategically integrated anti-LTTE campaign. The 'Army' appears to be fairly neutral in composition due to India's keenness to train and produce a fresh set of people who will not have group identities and will accept a common command. It is far more difficult to manage various groups and their operations in addition to minor undercutting and competition for political space, than to deal with one army under a single command. If all the anti-LTTE groups perceive the TNA as an instrument of their protection and survival then the TNA may be effective to some extent. However, this all depends on the LTTE's ability to play on contradictions rather than to use brute force against the other groups. If the LTTE proceeds to be as savage as it usually is, the groups ranged against it will have to forget differences and continue to pool whatever resources they have.

Advantage

Another important advantage the TNA may give both India and the TNC is an unprecedented logistical capability. Heavy dependence on the IPKF, concentration on gaining political space and financial concerns have all contributed to rapid deterioration of the combat potential of the EPRLF, TELO and the ENDLF; Manpower, skills needed in

the field and supplies of arms were all haphazardly dispersed during the period that followed the Northeast Provincial Council elections. Most of these problems can be surmounted only through something like the TNA. The pooling of resources it entails under a possible LTTE onslaught would give the anti-LTTE groups a logistical advantage they never had before.

Meanwhile another development has taken place that will certainly prompt the TNC leaders to expedite their defence arrangements in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts. The LTTE, despite an amnesty they said they were prepared to grant other Tamil groups, has begun to attack and kill members of those groups. The most daring of these attacks took place near the Kaluwankerny TNA training camp itself, where one EPRLF member was killed when two of them had gone to buy fish for the camp.

The TNC is also worried about the fact that the LTTE have recently started collecting money in various places and moving into some of their earlier strongholds such as Ariampathi in Batticaloa and Pandirippu in Kalmunai — two strategically important villages — after the ceasefire. Despite all this, the IPKF has given strict orders that no one should carry any weapons and this has irked some TNA cadres. Some of those watching the situation on the ground feel the IPKF may be doing this purposely to aggravate the situation on the ground.

The Amparai TNA deployment seems to be a programme executed by the Indian Army itself. This means the TNA project will come under India's defence establishment. This is also a significant change from the earlier practice, where RAW undertook both training and arming of Tamil groups. The TNA may turn out to be more of a conventional-type force than anything else. The Indian Army will probably monitor the performance of the TNA in Amparai, and if it is successful, extend it to other areas as well to fill in the the vacuum created by the eventual departure of Indian troops. Talk about the 'Afghan model' is already heard in some circles. How far that model will succeed here, given the specific conditions in the Northeast — and the South — is questionable.

The selection of Amparai as the first district from which the IPKF is to be withdrawn is not without practical and political advantages to the TNC. In the first place, the LTTE is believed to have been more badly hit in Amparai than in any other district. The group's most senior leader there, Davu, is in IPKF custody. Another prominent leader, Kattimadu, is thought to be out of action having been severely injured. The LTTE's main strength is held up in the jungles that stretch from Pannalagar tank and Bakmityawa to Lahugala. Because of this the group has serious problems of supply and has increasingly depend on the Muslims of the area for mobility and supplies.

Secondly, the numerical strength of the TNC groups is greater in the few Tamil villages in the district. The remnants of matrilineal clan systems ensure broader clan support, which is not the case in the North. Villages in Amparai do not form ethnically-contiguous blocs. In addition, vast acreages of paddy separate the villages. In this situation it becomes very difficult for the LTTE to attack and withdraw or sustain an offensive without being outflanked.

With the TNA entrenched in the main Tamil villages and the LTTE having to use non-Tamil areas, it will be easier for the TNC and India to denounce the LTTE as 'traitors' and even 'Sri Lanka's quisling'. The fact that the force which is going to face the LTTE is known as the TNA is expected to gradually gain nationalist legitimacy for the other groups. A turnaround of Tamil opinion — i.e. away from the LTTE — is most possible in Amparai, where the Tamils feel threatened by the Sinhalese on one side and Muslims on the other. A process that would bring about a delegitimation of the LTTE as a Tamil-nationalist force would be a major coup for the other groups.

But whether it will be possible to delegitimize the LTTE, who have over the years built up a strong Tamil-nationalist image, remains to be seen and will also partly depend on the extent to which they align with the Sri Lankan government.

22-10-19

The importance of *Pin Thalam*

If anything characterises the new phase of Tamil militancy, it is the waning importance of the rearbase in Tamil Nadu, or in India for that matter. Even if there is a drastic turn around in affairs, leading to a pre-1927 situation, a rearbase across the Palk Strait will not be as essential to Tamil groups as it was during 1983-87. During that period, the rearbase became so important that North and East Sri Lanka was simply referred to as 'land' in the parlance of the Tamil militants.

The pre-occupation that the rearbase - '*Pin thalam*' in Tamil - was so great that rifts within the groups were mainly on the lines of the leadership in '*in thalam*' and those on 'land'. The Sri Sabaratnam-as split (TELO), the Pathmanabha-Douglas evananda split (EPRLF), the Uma Maheswaran-swaran split (PLOTE) were all primarily due to the rearbase / land dichotomy. The only leader who circumvented the problem was Prabhakaran. He had a separate command for each district and handled supplies separately through an efficient communications network. Therefore none of his sea commanders could ever think of consolidating his power on land. The India-based LTTE leadership kept power by controlling the supply of weapons, ammunition and finance. They were also extremely careful to keep the top RAW contacts in their hands. It was felt that if these lines slipped RAW would have an opportunity to put through deals with somebody with influence on 'land'.

Those who call the EPRLF 'quislings' of the Indians should remember what RAW did to the EPRLF - pulling out their 'land' commander and naming him up with PLOTE's 'land' political leader to form the ENDLF. Despite their stated and real political position, EPRLF has strong reservations about RAW's intentions on this score.

The rearbases' control over supplies, their strategic links with Delhi, commitments and vested interests in Tamil Nadu reduced the leaders' sensitivity to and grasp affairs on 'land' - even in the case of the LTTE, but to a lesser degree than

the others. The fact that the leaders in the rearbase lived in comfort for which the boys on 'land' had to pay with their blood and sweat was the stuff which the disgruntled made generous use of to sow discord.

The now-forgotten 'literature of heresy' within the groups from 1983-87 bears ample evidence of the extent to which the rearbase became a fissure in the affairs of the Tamil movement. There was serious concern about the wisdom of having come to India in the first place and about the disproportionate importance of the rearbase among some quarters. The extent to which the war was becoming dependent on Tamil Nadu did not go without criticism. That a multipurpose, comfortable rearbase would, in the longterm erode the conviction to fight and play into the hands of India was an opinion expressed as early as 1983. Finally, the rearbase started becoming a factor that threatened to undermine the control various leaders had over their fighting cadres. Meanwhile the Indian authorities began demonstrating regularly that they had the militants in their mercy by locking up and releasing weapons and men at will, but by this time, the militants were hopelessly entangled. There was a time towards the end of 1986 when the Tamil Nadu state police started treating even the leaders of groups like common criminals. Further, the long period of inactivity and the absence of the natural discipline imposed by the guerrilla's fighting environment turned several cadres towards antisocial behaviour.

Another serious mistake was that if the rearbase in India had been developed on the basis of a sound political commitment from sympathetic local anti-establishment groups it would have been useful in the long run without jeopardising the future of the movement, even though such a line of action would not have had the massive benefits offered by the Indian state. In the early stages, before the split in the LTTE which saw Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran go their separate ways, some contacts of this nature were made. The

Vinod Mishra faction of the Naxalbari movement and Perunchitrana's group, which left the DMK when it abandoned the separatist call for Dravidanadu in the early '60's, were two such groups. Except for the National Liberation Front of Tamil Eelam and the *Thamilar Padukappu Peravai* (Assembly for the Protection of Tamils) — both Maoist groups which said they were only fighting for self-determination and not separation — everyone else went for the big parties in Tamil Nadu, especially after 1983.

The Indian central government became aware of the presence and nature of the Tamil militant movement on their soil only in 1982, when Prabhakaran and Maheswaran shot at each other at Pondi Bazaar in Madras. The actions of both after the incident made it obvious they preferred to work underground in Tamil Nadu. But it was too late by then. The matter was transferred from the State Police to the Intelligence Bureau (IB) of the central government. In due course, RAW took over.

Despite the IB's involvement (the first batch of militants was trained by them) operations in Tamil Nadu continued to be secretive. But 1983 saw too many young men wanting to 'join up' for the groups to handle in the North and East. Camps in Tamil Nadu became inevitable as each organisation was faced with the dilemma of absorbing at least part of the massive influx or becoming a nonentity.

The maintenance of large numbers in the camps needed the support of politicians from the AIADMK, the DMK and in some cases the CPI. The LTTE made a grave error, according to some of its sympathisers in Tamil Nadu, by cultivating MGR while discreetly and sometimes openly avoiding others. Karunanidhi and *Thamilaga Viduthali Padai* (Tamil Nadu Liberation Army) leader Thamilarasan were deeply vexed by the LTTE's strict adherence to MGR. In Colombo, the LTTE has adopted a similar one track allegiance.

In Tamil Nadu, the LTTE were very careful that not a single weapon went to either any of the various underground Marxist rebels or to Thamilarasan's separatist movement. Thus, unlike the other groups, they had a very good record with the 'Q' branch in Tamil Nadu — set up to crush the Maoist Naxalite movement and later given the responsibility of monitoring Tamil movements. But despite their careful conduct, the growing incidence of separatist and Naxalite violence in Tamil Nadu was seriously worrying some Indian authorities. The Accord provided an opportunity for a clean-up. RAW's promises were such that the LTTE never expected them to stand by and allow all of them to be arrested. But Ranjan Appa, who

managed their vast finance, Kittu and Rahim were among those arrested and sent back to Sri Lanka. Thus, when the LTTE started waging war against the Indian Army, they found themselves without any friends who could act outside the supervision of the Indian state.

Although analysts have attached considerable importance to the role of Tamil Nadu politics in shaping Delhi's attitude to the Tamil militants, it is Delhi and Delhi alone that decided on the course of action and maintained all the most important connections with the militants. Therefore, as soon as the RAW-LTTE talks of mid-1988 broke up, there was no one to help them in Tamil Nadu.

The war required higher and higher inputs in terms of ammunition, explosives, medicine etc. Even though the LTTE — suspicious of RAW — had hoarded vast quantities of ammunition and explosives in the North, it soon faced sharp reduced mobility and pressure on supplies due to the constant fighting on all fronts. The LTTE's brand of guerrilla war requires the kind of high inputs a conventional army needs. The volume of money that has to be handled to finance these inputs, and the international transactions need an urban centre. The 'closure of Madras' was a serious crisis for the LTTE from this point of view.

As IPKF operations aimed at throttling LTTE supply lines and the intensity of operations pushed them closer to Sinhala border areas; the prospect of a hostile Sinhala army at their backs became a serious consideration. This forms the background to their decision to deal with Colombo, which is always proving much cheaper than having a rearbase across the Palk Strait.

Cynthia, a 3rd-year medical student at the Jaffna University and Kittu's fiancee, came to Colombo three weeks ago. Kittu followed — for reunion, apart from other reasons connected with diplomacy or health. A strongly pro-LTTE paper 'Unmai', published in Colombo, is proving to be a bothersome fissure in moves towards an information-monopoly in the Northeast. In the meantime, the LTTE's public relations operation in Colombo has been expanding.

These are all signs that a fundamental change is taking place. Because of this change in the rearbase and its nature, despite the LTTE's commitment to Eelam, India may not be able to play the same role in Tamil-Sinhalese politics that it did before.

But the possible outcome of two recent developments may determine prospects for the internalisation of conflict-resolution in Sri Lanka

Saravanabhavan, elder brother of Francis, the LTTE's Batticaloa political leader, has been missing since last month, allegedly picked up by men in police uniform in Wattala. The LTTE leadership is seriously worried about this. And the RAW Director

for Sri Lankan Affairs had visited London recently to meet LTTE representatives there, according to the sources in Delhi. It remains to be seen how the LTTE reacts to these developments.

29-10-1989

Colombo diplomacy and the jungle war

The 'Buddhangala incident' kept the TNA in the limelight this week. TNA Amparai Commander Khalid and Foreign Minister Anjan Wijeratne offered the same explanation for the affair — that it was related to a land dispute. Khalid also denied that his 'boys' were involved.

The announcement of the IPKF withdrawal from the Batticaloa district makes one thing clear — whatever the uncertainty about the schedule of the withdrawal, it is linked to the preparedness of the Tamil National Army in each district to replace the IPKF. There have been many reports already about the activities of this force. Khalid has said 'TNA' is a misnomer and that the troops under his command in the district are known as the Northeastern militia. Some observers in the district feel the TNA or Northeast militia cannot be operating without the tacit understanding of the Sri Lankan government and the police stationed there. Khalid, who operates from the Kalmunai Resthouse — earlier the command centre of the IPKF brigadiers — says he and the Kalmunai police communicate with each other whenever and wherever necessary. But at Thursday's press briefing in Colombo, Minister Wijeratne said he was not aware of Khalid or his activities.

Meanwhile the EDF's (political party of EROS) statement on Thursday condemning the Tamil National Army (TNA) was a surprise move. The ROS is receiving training from the Indians under the current deployment programme in a village called Kirankulam on the Batticaloa-Kalmunai link road. They have also — along with others trained by the Indians — been armed and stationed in a camp in Akkaraipattu which the IPKF left a few weeks ago.

As Khalid sets about his job in Amparai, the TNA/Northeast militia is being gradually deployed in the Batticaloa district. Some confidence seems to have been created among the members of non-LTTE groups by the impressive sight of their 'army'. The dependency — sometimes terror — associated with the idea of the IPKF withdrawal and the savage

onslaught of the LTTE, which it was assumed would follow, seem to have been for the present allayed.

It has not yet been decided who the TNA/Northeast militia's commander for the Batticaloa district will be. The choice is between Razik of the EPRLF and Prasanna of TELO. The former is from Karaitivu, an EPRLF stronghold in Amparai, the latter from Jaffna. The Tamil National Council (TNC) in conjunction with its military council will have to decide before the 15th of this month, the date on which the IPKF has said they will begin their pullout.

The Sri Lankan police remain silent spectators as the 'militia' goes about setting up bases for its operation. In the meantime another round of conscription has begun in Batticaloa. This appears to be a counter to a recent recruitment drive by the LTTE. A sizeable number of boys have left their homes from areas hitherto assumed to be fairly impervious to Tiger influence. As the IPKF began pushing the LTTE towards the jungles, the other groups concentrated their operations mainly on eliminating all identifiable and suspected sympathisers of the Tigers. This also served in no small degree the broader strategy of the IPKF that aimed at cutting off all sources of supply to the LTTE that originated in the towns. But despite the combined efforts of the Indian Army and the anti-LTTE groups, a few silent sympathisers have remained in Batticaloa town and a few other villages like Navatkudah, Ariampathi (that these two are predominantly Karava villages is only incidental) and Kiran. The ceasefire with the IPKF gave an opportunity for the LTTE to move into many areas that had been more or less out of bounds earlier, and reorganise support networks. The LTTE's military and nationalist appeal still has enough potential to draw recruits. Ideologically, the LTTE's position is uncomplicated in that its ideal and goal is still a separate state of Tamil Eelam, whereas the politics of the other groups has become nebulous in the context of post-accord developments.

The recruits are taken to LTTE training camps in the dense jungles. In the Batticaloa district, IPKF operations have pushed the Tigers towards three major stretches of dry zone jungle that lie on the borders of the district. The LTTE is now well entrenched in these areas. Except for shelling suspected jungle hideouts of the LTTE, which has had no effect at all, neither the IPKF nor the other groups have been able to approach these bases. Since it began talks with the Sri Lankan government, the LTTE has built an immense military potential mainly in two very large, thinly populated zones. One lies on the right bank of the Maduru Oya between the Chenkaladi-Badulla road and the Valaichenai-Polonnaruwa road. (On the eastern entrance of this zone lies the village of Pulipainthakal — 'the rock from which the tiger leaped'). The other lies between the Verugal river and the Valaichenai-Polonnaruwa road, to the west of the Upparu lagoon beyond Vakarai.

The very few small and impoverished hamlets that are sparsely distributed in these vast tracts of jungle and shrub have generally been neglected by the other groups. Their main objective was and still continues to be the political and military consolidation of the more populated towns that lie on the main coastal road and the farmlands to the west of the Batticaloa lagoon. The decision of these groups to enter the political mainstream and their participation in the provincial and general elections deprived them of the motivation to develop jungle bases and consolidate their military strength in those regions, because there were few votes there. (PLOTE was the only group other than the LTTE which after the accord developed and held a 'base' in the jungles of the northern Wilpattu sanctuary that extend into the Mannar district).

The threat of the LTTE presence in those 'base' areas of the North and East which are tactically necessary to wage a sustained guerrilla war cannot be a reason for the apathy the anti-LTTE groups have shown in building up their potential as guerrilla outfits to face any possible turns of fortune in the future. It remains to be seen whether this attitude reflects an inclination on their part to 'settle down in the main-stream' for good.

This state of affairs in the Batticaloa District

indicates that the town jungle division maintained by the IPKF will be the main area of concern for the Tamil National Council. The primary - and perhaps the sole - task of the TNA in the present context would be to deter and check the advance of the LTTE from their jungle base. If the TNA/Northeast militia can succeed in holding the Tiger at bay, this will enable the anti-LTTE groups to continue the process of consolidating themselves with whatever means are afforded by the Provincial Council Parliament and, above all, India. Khalid says one of his primary functions will be to see that no one disrupts the civil administration in the area under his supervision.

In the East, unlike in the North, being pushed to and held in the jungles means one is nearer to the Sinhala border, which in turn means one has to compromise with the Sinhalese or face a growing number of operational difficulties. For the LTTE, prolonging the former means jeopardising its nationalist credibility. Prolonging the latter means increased vulnerability.

Therefore, the LTTE and the Tamil National Council have very definite priorities in the East once the IPKF leaves. The LTTE has to put all its resources into a thrust towards the towns from its jungle base. The other groups have to hold at least the towns with the conventional-type army that has been created. The separate momentums building up in the East do not appear to bear any relation to the visible diplomacy in Colombo that is aimed at arriving at a lasting solution to the current problems of the North and the East. The battle-line in the East are being drawn with different purposes and different imperatives.

One important question follows naturally from all these developments. If India is training and arming the TNA primarily to defend — through conventional military means — all the groups in the TNC in as much as they are part of legally constituted Sri Lankan institutions, then does this imply that Tamil militancy as an instrument of destabilisation in Sri Lanka is no more on the India regional agenda?

5-11-198

Tigers still for Eelam?

It was trained and deployed like a conventional army. But it set up its camps like a bunch of amateurs. The two companies stationed in hirukovil and Thambiluvil had massive firepower. When the LTTE struck the Thirukovil camp two ELO men — Asok and Thirumal — who were in charge, took to their heels and jumped into the sea. The others, mostly conscripts, surrendered. The fighting lasted a bit longer at the EPRLF camp in Thambiluvil.

The Thirukovil/Thambiluvil area is such that while there are only two road approaches from the north from Akkaraipattu and the one circuitous, the other narrow between the sea and a marshyagoon — the southern side is quite open, having several routes that can be excellent in the case of a withdrawal towards the Kanjikudiaru jungles — the case of the LTTE. The only two northern road approaches from Akkaraipattu were cut off by the LTTE, making the others totally vulnerable to the south and also preventing the arrival of reinforcements from Akkaraipattu and blocking the only possible outflanking manoeuvre (which was not even attempted while the fighting was on) along the Sakamam road.

Therefore the LTTE withdrawal with the heavy added load of captured weapons and a large number of surrenderees was swift and uncomplicated even in daylight. As usual, the surprise and shock of the LTTE strike was more effective than the fire power of its opponents.

The LTTE's presence in the jungles was not unknown to the TNC groups. But nothing was done to check the Tigers' advance. The situation is such that immediately beyond the southern border of Thirukovil village, it is Tiger country.

The Tigers are no more only a jungle presence between Thirukovil and Paanamai. The TNA is now spread out in the village but not moving out of the village into LTTE areas. The lack of the will to be on the offensive as the best form of defence has always characterised the other groups. The basic problem lies partly with the TNC leadership as well. The

TNC leaders were generally in India during the period of war with the Sri Lankan forces.

They all came back by Indian air force planes after the Accord and have faced none of the difficulties that normally help the seasoned guerrilla leaders in their specific situations. A lack of first hand knowledge of terrain and battle conditions that have developed after they left the island in 1983 are some of the factors that do not allow for good decision-making about defensive and offensive operations. The LTTE armoury in the district is now formidable. Because of problems in transportation the Tigers earlier had relatively fewer weapons than in the other districts. Among what they took are 6 Swedish Carl Gustav recoilless rifles, which are much more powerful and effective than the Russian RPG-7B. The ire of the TNC groups has now turned against EROS. The EROS was suspected of collusion with the LTTE, despite the fact that the LTTE itself has accused EROS of being insidious and of collaborating with the Indians. EROS has been asked to leave the district by the TNA. But that EROS should call for the disbanding of the TNA is curious because they have received the same training and the same weapons from the Indians and are generally considered to be the group closest to the RAW.

Meanwhile, all is not smooth going within the TNC itself. There is division in the Council on whether or not to admit the Muslim Congress. In addition, one of the TNC leaders, Paranthan Rajan of the ENDLF, has been pronounced medically unfit — the result of being in and out of Sri Lanka jails from the early 1970's. His condition has caused concern because the ENDLF is now an important factor in the TNA deployment programme of the Indians. The ENDLF has a number of well trained cadres at its disposal, unlike the EPRLF and TELO, who rely more on conscripts. The fact that the conscripts undergo a very short period of training and are looking for opportunities to desert could prove to be a very good source of weapons for the LTTE.

THE TIGER

"...one who brings a mind.

Not to be changed by place or time" (Milton, *Paradise Lost*).

His family is sympathetic to the EPRLF. His sister is the fiancée of Kirubakaran, Finance Minister of the Northeastern Provincial Council and senior member of the EPRLF leadership. He killed his own brother, but his sister escaped. He is Antony, commander of the LTTE in the Amparai district and leader of the predawn attack at Thirukovil and Thambiluvil. Antony is yet another example of the way in which the LTTE has moulded its men. Ruthless, fiercely loyal to the organisation, never having an iota of doubt as to their goal and ideal — Thamileelam. The motto found in all their leaflets and publications spells it out — "The thirst of the Tigers is for the mother-land of Thamileelam."

Prabakaran has been careful about one thing; he does not allow for confusion of purpose among those who remain with him. In 1972, Sathiaselvan's group was busted up by the Sri Lankan Police. Prabakaran, who belonged to one of its cells, survived. Then followed the years that saw little action, but growing militancy within the TULF youth ranks. During this period, Prabakaran was associated with the dubious Chetty Thanabalasingham, a smuggler turned nationalist, the poet-politician of Batticaloa, Kasi Anandan, and the amorphous Tamil New Tigers. The LTTE was formed in 1976. When the 1979 split took place, Uma Maheswaran took away with him most of its resources and men.

After 1983, PLOTE became the largest of the militant organisations, while later TELO got most of the Indian weapons. Uma Maheswaran became MGR's favourite and Sri Sabaratnam became Karunanidhi's favourite. The TULF had the greatest diplomatic clout in New Delhi. From this position of being at a total disadvantage, Prabhakaran persisted to make his organisation the most powerful. Right through the conflict with the Sri Lankan forces, the brief peace and the conflict with the Indians, he has not compromised. "Whatever his sins, from the beginning he (Prabakaran) has remained sincere to the cause of Thamileelam," said Uma Maheswaran once.

Therefore, how do the Tigers reconcile their present relationship with the Sri Lankan government with their stated ideal when addressing their sympathisers and supporters? (The cadres themselves have been given clear instructions — "Operations against the Sri Lankan troops, Sinhala civilians and

now the Indians have been suspended, but this only temporary".) As the true 'nationalist force among the Tamils' the LTTE has given the most logical explanation possible "TIGERS-SRI LANK GOVERNMENT TALKS — a tactical action by the Liberation Tigers". This is the title of a booklet that was put out by them, to be distributed mainly among supporters and sympathisers during the most recent round of Colombo talks, in September.

The booklet poses four questions and answers them.

QUESTION 1: Is it right to have talks with chauvinist Sri Lankan government?

ANSWER: Today's international trend is such that those who opt for negotiations with the opponents are more likely to win international sympathy for their cause.

There is a convergence of interest between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government on sending away the Indian Army. The Indian Army is trying to crush the Tamil national uprising.

Mao compromised with Chiang Kai-Shek to send the Japanese out of China. There is a similarity between that action and ours. Both are historically justifiable.

QUESTION 2: Will the Sri Lankan government grant rights to the Tamil people?

ANSWER: The LTTE has taken part in the talk without compromising on anything. Our position has been made known: "The problems of the Tamil speaking people can only be solved by a socialist Thamileelam. But we are prepared to examine another solution put forward that fulfills the aspirations of the Tamils."

If the Sri Lankan government cannot come up with a solution, the LTTE's position — the Thamileelam is the only solution — will be firmly established. In addition, taking part in talks (with the Sri Lankan government) will create the conditions for sending out the Indians, who have been preventing the creation of Thamileelam for their own interests. This will provide the basis for the victory of our struggle.

QUESTION 3: Can we antagonise India totally?

ANSWER: This question only arises if we look upon the Indian government as the whole of India. We must look on India as comprising the people who decide the rulers, the press which acts as the voice of the people and the opposition parties. The contradiction is therefore one with the Indian government and not with the country or its people.

QUESTION 4: What is to be done if the Sri Lankan army turns against the Tamils once the Indians leave?.

ANSWER: Our past experience justifies this fear. But India has no right to talk about the security of the Tamils once they leave because they have exceeded the excesses of the Sri Lankan Army and are trying to crush our National Liberation struggle.

In addition, the LTTE has faced the 100,000 - strong Indian Army. Therefore, it won't be difficult

for them to face the Sri Lankan Army if and when they try to turn against the Tamils. The Sri Lankan government also now realises that a military solution is not possible. It cannot easily handle a war in the North against the LTTE and a war in the South against the JVP with its 60,000 troops. The LTTE's position that Thamil-eelam is the only solution to the problems of the Tamil speaking people will be justified if the Sri Lankan government attempts a military solution.

12-11-89

LTTE—Lanka combine: fall out in Tamil Nadu

The Foreign Minister said the match was over and a new one was beginning. But the game on the Northeastern front might prove to be more complex and intractable than the one in the South. It is a game in which no one can define victory and defeat, where proclaimed triumphs can turn into unacknowledgable embarrassments and apparent defeats can open up tactical possibilities or gains in strength. And so the zeal with which Colombo addresses the complex of problems in the Northeast may lead to another set of problems, even India's current role.

For the ruling party in Delhi the election is all-important. It is survival for Rajiv. The TNA assault, which was obvious, was timed to make the news in Tamil Nadu as Rajiv arrived there on the campaign trail. In the field, the TNA assault has been a fiasco, producing a totally undesired and unexpected side effect. The killing of Muslim policemen has put Ashraff in the quandary and may sabotage other important designs the RAW had for the Muslims of the East in general and Ashraff's troops — who are expected to finish training in December — in particular. The LTTE now controls Tamil villages to the north of Kalmunai and has recovered large quantities of ammunition from abandoned TNA camps. The mostly-conscripted troops of the TNA were sent to the front in last week's clashes against the Sri Lanka army, while the commanders gave orders from the Onthachimadam IPKF camp. The TNA was able to inflict the damage it did mainly due to their Carl Gustav recoilless rifles, mortars and light and heavy machine guns and not due to the discipline of a conventional army nor the high motivation of a guerrilla force. Khalid has been severely criticised for the TNA's failure. The EPRLF

now want to replace the ENDLF commander with one of their own. The Finance Minister of the Northeast Provincial Council, P. Kirubhakaran, has also been with the TNA commander, giving directions from the safety of the IPKF camp. But it appears a RAW officer codenamed 'David' was instructing both Khalid and Kiruba. Even though ample supplies of ammunition were given to those fighting in Amparai by the RAW from its operational base in Onthachimadam, there was no proper use of it, only unwarranted wastage and abandoning of weapons. Many of these abandoned weapons have found their way into the hands of those in near-by villages. (Grenades are going at Rs. 10 each). The massive flow of refugees from Kalmunai, Pandiruppu and Chavalakadu after the TNA fiasco has put pressure on the TNC groups to now 'liberate' the areas which people have evacuated. The central government's move to spend one million rupees per day on the refugees through its GA in Batticaloa is likely to be looked upon by the TNC as a tactic to undermine the Provincial Council's credibility.

Embarrassing

One of the primary reasons for the deployment of the TNA, as indicated in these columns earlier, was to de-legitimise the LTTE's nationalist image. The conflict has created a situation where the LTTE-Sri Lanka Government axis has been given much adverse publicity, both in the Northeast and in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu. That the LTTE, which is now on very close terms with Karunanidhi, is helping the Sri Lankan government to bash up Tamil civilians could prove very embarrassing to the DMK at this juncture.

Reports of thousands of refugees fleeing to escape the atrocities of the Sri Lankan army, appearing in Madras dailies are bad news for the DMK already perturbed by the alliance of the AIADMK and Congress-I in Tamil Nadu. One Madras datelined report says "This strategy (the Sri Lanka Army moving in with the LTTE as a buffer) has created alarm among the population and in many areas, continued IPKF presence has been sought. "Sri Lankan armed forces were engaged in destroying the lives and property of the Tamils by aerial attacks using helicopters" and that the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE must cease this 'anti-people' war immediately. Paranthan Rajan, ENDLF chief, also urged the IPKF not to withdraw from the Northeast in view of the current situation in Amparai.

Karunanidhi's exceptional literary skills are a great political asset to the DMK. While the LTTE was fighting the IPKF from the jungles of Vavuniya, Kalaignar (savant — as Karunanidhi is popularly known) wrote a novel called 'The Leaping Tiger Pandara Vanniyan' that was serialised in a popular weekly in Tamil Nadu. It speaks of a relationship between a 'warrior of the Vanni' and a legendary king of Tamil Nadu who were both heroically resisting the European invader. During the same period, DMK MP Gopalaswamy mission to the Vanni jungles where he was received by Prabhakaran as Karunanidhi's emissary received wide publicity.

A pan-Tamil nationalism with the politics of Karunanidhi and the fierce militarism of Prabhakaran may not be a security threat but can be a political bother for Delhi. It was wrongly assumed by the Indian central government that a pro-Delhi MGR's formidable political influence had taken the edge off the DMK's nationalist appeal in Tamil Nadu. MGR's demise and the LTTE-IPKF war in Sri Lanka have turned the tables. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) which is in charge of the Indian state's internal security engineered a split in the AIADMK hoping that it would help the Tamil Nadu Congress-I to gain ground over the ruins of MGR's party. But despite great efforts by the centre, the Congress-I did not fare well in the state polls. Congress-I's Tamil Nadu boss, G.K. Moopanar was unceremoniously sacked by Delhi and Vazhapadi Ramamoorthy, considered to be very weak, replaced him. Subsequently, with the parliamentary elections in view, the AIADMK has been put together again. Delhi worked out an alliance with the capricious mistress of MGR, Jayalalitha, the present AIADMK leader. Delhi is counting heavily on the AIADMK—Congress-I alliance in Tamil Nadu — so much so that it was not the Tamil Nadu Congress-I boss who

prepared the candidates list for this week's election but the IB senior officers headed by one Saranian. Success in Tamil Nadu is in the long-term interest of Congress-I and Delhi officialdom since it would serve as a springboard to subvert southern regionalism. In the South, the DMK is the party which has survived best the constant efforts of Delhi and the IB to break it up or weaken it. This is primarily due to a strong party structure founded on a secular and rationalist Tamil ideology, whereas the other major southern regional party (The Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh) depends on MGR's celluloid image as in the case of MGR, and may therefore crumble in the future due to Delhi's persistent intrigues.

Sabotage

The Congress-I's main platform has been national integration and unity. The image of 'besieged India,' threatened by sinister external forces has been projected while the Congress-I has branded the National Front 'anti-national'. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI the Federal Internal Security Department) and IB have been heavily involved in forging documents to prove this. Therefore the Amparai violence came in handy to tarnish the DMK in particular and the National Front to which it belongs. A section of the Madras press warned on the eve of the elections that 20 trained LTTE cadres had arrived in Tamil Nadu to indulge in various acts of sabotage. Thus, apart from the IB and the CBI, the RAW has also done its duty by the Congress-I.

Since Rajiv's victory in the context of the National Front wave in the North may depend on the seats in may secure in the South, refugees and the dead in Amparai have become affordable, however insignificant the real impact of the violence may be on the voters, who have other things on their minds.

The strategy in Amparai has local aims as well. The main one is to drive a wedge between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE. Karunanidhi is worried by the possibility of an AIADMK-Congress-I comeback in Tamil Nadu, along with Rajiv in Delhi (which the DMK genuinely fears would result in the dissolution of the State Assembly) may also put pressure on the LTTE to move away from the Colombo government. The second is to make the point locally as well, that devolution and the safety and security of the Tamils can be ensured only through "active Indian intervention", thereby further strengthening the process of ensuring a legitimate role for India in Sri Lanka's future affair

Apart from RAW's designs, the TNC leadership has also been perturbed by the Sri Lankan government's apparent success in the south. This, combined with the Colombo-LTTE connection, it is felt, would allow the Sri Lankan government to sabotage what the TNC has thus far gained from the Provincial Council setup. Concern that the leathes of the JVP leaders might take the pressure off the Sri Lankan Government was expressed in a statement by Padmanabha, who said: "Although the JVP made several unrealistic political moves democratic forces could hardly deny its struggle against repression."

The TNC, which officially runs the TNA, may find it difficult to face up to the challenge in Amparai due to continuing problems within its ranks. Meanwhile there is speculation in the TNC that the Northeast Provincial Council may be dissolved if Rajiv is defeated, which has prompted

TNC leaders to issue statements that they will take up the struggle for Eelam once again.

If the National Front wins the elections, will this lead to a drastic change in India's role in Sri Lankan affairs? It definitely need not. In the first place, whoever comes to power is still bound by the Accord, which is one between two sovereign states.

Even though the Accord does not in any way necessarily imply the prolonged stay of the Indian troops, it gives the frame of legal reference for the bureaucracy and the defence establishment to prevail upon or condition any decision by a newly-elected government. Whoever wins, Sri Lanka will be faced with either a combination of RAW, a pan-Tamil nationalist DMK and the separatist LTTE, or Rajiv, the Indian Defence establishment and the pro-Accord, pro-Delhi Perumal.

26-11-89

Muslim involvement in TNA

The Minister of Rehabilitation of Northeastern Provincial Council, P. Rajaratnam of the ENDLF, speaking at a ceremony held at the Calmunai Public Library on the 4th of November, said the Muslims need not fear the Tamil National Army because 2,000 Muslim youths were being trained as part of it. SLMC PC Membr Nizamudeen resided at the meeting.

The number of Muslim youths being trained or the TNA may have been exaggerated or a target figure. But the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, having consented to become part of the Tamil National Council, has been made part of the TNA deployment programme in the Northeast, SLMC cadres are now being trained in Nilaveli in the Trincomalee district by the Indians. As things now are the armed cadres of the SLMC will be eligible to receive weapons from the RAW only when they become part of the TNC. The TNC is yet to decide whether or not to admit the SLMC. But if the SLMC is close enough to RAW, they can get their weapons without becoming a part of the Tamil Council, as EROS has done.

The training and receipt of arms will serve to cement the relationship that the relevant authorities in the Indian government have developed with SLMC leader MHM Ashraff. This could prove to be very valuable to the giant neighbour since the Muslim Congress is now the

third—largest party in the country in terms of the votes they polled at the last General Election, even though they contested only 13 districts; and Ashraff has no small influence in the political affairs of this country.

Asharaff's Indian connection is not just opportunism as many would tend to see it. It is also a calculated response to specific circumstances related to the consolidation and perpetuation of his powerbase among the Muslims of the East and therefore, the rest of the country. Having built up its support in the way the FP and the TULF did, the SLMC leadership has to now prevent itself from meeting the same fate the TULF leadership did being made redundant by militancy.

Two broad phases can be said to have characterised the changes that have taken place in the Muslim community in the East since the later part of the seventies. One saw the emergence of a distinct politicised Islamic identity while the other saw the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism and militancy. These are not chronologically separate phases, but are complementary and overlapping.

Paddy Lands Act

The disintegration of the Karave, Mukkuvar and Jaffna absentee landlordism in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts, the post-oil embargo,

internationalisation of Islam and Tamil nationalism have in various degrees contributed to the emergence of an articulate and ambitious social stratum - and its ideology - among the Eastern Muslims. When the Paddy Lands Act was introduced in the late 1950's it was primarily meant to deal with the acute problem of landlessness in the Hambantota and Batticaloa Districts. At the time, 72 percent of the population in the Batticaloa-Amparai region was landless, or possessed less than half an acre. The Muslims formed a large section of these landless people. Poverty was rife. A great majority of the majority of the Muslims of the Northeast labourers and weavers. Trade was in the hands of Muslims from Kilaikarai on the southeastern coast of India. The cultural difference between these Muslims and the Tamils of the area was minimal, with the Muslim community contributing to keeping alive a rich and vigorous folk tradition. This cultural affinity and the social backwardness of the majority of the Muslims of the North and East made it easier for the Federal Party. M.M. Mustapha, M.S. Kariapper and M.C. Ahmad became FP MP's. Some of the main issues taken up by the FP at this time like land, education and federalism were also attractive and immediate. The linguistic nationalism of the time was broader and more appealing to the cultural sensibility of the Eastern Muslims.

It is against this background that some crucial developments took place within the community in the 1970's.

The powerful Tamil Karava clan of merchant capitalists—turned landlords and the few Jaffna Vellala merchant capitalists—turned landlords had their vast acreages of paddy and coconut in Muslims areas. The Paddy Lands Act dealt the first blow and the Land Reform Commission delivered the coup de grace to this absentee landlordism. The landless section of the Muslim community benefited greatly from these two steps taken by the state.

Trade was gradually taken over from the Kilaikari Muslims, who began going back to India. Traditional weaving skills got a boost with the demand for handloom textiles. Paddy cultivation became more profitable due to state incentives. All this contributed to the emergence of a new, highly upwardly - mobile middle stratum among the Muslims of the East. The second generation of this stratum saw more young Muslims going in for education than ever before. The grievance and aspirations articulated by this new stratum were of a different kind, with which the traditional Muslim

leadership could not cope because of their position either in the UNP or the SLFP. Land was a key issue for the articulate middle class that had emerged from the peasantry. Paddy lands that were developed with Land Development Ordinance (LDO) permits and traditionally-held lands were taken over by the state for the Hingurana sugar factory and other projects.

These lands amounted to 7,000 acres. State-aided colonisation had also taken place. Digavaya became a burning issue when there was a sudden move by the state to acquire 10,000 acres of fertile paddy land owned by Muslims on Crown Grant title deeds. The Padaviya, Allai and Kantalai schemes have also been seen as discriminatory and depriving the Muslims of their lands.

Muslims Renaissance

The new intelligentsia became very articulate about these matters. MYM Sitheek and MIM Mohideen wrote extensively on the land problem of the Muslim in the Amparai district in particular and the East in general. Jaffna University and Batticaloa University created the conditions for part of the intellectual basis for the Muslim renaissance. Majlis were set up in all the universities and societies and publications appeared which were said to be funded and backed by Iran and Libya. Students, Moulavis (in form of pantheistic Islam as propounded by Raul Moulavai had the village of Kattankudy divided causing much violence) and Mosque Trustee Board became a very influential section of the Muslim community. The great potential of this section became evident with the anti-Israeli interest section demonstrations and the violence that followed in 1984.

Meanwhile, with the formation of the TULI Tamil nationalism started to become Tamil separatism, shedding its broader linguistic appeal and making an opportunistic use of the concept of Tamil-speaking people, which was later taken up by the militants. The concept of an ethnically-defined separate state and the concept of Tamil-speaking people were mutually contradictory and irked the Muslims. On the other hand, the State in 1977 became the protector of Buddhism, and continued to protect that image. J R Jayewardene warned of dire consequences for the Muslims, hinting at another July 83 soon after the anti-Israeli demonstrations in the East. The Digavaya issue was seen in the light of state efforts to establish it as a Buddhist sacred site of archaeological importance.

The efforts of Sinhala Buddhism and Tamil nationalism to consolidate and assert themselves and in the process subsume the Muslims resulted in

distinct Muslim identity constituting itself. At a local level, another area of friction was developing related to the decline of Tamil economic dominance and the rise of the prosperous Muslim middle class. Muslim villages were expanding into traditional Tamil villages by buying up land from poor Tamils. This exacerbated Tamil fears of 'Muslim expansionism'. Therefore, what were earlier local skirmishes took on the character of ethnic violence in the 1985 Tamil-Muslim riots.

Thus the international, national, local and internal conditions were ideal for the creation of an East-based Muslim party when Ashraff appeared in the political scene. To undermine the Muslim leadership in the national parties and to consolidate the strong social trend in his community, his greatest weapon has been the Islamisation of Muslim politics. (When Ashraff had to leave the area due to threats from Tamil militants, one of his associates compared his departure to Prophet Mohamed's flight from Mecca to Medina, inviting a great deal of criticism). The Islamisation has also had side-effects; a coherent fundamentalism which argues for the proselytization of Sri Lanka and the 'Jihad' groups whose concerns are much more local.

Ashraff's priority is to see that he is not

overtaken by the extremism and fundamentalism which continue to be consequential factors due to the constant friction with the Tamil community at a local level and the ideological distancing from mainstream politics at a national level. He wants to be and remain both negotiator and protector for his community. He knows only too well that negotiator Amirthalingam was overtaken and finally terminated by the one who established himself as protector - Prabakaran. Constant friction with the Tamils of the East would strengthen the extremeist sections in the community and within his movement.

This means he has to have peace at least temporarily on the ground to consolidate himself militarily and occupy the role of protector. The LTTE has made it very clear that to them he is an enemy because of his participation in the PC elections. The LTTE is with the Sri Lankan government at least at present. Hence Ashraff's decision to deal with India, arm a section of his cadres and associate with the TNC.

The coming weeks will indicate what role Ashraff's troops will play in the conflict.

19-11-1989

Tigers' two pronged strategy

As the last Indian soldier leaves the shores of Sri Lanka and the Northeast Provincial Council crumbles with the imminent "reduction" of his troops in the Northeast, Prabakaran has scored another point to support his longstanding claim; the only solution to the woes of the Tamil people is Thamileelam. Posters put up by the LTTE in Colombo and in the Northeast last week to celebrate 'Great Hero's Day' proclaimed the LTTE's motto. "The thirst of the tigers is for the motherland of Thamileelam". Dr. Balasingham and Yogi made it clear they had no hand in the actions of the Sri Lankan forces that saw the TNA retreat from Amparai when they addressed public meetings at Pottuvil and Thambiluvil last week. They were trying to counteract Perumal's persistent claim that they were operating hand-in-glove with the STF. Their concern to rectify the damage done to their nationalist image by this is evident.

From its inception the LTTE had a two pronged strategy; one, to conduct a military struggle towards separation; the other, to politically emasculate or

physically eliminate those sections and individuals in the Tamil community having a manifest inclination to compromise, who had influence or were gaining it.

The two objectives are being strengthened once again with the imminent departure of the Indian forces.

Firstly, the LTTE's morale has received a tremendous boost from the fact that it was the only force in Sri Lanka to have taken up arms to effectively oppose the presence of the Indian forces. Secondly, in the eyes of the Tamils, the Provincial Council — the latest post-independence 'solution' to the problems of the Tamils — and Varatharajah Perumal, who has spoken in the name of the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka, may now both appear ephemeral. This would appear to strengthen the LTTE's point that compromise does not politically gain anything for the Tamils. (Yogi said in Thambiluvil that the Provincial Council was nothing more than a Village Council).

TULF's decline

The campaign against the DDC's was the beginning of the TULF's decline. The TULF's compromise on the District Development Councils and their decision to participate in their election was the basis on which their general alienation began. For the LTTE, the 1977 elections were only a 'referendum' which confirmed the Tamil people's commitment to a separate state. The Tiger claim is that they and only they have not betrayed the mandate given by the Tamil people (see *Socialist Thamileelam — the political programme of the Liberation Tigers*, p 11) and that their struggle for a separate state is based on this mandate. The latest issue of the pro-LTTE paper '*Unmai*' condemns the Northeast Provincial Council as one that has shamelessly sold the Tamils and Tamil soil. The paper constantly endeavours to portray Perumal as a traitor. The style and content are reminiscent of the anti-TULF literature of the early 1980's put out by almost all the militant groups.

In 1983, when PLOTE was the first militant organisation to warn of ulterior and deleterious Indian designs on the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka with the publication of book "*Vankam Thantha Padam*" (The Lesson that was Bangladesh) the LTTE had not yet come to face with the so-called geopolitical realities.

"The Broken Palmyrah" says: "And it (the LTTE) was falling short by not conceptualising India's needs and aspirations so as to construct a path of accommodation of the geopolitical reality without total dependency and capitulation". (But on the other hand, the 'terrorist interpretation' of Hegel may have it that 'success decides truth').

In early 1986 the LTTE exterminated TELO in a ruthless and bloody massacre and told the Tamil people they had done so because TELO was acting in the interests of India. At that time, this view came as a surprise to many among the Tamils who continued to look upon India as the ultimate guarantor of whatever the Sri Lankan government might concede. From then on, the LTTE made all efforts to make it clear to the people that India's assistance was appreciated, but not its interference.

LTTE's tactics

Despite criticism about the LTTE's naive attitudes towards India, its propaganda continued to be directed against compromise with the Sri Lankan government on the basis of India's various proposals. In 1986, the LTTE went so far as to solicit the support of the EPRLF, PLOTE and Panagoda Maheswaran's TEA — all of whom were extremely suspicious of the Tigers because of what they had done to TELO only a few months before — to organise a mass rally to protest the talks the TULF

was to have with the Sri Lankan government in Colombo. By January 1987, the LTTE had created a situation on the ground in the Northeast where for either India or Sri Lanka, there were no alternatives for the Tigers to reckon with. The LTTE's solution to the intricacies of 'geopolitical reality' was to make itself the sole representative of the Tamils so that regional hegemony or Sri Lankan diplomacy would have no way of advancing its interests without the LTTE being in some way tactically advantageous to the LTTE.

Nevertheless, the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord opened an avenue which the LTTE thought would never open. The Accord brought Colombo as a direct factor into Tamil militant politics for the first time. The Indian army in the Northeast and the training and weapons given just before the Accord made it possible for the other groups to function and enter into dialogue with Colombo. The LTTE was once again faced with a threat of 'compromise' which they assumed they had banished for good or exterminated. To close Colombo down to everybody else became, in this context, a priority. The most vulnerable and politically-emasculated, but still the epitome of moderation and compromise — the TULF in the persons of Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran — were eliminated.

Varatharaja Perumal remains.

If a solution put forward by the Sri Lankan government and the Indian government and sustained by the world's fourth-largest army could fall like a domino, then what will save the Tamils from their misery? It now seems that since the Indian army withdraws completely only the LTTE will be around with its ultimate remedy. Like Amirthalingam, Perumal also has to be politically emasculated. Therefore effecting a legal dissolution of the Northeast Provincial Council and subsequent rout of Perumal—which would be guaranteed by popular support in the North and domination on the ground in the East — in fresh elections, would leave the LTTE as the only credible representative of the Tamil people and its goal, Thamileelam.

Delhi's primary objective once all its soldiers have come back home will be to have a war going on between the Tamil militants and the Sri Lankan Government, which would be the only way of justifying India's intervention in Sri Lanka and the Accord. Such a situation could suit the LTTE's basic purpose quite well, since it would give them a predominant position once again with Delhi's blessings. They will use this position to eliminate all possibilities that would allow either Colombo or Delhi to apply a 'divide-and-manipulate-to-one's advantage' policy.

Growing poverty sustains Peninsula war

The rise of Tamil armed militancy and the emergence of the phenomenon of Tamil refugees in the West have taken place and can be related to three stages of economic change in the country. The first stage was during the 70-77 period. The second stage was during the 77-88 period. The third from 88-91 and after.

The 72 constitution it is generally believed led to the rise of armed Tamil groups, but what is often forgotten is that it was during the period of the so called closed economic policy that saw an economic growth in the North that contributed to a rapid and broader economic integration with the South.

That section of youth who were affected by standardization were only a small percentage of the Tamil population. But it was an articulate section and was able to promote its problems as 'the' problems of the totality of the Tamil population in the Northeast.

That set of problems such as university admission, government jobs and language discriminations within the state machinery were the problems that were the central concern for the vanguard of the Tamil movement. The LTTE's first booklet gives these as the main grievances that led to their liberation struggle. At the time the book was published it was pointed out that 48 per cent of the Tamil people in the Batticaloa district were illiterate, and that an average of 65-70% had not even had primary education in all the districts outside Jaffna.

The small section of youth whose aspirations at the time had no direct relevance to the problems that were faced by the majority of the Tamil population were able to gain legitimacy primarily because the state projected itself as the protector and propagator of Sinhala Buddhism thereby becoming one that could be portrayed as a threat to the minorities.

Apart from the fact that the claims of a section of the Tamils did not reflect the real grievances of

the majority of them, the rapid growth of a cash crop economy within the peninsula and in fertile regions outside particularly in Mullaitivu and Killinochi was contributing to the growth of an economically influential section that was nationalist but dependent on the markets in the South for their livelihood. Many of the educated youth were attracted towards the highly profitable cash crop cultivation. Furthermore the oppressed slave castes within the peninsula also became economically assertive and less dependent on the traditional caste oriented relations of production.

The lower rungs of the caste hierarchy had been kept out of main-stream Tamil nationalist politics except for some cosmetic gestures. Their affiliations had been generally with the left.

The benefits of the cash crop economy were such that even though the significant section of the Tamils in the North who demonstrated their nationalism at the parliamentary elections in 1977, later voted for Kobbekaduwa in 1982.

It was the youth who, denied opportunities in higher education and state sector, went to the west at that time generally to the U.K., and established what eventually became the very influential foreign branches of the Tamil militant organizations. The role of the London branch during the early years of the LTTE was in some ways crucial. During the same period the EROS operated mainly from London.

Therefore when the UNP came to power despite the TULF and the small but influential and articulate educated Jaffna youth, there was a vigorous economy in the North based on fisheries, cash crops, and small industries which was primarily dependent on markets in the South. It was an economy that had a momentum that did not match the political momentum of the LTTE and other groups that were stepping up their campaign for a separate state which basically implied, the delinking of the Northern economy from the Southern markets.

The TULF was in the process of gradually falling in line with the economic interests that required the role of moderates who could further those interests in Colombo. But this process was arrested from '77; two factors led to the strengthening of separatism. One, the systematic undermining of Tamil moderate politicians by the state and representatives of Sinhala chauvinism and the Tamil militant groups. The other the systematic undermining of the economy in the North in particular and the East in general. The 70-77 period saw the development of an economy that, more than ever, integrated the North with the South and at the same time saw the establishment of a non-secular state which was by its very nature oriented towards marginalizing minorities. Those who came to power in '77 took over the latter for what it was and proceeded to undermine the farmer rather than strengthening it. '83 was a turning point; the Northern economic interests lost all political representation in Colombo. The militants took over. State facilities became almost non-existent for farmers in the North. Marketing became uncertain due to deteriorating security situation, which also effectively damaged the fisheries industries and its successful systems of co-operatives. The Palmyrah industry which flourished after the '70s and on which even now some 500,000 to 700,000 people depend directly or indirectly for their income, according to a recent UNDP report on the subject, has been severely affected by free sugar imports which stifled the jaggery market and the disruption of the state machinery after '83 with which excise controls vanished. Caste oppression and poverty that were traditionally related to the palmyrah industry reappeared.

In 1985 some militant organizations started a campaign of agricultural self-sufficiency in the peninsula. The objective was to reduce dependency of the Jaffna farmer on cash crops which for their high cost inputs and specialized market operations were still heavily dependent on the South. But during the year 1986 when Jaffna saw some

stability with the army confined to camps, it was observed that the land utilized for cash crops in the fertile red soil area in Jaffna had increased.

Despite this resilience of the Northern economy the war and unfavourable state policy and general macro economic conditions, have had their effect, during the 77-88 period.

Cash crop cultivation is no more attractive.

Meanwhile the paddy based economy that is found mainly outside the peninsula has seen the rise in rural poverty due to conditions that have adversely affected paddy cultivation in the island. This has been further aggravated by the war that resulted in the death of many a bread winner and abandoning of cultivation due to military operations. An ARTI report indicates that 3 percent of those who live in state colonization schemes are in permanent poverty; spending on seed paddy fertilizer and agro-chemicals has become excessive in relation to productivity.

Therefore when the nationalist wave started to recede from the end of 1985 in the peninsula, and more and more of the affluent there started leaving to the West, it was from the poorer sections of the Tamil community that started to fill the ranks of the militant movements. It is growing poverty that sustains the war now. It is no more education and jobs. Those who are eligible and who can afford leave the country.

The cash flow into the peninsula as a result of the large number of refugees in the West continues to ensure Jaffna in Tamil militancy as a financial center for their high input operations.

Thus the conditions in the peninsula and outside have developed in a way that is suitable to the financial and manpower needs of the militant organizations.

10-12-1988

Wrong strategies of TNA and RAW moves

The massacre of the EPRLF and its allies draws the attention again to some of the erroneous tendencies in their military decisions and operations. The sophistication of weapons acquired in recent times by them has not been matched by their operational practices, which could not have proven so lethally counter productive if at least guided by a pragmatism which should have been acquired in the past and by a simple common sense.

The tendency to set up camp in one's own village, or in an area from where many of a group leader's men have come rather than set up camp on the basis of an area's strategic location, defence purposes, withdrawal lines etc, has been a factor that has had many disadvantages than advantages for the militant groups in the past. After the original LTTE split, this tendency has been primarily responsible for many a military setback effecting the development of the Tamil militant organizations.

Older generations

The LTTE, when it was formed, inherited the wide span of thinking in relation to organisation from the TULF (Amirthalingam had an astounding memory that could recall the location of most villages in the Northeast), which was very useful to the TULF in their campaign strategies. Moreover, the politicians of the older generation came from an educational and career background that broadened their perspective beyond their villages and regions. Therefore the outlook that the original LTTE acquired from the TULF and their strategy of making use of the pervasive network built up over the years by the constant activities and organising of the FP and then the TULF led to a broad based development of their organizational reach. Camps were set up in Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu and in the jungles of the Eastern border. The concept of strengthening a base in Mullaitivu which would command a network of camps both in the Vanni and in the East guided much of the LTTE's activities before the split took place. Locations were sought even and in the remote Vadamunnai jungles

in the East. From the Perillaveli camp in Batticaloa to the Thulavil camp in Vavuniya the locations were good from the point of view of guerrilla operations and for future large scale training. Even the only one camp that the police discovered was such that Inspector Bastiampillai did not return alive.

Local leaders

Such a broad span enabled the LTTE to recruit on a territorial basis rather than in limited areas of influence generally available to guerrilla groups. From Gnanendramohan of Pt. Pedro to Ranjan (M.P. Kanakaratnam's son) of Pottuvil they had people who had the potential to organize the group all over the Northeast in general and militarily useful regions in particular.

It should be noted that the strategically advantageous thinking and practice of the LTTE was such at this stage despite the fact that most of its leaders like 'Uma', 'Praba', 'Nagarajah Master', 'Short Bala', 'Sundaram' etc., came from more in less organized backgrounds.

It was from the time that the LTTE split that the tendency towards localized perceptions towards military activities and organising took place. The Uma Maheswaran faction became more active in the Tellippalai and Chulipuram areas despite the fact that its Gandhiyam organization was rapidly spreading in the Vanni and the East. The Prabhakaran faction was generally working in VVT and few other areas like Thinnavelly where the Jaffna Campus was located. The EPRLF which was formed mainly from the GUES, the students wing of the EROS, fanned the Manipay area because the GUES leader at the time, Davidson, was from Manipay.

The situation changed for worse after the groups began to move their manpower and leadership to India. The necessity to take maximum advantage of terrain back in the Northeast of Sri Lanka was not felt, whatever planning, to which cadres were exposed in their camps in Tamil Nadu or in the RAW's training

camps in the Himalayan foothills, had no bearing on the ground realities back at home, and also failed to make much sense to boys of an age and a generation that knew little beyond their villages or regions. Further more, whatever the Indian instructors taught were generally out of standard military text books on guerrilla warfare which were heavily biased in their perspectives by assumptions derived from conventional battle.

Therefore, despite the training and weapons, once the groups began to come back to Sri Lanka to set up camps and conduct operations the commanders were generally inclined to do so in their own villages or in areas in which they thought there was a lot of 'support'. When Sri Sabaratnam came back to the North with a large quantity of weapons and trained men he set up camp in Kalviankadu in Jaffna, which was his village and where the Senkunthar caste (weavers caste) to which he belonged was found in greater numbers than anywhere else. Uma Maheswaran also, despite his Vanni and East-oriented planning, set up his base in Chulipuram from where his most trusted came. When the EPRLF came with a load of weapons that they had got from the Indians, they went to Manipay.

Substantial

The LTTE's preference for the Thinnavelly area apart from VVT was because it was the area of one of their senior members Kuhan and the University of Jaffna where two other senior members, Sivakumar (Thimpu) and Thaninayagam were studying. At the level of local leaders, even when in some instances there were orders to open camps and develop militarily useful jungle bases, they were found to gravitate more towards their villages whatever the disadvantages.

In the past there have been many instances where men and material were lost due to this tendency.

It has taken more than 8 years for the LTTE to seriously build up areas and bases with strategic motives. But in the case of the others it continues to afflict them in their operations.

In the TNA deployment in Batticaloa, except for Unnichai and Kokkaddicholai, the other places in which the camps were set up were by any standards not good locations whether for defensive or offensive purposes such as Palugamam where the LTTE launched its first attack in the district in a village surrounded by the lagoon and paddy fields, with only two road approaches. The ENDLF went to Palugamam mainly because several of its members

from the west of the Batticaloa lagoon were from the village. The LTTE was controlling Vellaveli in the neighbourhood and one of their powerful and ruthless area leaders was from Vellaveli. The Tigers also control the Thanthamalai jungles on the Sinhala border to the west of Palugamam, and part of the road leading to it from the jungles. Therefore the Palugamam TNA was helpless when the LTTE struck.

The basic rule of a guerrilla group of securing a line of withdrawal must have been last on their minds when the ENDLF decided to operate from that village since with the two road approaches cut off the only possible withdrawal point would be the lagoon.

In addition in farmlands to the west of the Batticaloa lagoon it is easy to get cut off and attacked unless an armed group is small and constantly shifting it can become easy prey to any agile enemy. Waiting for the LTTE in such open spaces could be nothing but disastrous even if one had sophisticated weapons. While the TNA was sitting duck for the LTTE in that area, the LTTE itself is faced with another moving menace. When Palugamam was being cleared, the cut off point pulled up by the LTTE on the road from Kokkaddicholai was suddenly attacked and all men there were killed and the point occupied by the attackers. When the LTTE which did not realize that the cut off point (referred to as cut outs in militants parlance) had been captured, came there several of them and gunned down by one of the PLOTE's groups that now roam the area. PLOTE, despite their small number of weapons, are able to survive and manage to control certain areas in that region because the LTTE is unable to corner them in any village. But it seems that once the TNA is completely wiped out the LTTE will be able to cripple their supplies, make movement difficult and then attack them.

Again in the case of the recent fighting in Batticaloa the same tendency made the TNA vulnerable. The ENDLF and EPRLF put up the main part of their massive strength in men and weaponry in Punnaicholai near the Batticaloa town, by the lagoon and near the sea. Again Punnaicholai was preferable because Anandappa and Rangappa senior ENDLF leaders were from that area (Another leader Prasath Krishnamoorthy, the jail guard who played a keyrole in the Batticaloa jail break, was earlier captured by the Sri Lankan Army soon after he returned from Lebanon, trained by the Palestinians, while frequenting Punnaicholai).

Damage

Moreover the lagoon separated most of

he other TNA detachments from this area. TNA reinforcements coming along the Valaichenai Road, Badulla-Chenkaladi Road had to reckon with LTTE groups which controlled sections of those roads. Therefore even when the Punnaicholai TNA was able to inflict substantial damage on the LTTE when fighting first broke in Sathurukondan they could not go beyond Thannamunai the next village to the north because TNA reinforcements from Unnichai beyond the Batticaloa lagoon, which had to move along the Badulla-Chenkaladi Road, got involved in fighting with the LTTE at Pankudaveli on the way. Crossing the lagoon in large numbers to reach Punnaicholai was impossible. When the Punnaicholai TNA got distracted by the fighting, the LTTE struck from a totally unexpected side.

The town, which TNA thought had been cut off to the LTTE, for it was assumed that the LTTE to reach the Batticaloa town was next to impossible since the two road approaches - one from Kalmunai, the other from Valaichenai - were controlled by the TNA near Batticaloa. Movement across the lagoon in large numbers or movement in the night through villages would also have been difficult, because of the time factor and TNA communications. Nevertheless the LTTE, by whatever means, was able to get to Batticaloa and strike in the night at the Punnaicholai TNA camp. ENDLF's leader Prasath and TELO's Batticaloa commander were among those who died in the battle that ensued.

Things were no better in Mannar when the PKF left. The TELO, the only TNA group to move into Mannar at the time, put up camp in Vidattaltivu, a location no better than Palugamam and Punnaicholai in Batticaloa. Vidattaltivu is the village of Selvam, who became the leader of TELO after Sri Sabaratnam was killed. It is a barren promontory on the coast to the north of Mannar.

TNA's capability

The only road approach is one that connects it to the Mannar-Puneryn Road. It also stands at the western entrance of the jungle road controlled by the LTTE, which on the other end touches the Vavuniya-Jaffna trunk road at Thandikulam which is a few miles north of Vavuniya town. If attacked

the place is very vulnerable and the only withdrawal line is by the sea to the Indian coast. Reports from the Indian coastal town of Mandapam indicate that injured TELO men have already arrived there. If India is to keep alive at least marginally the other groups, then it has the sea and they control some part of the Mannar coast because it is evident that the Jaffna and Mullaitivu coasts will be controlled by the LTTE. If one does not control any part of the coast line stretching from Mannar to Mullaitivu it means that one has no supplies which in turn means one would soon stop on an LTTE bullet.

Another aspect that continues to undermine the TNA's capability is the relative incompetence of some who are involved in the TNA project. David, the RAW officer in charge of the programme and Athavan, the co-ordinator of the TNA, once known in India as Segar Master, seem to have an extremely poor grasp of the ground situation. RAW officers are generally IPS (Indian Police Service) officers. It is curious indeed that police bureaucrats of RAW have generally handled India's most sensitive and massive covert operations.

Their grasp of tactical, logistical and geographical matters of the guerrilla war in the Northeast has been poor. Nevertheless it appears fairly certain that David's concern is to introduce a large quantity of weapons into the conflict rather than promote and look after the interests of the TNA.

On the other hand 'Segar Master' who used to style himself a Marxist and one who had worked with the Indian navy (submarines) has a known propensity for recommending methods of conventional warfare in situations where only guerrilla bands can survive. Many were trained by him in India in 84-85. None found any use for what he had taught in combat situations. The style of the TNA's operations partly reveal his propensity. Segar Master's immense knowledge of the historical, theoretical and practical aspects of warfare do not seem to have borne any fruits in the case of the TNA.

17-12-1989

The evolution of the Tiger

The decade began with the split in the LTTE. The split was the basis for the rise of an uncompromising militarism and for the involvement of India. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam had laid the foundation for the military means of securing what the TULF leadership had promised the Tamil people of the North and East on the 1977 election platform. For the TULF the concept of a separate state was at most a threat factor to strengthen their bargaining power with Colombo, and thereby strengthen their political base in the North and East. For Prabhakaran and his men Tamil Eelam was real; and it had to be and could only be established through an armed rebellion. The question of building up a people's front (mass front) was superfluous. If it was argued by the proponents of the 'pure military approach' (*Suththa Ranuwa Kannoatham*) that a mass front is needed in a situation where a people had to be convinced of a cause taken up by a guerrilla organization. But in the case of Tamil militant movement the people had already given a mandate for the separate state of Tamil Eelam in parliamentary general elections of 1977. Therefore it was said that the primary task of the militants should be to build up militarily by continuous armed action against the State. Even though the LTTE was founded as a military organisation there was a large section of those involved in the liberation movement within and without the LTTE which was not very much in favour of the 'pure military approach'. In fact many expressed the view that since the ultimate goal is political, politics should be in control of military action rather than politics being a useful tool to justify military action. Two factors contributed to this attitude against 'pure militarism'. One was the TULF background. The other was the exposure of many TULF youth league members, who went to prison, to the marxist politics of the Southern rebels.

The concept of a party firmly in control of its military wing or an "underground" was derived from an acquaintance with marxist philosophy and served as an articulation of the TULF's notion of the supremacy of political struggle, which finds limited armed action useful sometimes.

When Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran came to Colombo with the intention of assassinating Pottuvil M.P. Kanakarajam they were, an armed extension of the T.U.L.F.'s ethos. Uma who was Secretary of the TULF's Colombo branch was a continuation of the TULF's political approach to the 'final solution' to the Tamil problem. When the view that the TULF was betraying the cause and preparing the ground for taking a conformist attitude became widespread among the youth the strategy put forward by a section of the LTTE and the TULF's youth league was to systematically mobilize the Tamil masses in the North and East as the popular front of the armed movement. Such a mobilization it was argued would undermine the political base of the TULF, which in turn deprive the TULF of its political legitimacy to represent the Tamil people and thereby compromise with the Sri Lankan state in strength. However the militants who favoured the 'pure militancy approach' continued to assume the validity of the 'mandate' for a separate state given in 1977.

The Thangathurai-Kuttimany group which later came to be known as TELO, (with which Prabhakaran had to associate after the split when he was left without any resources) also advocated mass mobilization. Thangathurai's ideas in this matter were rarely evident in the TELO's activities after it was unnaturally boosted by the Indians. Meanwhile the EROS which was founded by some expatriates in London became active in some areas of the North and East in organizing trade unions, peasant organizations etc. The student wing of the EROS the General Union of Eelam Students was its most impressive mass front. The EROS introduced a new concept to the liberation movement. The question of the hill country Tamils. This added a new dimension to the trend of mass mobilization. (It should be pointed out here that if the LTTE was founded as a military organization, the EROS was founded as a political organization.) The Uma Maheswaran faction of the LTTE formed the PLOTE from former leaders Vasudeva and Santhathiyar, as its mass fronts.

The Primary motive in the political programmes of these groups was to undermine the TULF's power and to capture its constituency. The D.D.C. elections gave a great opportunity for doing this. A section of the TULF constituency which was not happy about the party's conformist attitude began to move into the mass organizations set up by all the groups except Prabhakaran's factions of the LTTE. The mass political fronts acquired strength from the hitherto politically neglected sections of the Tamil community, the East, the Wannai and the oppressed castes of the Jaffna Peninsula. Even though from time to time the TULF had been able to muster Tamil nationalist sentiment and gather the Tamil community in the North and East, economic, social and regional issues divided the community and in themselves were a sub set of grievance. The groups that were committed to the idea of eclipsing the struggle exploited this to their advantage. Therefore the predominant tendency among the Tamil militants when the decade began was political rather than military.

But the perception of the South was moulded by the sensational aspect of militant's activities. Both in the North and East and in the South it was the glamour of the armed actions of the groups that were considered the real manifestation of Tamil militancy.

The Sri Lankan state which became suspect in the eyes of the Tamil minority when it assumed the role of the protector and propagator of Sinhala Buddhism by constitution in 1972, gradually adopted the attitude of looking upon its Tamil population as a threat beyond its realm. A perception of the Tamil as the 'other' rather than a subject to be managed or controlled by the state, as taking root. The Sri Lankan state rather than one that managed crisis arising between two communities within its sphere of control preferred to be one that looked upon a section of its subjects as an externality, a threat to the state's being. The idea of the Tamil population as the Hegelian 'other', a menace on the periphery, led inevitably to the approach of excluding and a refusal to accept the role of Tamil militancy as such. The Sri Lankan army therefore gradually transformed into a Sinhala Buddhist army.

Thus when Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran had to find refuge in India since after the split, it became impossible to find safe hideouts that were not known to the one or the other. India had two actions that would assume a role in Sri Lankan affairs. One was the nascent militarism among the Tamil groups. The other a nonsecular and partisan state.

The IB and then the RAW took over the matter

of the Tamil militants in 1982. Politicians in Tamil Nadu saw the opportunity and potential in Tamil militancy as another factor that they could exploit.

The communal violence in 1983 created the opportunity for Delhi to openly involve in Sri Lankan affairs. The Sri Lankan state unwillingly created the conditions for the transfer of a role that legally belonged to it. The role of a state in a multi ethnic society which manages conflict between two communities, was taken over by the Indian state. For the Indian state its continued role in the Sri Lankan conflict acquired a legitimacy for a role that it desires to play in the region, the role of a crisis manager, a regional gendarme. For this India had to promote militarism within Tamil politics.

In 1985 when the Thimpu round of talks took place between the Tamil militants and the Sri Lankan Government, the largest and strongest of the groups were those committed to mass mobilization and 'people's politics'. During this period the PLOTE and the TULF were together. When these two organizations were on the way to opening up a dialogue with the Sri Lankan government, India through the RAW stepped up supplies of arms to the TELO and the LTTE, the groups in which militarism was manifest in its totality. The introduction of arms in larger and larger quantities led to the growth of the LTTE. It was the only organization that was from its inception fully geared to survive as a military group.

Therefore while the earlier part of the decade saw the growth of mass organizations and the predominance of the political over the military, the role of the Sri Lankan state in its self perception as a party to the conflict rather than manager of the conflict, the latter part of the decade saw the rise of Prabhakaran's LTTE, the only Tamil organization that was totally committed to the military approach. The rallies and demonstrations organized by the LTTE in 1986 and '87 were as a show of strength rather than conscious efforts to build up a political mass organization. The decline of broad based and politically motivated organizations which had shown potential to flourish after 1985 ensured a vacuum in Tamil affairs that India could fill. The Accord legally consolidated that.

The war between the Indian army and the LTTE, further strengthened the role that the Indian state wants to project and the legitimacy it desires to acquire. Its secular role in a multi ethnic region and a legitimacy to manage conflict even beyond its confines by virtue of its secular and multi ethnic armed forces.

31.12.1989

The Struggle for the Wannu

The Tigers never had it so good, and perhaps never thought it would be so good. Just as they emerged from the jungles as the only ones in Sri Lanka to have defied and taken up arms against the mighty Indian army, the massive quantities of the TNA's arms and ammunition, came as an unexpected bonus. If there is a war again it would be of another kind. If then it was the RPG 7 B, now it is the far more powerful and effective Carl Gustav RCL's of Bofors. If then it was gelegnite for all types of mines now it is TNT in unprecedented quantities. If then it were 2 or 3, 50' calibre heavy machine guns which can be used against lowflying aircraft now it is more than 60 of them recovered in the East alone. One wonders for whom the weapons that were unloaded by the Gajaraj aircraft were intended. The Tigers took 63 Carl Gustavs and a little more than 2000 AK 47s in Batticaloa and Amparai. They are still looking for weapons abandoned in abundance by the fleeing TNA in the Unnichai jungles.

Therefore despite whatever diplomacy on either side of the Palk Strait the introduction of large and unprecedented quantities of weapons in the Northeast has created the possibility of more wars, of a different magnitude.

Large quantities of weapons involve greater operational costs. Taxes are back. In the Wannu farmers have to pay Rs 25 per thousand chillie plants. Passenger van owners have to pay up to 25,000/- to obtain periodical passes to operate. Tractor owners are also liable to tax. A tax on liquor has been imposed in the East, which brings 5-10 rupees on each bottle of liquor sold.

A novel method of taking land in lieu of the sum to be paid has also come into practice in the East.

Peninsula

Till the LTTE captured the Jaffna Peninsula where during Kittu's reign taxes alone (on cement, asbestos, cigarettes, gold etc.) brought more than a

million rupees a day, the control of the Kandy Road which has come into Tiger hands now will ensure substantial funds. The control of the Kandy Road is crucial to a guerrilla group in the Wannu jungles because most of Jaffna's needs have to be taken along that road. Lorries bearing food supplies can be diverted and other innumerable lorries could be asked to pay taxes. While Tiger coffers fill up once again Prabhakaran's top and trusted financial manager Ranjan Appa awaits release in IPKF custody.

Important

Meanwhile in Oddsuddan in the Mullaitivu District where there are many brick kilns, it is difficult to come by any bricks. The LTTE in Mullaitivu is busy buying up bricks, cement and construction steel.

For a Northern guerrilla group Mullaitivu is strategically the most important district. The effective control of and access to the North as well as the East is possible from the Mullaitivu base. It is the district which has the largest jungle cover in the island.

The other groups as usual during the stay of the IPKF made very little effort to move into the district in any effective manner. The PLOTE which had the largest number of trained cadres in the district could not return since it got holed up in the jungles south of Mannar, and did not have enough weapons or the friendship of the IPKF to move into the area. In addition as it has been pointed out in these columns earlier the other groups were preoccupied with the towns and political matters while taking for granted the situation on the ground brought almost by the Indian army. The military means of survival was least on their minds.

When the Tigers moved into the district in 1984 they were not directed there by concerns of Eelam's military geography. One factor was the sociogeographic continuity of coastal villages from Myliddy in Jaffna to Alampil in Mullaitivu. The

Other was the connections in the prosperous agricultural villages of Jaffna settlers, in the district. Sellakkili who died in the ambush on the SL Army patrol in 1983 in which 13 soldiers were killed belonged to a family which had gone from Kalviankadu in Jaffna to a farm in the village of Jdayar Kaddu in the Visvamadu area. When Prabhakaran sent Mahaththaya to the Wann in 1984 he set up camp in Visvamadu and near Cumilamunai to the south of Mullaitivu. Cumilamunai was the village of Kandeepan, who was recruited to the LTTE by Mahaththaya. Kandeepan was Sriskantharajah the most powerful student council leader of the Jaffna University, till he joined the Tigers in 1984.

It was he who was the main organiser of the fast unto death in 84 to demand the transfer of all Tamil students who were following courses in universities in the South, to the Northeast.

The LTTE abducted the fasting students to India, among whom was Mathivathani, a science faculty student at Peradeniya whom Prabhakaran later married.

Not Easy

Even after Kandeepan — Sriskantharajah — was shot dead by the SL Army, Mahaththaya continued to build up LTTE strength in the Wann based mainly in Mullaitivu. Despite Mahaththaya's work the LTTE was finding it not so easy in the early days to win over the strong Wann regionalism which used to be occasionally instigated as antagonism towards Jaffna. The Wann once even had what was known as the *Yaazh Ahatu Sangam* (The organisation for the removal of Jaffnese). There was violence in Nedunkerni as recently as 1984 against Jaffna settlers. Even though Tamil Nationalism removed Wann regionalism to a great extent, the LTTE was not able to broadbase itself in the Wann. The local leadership was neither promoted nor projected which would have enabled the LTTE to acquire local credibility. It was only after the war with the Indian army that the LTTE moved its operational base into the Wann. Palamodai and Navvi in the heart of the Vavuniya jungles were not unfamiliar to Prabhakaran. It was in these places that LTTE had training camps, in the late seventies. But it took 8 years for him to come back to those villages. They had become PLOTE strongholds in the meantime. PLOTE was able to broadbase itself in the Wann because of the rehabilitation organisation run by the famous Dr. Rajasundram and because it continued to be active in the Wann militarily while Prabhakaran chose to confine his faction's activities to Jaffna. The EPRLF,

a new comer to the Wann based itself in the hill country Tamil settlement of Kannaddy and the oppressed caste village of Poovarassankulam. But the EPRLF did not make much headway in the Wann since they started centering their activities in Jaffna and the East.

Despite Mahaththaya's presence, the Wann and its jungles became crucial enough for the LTTE only after they fell out with the Indians and were pushed out of the peninsula. The Tigers were not without senior cadres in the Wann. It is only that they did not make it to the top of the Tiger hierarchy. Nevertheless Mahaththaya was prudent enough in view of keeping up a Wann image and credibility, to have Thavam as a close associate. Thavam of Pandarikulam is the most senior member of the LTTE in Vavuniya. He is contemporary of Seelan, Sellakkili, Victor and Mahaththaya. But Thavam was sidelined in the Wann during the war with the IPKF. He is said to have gone to the hill country as a disgruntled man.

Influence

The change of the Tiger operational headquarters to the Wann saw the rise to prominence and influence of two cousins from Pavaikulam, Dinesh and Jeyam. One is the political leader and the other is the military leader of the LTTE in the Wann. Both are senior members whose families had been resident in Anuradhapura for several generations till displaced by the anti-Tamil violence there in 1958. The Tigers have learnt their lesson in military strategy the hard way. They are now determined to build up a strong and invincible base in the Wann. But there are problems. The PLOTE which held a base in the jungles south of Mannar against the Sri Lankan army, the IPKF and the LTTE for the last 3 years is putting up a stiff resistance against Tiger onslaught. The LTTE has suffered heavy casualties in the heavy fighting which raged in the Chettikulam area for more than 4 days. Forty seven PLOTE members died. In the first round of fighting the LTTE suffered an ignominy which it had never suffered in the hands of a rival group. Two of its cyanide wearing members were taken captive. The LTTE's European and Canadian telephone news service was silent about the details of the fighting for several days. The LTTE captured Kiliyan of the EPRLF who had chosen to stay back in Vavuniya.

The LTTE has laid siege and is waiting in the hill country Tamil settlement of Musalkuthy. The PLOTE and its commander Mannickamdasan (a relative of the late Upatissa Gamanayake) have retreated into the dense jungles along the Mannar-Anuradhapura border.

Meanwhile, Mahaththaya's role in the Wannu may also be coming to an end after he was made the president of the PFLT which coincided with the child birth of his wife. It may have been felt that Mahaththaya's wife had a genuine concern in not

wanting to be made a widow by a Tiger once again (Mahaththaya married the widow of his protegé Srisikantharajah alias Kandeepan).

7-1-199

Tamil Nadu's bizarre politics

Muthuvelu Karunanidhi is a shrewd man. He knows that if Rajiv Gandhi's retribution eventually proves to be a political advantage to the Congress-I for making a comeback in northern India his survival as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister will be in jeopardy. The DMK lost all the seats it contested for the parliamentary elections. The AIADMK - Congress-I alliance in Tamil Nadu had campaigned on the basis that they would get the Karunanidhi government dismissed if they defeated the DMK in the parliamentary elections. Fortunately for Karunanidhi the Congress-I lost in the North and the National Front to which he belonged came to power. Karunanidhi's priority at the time of the parliamentary election was to use it as a mandate from the Tamil Nadu people for the continuation of DMK rule in the state.

The DMK expected that its success at the state Legislative Assembly election would be repeated because the internal problems within the AIADMK as well as the Tamil Nadu Congress-I would undermine their potential to muster support and maintain credibility.

One-time mistress

MGR's one-time mistress and popular actress Jeyalalitha had antagonized almost all of MGR's men. Her caprice was well exploited by pro-DMK papers to tarnish the AIADMK.

The Tamil Nadu Congress-I was also afflicted by internal dissension caused by the removal of its strong man G.K. Moopanar. Sivaji Ganeshan — the famous movie hero of yesteryear — left the Congress-I to form the Tamil Nadu Progressive Front. (*Tamilaga Munnatra Munnani*). Pakyaraj the powerful producer-director-actor who was once proclaimed by the late MGR as his successor in Tamil filmdom, fell out with the AIADMK and formed a party of his own. Most of Tamil Nadu's influential papers and magazines were critical of Jeyalalitha and her party. Nevertheless Jeyalalitha won.

Vast fortune

MGR had left a vast fortune for the party. But

when the party split with one faction going with his wife Janaki and another faction going with his Post garden mistress, Jeyalalitha, the party assets went to Janaki.

Jeyalalitha proved her faction's strength in the elections to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly in January last year. She got more seats than the Congress-I of G.K. Moopanar, who had advised Delhi against any alliance with either faction of the AIADMK. Rajiv Gandhi's frequent visits and the extraordinary prolongation of the Governor's rule before the elections during which Delhi tried to gain credibility for itself and for the Tamil Nadu Congress-I, did not help in the elections.

The Legislative Assembly polls made one thing clear to the Congress-I leadership in Delhi — that it is difficult for the party to aspire towards ruling the state without aligning itself with one or the other of the Dravidian Parties. Congress-I's long standing plan to hold its own in Tamil Nadu as it had done in other southern states was shelved once again.

Split AIADMK

Delhi (Congress-I's) actively involved itself, as never before, in the affairs of MGR's split AIADMK. Janaki retired from politics, as a result the party was unified under the leadership of Jeyalalitha and more important the vast assets of the party which were retained by the Janaki faction were made available for political work once again.

Delhi also pumped in a lot of funds into the AIADMK and replaced TN Congress-I leader G.K. Moopanar with Vazhapadi Ramamurthy who had earlier made representation to the Congress leadership urging an alliance with Jeyalalitha. Meanwhile Karunanidhi was engaged in subtle manoeuvres to attract the disaffected within the AIADMK — Congress-I ranks. The activities of G.K. Moopanar's supporters and the capricious and impervious behaviour of Jeyalalitha were conducive to this.

Delhi intervened again. This time supplies of essential goods like rice, vegetable oil, sugar etc., were curbed. The shortage of essential items in the co-operatives was something about which the DMK could not do anything. The shortage led to the party's undoing in the parliamentary elections.

The DMK was unable to secure a single seat. Party stalwarts like V. Gopalasamy were defeated.

Karunanidhi, well aware that if the Congress-I was returned to power, the Central government would further undermine his party's position in the state, preferred not to take a hard line against the Congress-I in his campaign. A story was even leaked to pro-DMK papers about a meeting between G.K. Moopanar and Karunanidhi during the campaign.

Karunanidhi's stand during the election was an indication of the Congress-I's success in making the Dravidian parties realize that in as much as it could not come to power in Tamil Nadu without their assistance, the Dravidian parties could also not survive as rulers in the state without its co-operation while in power at the centre.

Rice rations

The issue of rice rations was such a serious matter that Arcot Veerasamy — Karunanidhi's food minister — had to resign from his post, subsequent to the party post-mortem of their defeat in the parliamentary elections. The prospect of dissolution of the DMK government in the state was so crucial that it led Karunanidhi to send secret feelers to the

Congress-I leadership in Delhi. Murasoli Maran and Nanjil Manoharan met with one of Rajiv's cabinet ministers, Dinesh Singh, to work out a compromise, before the elections.

Now that the National Front is in power at the centre and Karunanidhi's nephew Murasoli Maran has been made a union minister, the DMK is determined to regain political ground it lost to Jeyalalitha by making maximum use of its position in the National Front to secure the co-operation of the central government in implementing its projects in the state.

Chances

But Karunanidhi is not taking any chances.

Moves are afoot to buy influence in the Tamil Nadu Congress-I for the DMK through G.K. Moopanar's people.

In the meantime the Congress-I is said to be negotiating with Jeyalalitha to work out an amalgamation. Such an effort failed during MGR's time.

Political advantages apart such an amalgamation may be motivated by pecuniary interests. Many valuable assets like MGR's Sathya studios will go to Congress-I.

Such matters at the home front may therefore prevent Karunanidhi from taking any strong position on the Sri Lankan issue.

14-1-1990

The TNC can woo Colombo

The TNA phenomenon, even when seen as a brief military fiasco, could lead to changes in North-South politico-tactical alliances, in the Andia/Tamil militancy nexus and in the conduct of war, if and when there is another one in the North and East. The TNA 'domino' has set in motion a dynamic that will create the conditions for such changes and a realignment of forces.

The groups that are opposed to the LTTE will almost certainly lose control of all the coastal areas that are vital to keep the supply lines from Andia open. They will therefore have to seek an alliance with Colombo. The TNC has already sought an interview with the President. The anti-LTTE groups will find it easier to keep connections going in the North and East from Colombo than

from beyond the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar. They now have a legal right to be in Colombo, which was unthinkable before 1987. This legality they will try to exploit to their maximum advantage once the North and East are closed to them.

The fact that the LTTE made such use of the alliance with Colombo when supplies from India become restricted and the geographical marginalisation that was being effected by the IPKF was seriously impairing their mobility and subverting their logistics, has set an example to the others. Whatever large stocks of weapons the EPRLF, ENDLF and others may have in the Southeastern coastal villages of Tamil Nadu, these will be of no use if they cannot be transported to bases in either the North or the East of Sri Lanka.

This will in turn require the effective control of certain coastal strips, the location of which would enable the quick and smooth transfer of arms and men to a base.

Danger

The best and most vital landing areas are located along the Mannar coast, north and south of the Mannar peninsula and along the northern Jaffna coast from Delft to Velvettiturai. The safest run from Tamil Nadu has been along Adam's Bridge to the South of Mannar — Adam's Bridge being a stretch of sea where the uninitiated can be wrecked on constantly shifting sandbanks, a danger any Navy patrol would generally avoid.

The shoals, reefs and sandbanks to the north of the Gulf of Mannar along Adam's Bridge and near the coast south of Mannar are many and perfidious. The skill of traversing these waters between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka is still based on traditional knowledge. Admiralty charts could be of no use in these parts. But the Palk Strait, which does not have these advantages, has been generally used more to transport men and weapons because Jaffna has a well-developed infrastructure that facilitates a quick transfer from coast to base. Refuelling, engine repair, boat repair and sudden changes of landing spots are all possible on the Jaffna coast, unlike in Mannar, where a mishap may be very costly because of the lack of the infrastructure needed to support sea operations.

Vedaraniyam was the coastal town in southeast Tamil Nadu where the smugglers of VVT and Thondamannar had developed, over several generations, a good network for their operations. The run between Jaffna's northern coastal strip that extends from Myliddy to VVT, and Vedaraniyam, does not involve the navigational problems associated with other runs.

Vadarniyam with its lighthouse, secure coves, and engine repair facilities on one side and Jaffna on the other side, where one can land anywhere and quickly locate a road or a temporary safe house, combine to make operations across the Palk Strait easy. The running time needed to cover the security zone on the Sri Lankan side is another advantage.

Apart from the Mannar and Jaffna coasts there are a few landing strips along the Mullaitivu and Trincomalee coasts. Even though the distance and hence the expense is greater, the Mullaitivu coast is suitable for sea operations using small boats because of the convenient location of a stretch of shoal which makes runs along the Mullaitivu coast above Kokilai safe.

After the TELO-LTTE clash in 1986, where groups became extremely suspicious of each other and of the LTTE in particular, it was deemed necessary to secure coastal areas exclusively. Common areas were generally avoided. The LTTE for the first time realised the need to guard certain coastal stretches which it thought could be made use of by the remaining TELO cadres to infiltrate from Tamil Nadu, re-group and carry out guerrilla attacks on the LTTE. When the LTTE had by the end of 1986 driven all the other groups to India, it intensified surveillance on most of the coastal villages. In Jaffna, the LTTE was most secure from the other groups because the LTTE could rush troops to any part of the coast as soon as a landing was reported.

(However, the LTTE may now use the Mannar coast more than it did earlier because of its present policy of strengthening its base in the Wannii.)

'Rearbases'

Because of this situation in Jaffna and because Vedaraniyam was an LTTE stronghold where the others were in no position to maintain secrecy regarding their sea operations, the anti-LTTE groups started to establish their 'rearbases' on that coastal stretch, a narrow projection of the Indian subcontinent towards Sri Lanka. The projection extends from Ramanathapuram to Dhanushkodi interrupted by the Pamban Bridge, where the Bay of Bengal meets the Gulf of Mannar.

This stretch of land has an advantage that Vedaraniyam and other coastal towns near it do not have — the Bay of Bengal on one side and the Gulf of Mannar on the other. Therefore several villages on either side of the road from Ramanathapuram to Mandapam where the Pamban Bridge connects the mainland to the isle of Rameswaram became very helpful to anti-LTTE groups for making preparations to launch their sea transport-runs. From here they could go towards Mannar, towards Jaffna or towards the East coast.

Soon after the SAM-7 (the shoulder fire missile known as the 'grail') training, substantial quantities of weapons were released to several groups. They were expected to go back with these to the North and East before the Accord was signed to operate in their respective areas of influence. It was during this period that the ENDLF was formed. The ENDLF established itself on either side of Uchipuli town on the Ramanathapuram-Mandapam highway.

Mandapam, Vedalai, Pirapamvalasai etc. were already in the hands of other groups.

It should be pointed out, however, that the EPRLF, the TELO and the ENDLF never succeeded in bringing any of those weapons to the North and East under LTTE control at the time. Some of them, which were buried at Ramanathapuram coast were confiscated by the Indian police and some found their way into the hands of bigtime smugglers and local thugs. The one boatload the EPRLF tried to bring was intercepted by the Sri Lankan Navy off the coast of Mannar. The ENDLF buried its weapons in an area where it was established. There could not have been a mistake.

The mistake was that they had antagonised Karunanidhi in recent times as no one else had done. By the seizure Karunanidhi has warned the ENDLF not to be rash. The many coastal Muslim villages along either side of the Ramanathapuram-Madandapam road used to be DMK strongholds.

There are several problems that can hinder sea operations by the EPRLF, ENDLF and TELO penetrating an LTTE-held North and East. First, they do not have the necessary expertise to make landings outside the peninsula.

Second, they do not have the necessary

expertise to set up camps and establish supply lines and defences in jungle areas nearest to any coast in the Northeast.

Third, they do not now have the financial resources required for the sea operations, which are generally very expensive.

The TNC groups will very soon lose control of Jaffna. They have lost the Mannar coast. They never had the Mullaitivu coast.

After the war with the IPKF, the LTTE is now in a position to monitor most jungle areas that are in the vicinity of the sea and can quickly reach any point of coastal infiltration because of its enhanced jungle presence and mobility.

Therefore, the TNC groups will find the long land border of the Northeast Province easier and cheaper to penetrate if they intend undermining the LTTE's power. Under these circumstances, it seems to be in their interest to forge an alliance with Colombo if they can rather than depending totally on Tamil Nadu bases as they did between 1983 and 1987.

28-1-1990

LTTE — the Tamil-Muslim equation

The Tamil people in the Northeast are tired and worn out. They are tired of war and intrigue. None of the non-combatants wants a war. The battering has been severe. But the LTTE's goal is total control. And that goal will definitely involve further violence. To establish control over society, violence is inevitable. In the North, the Tiger's quest is possible if they develop a powerful military and maintain social order.

But the East can always be a region that will create fissures in the LTTE's project of total domination.

The reasons for this are many and varied. Some can be tentatively summarised as follows:

The question of Tamil nationalism, which seeks, however, subtly, to assimilate the Muslims.

The question of Muslim ethnicity, its scope and limits.

Village-level Tamil-Muslim relations.

The LTTE has not been very successful in its social and political strategies for the East in general

and the Batticaloa and Amparai districts — the hotbeds of friction in the East — in particular. One strategy has worked — the massacres in those areas considered to be state-aided colonisation schemes, which it was assumed would eventually make the Tamils of the East refugees in their own land.

While the LTTE's hard line on land settlement is its great political advantage in the East, its attitude towards the Muslim question is a serious drawback that is bound to afflict its progress towards total control.

Rounding up areas in Muslim villages and conducting house-to-house search operations while calling upon members of the 'Jihad' — not necessarily of the SLMC — to surrender will lead to further bitterness among the Muslims because in these circumstances it will be looked upon as armed Tamil militants using force on the Muslim community.

The LTTE goes about using violence in the Muslim villages with the mistaken view that clearing those villages of militant sections of the SLMC will help to eventually bring about a situation

where only their close allies in the Eastern Muslim community will be that community's sole representatives, or even worse, a situation when Muslim youth who are members of the LTTE would play that role.

Acrimony

In fact, it should be pointed out that the Muslim youth who were recruited by Tamil militant organisations were partly responsible for the Tamil-Muslim acrimony that flared up to unmanageable dimension after 1984.

The Kattankudy incident that sparked of the current LTTE violence involve the murder of a Muslim youth who was a member of the LTTE.

The recruitment and training of Muslim youth was an extension of the mistaken belief that Tamil nationalism encompassed the Muslim of the North and East as well. The most progressive thinking during the early years of Tamil militancy that was possible within the Tamil nationalist thinking was to ensure proportional representation of the minorities in recruitment. The Muslims were subsumed from time to time under various politically-convenient concepts such as 'Tamil-speaking people 'Eela-muslims' and 'Islamic Tamils'.

The few critics of Tamil nationalism as such voiced concern over the way in which Muslim representation in the militant ranks was looked upon as a way of dealing with the Muslim question. It was pointed out rightly that any Muslim youth trained by the Tamil militants would be looked upon by his community as a member of the Tamil militant organisation to which he belong. Therefore these Muslim youth could in no way secure the allegiance of the community as such. In addition to the process of furthering the interests of the Tamil militants within the Muslim community, these youths invariably created the conditions for communal friction. The Tamil militants used their Muslim cadres to facilitate their military operations in Muslim areas. The gun toting youth Muslims who belonged to Tamil organisations that were fighting for the separate state of Eelam were a cause for resentment in Muslim villages because their Tamil leaders had little knowledge about the affairs of those villages and hence little means of checking on the activities of their young Muslim recruits.

The EPRLF institutionalised the Tamil National reaction when it formed — or began putting up posters in the East in the name of — the Eelam Muslim Front. It was an addition to its peasant, trade union, student and women's fronts. The Muslim community was thereby classified as a subsection of the Tamils in the Northeast.

Some progressives within the Tamil movement argued for upholding the concept of Tamil-speaking people while recognising the Muslims as a separate ethnic group.

Another idea put forward in the East in 1989 after the anti-Israeli interests section riots gave some indication of the rapid Islamisation of Muslim politics and social action in Batticaloa and Amparai

Illusions

It was argued that certain international national and local developments were leading to an inevitable emergence of a 'distinct Islamic identity in the East. Any attempt by Tamil nationalism to subsume this identity would lead to an antagonism toward the Tamils which could be further aggravated by friction at village level due to Muslims buying up land and 'swallowing up neighbouring Tamil villages. Therefore it was further pointed out that rather than entertain illusions of representing the Muslims as well, the Tamil militant organisations should forge an alliance with nascent Islamic Organisations (the Muslim Congress was just one of these at that time) and mosque-based traditional Muslim leadership that were politically assertive against the gaining influence over either of the national parties, the Muslim members of which had generally drifted towards Colombo.

The common basis for such an alliance should be at the international level, anti-imperialism, at the national level, anti-Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism and at the Northeastern level, anti-Tamil chauvinism, it was said. An alliance formed on such a basis, accepting the distinct identity of the Muslims of the Northeast and on the basis of working out an acceptable mode of devolution, would be the only way the Tamil movement could avert the disaster of an intractable building up their limited capability, 'The Island' learns. Informed sources claim that the SLMC was receiving funds from some foreign organisations.

Latest reports from the Jaffna peninsula indicated that the Tigers have ordered the authorities to stop their plans to reopen police stations and police posts in the peninsula. Last week's incidents showed that the government was slowly losing its grip in the province with the Tigers moving into take over the control. "Tigers flags were fluttering in the peninsula", 'Tamil sources said'. The EROS, a one time ally of the Tigers, has also come under threat with Prabakaran's people asking them to stop operating in the province politically or militarily, they said.

Meanwhile with just a month to go for the complete withdrawal of the Indian forces from Northeast Sri Lanka the Governments of Sri Lanka and India are still locked in a diplomatic battle informed sources said.

The Sri Lankan Government is reported to have expressed its reservations on some of the provisions of the Indian counter-draft for a proposed Friendship Treaty.

The Lankan Foreign Ministry's views was expressed to Muchukund Dubey of the Indian External Affairs Ministry a few days ago. The Sri Lankan Government was not happy about some of the so-called Indian security concerns included in the counter - draft they said.

An Indian diplomat in Colombo said that there was no response from the Sri Lankan Government to the Indian draft. These sources further indicated that despite repeated claims that the Indian Government will complete the withdrawal by March 31, the recent information from the Indian capital points to something different.

The Indian army has not indicated their

schedule for the Trincomalee district upto now. However all Indian forces were expected to leave Jaffna by end of March leaving six out of seven Northeast districts to the "Tigers".

On Friday feelings were running high among Sri Lankan defence circles when reports from the 'Tiger' controlled northern peninsula said that they had blocked the Sri Lankan Government's plans to reopen police stations in the peninsula. The first such incident was reported from Chavakachcheri where the LTTE leaders requested a group of policemen to leave the area immediately and warned them not to reopen police stations until the Indian army leaves, hopefully by end of March. These sources said that several Sri Lankan security forces detachments and police stations have come under 'Tiger' guns. The camps were under surveillance, they said.

In Kalmunai, Sri Lankan police station and the rest house army detachment were under threat, they said.

4-2-1990

The unhappy fate of Mr. Perumal

The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front which controls the Northeastern Provincial Council which is now effectively only in the town of Trincomalee, has pulled out of the Tamil National Council despite the threat of total elimination by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the apparent hostility of the Sri Lankan Government, the EPRLF had decided to go its own way. That its opposition is thus disunited is an added benefit to the LTTE. The EPRLF's pullout from the TNC indicates inter alia that it no more has any need for a common front. The Indian Government required the unity of all anti-LTTE groups as long as the Northeastern Provincial Council was tenable to enable field of reference with the limited instability that would have ensured continuation of India's role as a conflict manager in Sri Lanka. The TNA and the TNC were both initiated by the EPRLF in consultation with sections of the Delhi establishment. India's friends in the Northeast were in need of a great deal of Tamil nationalist legitimacy since they had fared very poorly firstly in their role as protectors of the community and secondly in their post-accord role as the dependent allies of the IPKF. The LTTE on the

other hand had further boosted its nationalist appeal and enhanced the legitimacy of its persistent claim that it was the only genuine representative of the Tamil people. The Indian government needed a Tamil nationalism (Sinhala buddhist chauvinism was institutionally guaranteed of course) that could be controlled. The LTTE's nationalism was the best they could have had for their purpose of keeping the conflict going in Sri Lanka where the government would be party to the conflict. But the LTTE's nationalism was beyond any management, almost fanatical in its commitment, the nature of which it now seems is not comprehensible to many who deal with them with mitigative designs. Therefore the TNC and the TNA were formed and projected as the basis for developing an alternative and manageable form of Tamil nationalism. But Varatharaja Perumal had other plans. He set about using the TNC and the TNA as instruments of stabilization, in the Northeast. TNA's Brigadier Kalihd spoke of ensuring the smooth functioning of the civil administration in the area under his command. Perumal's moves at the time were indicative of his intention of regularizing the TNA as part of the Sri Lankan army. Perumal's scenario

was the best for the EPRLF which was mainly a political organization rather than a military one despite its weak pretensions about being one.

A Tamil regiment of the Sri Lankan army would have ensured the commitment of the Sri Lankan government safeguarding the EPRLF's democratic activities. But Perumal despite several years of dealing with the Indians, failed to see one crucial aspect of their approach of Sri Lanka, namely the very obvious policy of divide and manage. The secularization of the Sri Lanka state and the instruments of violence that sustain it would close the most important avenues of India's intervention in Sri Lankan affairs. Perumal's intention therefore was most dangerous to the interests of Delhi. He was, it could be said, partly misled by certain sections of the MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) who made him believe that India was, after the Accord, only interested in stabilizing and consolidating what it had achieved for the Tamils; thereby ending the militant role of Tamil nationalism. Therefore, Perumal was justified in his belief that a Tamil regiment of the Sri Lankan army which had troops politically opposed to the claims of the LTTE would be the best to further his interest as a moderate Tamil politician, and also in his belief that Tamil aspirations could be effectively brought within the framework of centre-state relations, where he would be able to enhance his power in the Northeast by bargaining for more.

Perumal had prepared for such a role by rendering certain crucial services to the UNP in the Northeast during the Presidential elections. He assumed that Colombo would be 'eternally grateful' for these valuable services. Later he was keenly building up a rapport with Colombo which would have gained him credibility as a bargainer for the Tamils in the context of the Provincial Council

system. He went so far as to hoist the National Flag in Trincomalee, a practice that Tamil politician discreetly avoided or openly defied after 1972. Certain sections of the Indian bureaucracy also encouraged him in these efforts.

But Perumal could not be too smart. As soon as his designs on the TNA became evident following the attack by the LTTE on two of the Tamil National Army's camps in Thirukovil, the RAW officer in charge of the TNA, David arrived in Kalmunai and hastily convened a meeting of the local TNA leaders. The same day the attack on Sri Lankan security positions was begun. The TNA was set on self destruction. Perumal's intention of regularizing the Tamil National Army as part of the Sri Lankan security forces was thus busted. Perumal had to pay for the 'sin' of integration. This is another reason why India was not keen to weaken the LTTE beyond a certain point.

India is no more interested in promoting a manageable brand of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka because the LTTE is back. The TNC falls apart. For the EPRLF, the TNC is not useful anymore. It is a matter of waiting till the LTTE begins another war when they might try to rise again. Another reason for the EPRLF's pull out of the TNC may be regarding the several crores of rupees that were given to the TNC through EPRLF by RAW.

The question of accounts of these funds has been raised in the TNC. The EPRLF has not been able to come up with any proper explanation on this matter.

The question of where part of these vast funds went may have been an embarrassing one both for the EPRLF as well as the source of these funds.

11-2-1999

Enter, Mr. Karunanidhi

The armies of the Chola kingdom marched with the flag which writers and poets of the Dravidian renaissance transformed into the symbol of Tamil might. It was the Chola dynasty's flag of the leaping Tiger.

One of Prabakaran's earliest friends and mentors, the poet Kasi Aanandan who has surfaced again recently was a student involved in the Dravidian movement during this period. It is generally believed that it was he who named the Tigers so.

The Dravidian movement is no more than a tremendous social and cultural force it was. But the DMK cannot allow along with the wave of the Dravidian ideology, the loss of those symbols that may be required to stir dormant emotions of at least the literate Tamil nationalist sections of Tamil Nadu. The Tiger remains the greatest symbol of Tamil might; which it now seems Karunanidhi is set to revive, along with other symbols and issues which have periodically ensured the allegiance of the Tamil Nadu electorate despite constant and systematic efforts by the Centre aimed at diluting the potency of the Dravidian ideology.

Karunanidhi has recently found another way of diminishing the role of greater Indian nationalism. Subtle endeavours by pro-DMK magazines tend to portray the Indian army in Sri Lanka as an external aggressor to be resisted by the Tamil nation. To those steeped in the Dravidian tradition of politico-literary propaganda the message in Karunanidhi's novel is very clear. That the leaping Tiger Pandaraha Vanniyan is patriotic because he is resisting an external aggressor. The issue of Tamil rights has been replaced by the broader concept of Tamil patriotism which has to resist all external dominations which also provides for tactical compromises, as in the case of the LTTE's Colombo connection.

By externalizing the Indian army and extolling Tamil patriotism, through the most useful medium of the Dravidian movement, Karunanidhi may partially succeed in sustaining the potential of Dravidian radicalism.

Karunanidhi has come a long way from the days when he used to constantly demand that Delhi should send the Indian army to save the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

What we have now is a Karunanidhi who is carefully conducting a Tamil nationalist ideology into which he is subtly integrating the Tiger's Tamil patriotism, a task which will gradually create the conditions in Tamil Nadu which would be conducive for the perpetuation of DMK's politics and a resistance to the influences of pan-Indianism.

The survival of the LTTE as an independent force is also necessary for the DMK. It is now only too obvious that Delhi's involvement among other things has succeeded in politically emasculating the Sri Lankan Tamil movement. Such an emasculation if allowed to proceed any further would ultimately rebound on the DMK also. The LTTE is the only force that has at least survived it, by resisting it even at a very late stage.

Therefore the strategy is distancing the LTTE from the Centre and creating the conditions for the continuation of LTTE's independence. The LTTE has become very active in Tamil Nadu again. They are clearing the state of other groups with the help of the Q branch which was earlier formed under the State police to hunt down Marxist/Leninist's commonly known as Naxalites and later turned into the TN State's arm for handling Sri Lankan Tamil militants.

Pilimatalawe is angry. His mistress Marthanee, who is also his daughter Piyaseeli's friend, has told him that she would no more be party to his treacherous plans. Marthanee has returned from

Mullaitivu and is convinced now that the Tamils are a cultured people who are determined to rid the island of the invader. Pilimatalawe is alarmed and exhorts his mistress to behave like a true Sinhala woman. To which she answers "the Sinhalese and Tamils live in this island and it belongs to both races. These two peoples should have equal rights and should live here without antagonizing each other. That is my desire".

The cause of Pilimatalawe's bitterness and Marthanee's change is the heroic patriotism of the legendary Tamil warrior-Chieftain of the Wannu - Pandaraha Vanniyan. He has fought and resisted the British invader in the Wannu jungles of the Tamil north, and he has now helped the king of Kandy - Wickremasinghe to defeat the British. The valorous deeds of the Tamil warrior of Wannu have ruined Pilimatalawe's hopes of coming to power with the help of the British invader.

This is not from any Sri Lankan history book, but what is found in the 67th instalment of a historical novel by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi currently being serialised in the popular weekly 'Kumkumam'. The novel is *Payum Puli Pandaraha Vanniyan* — The leaping Tiger Pandaraha Vanniyan.

Karunanidhi is working with obvious parallels in his novel. The course of the novel is also connected to current developments in Sri Lanka related to moves by the LTTE. Earlier the novel described the mission of a friend of Veera Pandiya Kattabomman, the last Tamil king who resisted the British in Tamil Nadu to the Wannu jungles in Sri Lanka. His mission was to meet Pandaraha Vanniyan who was also resisting the British. This part of the novel appeared when V. Gopalawamy M.P. whom Karunanidhi once referred to as his 'sword', visited Parabaharan in the dense jungles of the Wannu.

Karunanidhi's remarkable literary skills have always had a definite political purpose. His film scripts were fairly influential in his comeback after the death of MGR. His literary merits earned him the name *Kalaignar* (savant) by which he is now generally known.

What does Karunanidhi have in mind in writing such a novel?

The historical novel has been the most powerful literary game at the service of the Dravidian movement. It was immensely successful in popularizing a so-called 'golden era' in the history of the Tamil people. The portrayal of heroic past and the courageous deeds of various mythical,

legendary and historical Tamil kings and chieftains has contributed towards the propagation of a Dravidian – Tamillian – identity, distinct and in no way inferior to the 'Aryan' culture of the very powerful minority of Brahmins in Tamil Nadu.

'The golden era' along with the uniqueness of the Tamil language and the anti-Brahmin secularism was part of the Dravidian ideology. If the Sangam epoch symbolized the purity of Tamil language and culture, it was the epoch of the Chola

kingdom that symbolized the 'golden era'. Many novels were about that zenith of Tamil power when the military and naval might of the Chola kingdom subjugated many parts of south east Asia.

The Tiger flag, the historical symbol of Tamil might now flies high in the Northeast, no doubt much to the satisfaction of the author of *Payum Pul Pandaraha Vanniyan*.

18-2-1990

Salute – to a friend

I salute a friend and fellow journalist most gruesomely murdered by those who dare not show their faces nor advance or protect their interests as honourable and brave men do. In the land where the people were proud of the Sinhala lion, desperate jackals roam, seeking out their defenceless prey. What more justification I may ask you, is there in continuing to call those who took up arms in the Northeast, terrorists, when more Sinhalese have become bloody victims of an insidious and cowardly terror in the South than the Sinhalese killed by the LTTE or EROS. Richard and many more have been brutally murdered; who or

what is to be blamed? Remnant of the JVP which still have access to Pajeros with a nocturnal immunity? The collective psyche of the Sinhala people? Enough of this silent impotence. The terrorists have to be resisted. Extreme cowardice and a gnawing lack of self esteem as usual seem to be at the source of this faceless terrorism. Therefore it should be collectively resisted before it starts to knock on every door looking for victims to torture and kill, thereby to reassure itself of its existence.

25-2-1990

Perumal's tactical antics

Perumal's declarations should be taken in a lighter vein these days. His Eelam declaration is the act of puerile desperado. Tactically it is meant to land the LTTE in a quandary by preempting them with this move so as to drag them into a conflict with the Sri Lankan government. For Perumal and the EPRLF, the Tiger had to fall out with Colombo before they (the Tigers) strengthen their position in the Northeast and with Tamil Nadu and Delhi. but little does Perumal realize that Prabhakaran alone would be taken seriously by

anyone in the matter of such a unilateral declaration of a separate state. Perumal has consistently created the image of a moderate over the last few years. Tactically, how far Perumal's move will be productive remains to be seen. But despite the ex-chief minister's provocation the Tiger cannot at this juncture afford to be dragged into a conflict. (In any case no one seems to be getting worked up enough about Perumal's Eelam to declare war on Tamils.)

The LTTE's success has always been due to the

fact that it has always remained clear as to what it wants.

Therefore the Tigers will be little distracted from their business by the tactical antics of Perumal.

Three Tasks

The Tigers have three tasks. Now that the complete withdrawal of the IPKF is certain these three tasks will mainly occupy the LTTE for some time. Most of their current activities and moves can be classified on the basis of these tasks. The first is the prolongation of the very successful process of convincing the Sri Lankan government and thereby keeping it at bay, the second is the reconstruction of the Indian connection on a more solid basis to suit the LTTE's strategy in the Northeast; the third is the rejuvenation of the Tamil nation, morally and economically wasted by two wars and internecine massacres.

The LTTE's very successful and swift campaign against the TNA would upon a closer examination reveal many crucial weaknesses in their military capabilities as they emerged from the jungles. The LTTE's main problem is one of resources men and material. An imagined terror and the prodigious and incredible military amateurism of the TNA have been more convenient for the LTTE, than any advantage in troops, mobility or weapons.

The Tigers had to pull out troops from one area to strengthen another. The logistics of the campaign against the TNA was all important because of these limitations, and that logistical capability would have been impossible without the Colombo connection.

For the LTTE, Colombo has been the most useful political connection after MGR. They have been more prudent in their relationship with Colombo than they were in their dealings with MGR. The first and foremost objective of the LTTE's connection with Colombo has been achieved more to the military advantage of the LTTE than to the political advantage of the Premadasa regime.

The idea of Eelam

Sensing, perhaps the bitterness and misery that were to tarnish the Tamil militant movement, a friend once told me, that he often wished that he were dead while the dream of Eelam was still fresh in him. He was a brave and

Colombo's usefulness in defeating the TNA was more incidental than by original design.

LTTE's Tactics

What are the other interests that continue to bring the LTTE to Colombo now that the Indian army is almost gone? The desire to join the mainstream, many would venture to say. But that would be a naive characteristic of a system of values where the semblance of democracy or the practice of immunized terror serve to advance and secure very mundane interests. The rationality of such a system cannot conceptualize the logic of Prabakaran's idealism.

The LTTE is a military machine with a clear mandate. The politics it may come to practise is a means at the service of its goal which can be defined only military unless of course Colombo concedes a separate state.

The LTTE needs time. It can't afford to precipitate a war given its limitations in men and material. It can't allow Colombo to flirt with the other groups even while it enjoys total control of the Northeast. Nor can it afford to get into a war to defend Eelam alongside the EPRLF(!)

Paradoxically Perumal's Eelam declaration may be a welcome matter for Colombo.

It has solved a problem for them since there was some concern about unilaterally dissolving the council (otherwise the need to put the ball in Karunanidhi's court on this matter would not have arisen). In addition this may invalidate a demand in the South by the SLFP that all Provincial Councils be dissolved. Such a demand could have made Colombo uncomfortable. Anyway thanks to Perumal matters have been made easier for Colombo and more so for LTTE.

The Tigers wanted a dissolution because it would remove Delhi's commitment to speak up for the EPRLF, and thereby create the conditions that would enable them to insinuate themselves into an advantageous position vis-a-vis Delhi.

4-3-1990

honourable warrior whose simplicity and sincerity were such that it never occurred to me to draw him into a conversation on the concept of Eelam. Many moons later, just before the LTTE massacred the TELO I heard that the sea had taken him.

The concept of Eelam has been taken up by two kinds of people. The one being those who have from the beginning or along the way of the struggle for Eelam, looked beyond it and who have consciously or otherwise used it as a slogan or a tool in their Machiavellian perception of means and ends. The other being those like my friend and many others who saw it as an end in itself, a non-negotiable goal.

Whatever their difference in attitude towards the idea of Eelam it has confounded the former and consumed the later. The elder statesman among the Tamils may have thought that like its counterpart the Dravidanad of the Dravidian movement of Tamil Nadu, it may not live beyond the limited purpose of a political threat factor in a multi-ethnic state.

The earliest reference to Eelam (Eezham in Tamil) is in the earliest Tamil poems in the sangam authorities. There is a poet by the name of *Eezhathup puthan thevanar*, Puthan — Thevanar of Eelam. It could have most probably referred to Sri Lanka. The EPRLF could say that the Eelam in their name denoted Sri Lanka when they applied for recognition as a political party. There were Tamil texts to prove their position.

A fundamental distinction between the concept of Thamileelam and Eelam has subsequently been overlooked. What is generally understood by Eelam for many of the uninitiated is that area comprising the Northeast of the island claimed to be the traditional homeland of the 'Tamil speaking' people. But Eelam, for the EROS and EPRLF have another meaning and geography. It includes along with the Northeast a part of the hill country as well. This was a concept first enunciated by E. Ratnasabapathy, the founder of the EROS. In the Tamil militant movement it is Thamileelam that denotes the Northeastern traditional homeland.

Curious map

Therefore, the EROS and EPRLF which was formed from its student wing — GUES — had a rather curious map of the state which they were struggling to establish. (The idealism was such at the time that there was a minor difference between the EROS and the EPRLF as to where that part of the hillcountry which included Badulla connected with the east). The two organisations were operating in the hillcountry.

The Thamileelam groups were the LTTE, TELO, PLOTE, TELA, NLFT and a host of others, which had taken over the idea of Thamileelam demoting the TULF. Even though the idea of a separate state for the Tamils in the Northeast

had been there for a long time, it was first put forward as the 'final solution' to the woes of the Tamils at the crucial Vaddukoddai conference of the TULF. The general elections in 1977 were taken as a mandate by the Tamil people in the Northeast for a separate state by the Thamileelam groups.

Be it Thamileelam or Eelam, a category mistake which few bothered to correct was at work behind the political articulation of these concepts. It was characterized as a liberation struggle, and it was the liberation struggle of the Tamil nation. Therefore it became a national liberation struggle, and the idea was promoted without the least concern for defining it in its specific context.

The struggle when compared to those of the Cubans, Vietnamese etc, where nations with already defined, demarcated and internationally accepted borders had struggled to capture the seat of power from despots or colonial masters.

There were very few who pointed out the category mistake since the idea of national liberation had become overwhelming. Surprising as it may seem now there was a general reluctance or apathy to define the struggle as a separatist one akin to those of the Ibo's in Nigeria, the Basques in Spain, the Eritreans in Ethiopia etc.

Such a definition would have entailed the corollary about the establishment of Thamileelam or Eelam which would have upset much of the political and military romanticism that had developed in association with the notion of national liberation. The corollary to the concept of a separatist struggle would have defined the ultimate goal as holding a certain border until such time that it is accepted and ratified as such by treaty; a next to impossible situation in the post world war II international system.

War of attrition

The national liberation concept led to the notion of engaging the enemy in a war of attrition; the application of the 'FOCO' theory of Ernesto Che Guevara.

The LTTE was so fascinated by the Latin American revolutionary that it failed to scrutinize the mass massacre of the Ibos who wanted to carve out Biafra of Nigeria.

The Indian connection after 1983 led to a fundamental change in attitude towards the idea of Eelam. Two organisations revised their views in the context of the 'geopolitical reality' of Indian interests. The TELO took up the position that it was India alone which could create a separate state. Sri

Sabrarnam gave an interview to this effect in the second issue of their official publication *Elutchi* — which shocked many of the local national liberation theoreticians. The PLOTE on the other hand realized that a separate state was not possible given India's concerns in this point of the region. This in conjunction with a strong left wing influence in that organization both internal and external — resulted in a process of gradual dismantling of the Eelam concept within that organisation.

on Eelam the EPRLF remained quite muddle-headed about it despite their submission to the will of Delhi. The LTTE is the only organization that still refuses to submit the dream of Thamil-eelam to the dictates of political and geo-strategic realities. For the LTTE the moral obligation is more important than political reality. It still feels that it should not betray those who like my friend laid down their lives for the cause while the dream was still fresh in them.

Even after the imposition of the Indian reality

11-3-1990

A fundamental contradiction

There are no permanent alliances but only permanent interests”

There is a fundamental contradiction in Indo-Sri Lankan affairs. India and Sri Lanka are opposed to the creation of a separate state for the Tamils in the Northeastern part of the island; but some basic interests of the ruling establishments in both countries are such that these contribute towards the perpetuation and strengthening of the phenomenon of Tamil separatism rather than working towards the progressive removal of the phenomenon and its causes.

For both countries what is at stake is not Tamil separatism, per se. This is the most important reason other than the fierce zeal of the 'Tigers', which contributed to their surviving despite the stated and asserted position of both India and Sri Lanka, about the course of the creation of an independent state for the Tamil people.

It is the consistent interplay of Indian and Sri Lankan interests after 1983 that gradually weakened the politically oriented organizations, that were more or less in a position to gradually discard their separatist and armed trappings.

An armed Tamil movement looking beyond the idea of Eelam is not suitable to India because it is the will to separate that feeds the zeal of armed conflict: an armed conflict with the Sri Lankan government is a way of bringing pressure on Colombo in the process of destabilization.

A Tamil group that works out its strategy in terms of compromise becomes a useless connection when the need arises for Delhi to step up pressure on a Colombo government that might foolishly decide to allow itself to be led astray by interested parties in the West, in a way that could jeopardize some Indian interests in this part of the region.

Furthermore there is another important political aspect to the destabilization agenda apart from India's stated and assumed strategic and economic concerns. It is the projection of a legitimacy; one that politically guarantees India's role of a secular state that is a rationalizing force in a multiethnic region, such a role projects it beyond its boundaries, as a manager of conflict in an ethnic situation. The Sri Lankan Tamil problem has been its main venue in the region for exercising this role. It appears therefore that India's concern is with legitimized intervention in the guise of a manager of ethnic conflict, rather than the crude American approach of delegated thuggery and butchery. The assumption of such a role by the Indian state puts those forces that may be inimical to its national and regional interests on the side of the non-rational which gives a political advantage to its claims in the region.

Hence it can be said that India also uses destabilization in ethnic situations for the politico-strategic purpose of promoting its image and role of the greatest stabilizing and rationalizing force in the subcontinent.

There is a definite qualitative difference between the LTTE and the Contras' even though both may be seen as instruments of destabilization.

The LTTE gives India the role of a mediator on behalf of a population battered by the State controlled by a hostile ethnic group. The Contras on the other hand were used with the open objective of bashing up a movement that had overthrown a US sponsored thug.

There is another reason other than the agenda of destabilization for the preference of armed separatism from India's point of view. A broad based political organization among the Tamils in the Northeast may not be easy to handle because of two factors. One is that political broadbasing will eventually prevent an organization from being hooked to supplies of arms and ammunition, and hence become less and less controllable. The other is that broadbasing through democratic means such as trade union and mass front activities if successful give political legitimacy to the claims of an organization which would diminish the standing of an external mediator. When an organization's needs are military needs, its political options could be limited by those needs. (The LTTE limited its connection to MGR and RAW while in India and has to limit its connection to the UNP while in Colombo.) Whereas a political organizations options are many both nationally and

internationally, which makes it hazardous to use its armed wing as an instrument of destabilization. The wide range of options for a politically motivated organization that has disowned separatism or uses it as a slogan only can be inimical to Colombo and Delhi for different reasons. For Delhi the problem may arise from such a group seeking and building up long term and solid relations outside and inside India; relations that cannot be supervised or controlled by Delhi and which might eventually help that group to move away from its sphere of influence.

For Colombo the problem from a non-separatist Tamil group with a range of political options is that it presents the dangerous possibility of undesirable alliances, in the South. A Tamil group that can speak to the Sinhala people and build up its links in the South on a sound political basis can be perceived to be a great threat in a situation of widespread political discontent among the Sinhalese.

Colombo would be 'happy' with a war in the Northeast rather than be faced with the prospect of an ethnically unified threat to the establishment.

18-3-1990

The importance of (MK) Stalin

In politics my progress has been from the grassroots. I joined the party as an ordinary member and gradually worked my way up, to become a general committee member. I have never been appointed to any post in the party but was duly elected and now I am the secretary to the party's youth front", says M.K. Stalin. Indo-Sri Lankan scenario planning — if at all there is any such thing to guide decision making in Colombo — cannot afford to exclude him in the long run.

M.K. Stalin is one of the most influential people in the DMK and in Tamil Nadu right now, and a controversial figure in 'Dravidian' politics, because of his role as the leader of the powerful youth wing of the DMK. One would find it difficult to attribute the rise of M.K. Stalin to the fact that he is M. Karunanidhi's son. He is no dynastic imposition on the party. It is a strong point for him that, of Karunanidhi's five sons, he is the only one

who has taken up politics as a profession. Stalin is also a member of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.

Although he is not a minister in Karunanidhi's cabinet he is able to wield considerable power because of the usefulness of the active youth wing of the DMK in the actual building up of the party's strength. The party's success at the TN Legislative Assembly elections after many years in the opposition can also be attributed to the role of Stalin's youth wing. The youth wing of the DMK had an important function in the early days of the Dravidian movement since the various forms of non-violence and sometimes violent protests had to depend on the youth who, unlike the generation before them, were not greatly influenced by the greater Indian nationalism but were more the products of the Dravidian renaissance movement and the rationalist movement of E.V. Ramasamy —

the founder of the *Dravida Kazhagam*.

When MGR split from the DMK and formed the AIADMK he began promoting his fan clubs as an alternative to the DMK's youth wing. The fan clubs which MGR organised all over Tamil Nadu were immensely influential in defeating the DMK. While MGR was in power he used the fan club as a local power base to undermine the political clout of the DMK youth wing. Even though MGR realized the potential it had in keeping up the energy of the Dravidian ideology he made a mistake in promoting his fan clubs to counter the DMK youth wing branches. The fan clubs were enormously useful for AIADMK politics as long as MGR and his movies were there, but the DMK youth organizations had a more solid basis; they were essential units of the party and were linked to local social reform movements. Having been hooked to the MGR charisma, the fan clubs have not been able to evolve politically after he died. The organizational basis of MGR's politics is disintegrating now.

For the DMK the youth front is a local unit and point of mobilisation and in Tamil movement it is frequent mobilisation on issues such as language discriminations etc., that is deemed necessary to keep up the ideological fervour. This is true of the DK, DMK, the Federal Party, the TULF and the LTTE.

Lankan Tamils

MGR and Karunanidhi added another distinct issue to the Dravidian cause after 1983; the issue of the Sri Lankan Tamils. The DMK youth were mainly mobilised on this issue after 1983. Therefore, whatever the party line they were sympathetic to the Eelam cause at a local level, and generally tended to look upon the matter as part of the Dravidian cause. This is why while Karunanidhi was sympathetic to the TELO, DMK sympathies were different from area to area according to the level of contact with one or the other Tamil militant organization (Madurai DMK was with the LTTE while the Tanjore DMK was with the PLOTE.)

This is where Stalin may have an important role to play in Sri Lankan Tamil affairs despite the

fact that he has not thus far made any strong commitment on the issue. Local contacts with the Dravidian movement is more useful to Sri Lankan Tamil militants than party level contacts. It was such contacts that became extremely useful to the LTTE during the war with the IPKF. An almost unlimited supply of explosives and a limited quantity of ammunition were possible because of these contacts and sympathies. M.K. Stalin is more in touch with this stratum of the Dravidian movement by virtue of his position as the youth wing leader of the DMK. This broad stratum includes Veeramani's *Dravida Kazhagam* and the AIADMK but it is the enthusiastic youth of the DMK who preponderate. Other Tamil militant organizations which hoped to build up connections on a more radical Dravidian basis had difficulties because these connections were under surveillance for espousing separatism in Tamil Nadu even after it was made illegal by constitutional amendment in the early sixties.

Perunchitiranar left the DMK when C. N. Annadurai decided to foreswear the demand for Dravidanad. It was he who was most useful when the LTTE (before it split) first established a rearbase in Tamil Nadu. His son Pozhilan became active in an armed separatist organisation which demanded the secession of Tamil Nadu from India. But the Tamil Nadu police and the IB were successful in busting up the movement in 1988. As a result all those militants from the North who had developed good relations with them were severely affected. The LTTE is wiser. It draws on a broader Dravidian ethos, which is main stream, and therefore safe. The Tigers trust this ethos so much that the only surviving central committee member other than Prabhakaran continues to function from Tamil Nadu. Pronouncements aside, the facts indicate that Karunanidhi and the Tigers are counting on pan-Tamil nationalism for their long term survival and growth strategy.

If this is so, one cannot afford to leave out M.K. Stalin and the DMK youth front he leads from scenarios on the future of the Tamil movement.

25-3-1990

LTTE invests in Tamil Nadu nationalism

'Baby' Subramaniam was a central committee member of the LTTE when it was formed in 1976. Many changes have taken place since then. The central committee later approved the recruitment of many who later became famous such as Mahattaya and Balasingham. Dr. Balasingham was recruited by the LTTE's London branch around 1978. After the split in the LTTE took place in 1979 he preferred to edit a journal called *Nexus* and remained non-committal for some time; and Yogaratnam Yogi of course is extremely junior in the Tiger hierarchy having spent several years in London even after 1983. His main qualification for being what he is now in the LTTE is that he is the brother of Ponnammam alias Kuhan, of Thalaisyazhi near the Jaffna University, who was one of Prabhakaran's most trusted and senior lieutenants.

'Baby' Subramaniam was the only person of the LTTE's central committee who is still very active and who has remained loyal to Prabhakaran to this day. After the LTTE split Prabhakaran decided to do away with the central committee system and formed a vague body called the senior committee. Many of the LTTE leaders who rose to fame after 1985 as area commanders would not have belonged to this senior committee. Many of the LTTE's vital political and propagandist connections are controlled by 'Baby' Subramaniam.

Then there is another man more powerful than 'Baby' and held in great respect because of his seniority and age. His relationship with Prabhakaran predates the formation of the LTTE. Many in the LTTE today may not even realise that such a person exists. The mysterious Appiah also controls many vital connections and continues to be a powerful person next only to Prabhakaran.

Kundappa alias Ragu holds a rank equal to that of Mahathaya and is a contemporary of his. Kundappa is believed to have handled arms and ammunition supplies during the critical days of the IPKF offensive. Unlike the other two he has been more exposed and identified. The Tiger boss may

have had a different role for him in mind when he allowed him to appear in public at the Sudumalai meeting in 1987. But Kundappa has once again become one of Prabhakaran's unseen and unheard of lieutenants.

● Success

That he is careful not to expose his associates and lieutenants who handle crucial and sensitive matters which are vital to the organization's survival is one more reason for Prabhakaran's success as a militant leader; one who has been able to keep his organization free of extraneous influences which tend to create dissension within.

The crux of the matter is that more of these important people have sighted Colombo despite much rhetoric about how the 'Tigers' trusts Colombo. Maybe someone could say that there is no need for everyone to come to Colombo. But then why should these people increasingly frequent Tamil Nadu?

'Baby' Subramaniam and Appiah are more active in India now. Tiger presence in Tamil Nadu is quietly becoming greater than it used to be. Even during the days of the harsh crack down on the LTTE subsequent to the failure of the RAW negotiations, 'Baby' Subramaniam was able to continue with his work because the Q branch, which supervises and sometimes controls' most Tamil militant activities in the Tamil Nadu state, knew only his name, not the man. He could travel and work with great facility and ease because of the vast range of useful contacts.

The Tiger propaganda machine is as equally effective as its war machine. But when they fell out with India they suddenly found that many venues and sources of their international propaganda was closing up or drying up. Even during the most difficult of times it was that section of the Tamil Nadu press which they have cultivated through pecuniary and personal means that kept up their cause and the invectives against the Indian army in the Northeast. S.M. Gopalarathnam, otherwise

known as SMG, a well known and senior journalist in Jaffna who edited the 'Eelamurasu' for the Tigers under Sasheer Kaka, started a series in the popular Tamil weekly, the 'Junior Vikatan' called "an Indian prison on Eelam soil." This magazine also gave wide coverage to the V. Gopalaswamy mission to the Wannī jungles during the height of the IPKF offensive. Most of the anti-IPKF propaganda was done in Tamil Nadu during this period. It was the pro DMK LTTE press in Tamil Nadu that was able to counter the successful Delhi - EPRLF propaganda that the LTTE was politically and militarily marginalised.

It seems that the experience of the last three years has set Prabhakaran on the course of a long term investment in the strong Dravidian ideological stratum in Tamil Nadu through personal, political and pecuniary means.

Karunanidhi also finds the process advantageous in his long term interests.

● Check point

Some of the details of an incident that took place some time ago would throw some light on the matter. A police check point has been put up at a place called Pannamkattan near Ramanathapuram town subsequent to the discovery of an arms cache in the coastal village of Dargavalasai. The police in Ramanad district used to turn a blind eye on the operations by the anti-LTTE groups during MGR's time. After V.P. Singh came to power and Karunanidhi and the DMK decided to back the LTTE, the local police was activated against these operations. The anti-LTTE groups had to move out as a result.

Therefore the police were acting in accordance with the new trend of not allowing armed Tamil militants to operate in the district

when they tried to stop a convoy of vehicles at the check point. The heavily armed occupants had identified themselves as LTTE and forcibly removed the barrier and proceeded towards a coastal village called Nachioorani. The convoy had gone there to receive somebody coming by boat from Sri Lanka. The boats must have come from Mannar because it is only from the Gulf of Mannar side of the Pamban bridge that one can go to Mannar. Nachioorani was never used by any of the anti-LTTE groups which would have ensured secrecy.

By the time the convoy returned from the village, they found a large number of police at the check point determined to block them. The convoy had opened fire killing one policeman and injuring many others, broke through the barrier and then proceeded towards the police station in Ramanathapuram town and opened fire on it. Having scared the police in this manner the convoy had sped towards Madurai — the traditional stronghold of the LTTE.

The police have said that a very important man was travelling in one of the vehicles and it was he who had given orders to shoot. Three days later Ramnad S.P. Radhakrishnan was perplexed and confounded when the Chief Minister telephoned him and pulled him up for having stopped the convoy in the first place. The message implied in the call was clear—lay off the LTTE. To kill policemen in Tamil Nadu and get away with it means tremendous influence with the State.

The problem that has to be reckoned within the future would be the pan Tamil nationalist reservoir in Tamil Nadu which cannot be controlled or supervised by even the Indian government. Prabhakaran and Karunanidhi are seriously investing in it.

1-4-1990

The Government — LTTE dalliance

The LTTE and the Sri Lankan government have been talking for quite some time. Few may know the agenda and fever the substance — if at all there are such — of the talks. This process taken in conjunction with what is happening on both sides is increasingly taking on the appearance of a game, where moves are made which betray an anxiety that a sham could be discovered. To name the game may not be judicious. But it is no usual

game between two political forces in a country. The difference and the danger I think is that each side has a war-tested army at its command. Initially the coming together had one clear objective — to kick out the Indian Peace Keeping Force; a political imperative for the one and a military exigency for the other. Now that the Indian army is gone what are the objectives or objective that each has in mind?

Peace

Peace, one might venture to say, a very useful word in the name of which a lot of people have got butchered in many other places. Peace and prosperity — that's what they say. The moves that each side makes now indicates an eagerness to accumulate sufficient rationale for what each might do in case something goes wrong.

Just in case that is partly the basis of the logic that informs the attitude of both parties. The situation is such that one wants to be prepared for any eventuality. No one of course would want to get caught with their pants down, as it were. I think that three phases can be identified in the Colombo-LTTE connection.

The first phase was brought about by the common task of getting the Indian army out. The task was the most urgent at the time for both parties. All other issues were negligible. To keep talking while stepping up pressure on the Indians to withdraw their forces was the only necessity. The UNP was faced with the threat of the formidable JVP campaign, the LTTE with that of the Indian army operations. It was a matter of survival for both. Sending the Indian army out was not a political problem alone for Colombo. There was the possibility of a JVP-Tamil militant nexus. Colombo was already alarmed by a link up between the PLOTE and the Southern rebels. There was suspicion that the late Uma Maheshwaran had developed a strong working relationship with the JVP. But PLOTE was not in a position to achieve anything substantial through the relationship after it lost most of its men and material in the Maldivian fiasco. But the EPRLF linking up with the Southern rebels would have spelt disaster in the South.

This was another aspect which may have been the reason for Colombo's desire to quickly bring the Indian intervention to an end.

Therefore the relationship was quite solid given the needs of both parties during this phase.

TNA debacle

The second phase begins with the TNA debacle.

The LTTE was very keen to consolidate its connection with Colombo, while it finished off the TNA and began to augment its power as a military and political organization. The Tiger strategy during this phase was to convince the UNP of its bona fides, so that it could recruit and train a large

number of young boys, (The first batch of trained cadre were out even before the TNA was driven out of the Vanni) build fortifications, organize a very systematic means of taxation and collections in cash and kind, and re-build its propaganda machine in the Northeast. The second phase has been extremely useful to the Tigers because of this. It has also reorganized its sea operations, to facilitate which, it has established military bases near strategic coastal strips - a novel practice that the Tigers have adopted in recent times - and is busy setting up - rear bases in Tamil Nadu with the necessary coastal link-up.

There were moves to mend fences with Delhi through Tamil Nadu making use of Karunanidhi's position in the National Front and his nephew Murasoli Maran's position as Union Minister in Delhi. The initial efforts were to exert pressure through this quarter on the V. P. Singh Government to remove a certain official in charge of Sri Lankan matters in Delhi. Murasoli Maran had claimed that he could do away with such people very soon. But the fact is that there has been no changes in the RAW and even Verma — its boss whom many expected would be kicked out— remains in his post.

Either Murasoli Maran was naive or it was deliberate bravado.

On the other hand for the UNP, peace with the LTTE meant not just development alone. An armed but friendly Tiger could deliver a virtual treasure trove of block votes in the Northeast in case, a need, should arise.

Furthermore there was reason to believe that a fiercely independent Tiger in total control of the Northeast could mean that there would be no further instability affected by India, which in turn would have resulted in the general economic and political consolidation of the regime in Colombo. A one time revolutionary who is part of the establishment told me recently that the aim was to "do a Gorbachev on the Tiger", in other words to deprive the LTTE of an enemy and thereby make it useless as a military machine. But, of course, he failed to take note of the fact that the reason for the Tiger military machine is not an enemy as is the case with the US where the military-industrial complex was justified because of the Soviet enemy, real and imagined, but the goal of Tamil Eelam. (Asked to specify the objective of the LTTE now at the press conference held in Nallur, Prabhakaran had said the people know for what we have been fighting for during the last 16 years).

Suspicious

Meanwhile both sides developed suspicions regarding each other's real intentions.

The LTTE's insistence in the 6th Amendment and the indications that it would also demand the removal of the 13th Amendment on grounds that the Provincial Council offered nothing by way of power sharing to the Tamils have not been very encouraging.

The Tigers were also getting nervous about the delay in the dissolution of the Northeastern Provincial Council.

The President had made use of Article 154(T) which empowers him to deal with problems of transition etc., and not 154(L) of the 13th Amendment by which Presidential proclamation empowers him to take over the Council.

Another reason for the Tigers' suspicions of Colombo's bona fides is the presence of the EPRLF's

Razik group, a former section of the TNA and said to have been one of its most effective groups in the jungles south of Pottuvil and on the Kanjikudiaru jungles, in the Amparai district. Tigers fear that Razik who has a large stock of weapons at his disposal is being tolerated by the Sri Lankan troops. In fact Razik may not be an altogether undesirable element in the eyes of the Sri Lankan army since it is said that he had assisted them during the Vadamarachchi operation. That PLOTE and TELCO are closer to Colombo now also bothers them.

The third phase has begun with the complete withdrawal of the IPKF. The real factor that kept both parties together is no more. Matters may come to a head when Pon Ram Rajakariyar, the chairman of the NPC, succeeds in his mission to hold the Provincial Council meeting in Colombo.

Then much will depend on what India's stand would be vis-a-vis the Tiger.

8-4-1990

The LTTE's one - party state dilemma

Velupillai Prabhakaran has said and done what many other so-called god fearing and democratic politicians may have dreamed of and unwillingly expressed a desire for, however disguised in their pronouncements on the perennial threats to democracy.

Sri Lanka's future will indeed be deplorable if democracy finally becomes what Prabhakaran has formulated it to be a just and free democratic system where only one party will be the sole representative of the people! This is what the Tigers always wanted; to be recognised firstly by India as the only legitimate representative of the Tamils. But the reality with they find it difficult to compromise is that no one will recognise nor entertain, one, and only one group as the sole and legitimate representative of a people.

There was a time when it was said that the Tamil militant groups should aspire towards becoming something like the Palestinian Liberation Organization so that there would be recognition forthcoming from India and some other countries. This it was thought, could be the final basis for depriving the legitimacy of the TULF which was the sole organization of the Tamils by virtue of an election. For India to acknowledge anyone as the only representative would have

served no-purpose and would have been counterproductive. To have and to sometimes foster a number of groups whose interests and ideologies may not always converge, is the only way in which anyone would want to deal with a people. That is commonsense is statecraft.

Many parties among the Tamils is the only way in which India could handle successive stages in its policy towards Sri Lanka. If the TULF was useful to gain a legitimacy for India's diplomatic leverage, the LTTE was useful to step up the quantum of brute pressure and then again the EPRLF comes in handy to consolidate a legal claim for its intervention. This is why the RAW was very keen to collect the scattered factions of the PLOTE and EPRLF and form the ENDLF as an organization which became very handy to give credibility to the Northeastern Provincial Council, and to check the re-emergence of an unmanageable PLOTE as another force which could threaten the standing of the Provincial council and leaning more towards Colombo.

Favour

What some groups like the EPRLF fail to understand even now is that Delhi's attention and favour lasts only as long as it is in their interests to do so, or for that matter it's the same with Colombo.

EPRLF's tragedy is that it assumes that its ideology is one that does not come into conflict with the broader Indian interests unlike that of the LTTE. Ideology is not a problem for Delhi but whether the nature and position of an organization will suit its needs at a given time and context is more important.

The success and strength of the LTTE is that it shirked that illusions of permanence of India's support.

But what the Tigers still fail to realize is that India or any state cannot afford to deal with only one organization among a people because it will only help to advance the interests of that organization but not the interests of those who deal with it.

In reality the outcome of the Tiger insistence on the 'one party democracy' is that other political interests and views can by same logic or the other derive their rationale for being armed to the teeth.

If LTTE can easily emerge now through a democratic process few can find fault with like the TULF did in 1977 as the only strong representative of the Tamil people.

Prabhakaran is hero now among his people no doubt having defeated the fourth largest army. His chief opponent A. Varatharaja Perumal is undone. The groups that oppose him are in dissaray and literally scattered; some stand and wait in Colombo and Mauritius, others hang around in Tamil Nadu.

15-4-1990

The EPRLF's Kumana foray

The EPRLF's main weakness was that their political and military strength was not homegrown, hence unsustainable. An organization should always derive such strength from the people whom they are supposed to represent. It is the will to be independent that makes one formidable even in adversity. The EPRLF has displayed a total lack of such a will all along its political career in the Northeast. The ideological confusion of adolescent marxists trying to assert themselves or assume a role in a situation of nationalist upheaval, may originally have been the cause of this shortcoming in the EPRLF and its parent organization, the EROS. In contrast Prabhakaran's strength is that he is "one who brings a mind not to be changed by place or time", and think it is this that is the very basis of the Tiger phenomenon. "A national liberation organization's

and some others, uncertain sojourners of Orissa. But it seems that the Tigers may not make use of this juncture to their advantage but may get confounded by their desire to have a one party system, which gives a certain legitimacy to the armed intentions of the others.

Complicate

The EPRLF, ENDLF, TELO and PLOTE await the day when Colombo and the Tigers fall out. That's when they can move in to establish themselves once again.

The equations are not so complicated. The anti-LTTE groups assume that if there is a war between the Sri Lankan Army and the Tigers, India will not help them as they did before 1987. Therefore the LTTE would not be able to sustain its campaign or even defend itself without proper backup from India.

The Tigers on the other hand seem to be counting on another equation: that India has no one but the LTTE as an effective pressure group which if the need arises can bring about a situation where Colombo may be expected to come on bended knees to Delhi. Prabhakaran's quandary finally is that to achieve his goal of a 'one party democracy', he has to deal with Colombo or Delhi as the situation would require both of which need more than one party among Tamils to advance their interests.

last resort should always be the land and its people" is one of those well known slogans which was introduced mainly by the left oriented youth in the Tamil militant movement; but the EPRLF still seems to be ridden with the idea that India is the last resort for their organization.

Even in India the only thing, a Tamil organization can count on, permanently, is the Tamil nationalist sentiment in Tamil Nadu. Everything else can change. The EPRLF chose to ignore it.

They threw their weight (whatever little was there) behind the AIDMK—Congress-I combine who if Delhi would have it so, can any day discard the EPRLF and embrace the Tiger.

The EPRLF is back to square one. Their rear

base in India is not so good as it used to be. Their presence in the Northeast is almost nil. Even infiltration through the jungles on the Sinhala-Tamil border can be very difficult because the LTTE is on the move, checking out all the possible points where such infiltration is possible. The Tigers have an advantage here. During the period of the massive IPKF operations aimed at marginalising the LTTE, they acquired an excellent knowledge of the terrain.

The jungles along the Sinhala-Tamil border in the East which the EPRLF has to make use of if they are to attempt armed forays into Tiger country, are better known to the LTTE than to the EPRLF. Therefore even if infiltration is done it will be extremely difficult to regroup or transfer arms caches.

EPRLF's pre-Accord attempts at infiltration into the LTTE held Northeast were under failures; but then sending men and material across the sea was a major problem, and the EPRLF's mastery of seafaring was poor by any standard.

Their decision to send their best group and a large stock of weapons from Trincomalee to the Kumana jungles to the south of Pottuvil, before they declared Eelam and fled, was a big blunder as usual.

The most important thing that one takes into account when sending a band of guerillas on a mission that could last more than a few days, is to work out some means of securing supplies, enough to support the whole group. It is equally important to have at least a clear idea of more than one withdrawal line. The Kumana jungle which is an

extension of the Yala sanctuary poses a lot of problems in securing supply and withdrawal lines for a Tamil group, opposing the LTTE. It is Sinhala land to the west and south, to the east it is the sea and to the north lies the Pottuvil town where LTTE was active as far back as 1977.

When the EPRLF sent boat loads of men and weapons by boat from Trincomalee to this area they had decided to declare Eelam and the leadership was leaving for India. To declare Eelam and then presume that one could secure supplies through Sinhala area was naive indeed. In addition supplies or withdrawal by sea was virtually impossible because India was far away; and sea operations from Tamil Nadu had become difficult due to the hostility of the Tamil Nadu State government.

The haphazard and amateurish military planning and operations of the RAW and TNA has been described in detail in these columns earlier.

But what they did with the Kumana mission was unsurpassed. The bungling is persistent.

As they prepare to meet with the Sri Lankan government they find themselves in a situation not unlike what they found themselves in just before the Accord.

They had weapons and trained cadres, but they were unable to move anywhere into the Northeast. As a result they had to depend totally on the IPKF and the whims and fancies of the RAW and Delhi bureaucrats. The EPRLF is yet to learn from its past, and to acquire a strong will of its own.

29-4-1990

Was the LTTE defeated?

The RAW knew all the details of the Vadamarachchi operation and when it would begin. But they gave us false information. The Sri Lankan troops are going to launch a massive offensive on the Jaffna town, move your troops into that area, the RAW told us. We believed it and our troops in all the other parts of the peninsula were sent into Jaffna town. Therefore when the Sri Lankan government attacked Vadamarachchi we were defeated." This is what Dr. Anton Balasingham has said at a meeting held in Nallur as reported by the Jaffna press.

I think this is the first time the Tigers have said that they were defeated in that operation. Coming

at this juncture when the LTTE is seriously working on broad-basing itself politically, Balasingham's account of Vadamarachchi is not, I think, in the best interests of his organisation.

Doesn't the good doctor, after associating for so many years with one of the world's best guerrilla leaders know that there is no 'defeat' as such but only tactical withdrawal in guerrilla warfare? Prabhakaran was not called the man of the decade for nothing and to say that he was making crucial and strategic military decisions based on RAW information or disinformation given by Indian police service officers (they are the people who man the RAW and the IB) is bad enough. In addition

experience in the 'Adampan' operation in Mannar would have made the Tigers well aware of the diversionary tactics used by the Sri Lankan forces, which could very well distract one away from the point of the main thrust. Either Balasingham is wrong or the Tigers had reason to go by RAW information. The one and only reason they could have taken such information for granted is that it was correct on most previous occasions about the operational details of the Sri Lankan armed forces.

● Dead rope

There is another important point. Didn't the Tigers see that they were being given a dead rope when as, Balasingham says, the RAW had indicated Jaffna town as the point where the Sri Lankan armed forces were going to start their offensive? Logistically it would have been next to impossible to sustain a major thrust from Jaffna town. Even for the Vadamarachchi operation the Sri Lankan army was busy, quietly clearing the Palalay — Thondamanar coastal road for more than a year, so that the thrust out of Thondamanar and the subsequent spread into the Vadamarachchi region would have an extremely vital line of supply. Given the maximum fire power of the Tigers (mines and all) operations of such scale could present Sri Lankan troops with logistical problems (amphibian and air).

Everyone knew with what difficulty the Jaffna Fort camp used to secure its supplies. However despite what the Tiger theoretician who was mainly in Madras, Delhi or London at that time, says I do

not think Prabhakaran would have handled the situation in that manner. In the first place the Tigers had come to seriously doubt the wisdom of having 'liberated zones' in the Northeast towards the end of 1986. To their chagrin made known to the Jaffna public they discovered that the information flow to the Sri Lankan army had increased sharply, during the period of peace they had secured by having confined the army to its camps in the peninsula. The number of precision bombings that the SLAF carried out was one clear indication of what 'peace was doing to some people in Jaffna. The Tigers were considering the prospect of going back to guerrilla warfare in the peninsula, The people had not been exposed to the hardships under state terrorism. Only then would the people become truly patriotic. Johnny, one of the LTTE leaders who was killed by the Indian army told me at a time when Jaffna was a 'safe' place, that they would have to soon get back to landmines in the peninsula. Their objective was to launch attacks on camps such as the one carried out in Nelliady sometime after Operation Liberation, and to hit and run rather than hold an area. One cannot dispute Balasingham's intention that RAW's aim was to undermine LTTE's position as the only protector of the Tamil people. The idea was not to promote other groups but to promote India's direct role in the war, for which Operation Liberation provided an opportunity.

However, if what Balasingham has said is true then certain crucial revisions have to be made in the modern military history of the Tamil people.

6-5-1990

The last of the Tamil moderates

The late Sam Thambimuttu's house in Batticaloa is being gradually dismantled by the LTTE. Soon only a little will remain of that neat house by the lagoon. The Tigers tried to assassinate him there once. He escaped by grabbing his assailant's gun; and now unidentified gunmen have killed him. The police have said that they will investigate with an open mind.

Some members of the EPRLF accuse the LTTE which has denied any involvement in the murder. EPRLF's Member of Parliament, Yogasangari has said that the government has to take full responsibility for the murder, in a statement that was carried in one of the Jaffna dailies.

Not many people had come from Batticaloa for

the funeral on Thursday. It seems that there was some concern in being seen at Sam's funeral for many family friends and clients, and former employees, from Batticaloa. The antagonism of the local Tiger leadership towards Sam is well known there. (The LTTE still retains his car.) The last time I saw him, to find out whether, he could lend me S.O. Canagaratnam's 'Monograph of Batticaloa', he was still complaining about his precious books that the Tigers had removed from his house, and had left somewhere exposed to the elements. He also showed me a letter from Stephen Bolary, and said that he had accumulated substantial material on the human rights situation in the Northeast. (Sam was well connected with the various human rights lobbies in the West. He had developed these

connections during his days as a Citizens' Committee activist in Batticaloa.) He was planning to take this material with him to the US. He was going on a programme said to be sponsored by the US State Department. It was also clear that he had become very disillusioned with India's role in Tamil affairs. He was one of those who had come to take India's bona fides in the matter of the safety and security of the Tamils for granted.

The TNA debacle and the withdrawal of the IPKF dashed all the hopes of those who had assumed that India's commitment in the Northeast was only a moral one. As a result Sam was determined to work out even a minimal settlement with the Sri Lankan government. The tragedy of those who were so naive that they could not grasp even the lessons from the history of India's relationship with the Tamil militants is great. People like Sam Thambimuttu, TELO's Thivyanathan, and Prince Casinader, all of whom could have spent the rest of their lives as respectable citizens of the East are drawn into a political milieu that was quite alien to them, — the illusion of the stability that the Indian presence seems to ensure for evermore and the EPRLF's need to give an air of respectability to the general elections. But what many a citizen and moderate politician who contest elections in the Northeast after the Accord was signed, failed to realize was that politics as they had known it before 1983 had become a thing of the past. The new politics of the Tamil people which had grown out of an intense gunculture and geostrategic intrigue was something totally beyond the ken of the post-Accord nonmilitant 'gentleman'.

Many people in the Northeast seriously believed that the role of the Tamil militant as guerillas, fighting for a separate state was over. The boys had done their job; it was time for the educated and 'civilised' Tamils to take over. The militants were generally regarded as a bunch of uneducated ruffians who were only fit to carry the gun. This opinion continues to condition the attitudes of the high brow (or those who desire to be so) English speaking Tamil elite. It is still not clear on what basis these people presumed that the 'boys' who had shed so much blood and sacrificed so much and who in the process of the struggle had acquired a certain maturity and ruthlessness could not match the advantage of better circumstances and education. It is precisely this attitude that led to the utter alienation of the 'gentleman' moderates from the militant leadership that emerged out of the war. The former supported the latter as their soldiers only with a latent and sometimes manifest disdain. The utter failure of the Indian bureaucrats in Sri Lankan Tamil affairs was also mainly due to this basic bias. Sam was one who made no bones about it and spoke seriously about the need to rehabilitate the militants once a settlement to the ethnic question was worked out. Sam could not compromise with the bitter reality of Tamil militancy and therefore could never have survived.

That moderate Tamil politicians are on their way out is something for which one has to blame not only the Sri Lankan and Indian governments but the attitudes of the Tamil moderates themselves.

13-5-1990

Tiger tough talk

Tough talk. That's what the negotiator from Colombo might hear when he meets the Tigers for yet another round of discussions. A statement issued from the PFLT headquarters has strongly objected to the government — EPRLF talks. That Colombo should be talking to an organization that has been rejected by the people and has collaborated with the Indians is an insult to the Tamil and Sinhala people according to the statement. "The Indians tried to prop up groups that had no support among the people but they failed. It seems that the Sinhala government is also making the same mistake. The Sri Lankan Government has to bear the responsibility for the serious consequences of this.

"The Premadasa government has been talking to the LTTE for the past one year. None of the

fundamental problems of the Tamil people have been resolved through these talks that have been dragging on for a long time. They have been putting aside and neglecting (*that-tik kaliththu*) our reasonable requests to dissolve the NE Provincial council and to hold elections and to repeal the 6th Amendment, but at the same time they hold official talks with those who assisted Indian aggression and were rejected by the people." This is what the LTTE has told the 'Eelanatham' a daily newspaper that is published in Jaffna and controlled by the Tigers. The report appeared on the day, 15-9-1990, that the EPRLF had talks with the government.

Quandary

It has been pointed that the LTTE's quandary in dealing with the Sri Lankan and Indian governments.

is that they stubbornly refuse to come to terms with a simple and basic tenet of state craft, i.e. that no one wants to be left with a sole representative of a people. Machiavelian considerations aside there are strong compulsions within a system that subscribes to the concept of democracy as formulated by the West to have at least a semblance of multi-party politics. Butchery and unmitigated totalitarianism have been unleashed on the peoples of the third world, in the name of restoring democracy, but once they have exhausted their potential the frame of reference that the system is left with, is democracy.

Democracy

The lethal intolerance that is generated in the course of restoring democracy by violent means has to face its antitheses i.e. freedom of speech, freedom of the press, political pluralism, an articulate opposition etc. The difference that has to be taken into account is that the lethal intolerance of Prabhakaran is not the result of a brutality perpetrated for the sake of safeguarding democracy, it is a necessary condition of what he believes in the one party state. Hence the LTTE would welcome complaints and suggestions but not other views. Whereas in other situations which require one to present one's totalitarian desires trussed up in democratic and ethical pronouncements, coercion has to be practised through manipulation.

Proponents

In a one party state, there cannot be proponents of other views; the very concept implies that they be muted by whatever means. "We made a mistake in pardoning a lot of EPRLF members (in 1986) who later joined the IPKF against us. This time we will not make that mistake." Prabhakaran made his attitude towards the other groups quite clear at the first press conference he held in Nallur after the war with the Indian army.

The supreme commander who controls both the LTTE and the PFLT regrets the mistake they made in pardoning the EPRLF cadres whom they had captured during the last of their operation intended to eliminate the other groups, while the government decides to call the EPRLF for talks

LTTE

The LTTE reaction therefore is not at all

surprising. They have been bothered for some time by the presence of the other groups in Colombo. The LTTE's concern is that these groups could engage in subversion in the Northeast from the South.

It is easier for the LTTE to monitor the others in Tamil Nadu and prevent all kinds of infiltrations by sea. But it is extremely difficult for them to monitor and control infiltrations and subversion carried out from the South, by the other groups. The 'Uthayan', a daily published in the North had a headline story sometime ago that EPRLF cadres are being 'maintained' at an STF camp in Ganemulla. The LTTE had assumed that the EPRLF would not be taken into account by Colombo because of the TNA and the Eelam declaration.

Representative

A hostile government in Colombo and a hostile Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu could have made survival extremely difficult for the EPRLF, and made matters easier for the Tigers in becoming the sole representative of the Tamil people. The role of Colombo in Tamil affairs acquired a new legitimacy after the success of the LTTE — UNP combine in getting the Indians out.

The LTTE is in no position to cry treason this time because it was the LTTE that gave Colombo this legitimacy. The talks have given a status to the EPRLF which otherwise would have been left out in the cold, and this is what has embarrassed the LTTE; they have told the people in the Northeast that they count much on the trust that they have in the President.

Legitimacy

Now how goes the LTTE explain it to the Tamil people that their ally in Colombo whom they had claimed, would settle the ethnic problem the way the Tigers wanted it, was also talking to an enemy who should have been eliminated some time ago?

The Tigers, it seems definite, try to diminish and negate Colombo's legitimacy in Tamil affairs. The LTTE is in a position to do it because of its immense moral and military strength, and more than that because most of the problems of the Tamil people still remain as unsettled grievances.

28-5-1990

The coming Tamil challenge

I do not cheat anyone, But if others try to cheat me I will teach them a good lesson." — V. Prabhakaran last week (quoted by A.S. Balasingham at a public meeting in Nelliady on 18-5-90).

Another war has to be avoided at all costs. The situation in the Northeast is tense despite what is being said in Colombo. Brinkmanship, that's what we need now. The LTTE has troops. The Sri Lankan government also has troops. Tension, if not handled properly, can spell disaster, in these circumstances. After fifteen years of guerrilla war and after what their erstwhile friends, the Indians did to them the Tiger can be anything but careless. If this opportunity is let go, there cannot be peace in this country for a long, long time. A permanently paranoid Tiger is the worst the land can bear. It will then be easier for anyone to convince the Tamils that all 'settlements' put forward by Colombo are sham.

Discussions

The olive branch was first offered by Colombo. The Tiger accepted the offer, began a dialogue and stuck to the UNP alone. Thus far they have not had discussions with any other political party in the South. They struck a deal with the UNP and stood by it while waiting to get their part of the deal.

The UNP got its part of the deal the Indians kicked out and the recalcitrant TNA busted. The Tiger continued to stick to its ally in Colombo without dabbling in the politics of the South. Most important, they kept clear of the JVP; in short they acted with utmost care where UNP's sensitivities were concerned in the South.

Amendment

The government had promised to dissolve the Northeastern Provincial Council and repeal the Sixth Amendment to enable the LTTE to contest. The Tigers went ahead and registered the PFLT as a political party. In all this they expected that the

UNP would reciprocate by sticking only to them till the deal was through.

Commitment

To promise and then to delay and to delay further can make the promise take on the appearance of a deceit that can be very dangerous with the ever wary Tiger. Since they made these commitments to the LTTE it is upto the UNP government to see that the olive branch does not become a symbol of political perfidy. The LTTE is now on the alert and speeding up all warlike preparations. Trincomalee and Muslim areas in the East can be potential flash points, the people are being informed of the situation. Prabhakaran has told Balasingham. "Inform the people of the true situation. There is a change in the government's approach, they are strengthening the army. A lot of camps in Trincomalee are being strengthened.

"They are increasing their military power at Palaly, Jaffna Fort and other places. They reconnoitre by air, they are speaking to treacherous gangs. What is the purpose of all this? Explain everything to the people, and how much danger is there in all these". Such is the situation now in the war-torn Northeastern province. Velupillai Parbhakaraan is one who keeps his powder dry lest someone take him for a sucker.

We have wittingly or unwittingly come to the brink of another grievous conflict, but it is never too late. Practise brinkmanship till something is worked out.

Democratic

A diplomatic acumen that can carefully defuse tension and operate on the edge will be in everyone's interest than the temporary and foolish satisfaction of shaking the nailed fist across the ethnic divide or engaging in acts of provocation. The opposition also has to carefully study the complexity of the situation with greater

responsibility. Since the Sixth Amendment is the main issue, now the role of the opposition will be crucial in Tamil affairs. The opposition cannot at this juncture dissociate itself from the future of the Tamil people.

They have nothing to gain from another bloody war in the Northeast. Whether one likes it or not the Tigers are there in power, and they are telling the Tamil people that the Sinhala opposition is once again whipping up chauvinism, against a reasonable settlement to the Tamil problem.

The antipathy that can be generated as a result will affect opposition strategies at a national level in the long run. Any party in the South can secure power without Tamil votes in the Northeast, true; but that power cannot be consolidated without the allegiance of the Tamil constituency. A hostile Northeast can destabilize political power in the South, in the long term. Antagonizing the Tiger is one thing but when the Tiger tells the Tamil people that the opposition parties are opposed to a settlement, it is the goodwill of the Tamils that may be lost.

The SLFP, in particular, has to communicate their stand on the way the problem should be settled or be approached, to the people in the Northeast. They have to decide soon before the motion to repeal the Sixth Amendment by the EROS comes up in Parliament. V.Prabhakaran and V.Balakumar have discussed the matter on May 19.

The Tigers are doing it through the EROS to see what will be the attitude of Southern political parties including the UNP towards the repeal of the Sixth Amendment. If the motion is defeated, the LTTE can tell the Tamil people that the Sinhalese cannot be trusted, therefore we have to find our own way.

Their own way in the final analysis means war.

The Tigers have said that Premadasa who had promised to dissolve the Northeastern Provincial Council and repeal the 6th Amendment without delay had begun to prevaricate later because of pressure exerted by the opposition parties. Whether this is true or not propaganda has been done. What is the SLFP going to say?

The EPRLF may be friendly towards the SLFP but the overall effect of what the Tigers are saying about them in the Northeast can make it appear that the SLFP is the real villain intent on sabotaging any solution to the ethnic problem. There is another matter that the opposition has to seriously consider. If a war is precipitated in the Tamil areas, the government can easily control the economic and social problem that threatens to undermine the system once again in the South. The opposition will not be in a position to take up these problems and build up their strength while the government is waging a war in the North.

The opposition politicians should know that a regime which is afflicted by civil war and beset by economic crisis can become very authoritarian and the role of a moderate parliamentary opposition can be supplanted by an armed underground once again.

The rise of armed rebellion as a means of advancing political and social interests will claim the moderate political opposition in the country as its first victim. The SLFP has to formulate its future as a national party. It is time that they work out a convenient strategy to deal with the ethnic problem and make it known to the Tamils in the Northeast, Muslims and the up-country Tamils.

On the other hand the UNP leadership should review the wisdom of carrying on with the Machiavellian success story even into the unfamiliar terrain of the wary Tiger.

27-5-1990

Rumblings in the hills

Coodaloor is a town near Tamil Nadu's western border where the Nilgris hills begin to slope towards Kerala. One remembers Coodaloor as the only place in Tamil Nadu where there is a shop in which one can get plain tea. Tamil estate workers who were repatriated from Sri Lanka live there. They were given jobs in estates around Coodaloor during the period when the DMK was in power in the early seventies. In neighbouring Kothagiri and other towns and villages in the

Nilgris hills, the workers and their families who left Sri Lanka's hill country under the Sirima-Shastri agreement have not been so fortunate; many have been reduced to begging, others are vagrant coolies. In Coodaloor there lives a man who set in motion an idea among the few educated upcountry Tamil youth 16 years ago, an idea that has gathered strength over the years and which may become the basis of a political and social movement in the upcountry. He is R. Sivalingham who formed the

Upcountry Youth Front in the early seventies. It was he who first raised the slogan in the hills. 'Malayaham' (the hill home land) is for the people of *Malayaham*. Sivalingam has long since gone but the slogan remains.

That the upcountry Tamil People should assert their identity and make *Malayaham* their homeland is no more an idea that was confined to seminar circuits and study circles. It has become the political basis of a budding mass movement.

The May day posters of Chandrasekaran's UPF in Talawakelle which have been splashed with green paint, proclaim "let us safe guard *Malayaham*". Many would be inclined to see Chandrasekaran, the educated and articulate son of an influential businessman of Talawakelle, as an 'ambitious person fallen out with the CWC of which he had been a member for many years; but the fact is that he is one who has been associated with the political trend begun by R. Sivalingam, in 1974; B.A. Cader, a teacher from Welimada, who is the General Secretary of Chandrasekaran's party, was one of the earliest theoreticians of the *Malayaham* homeland. The *Malayaha Makkal Munnani* (The Upcountry People's Front) is still no match for the money and power of the Ceylon Worker's Congress but it has to be taken into account that the UPF is an outcome of an idea that has persisted and been the motivating factor in the formation of many organizations by the educated among the Upcountry Tamil Youth. The Upcountry Youth Front, The Upcountry People's Movement, the Upcountry Liberation Organization, The Upcountry Mass Movement, were all formed by a new generation of educated youth that emerged with the introduction of standardization in university admissions in the early seventies. These organizations had an express mission: to tell the Tamil estate workers in the upcountry that it was their homeland and that they should stay there to fight for their rights. But they did not succeed much in their mission because they appealed only to educated middle class youth and those who were already politically mature to grasp the intellectual formulations presented by them.

Ten years ago when Shanthi Kumar, the young law graduate who founded the Upcountry People's Movement went to the Northeast to profound his ideas and to find readers for their magazine 'Theerthakarai', it was clear that he was engaged in an intellectual exercise and not a political mission. But the efforts of people like him have in one way not been in vain in that they have provided a corpus for the cause of the *Malayaham* homeland. Geographically the concept of

Malayaham is not precise. Whereas every Tamil group started off with a map no one in the *Malayaham* politics has a clear idea of the area denoted. But there is no doubt about where *Malayaham* is. The highest concentration of Upcountry Tamils is in the Nuwara Eliya district. Two AGA divisions in the district are tentatively proposed. One is Ambagamuwa Korale AGA division and the other the Nuwara Eliya AGA division. But the Minister of State for Hindu Religion and Cultural Affairs P.P. Devaraj — the intellectual in the CWC — has a very plausible explanation to offer, "The concept of *Malayaham* is an expression of identity (of the Upcountry Tamil people) more than a geographical expression".

The politics of *Malayaham* is the assertion of a people against dispossession, communal pogroms and the systematic submersion of their cultural identity.

Many, I am sure are bound to ask, what is all this about? To them I would say that the problem in the upcountry is not repatriation; it is only an issue. The problem is political and social, and it appears that with the changes that are definitely bound to take place in the plantation sector under the new economic order, the politics of *Malayaham* can threaten to undermine the control of trade unionism: and that is what this is all about. Three phases and three factors can be broadly identified in understanding the changes taking place in the hill country.

The three phases are, 70-77, 77-88 and the beginning of the serious implementation of the structural adjustment program in 1989. The three factors are the policy of nationalization and land reform in the plantation sector by the UF government, settlement policy in hill country of the 77-88 UNP Government and the structural adjustment policy of the present UNP government. The first two factors betray Sinhala Buddhist hegemonistic impulses. The third factor, the structural adjustment programme, aims at productive efficiency and at dismantling a cumbersome public sector and hence its ulterior dynamic is economic. Though when analyzed in context the consequences will be political and communal, the problem of land distribution which has already become bitter can add to it.

The nationalization of the plantation sector and subsequent experiments in land reforms and projects like the *Usawasama* during the SLFP period brought the plantation workers face to face with the dire prospect of being dispossessed or being made refugees in their own land. The

prospect of repatriation was not so dire because there was some hope in a new land with new opportunities. The estate workers having been in the same estates for several generations had come to regard them as their villages. Therefore the possibility of being thrown out by the state was perceived as a threat to their existence much in the same way colonization was viewed by the Tamils of the East. For those who had decided to go to India this did not mean much.

The tough measures that were adopted at the time to repatriate was also a cause of bitterness. (Whereas the total number of people repatriated to India between 1964 and 1970 was 21,224, in 1971 alone it was 21,867). But the problems and fears of those who have stayed back in the hills is at the root of the new politics of *Malayaham* problems that could not be adequately addressed by trade unions alone and fears that could not be allayed by temporary compromises.

Some of the youth who had been able to get a higher education at the time because of the standardization of university admissions and who belonged to an upcountry Tamil middle (mostly urban) class which had much at stake in Sri Lanka than the estate workers, formulated the concept of *Malayaham* as an answer to the problems and fears among the upcountry estate Tamils created by the SLFP's policies in the plantations. Most of these young men were influenced by Marxism. But in those circumstances naturally it became marxist ideology for an ethnic group that has to articulate and assert itself rather than Marxist ideology for an oppressed class. While the policy of the state was an external factor there were two internal factors which had to be resisted. One was the sense of Indian-ness sponsored by the traditional leadership that had large vested interests in India; the other, the claims of the Tamil politicians that upcountry Tamils were also part of the Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka. It has been examined in these columns how the concept of Tamil speaking people has caused friction with the Muslims. Unlike the CWC leadership, the middle class among the upcountry Tamils had their vested interests in the upcountry itself. There was already a bitterness caused by the superior and arrogant attitudes of the Jaffna people who were living there.

Hence the resistance to Indian-ness and the subsuming force of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism. If the nature of state intervention in the Tamil dominated plantation sector was at the very basis of the *Malayaham* homeland ideology, these two matters gave it its secondary characteristics.

That the upcountry Tamils cannot be subsumed by the Sri Lankan Tamil national ideology is correct for an important reason that has not been taken into account by those who have

argued copiously to show that the upcountry Tamils are different from those living in the Northeast. The reason is that the impoverished lot who came from Tamil Nadu's wretched and famine stricken countryside came long before the Dravidian movement spread.

The impact of the vigorous pan-Tamil nationalism propagated by the Dravidian movement was minimal among these workers whose life and outlook were circumscribed by the estate and the Trade union. They are a people who have not been exposed to the powerful politics of Tamil linguistic identity like the Tamils in the Northeast or in Tamil Nadu.

There was an effort in the early seventies to introduce the symbol of the rising sun which was on the DMK flags among all Tamil political movements. The TULF took it as their symbol but the CWC did not.

The problem of having no land to live on (there was no question of owning land) was a real problem which gave rise to the view of the middle class intellectual that the upcountry Tamil people had a right to land in that section of the hills which they had cleared for the British and where no Kandyan peasantry had lived before.

An editorial of a Jaffna daily reiterated an argument advanced in the late seventies, recently, commenting on repatriation and Chandrasekaran's arrest. The argument is that paddy does not grow above the elevations of 3000 feet, therefore there could not have been agricultural settlements of the Kandyan peasantry in that region and hence it belongs to the upcountry Tamils.

"No one has a right to chase the upcountry people away from their *Malayaham* for those same historical reasons for which the Sinhalese cannot be told to hand over the country to the Veddhas and go back to Bengal. We are a distinct nationality of Sri Lanka. We have a right to live in *Malayaham*."

Towards the end of the SLFP era, there was a move to take over 7500 acres in the Kotmale, Nuwara Eliya and Maskeliya regions. The move also meant that Tamil estate workers were going to be thrown out. When take-overs and forcible eviction were attempted at Devon estate in Talawakelle there were protests and demonstrations (stone throwing included). There the Police shot dead Sivanu Lakshmanan. He is a martyr for the CWC. The conflict and its politics are very much alive today.

"What the SLFP did openly, the UNP is doing subtly", said an official belonging to a very powerful trade union in the upcountry who had erected a memorial for Sivanu Lakshmanan.

3-6-1990

The struggle for the upcountry Tamil soul

The Upcountry Liberation Organization was an armed underground movement which aspired to become somewhat like one of the Northeastern militant groups.

In 1985 some of them had come to Vavuniya to see whether they could successfully negotiate with the Tamil militant groups to get training and weapons. Nothing substantial came out of these discussions and negotiations mainly because, none of the Northeastern militants had a definite and consistent policy that in some way reflected the aspirations and problems represented by the *Malayaham* concept.

The problem of citizenship was one of the four cardinal principles put forward by the EPRLF, EROS, TELO, LTTE, PLOTE and the TULF at Thimpu for the basis for any political settlement with the Sri Lankan government. Despite a persistent concern with the problem of the plantation Tamils and the stand taken at Thimpu, the Tamil movement in the Northeast was incapable of representing the upcountry. Tamil nationalist politics showed a tendency to subsume the question of *Malayaham*, as in the case of the Muslims, rather than coming to terms with a distinct and separate issue which could not be related to the dynamics of Northeastern Tamil affairs.

The conditions in which the idea of Thamileelam evolved and the conditions in which the need arose to articulate the idea of a hill country homeland are different. None of the Tamil movements paid attention to the specific set of issues that made up the upcountry Tamil problem, from the beginning of the 70's. The failure of the Northeastern Tamil movement's intelligentsia to grasp and represent the social transformations that were taking place in the Muslims and upcountry Tamil community was the result of an assumption that the Tamil language was the sole unifying factor, in Tamil nationalism. The Muslims and the upcountry Tamils were seen as integral to a greater Tamil identity constituted by language.

The beginning of the eighties saw the

formation of the Thamileelam concept of the LTTE and TELO. The map that EROS had drawn of Eelam had the Northeast extending into the central province. For EROS, the people who lived in this Eelam were Eelavar. EROS posters had a motto: We are Eelavar. Our language is Tamil. These expressions showed the rise of two political and social identities within what was assumed to be the Tamil (speaking) people, one was Muslims, the other the Tamils of *Malayaham*.

The Muslims and *Malayaham* 'sub nationalisms' were not recognised as such and the Tamil movement to this day harbours a desire to subsume these two. The earliest attempt to claim that the people of the hills were part of the Tamil liberation movement was by the EROS. They claimed that Tamil estate workers in the hill country belonged to Eelam. The Eelam that EROS had in mind was quite different.

The EROS and its registered political party the Eelavar Democratic Front operates in the hills because it is part of Eelam. They have to train and give weapons to upcountry Tamil youth for the same reason.

The EPRLF which inherited the Eelam concept from the EROS continues with a similar policy in the upcountry. The EROS and the EPRLF are the only Tamil militant organizations that have some regular followers there. The Eelam that Varatharaja Perumal declared, should have included part of the Central province. Our country is Eelam. The upcountry Tamils and Muslims who had begun to assert their distinct identity were subsumed unqualified by the concept of Eelavar.

The Eelavar, incidentally are a numerically influential caste in Kerala, who do not belong to the upper rungs of the caste hierarchy.

Eliyathamby Ratnasabapathy and others who founded the EROS, integrated the working class struggle of the most oppressed section of the Sri Lankan proletariat into militant Tamil nationalism.

Ratnasabapathy was a Tamil nationalist turned

Marxist who lived in London at that time.

Once I asked an EROS member whether they expected that the plantation economy would survive if the kind of Eelam which they sought was carried out eventually. The infrastructure of the economy was Colombo oriented in its historical development and therefore in the event of this Eelam coming into being the plantation economy would be severed from its infrastructure and cease to function. What happens then I asked him, to the thousands of estate workers who were bound to the plantation economy? He was unable to come up with a satisfactory answer because the EROS leadership itself has not as yet made its position clear on their Eelam and its hapless working class in the plantation sector.

The policy of the EROS and the EPRLF in the

hill country is nothing but the hegemonistic and subsuming tendency of Tamil chauvinism in disguise, inherited from the moderate Tamil politicians of Jaffna which has over the years alienated the Muslim community in the East.

The ambitions of the Northeastern Tamil groups in the hill country will face severe limitations in the future because of the poverty of their philosophy when they have to address the problems of a people to whom they unconsciously refuse an identity. The claim that the hill country is part of Eelam or the claim that the upcountry Tamil people can settle down in the Northeast have no relation to the specific set of problems that continue to afflict the people who have decided to make the hills their home.

10-6-1990

The push for the East

The most important thing that the LTTE got out of the one year long talks with the Sri Lanka government was a clear tactical advantage.

They were not going to lose it to the Sri Lankan forces which had become quite suspicious of the Tiger intentions recently despite the trust the President continued to have in his feline friends.

Advantage

The enormous cost of having given this tactical advantage to the LTTE will be apparent to everyone very soon. When it struck, the LTTE was in a position to isolate and force attacks on the few army camps within the Northeastern province while they could block the Sri Lankan troops on the border. Therefore the Tigers pre-empted the tactical as well as the logistical advantage.

The tactical, because it will be more difficult for the Sri Lankan troops to fight the Tigers from camps that have been cutoff from each other and which can only be supplied by air, and because it would be easier for the LTTE to mine and booby trap all the points of entry on the Northeastern border and inflict substantial damage on the advancing troops from well defended positions that have been built up on all strategically crucial points near the border over the last 6-7 months while the LTTE's political leaders were charting up the Sri Lankan government in Colombo.

On the other hand the Tigers pre-empted the

logistical advantage because they are now in a position to move troops and supplies freely with the Northeast to keep up the intensity and quality of all their offensive and defensive operations. The LTTE had been preparing for this war for 6 months with the problem of supplies and mobility in mind. Advance supply depots were built up near strategic and potential entry points near the border and were well defended with sand bags, steel and concrete. Conventional type military camps were also set up near the border in such a way that troop supplies and military operations could be co-ordinated.

Forces

The Sri Lankan forces in the East have only three camps in a vast region from Pottuvil on its southern end to the Verugal river on its northern end. The Kumboorumoolai camp at the Valaichenai-Pasekudah road junction and the Kaluwanchikudi camp on the Kalmunai-Batticaloa road are about 35 miles between them and are under fierce attack. (However all seems to be quiet around the air force camp near the Batticaloa town). The Tigers in this situation have only to check the advance of the Sri Lankan forces from outside the border. It is hard to believe indeed that the strategists of the Sri Lankan army gave such obvious tactical and logistical advantages to the Tiger who was making no secret of its war-like preparations. During the IPKF offensive in the Northeast, the LTTE learnt a valuable lesson that it is vital to control and make use of vital roads and jungle paths. The vital

logistics of the advancing troops will be especially difficult along lines like the Pottuvil-Tirukovil road.

Difficulties

The Tiger-infested Kanjikudiaru jungles to the west and a sandy strip of coconut estates with several treacherous marshes lie between the sea and the road to the east. Advancing along this road can be very costly because troops that may have to move through the jungle from the border divert Tiger operations or to weaken the jungle base of the LTTE in that region can face severe difficulties now. To keep up the quantum and speed of supply to the advancing troops at all points of entry can be a great strain on the back-up arrangements in such circumstances. Meanwhile it may be not so difficult to advance along the Amparai-Kalmunai road because paddy fields lie on both sides which can hinder the mobility of the Tigers. But the open spaces and muddy fields can become bit of a problem when they start blasting some of the small bridges and culverts on this road.

To establish its dominance in the Batticaloa-Amparai region, the Sri Lankan forces have to control, (a) the Pottuvil-Tirukovil road, (b) the Amparai-Kalmunai road, (c) the Chenkaladi-Badulla road and (d) the Polonnaruwa-Valaichenai road. Of these except for (b) all the other roads can pose problems even if the SL troops succeed in advancing along them towards their target areas. Logistical difficulties many be further compounded once the fighting begins near the marshes and the lagoon.

The tactical advantage that the Tigers gained

through their year-long friendship with the Sri Lankan government has put the Sri Lankan troops in a situation where all the geographical problems that used to bother the LTTE when it fought the STF prior to 1987 would now be greater problems for the advancing Sri Lankan troops. Mine installation has been made easier by the large number of sophisticated anti-personnel mines that the Tigers recovered from the TNA. The cumbersome mine and explosive types have been replaced by easy to carry, easy to camouflage high explosive mines.

Operations

The daunting task that the Sri Lanka Army faces now is that they have to do more than a dozen Vadamarachchi type operations, all simultaneously if they are to regain control of vital regions in the Northeast. There is one important difference this time. The Batticaloa and Amparai districts were never controlled in the way the LTTE controlled some other regions in the North. It is a vast region with a variegated terrain: jungles, massive acreages of paddy, lagoons, marshes.

The LTTE has made the best use of the physical advantages this time. The addition of these two districts to the geography of the Northeastern war is going to be logistical and tactical strain on the Sri Lankan troops. Meanwhile where does India come into all this? It seems that the EROS troops have joined the LTTE offensive and as everyone knows the EROS is a very close ally of India's external intelligence agency. India's problem is that they cannot allow the Sri Lanka Government to succeed where they failed after two years of war.

17-6-1990

Handle the Tamil people carefully

On Monday, the Tigers in the Amparai and Batticaloa districts, who were engaged in defensive and offensive operations as in conventional warfare decided to get back to their vast jungle bases.

The people in the Batticaloa town were waiting for the Sri Lankan troops to move in for several days in the town area and sought refuge in temples and churches. Most of them are now suffering without food. Several Tamil villages in the Amparai district have been abandoned. There had been no fighting near any of these villages but the people there had fled in fear of reprisals. These people are also starving.

Government

The people of Veeramunai on the Amparai-Kalmunai road had fled towards Karaitivu to find that people were leaving Karaitivu also. The government should see to it that food supplies reach the thousands of people who are refugees within the two districts. These people have taken batterings on all sides for too long. No one can hold them responsible for all the political and military events that have wreaked havoc since the Indo-Sri Lanka accord was signed in 1987. The government should endeavour to leave the people alone in this war. The TNA was nothing but the folly of the Indians: a conscript army, to the bloody antics of

which many Tamil parents lost their teenage children; and then comes along the LTTE, making enormous preparations for a war which only the government refused to see.

Unjustifiable

To punish the Tamil people in anyway is unpardonable and unjustifiable. A people constantly battered on account of misguided delusions and strategies of politicians and bureaucrats can become a very stubborn people like the Jews or the Palestinians. The Government and the army should take all necessary steps to remove the terror with which the people of the East expect the next phase of the war.

They have to be fed and given all assistance to go back to their homes. It has been said many times since the conflict began that the war is not between the Sinhala and Tamil people. This is a very crucial change in the fundamental attitude that informed the strategies of many Sinhala leaders in the past. There will be some reasonable hope for peace among the Tamil people if this change is reflected in conduct also. In such complex situations methods matter a lot.

If one fails to take care of one's methods and goes only for the trophy in this war even the trophy may ultimately be lost.

In the South it was different. A population living in utter terror of the army can be very convenient to the needs of the LTTE.

Peace had given them a lot of problems in recruiting and maintaining a large number of boys. The dropout rate tends to be high when there is no war; many a doting parent had been able to coax his little son out of the Tiger army in recent times because of the peace.

But if the LTTE succeeds in dragging the army into another war of attrition it may be able to resolve the problem. The Tigers want a situation where the general perception is fear that the Sinhala army is against the Tamil population.

Relevant

The Tigers have been able to take many young

men along with them into the jungle from many areas which they evacuated because of the fear that they would not be safe once the Sri Lankan army moves in. It would be relevant to point out here that the bane of the Tigers in this war with the Sri Lankan army is going to be the hundreds of youth who fled from the Northeast in terror of their brutal massacres. One, the more articulate of these, who had come from Trincomalee explained it to me once: the Sinhala government denied some of our rights and we took up arms because of that; but now the Tigers have denied us the right to live.

Problems

Many of these young men now operate with the army. They want to make money and kill the Tigers. Many problems could be created mainly because none of them are bound by any political purpose. Local spotters, informers and guides have earlier been the cause of ruined relations between the IPKF and the public.

Necessary

Therefore it is necessary that the political task be given priority where there has been military gains. But the political task can be very difficult because of the massacre of the EPRLF and the subsequent arrest of Tamil militants in Tamil Nadu. The man who could keep the EPRLF together, Padmanabha — one of the most senior militants of the Tamil movement is no more.

Nabha, as he was known — was not a colourful personality like Perumal but he was the man who ran the EPRLF.

Majority

The majority of the members of the anti-LTTE group were in Tamil Nadu. Most of them were to return to Sri Lanka and move into the Northeast with the army. All of them are now under arrest. The Tigers continue to operate in Tamil Nadu without any major hindrance. It was observed in these columns some months ago that the Tigers' investment in Tamil Nadu would pay off in case of a war in Sri Lanka.

24-6-1990

Will India help LTTE?

The LTTE is obviously soliciting India's support once again. The course of the conflict in the Northeast will be in part determined by the nature of the relationship that the Tigers are seeking to rebuild with a section of the Central Government of India.

Intend.

Some people in Delhi would very much like to see an LTTE bashed and weakened by the Sri Lankan armed forces coming on bended knees to them for help. Some Central Government officials never lost contact with the Tigers even during the darkest days of the Indian army's operations in the Tamil areas; and then they always had the EROS as an alternative line to the LTTE. The leadership of the Tigers always spared the EROS from their fratricidal projects mainly because of the middle-man value of the EROS in the RAW-Tiger relations.

The stated intention of the LTTE and an impulse fundamental to it is the one party society where the EROS certainly would have no place. Then why is it that it is the only organization that has not been the target of the Tiger in its persistent drive to eliminate every other group?

A proper answer to this question has to take into account the intricate role played by the real and effective leader of the EROS, the elusive and sophisticated internationalist Shankar Raji, close friend of the late Abu Jihad, the military commander of the PLO.

Ignorant

The callow sidekick of 'broker' Balasingham, Yogaratnam Yogi, may have not known the true nature of the EROS-Tiger relationship when he told an interviewer in Colombo that Shankar Raji was associating with Indian agents. The EROS may of course justify what it is doing in terms of their political philosophy. But the fact of the matter is that their political thinking and the fascist fanaticism of the LTTE in conjunction have been useful to some of India's needs in the Sri Lankan

problem. So in this manner the RAW kept the LTTE on line. They also had an independent line of communication. At the time when the TNA was created, Varatharaja Perumal and some others in the know had been quietly alarmed by reports of meeting between Kittu and the RAW in London.

Some months ago it was pointed out in these columns that the most important leaders of the LTTE including the only surviving member of its only Central Committee formed in 1976, Baby Subramaniam, were busy in India and not on the negotiating team that was regularly chatting up Colombo; and except for 'Baby' the other two mentioned in the column were not involved in looking after Tiger interests among Tamil Nadu sympathisers.

It was said that the Tigers were linking up with Sikh militants. One Nahaimuhan had been involved in the connection on behalf of the Tigers. It was also said that senior Tiger Ragu was giving weapons to the People's war group of Kondapalli Seetharamiah.

Diverted

These 'stories' have diverted attention from the connections that was most important for the Tigers — that with their former patrons — the RAW. It appears that the person who handles the connection on behalf of the Tigers in India would have people believe that he has left the organization. He is one of Prabhakaran's most senior but little known lieutenants.

In addition the Tigers could also count on the good rapport that Kittu had developed in Madras with some very important officials from Delhi while the Indian army was fighting one of its most bitter wars with the LTTE in Sri Lanka. Therefore it was only appropriate that the LTTE's public appeal to India for its moral support should come from Kittu. The appeal coincided with the change in the attitude of the Central Government *vis-a-vis* the war in Sri Lanka.

Political parties that had been lambasting the DMK for supporting the LTTE are now demanding that Delhi should take immediate steps to intervene in the war. Some have demanded that food and medicine be sent to Jaffna. Many I think would have taken note of the fact that statements by Delhi officials have discreetly avoided any harsh and direct reference to the LTTE.

Accord

Apart from their connection with the Tigers, the Indian government will use another important means to gain leverage in what can escalate into a political and civil crisis in the country. That is the legality it can derive from the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 to diplomatically intervene in the Northeastern crisis and issues related to devolution. The dissolution of the Northeastern Provincial Council will create the conditions suitable to India in the absence of the Council; it can again acquire

the role of representing Tamil interests when the conflict develops into the need to talk about another 'settlement'; and more than that make the conflict appear to be a civil war rather than a law and order restoration effort in a province of a country. If there is a Northeastern Provincial Council in place right now, the offensive against the Tigers would have pre-empted the political and diplomatic disadvantages that are bound to develop in the course of conducting the war due to India's involvement — covert and overt.

Finally the successful and effective conduct of the war at the mass communications ideological level about which so many seem to be concerned now, will depend on resisting the urge to see all reasonable Tamil opinion as in some way being related to a greater conspiracy to sabotage the well-being of the nation.

8-7-1990

No room for mistakes

It is not just a war between the Tigers and the Sri Lankan security forces. The situation is much more complex. The course of the conflict will depend on how the complex of the various factors connected to it, is going to evolve.

Economy

A few, for the time being, could tentatively be enumerated. They are: the money for the war, the effect of the war on the economy, political stability in the South, the refugees, the politics of Tamil Nadu, the strategies of Delhi, the LTTE's ability to secure supplies of ammunition, medicine, fuel etc., the ability of the non-LTTE groups to be a viable and tangible alternative in Tamil affairs, the Muslim-Tamil equation in the East, the status of the areas which lie beyond the towns controlled by the Sri Lankan security forces, and finally the relationship between the State and the Tamil people.

The mistakes made, if anyone is ready to accept that there were any at all — in the political, diplomatic, and military conduct of the war between 1983-87, arose mainly, I think, from failing to properly handle the complex of factors that affected the war in a sensible manner.

Cosolidation

The end is always political; if so political

consolidation, the nurturing of alternative and legitimate political forces in the Northeast should be essential to military strategy.

Denzil Kobbekaduwa, the General who is acknowledged as a good soldier even by some of those whom his troops are fighting in the Northeast — himself has said that a political approach is also necessary to the conflict. The naive pursuance of certain other types of solutions to this problem can lead to a greater geopolitical complication, than that which came out of the 1983-87 policies. Even a brief survey of what's going on across the Palk Straits right now would give some indication of the difficulties that finally bother policy making at the top here in Sri Lanka.

Separate

Karunanidhi has said that he is not for a separate state for the Tamils of Sri Lanka but his party which is also an ally of V.P.Singh's National Front Government has organized a state-wide bandh to protest against civilian casualties in the Northeast.

The bandh may turn out to be a show of solidarity with the Tigers, if one is to take note of the Tamil nationalist pro-LTTE trends within the broader Dravidian movement.

But what may be of immediate concern to

Colombo is the decision by Delhi to send two Navy vessels to the Indian side of the Palk Straits to ensure the safe passage of refugee boats across.

The very serious implication of this move will only be too clear to all those involved in the war. India can come into the scene with the Sri Lankan Tamil refugee problem in the Tamil Nadu state. Then what do we do with India? War is not the one and only imperative in this context. This conflict is complex and the complex can develop into costly complications if the many factors that have been tentatively enumerated here are not studied and pursued with professional zeal.

One can see that Colombo now is handling the problem with greater diplomacy but sentiments and pressures that are definitely bound to develop in the constituency can be a bother.

If any progress is to be made this conflict has to be handled by professionals and politicians with a

practical sense of national responsibility; allowing a few upstart quacks here and there can bust the whole business in the long run.

The consequences of the 1983-87 war leaves no doubt as to the political and economic cost of accomodating sentiments and passions which were historical rather than practical, to the neglect of professional input in many aspects related to the Tamil problem other than the conduct of war.

Necessary

Therefore it is necessary this time to see that all the initial premises that informed the governments attitude to the Tamil problem is general and the present conflict in particular are not allowed to the cast aside to the detriment of the country's ethnic fabric.

15-7-1990

And so to the third party

Third party involvement, the flow of refugees into the Tamil Nadu State and a 'legal' concern about the "safety, security and the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Tamil people in the north and east of Sri Lanka" are the three matters which the Indian government refers to, whenever it chooses to address the current war between the Sri Lankan army and the troops of the LTTE.

If the controversial exchange of letters are to be taken as part of the Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Accord, India can derive a legality from it to, politically (militarily only if requested by the President) and diplomatically intervene in the conflict and its possible resolution. It can also, on the basis of this legality manoeuvre to prevent international involvement in working out a program for peace. The Indian Prime Minister V.P.Singh, said that the Accord stands. Although Delhi has not formally invoked the Accord in their statements expressing concern about the three matters referred to, it appears that the right by treaty to do so, is implied.

It is now too late to say that the Accord is unequal or is a ratification of Indian hegemony; and it is also of no use to go after scapegoats. Unless it is unilaterally abrogated India can use it as a document to play a role in the ethnic affairs of Sri Lanka in its own interests.

(One could only surmise as to what these 'interests' are).

Vital factors

The two most important factors that can lead to Delhi's gradual involvement are the number of refugees going across the Palk Straits and the so called third party involvement.

If the LTTE can maintain the volume of its fire, will it be possible for Colombo to do without the necessary arms and ammunition? In such a situation India itself can bring about a third party involvement if, as it did during the '83-87 war, it can effectively dissuade sources in the international arms market from selling to Sri Lanka. When it becomes difficult to find the money and arms for the war Colombo may have to go to "third parties", by which I think India means those sources which it does not consider to be friendly towards it, like Pakistan, China, Israel etc., and western intelligence organizations and associated mercenary groups.

Since the war began, Delhi has on several occasions referred to a third party involvement; even editorials of some prestigious Indian papers have mentioned it. Colombo can either say that Delhi has no business to talk about it or get the matter spelled out in clear terms. (The parliamentary

delegation to India has also been sounded on this matter.) Since the former is not possible because of the Accord, the latter approach may be better, if Colombo is anxious about the intentions of Delhi.

If this is allowed to remain nebulous as it is at present, no good is going to come out of it. Whether a third party involvement in the Sri Lankan conflict is detrimental to the "security environment in the region" is not so relevant, I think, as the motive behind raising the issue, with a certain regularity which cannot be ignored. The aim may be, to finally impress upon Sri Lanka that it cannot operate beyond or independent of a regional security system managed by India.

Missiles

India has developed its own intermediate range missiles and is working on other types of missiles as well. Third parties in Sri Lanka cannot do much to threaten India's security. But raising it as a crucial issue in bilateral relations whenever there is a conflict here, is the assertion of a self-perceived legitimacy for being in charge of the security environment of the region.

There is a patent interest to isolate Pakistan, consolidate the rest of the subcontinent, with security and economic arrangements, and do

whatever is possible to strengthen Najibullah's government in Kabul. This may be a way of feeling secure for a large country made up of so many ethnic communities languages, castes etc., or a way of exercising power to gain a preeminent position.

As it stands Delhi can keep the Tigers going till a stalemate situation arises and the burden on the economy is too much to bear, and then come to Colombo with some form of settlement derived from the Accord.

This time there is no way of knowing the magnitude of the cover support that may be given to the LTTE because India, by strictly abiding by its promise that it will not allow Tamil militants to use Indian territory, will ensure that covert operations remain covert, unlike in 1983-87 when what were supposed to be covert operational, became the most publicized aspect of the connection between Delhi and the Tamil militants.

This time there is an agreement that binds the two countries. Therefore Delhi is trying to operate in a manner that it thinks would give it a legal advantage, in its relationship with Colombo in the context of this war. Therefore it will be better to study and address the issue of third party involvement; apathy can cost a lot.

22-7-1990

LTTE between positional and guerrilla warfare

Last week on Saturday (July 21) six Tamil parties were engaged in very crucial deliberations about the situation in the Northeast and about forgoing common strategy to face up to the difficult tasks ahead. While the six parties, all of which have been the victims of the 'fratricidal project' of the Tigers were thus busy at the 'Sravasti', a function was being held in the distant North, in the heart of Jaffna.

Took part

PFLT's general secretary Yogi, the only surviving member of the LTTE's Central Committee of 1976, 'Baby' Subramaniam, the poet 'Puthuvai' Rathinathurai and LTTE's political organizer for the Jaffna district Rajan participated.

(Balasingham had been conspicuous by his absence. It was said some time ago that he was in Bangalore.) The Jaffna press had also been invited.

The function which was held at the Tiger's district headquarters in Kondavil had been

arranged for the formal release of the 17 policemen who were taken prisoner from the Kilinochchi police station. That evening they had parked an armoured vehicle near the Kondavil headquarters said to be of those bought from South Africa by the Sri Lanka Government and which had been captured by the Tigers when they had overrun the Kondachchi army detachment South of Mannar on June 21.

A video film taken after the camp's capture had been shown to the large number of people who had flocked to see the armoured car. The matter was reported in the Jaffna daily 'Uthayan' along with a picture of the armoured car.

Protector

The Tigers were at it again: dispensing the image of a militarist protector of the Tamil people. Even though the illusion that a guerrilla organization can hold and protect territory as in conventional warfare was laid bare by many major military operations in the past, the LTTE continues

with this practice. I have wondered many a time whether the Tigers were doing this in earnest or with a conscious purpose. If one goes only by what they tell the people, and by the trophies' they exhibit with much fanfare during times of war it will seem that they seriously believe that their greatest mission is to fight the enemy on the border of their homeland. But the way in which the LTTE handled the East in the early phase of the current war has removed my doubt. The Tigers in the East were making war-like preparations which were intended to keep the fighting on the border and to isolate and destroy the army camps within, so that resources could be mobilized and normalcy maintained.

"The only thing that can cause any serious disruption is going to be aerial bombardment", the Tigers had told the people; instruction manuals on what people should do in case of bombings were distributed and serialized in the Jaffna dailies.

The Tamil people in the Northeast were made to believe that the Tigers were going to fight a different kind of war this time: the war on the border. The Tigers had informed the people of Batticaloa with great confidence that they will defend the border come what may, after they took over the police station and began attacking the Kiran and Kaluwanchikudy camps. As a result very few expected that they would find themselves in the midst of war so soon. It is said that the LTTE leadership in the district had received instructions from their headquarters to withdraw into the jungles, and this is why they pulled out of the town and sent their fighting units into areas which they had used in 1986-87. The attacks at Palampattaru, south of Trincomalee and at Thannamunai, five miles north of Batticaloa town, show that they have got back to operating as guerrilla bands.

And that unpardonable and dastardly act of killing non-combatant Sinhala civilians, poor peasants mostly, has revived the LTTE's final solution against those Sinhalese it perceives as being integral to what it calls 'Sinhala aggression.' (Karunanidhi also, in a recent speech used the same expression). Therefore if we study Tiger behaviour in the East, it will be clear that conventional — or, to use a term preferred by some Indian military instructors, positional warfare — is only a temporary extension of the LTTE's basic guerilla strategy.

Intricate

However strong or intricate they may be, bunkers do not make for positional warfare. The art of making bunkers with sandbags, concrete and

steel have been useful only to the extent of giving the Tigers some initial advantages in inflicting damages within a very short period of time than it would have taken if they had had gone for guerrilla war from the beginning. The LTTE did not have the weapons nor the troop formations required for a proper positional war. But there is one qualitative advance that has to be taken note of in characterising the Tigers as being basically a guerrilla 'outfit': that they are making use of positional warfare methods extensively because of the large number of light, medium guns and heavy machine guns in their possession as well as the Carl Gustav Recoilless rifles recovered from the TNA in large numbers (some of these had malfunctioned as it happens with many of the heavy weapons given by the Indians). Even most heavy and medium, recoil-action machine guns which were supplied had one part or the other of the breech block or trigger mechanism missing, but the LTTE has learned to make these missing components.

So in the future it won't be hit and run only, the Tigers will use the bunker and whatever heavy weapons at their disposal to engage the Sri Lankan troops in positional warfare. This would be so if the LTTE that has been driven into the hinter land and has to operate as groups, gradually secures 'liberated zones' which would again make it necessary for the army to carry out Vadamarachchi type operations.

I think the control of the hinterland will be a real problem once the army has succeeded in driving the Tigers out of the major towns in the Northeast. The extensive constructions of bunkers gave rise to an old image of the Tigers as the protector and to the expectation that the Tiger guerrilla force among the people had become the Tiger army holding the border. But I do not think that the bunkers fully served their purpose. For one, the art of bunker building which was another result of the Palestinian connection introduced to Jaffna first in 1986 by a former engineering student of the Moratuwa University, whose nom de guerre was 'Sunil'. Sunil became famous because of the bunkers that were built according to his instructions. It seems to have been forgotten now by the Tigers. (Sunil was one of those who had received special training in Lebanon). For another, what the Tigers construct now are clumsy ones made of commodious gunny bags piled one on top of another, the method of arrangement and the size of the bags make the bunkers not so effective against artillery barrage, as are the smaller ones and the method of piling them prescribed by the bunker making are of the Palestinian guerrillas.

But despite these shortcomings the bunkers have added another dimension to the LTTE's war.

The display of a captured armoured car, the building of bunkers or that rhetoric about being the defender of a besieged nation, are all part of a conscious effort by a guerrilla movement, the

leadership of which still sees itself as such, to make the maximum of political gains among the Tamil people while they can and to add some advantages of positional warfare to their methods of defence and offence.

29-7-1990

Intrigue and caprice in Tamil Nadu

A rather calamitous time it is. Saddam Hussein has invaded Kuwait while our man on the job Ranjan is on a visit to some Arab countries. The Arabs as well as the Japanese are going to be busy for a while with problems which are bound to arise as a result of the type of assistance given to those who have toppled the government in Kuwait. But it may be too early to say how far this will affect the war effort in this country.

Depends

Sri Lankan now depends fairly substantially on the aid in cash and kind which these parties are prepared to pump into the economy. Amidst all this, the calamity across the Palk Straits also does not allow much room for an apathetic complacency on the part of our advisors and policy planners.

It won't be a gross exaggeration to say at this point of time that India's ruling National Front Government is tottering. Ex-king Singh can't do anything about it. In Delhi that powerful rural lord, Devi Lal has been sacked despite the fact that V.P.Singh's Janata Dal counted much on his support base among North Indian peasants to come to power. In Madras, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the party found by MGR, has sacked his one time mistress and successor, the capricious Jeyalalitha, this week. The AIADMK's attitude towards the LTTE in particular and the Sri Lankan problem in general may undergo some changes as a result.

Jeyalalitha was one who cared little for the Dravidian sentiment and tradition in Tamil Nadu. That the illiterate majority of Tamil Nadu voters saw her as MGR's heroine and successor was enough for her to ensure votes. Unlike MGR, who was crucial to the massive cinematic propaganda drive of the Dravidian movement, and who as a result saw himself as a hero and saviour of the Tamils in real life also, Jeyalalitha is one who did not belong to the political and social upheavals which shaped Tamil

Nadu in the sixties. Her opponents have sometimes accused her of being insensitive to Tamil nationalism because she is a Brahmin.

The movement for social reform and nationalism begun by the Dravida Kazhagam — the parent organization of the DMK — became anti-Brahmin in content. The Brahmins were made out to be the cause of all the woes of the Tamil nation. They were portrayed as a perfidious and vicious lot whose historical mission had been to sabotage the Tamil language and identity. (But it is another matter that the Sangam classics which formed the ideological-historical basis of a romantic linguistic nationalism, were discovered by a Saminatha Iyer — a Brahmin)

Karunanidhi has said that the DMK should take up the task of social reform again, and has moved closer to the pro-LTTE Dravida Kazhagam which has revived the practice of forcibly tearing up the holy thread worn by Brahmins. The ulterior motive obviously is to damage Jeyalalitha's image in the Dravidian camp.

Vital factor

But most of those who have taken over the AIADMK are from the Dravidian social and political movement. Thirunavukarasu and Saththoor Ramachandran were influential ministers under MGR whereas Jeyalalitha had an uncertain career as the party's propaganda secretary who was suspected of having a connection with the anti-Tamil Brahmin lobby in the Delhi bureaucracy. Still, even without her party the late MGR's mistress remains a formidable factor when it comes to gathering votes in Tamil Nadu.

But her caprice which has been her main handicap in politics can undo her future prospects, what with Karunanidhi's propensity for intrigue and spreading dissent in the opposition. With Jeyalalitha gone, the Tigers will try their best to woo the new leadership of their greatest benefactor's

party. It has to be pointed out here that despite the grandiose nationalist rhetoric of Kalaingnar Karunanidhi, very little material benefits accrued to the Tigers.

The new leadership of the AIADMK has to build up some charisma. That means that they also have to lean on Tamil nationalism for they have not been cinema stars to depend only on their personal appeal like their deposed boss.

Therefore the LTTE will not find it altogether difficult to insinuate themselves back into the AIADMK. The Tigers have another need to do so because of the instability in the National Front government which in turn makes Karunanidhi's future uncertain. The DMK chief fears that Rajiv would dissolve his government, if he comes to power.

Reveals

But the problems of Jeyalalitha who has been Rajiv Gandhi's staunchest ally in Tamil Nadu makes way for some manoeuvring by Karunanidhi to make peace with Congress-I headquarters, which he had tried to do through Maran who met Rajiv's man Dinesh Singh to work out a deal.

It is the fear of Rajiv's return on the one hand and weakening of the Tamil Nadu Congress-I, that is reason for his alliance with G.K. Moopanar who led that party earlier.

Karunanidhi's relations with another National Front ally, the BJP, are not good either. He has accused its parent body, the RSS — a right wing Hindu chauvinist organization — of plotting to assassinate him. The crux of the matter is that V.P.Singh who has fallen among such politicians will find it difficult to emerge unscathed with his former pristine political glory, if there are a serious crisis leading to an election. Even if there is no election in the near future the going will be very rough for the Janata Dal.

G.K.Moopanar said on Thursday that Delhi has to actively intervene in the Sri Lankan Tamil conflict. He also said that, that was how Delhi had handled the problem earlier. But the Congress-I will not find it easy to act through Tamil Nadu this time because of the political conditions that obtain there now, the result of Karunanidhi's intrigues and Jeyalalitha's caprice.

5-8-1990

Why the LTTE is gunning for the Muslims

Basheer Kaka punished Tamils who tried to harm a Muslim shopkeeper in the village of Sithandy a few miles north of Eravur.

The Tamils had wanted to take revenge on the only Muslim in the vicinity for what had taken place in Eravur and Chenkaladi. Many Tamils has been killed and their houses burnt. Thousands of Muslim refugees were pouring into Vantharamoolai and Sithandy. There was a lot of pressure on the Tamil groups to retaliate on the Muslims. All the leaders except Basheer Kaka decided that they should act in the interests of the affected Tamils. If they did nothing it was feared that the support of the Tamils may be lost. Those Tamil militants who ventured to the Tamil-Muslim border, with their guns, were treated as heroes.

Supporters

Many Tamil supporters of the LTTE were very unhappy and angry about Basheer Kaka's attitude. That was in 1985, a time when none of the Tamil groups had any clear idea of how they should approach the Muslim problem. The refusal of the Tiger leader to submit to a section of belligerent

Tamil opinion was mainly due to the fact that he was an outsider. Tamil militants who belong to villages that lie close to prosperous Muslim towns and villages tend to share the acrimony that has marked Muslim-Tamil relations in recent times. It is an acrimony that developed over a period of time due to the expansion of Muslim villages and a fear that the prosperity and political assertiveness of the Muslim community would ultimately endanger the existence of the Tamils.

Perception

Some tend to interpret the LTTE's brutal attacks on Muslim civilians as tactical moves intended to keep the army occupied in the East so that there will always be a shortage of troops to fight in the North. Although this view cannot be rejected altogether, the perceptions and attitudes which motivate the local Tiger leadership also play an important role in what is happening in the Amparai and Batticaloa districts now. Five years ago when Bahseer Kaka was going around punishing Tamils who tried to loot isolated Muslim shops,

Major Ganesh who was the commander of the LTTE in Mutur ordered his men to attack Muslims.

jungles without offering much resistance to the army.

Karuna of Kiran who now leads the LTTE in the Batticaloa district is one who can easily yield to local sentiments and pressures. His two predecessors Kaka and Kumarappa were senior Tigers lieutenants from Jaffna. He was the first one from Batticaloa to be appointed commander of the district. He had been one of Prabhakaran's body guards in India and was appointed for his loyalty more than for his military merits or seniority. He has been very ruthless and brutal in killing other Tamil militants but has been less effective as a military commander. The performance of the Tigers under his command was very poor during the IPKF offensive. Whereas many Tigers recruited in Batticaloa had done well in the North fighting the Indian army Karuna did very little to bother the Indians. He just survived by successfully evading the pro-IPKF groups.

Target

The LTTE recovered the largest stock of weapons from the TNA in Batticaloa and they collected more money there than most other districts. The money and weapons acquired by Karuna did not enable them to prevent the advance of the Sri Lankan army into the main towns which they had vowed to defend to the last man.

Ram who had been appointed as the Commander of the Amparai district after the removal of his ruthless predecessor Antony, withdrew with his troops into the Kanjikudicharu

Supervision

Ram is under the general supervision of Karuna, and as a result Ram's decisions have affected him also. All these events have had an adverse impact on the self-esteem and self-perception of the Tiger as the sole and legitimate protector of the Tamils.

How do the Tigers explain their failure in Batticaloa and Amparai? The perfidy of the Muslims. That the Muslims were collaborating with the Sri Lankan army, in a diabolical scheme to decimate the Tamil population. That the SLMC was ambitious to make a Muslim majority district of Amparai by driving the Tamils out. It seems that there is a belief that terrorising the Muslim community with bloody massacres would effectively check the success of army operations, and generally scare and deter Muslims from joining the army and home guard units.

Strategy

Rather than seeking out the so called Muslim collaborators and home guards, which the Tigers are not in a position to do, they have adopted the strategy of going for easy civilian targets to create a general fear. But all fascist strategies are finally counter productive. Tamils are also getting killed in growing numbers, and thousands have become refugees, in Batticaloa in the last few days.

19-8-1990

The Jaffna Fort as symbol

Journalist — So the main exercise is to clear the Jaffna Fort?

Ranjan Wijeratne — Yes.

— at the Cabinet Press briefing on Thursday.

The Tigers have made the Jaffna Fort a crucial issue for the Tamil nationalist cause. They now tell the people in the peninsula that the Fort symbolizes the enslavement of the Tamil nation for more than 300 years.

The fall of the Jaffna Fort would be of great ideological and propaganda value for the LTTE. Not only do they stand to gain by impressing upon the

people that the Fort is a symbol of centuries of enslavement but their persistent and sometimes suicidal onslaughts on it would tremendously boost the self-image which they have strived to establish from their inception as the "liberator" of the Tamil nation.

That they should have come upon such an idea shows that the Tiger is extremely keen to get as much ideological gain as possible out of the War. The siege and assault on the Jaffna Fort has tremendous long term political value for the Tigers if they succeed in making the Tamil people perceive it the way they want it to be perceived.

Monument

What to many was a sturdy monument of the Dutch period and to many others just another army camp is now made out to be something that is supposed to remind the Tamil people of more than three centuries of external aggression and subjugation. (The sophistication of a political strategist steeped in the traditions and manners of the Dravidian movement is apparent in the ideological angle given to the assault on the Fort.)

If the LTTE propaganda is effective then the Fort's fall will bring greater political benefit than what they may gain militarily. The LTTE may also be hoping to find a lot of money and some artillery pieces. But it seems that a lack of information about how the army has organized its defences inside, is a major handicap for those Tiger commanders who plan the assaults.

The moat poses a problem in that tunnels can run into it. But the siege can ultimately do greater damage than the suicidal assaults (which in some instances remained one of the methods of medieval warfare). The extensive bombings around the Fort have done little to dislodge the Tigers from their positions. For the government it is more than just an issue of prestige, it is a matter of responsibility. The military and political leadership of the country cannot afford to lose or abandon the Fort. Any failure on their part to save the men in the Fort could be a big blow to troop morale and could result in a massive loss of confidence in the incumbent. In the face of rapidly deteriorating economic condition the fall of the Fort will only aggravate the discontent in the Sinhala constituency, and also gradually lead to passive indifference of the Sinhala public towards the war effort. Therefore the prevention of such an eventuality has become an absolute priority for the Government. It now seems that there have been moves to evacuate the Fort through ICRC mediation.

DMZ

Re-opening of the Jaffna hospital, the demilitarized zone, etc., appear to be part of a process aimed at clearing the Fort without going in for a costly and precarious military operation that would have been a real strain on the logistical capabilities of the armed forces. Some section of the Government said that such a proposal has been made and that they intended to pursue the matter seriously. But the State Minister for Defence had a different opinion about the project when he returned from the Middle East. Nevertheless it seems that the matter was not dropped. Given the LTTE's present attitude of making the maximum

political profit out of the assault and siege on the fort they would have been more interested in scuttling the plan rather than seen the ICRC taking it over. Kasi Anandan and his one time protege Prabhakaran would have preferred to see the Tiger flag fly over what they now consider as the symbol of three centuries of enslavement of the Tamil nation and not the ICRC's flag of neutrality and peace. Anyway last week a delegation arrived from Jaffna with a fresh proposal to reopen the Jaffna hospital, and to create a no-fire zone covering the Fort and the hospital. The delegation included a high ranking official of the Jaffna branch of the GMOA. Again the implementation of the proposal was to be supervised by the ICRC. But before the delegation could return to Jaffna the operation to clear the Jaffna Fort began. The government while considering non-military and less costly means of addressing the problem would have had to plan the military option as well.

The government cannot afford to fail with its military becomes irrelevant while the operation is on to clear the Fort.

The Tigers assumed that the military option of the government to get at the Fort would either involve a massive thrust out of Palaly or a massive air lift of troops to Mandaitivu with the intention of setting up a base with facilities for the safe landing of helicopters.

The Tigers had been confident that they could handle both possibilities because one would mean fighting in thickly populated and built up areas where mines and out flanking manoeuvres could severely restrict the progress of the army while the other would involve blasting causeways, making vast mine fields and placing machine guns so as to make it extremely dangerous for paratroopers. But the thrust came out of Kayts, a place in which troops can get back up from the Karainagar camp, a short distance across the sea which separates the Karaitivu island from the Kayts island.

Thankless

The army, according to one source, has occupied the Kayts hospital and school nearby which are near the coast. The army will have to move along the coast of the Kayts island that faces the Peninsula proper. It will be a thankless job, the shallow sea is muddy in many places and full of sharp edged coral rocks. The open spaces are many in the islands, near the coasts. This can be a big disadvantage to the LTTE, unless they build bunkers making use of the delay in the advance of the troops. But before the troops can reach the Fort, they have to cross two causeways. One is at

Allaipiddy which connects Kayts to Mandaitivu, the other the Pannai causeway which connects the islands to the peninsula. The Tigers will try to block the army before they reach these causeways, because deepening the points which lie in vast open spaces can be difficult if there is heavy aerial bombardment. It will be logistically impossible to sustain the thrust towards the Fort through Kayts without setting up a base at Mandaitivu where it would be easier to defend one's position and enable

helicopter landings because of the island's open spaces.

It is more feasible to control the Pannai causeway from Mandaitivu than from the Fort. But most of the Kayts island is in the hands of the LTTE. It remains to be seen whether the strategically important Mandaitivu will be taken by the troops. And that will determine the fate of the Jaffna Fort.

26.8.1990

Is Sri Lanka in danger of ceding its moral authority to India?

Thinakaran the Tamil daily published by the State-run Lake House said on Thursday that the people of Jaffna were now living in bunkers.

The predicament of Sri Lankan citizens who live in the peninsula as succinctly described by the State controlled daily is dismal indeed and should be considered with utmost concern by the government.

People live in hot and musty bunkers only when there is extensive bombing which does not discriminate between combatant and civilian.

But on the same day at the weekly encounter with journalists, the government insisted that only specific targets identified by intelligence were bombed.

Civilians

This bombing has to stop. This time the concern for the lives of the noncombatant Jaffna civilian has been expressed by almost all political parties in the opposition. The government cannot claim that the war is not against the Tamil civilians and make them live in bunkers in mortal fear. It cannot certainly expect such people to view the war only as disciplinary action to restore law and order. The government has to have a mature and impartial sense of responsibility for the lives of its people. The LTTE however irrational it may be, is no excuse for shirking that responsibility for the lives of its people.

Devolution

Then there is the political handicap by the devolution and a lot of bombing will only end up justifying Tiger intransigence and playing into India's hands. This time India has begun with the strategy of moral intervention.

Ninety five thousand refugees, civilian casualties, the escalation of the conflict and instability in the neighbourhood are matters of concern for us, says Delhi. Colombo bombards and Delhi is anguished.

Authority

The process will once again push the moral authority to represent the interests of the Tamils of the Northeast into India's hands. The delay and compounding of political strategies for devolution and a reluctance of the political leadership to courageously take up the aspirations and demands of a section of the people whom they rule will only strengthen the process of India's moral intervention. This is more far-reaching and will become the very basis for gradually acquiring the allegiance of a people, across one's border. India is an old hand in this game, developed by the British empire to manage the subcontinent. Delhi has evolved a sophisticated and modern version of this ethno - Machiavellianism.

Endemic

Sri Lanka is particularly vulnerable in the neighbourhood because the constitution of the land is not secular and therefore essentially exclusive in spirit.

The reluctance or refusal to devolve has become endemic to the political system.

Devolution is not seen as a means of integration but as a stepping stone to separation.

The government should attend to the urgent task of gaining moral authority in Tamil affairs as much as it has to do so in the tyre ridden and poverty stricken areas of the South. If it fails in that

task, the Indian strategy of moral intervention will finally succeed in acquiring the valuable allegiance of the Tamil people of the Northeast. The military imperative of Colombo translates into political and cross border and moral clout for the Indian officials who handle Sri Lanka. To say that Delhi is preoccupied with Kashmir and therefore has little time to bother about what happens across the Palk Straits is definitely wrong. That India is a nonchalant neighbour given to token expressions of anguish and concern is a myth and a comfortable one at that because it is naive.

Retaining the moral legitimacy for dealing in Tamil affairs should be absolute priority for the government in this context. Has Colombo now got the sense to find the means of preventing the transfer of this vital legitimacy to India? J.R. Jayewardene did not, and as a result India was able to become a mediator for a people whom he was supposed to govern.

Even now the situation is such that few in the political establishment may consider it the greatest ingominy that the Provincial council system of devolution had to be negotiated and underwritten by a foreign government.

Did not the pogrom of '83 and the war with the guerilla groups of the Northeast, transfer, with an inexorable build up of pseudo-historical folly and myopic bravado, the moral right to represent Tamil interest to the Indian state? The Accord is a document that bears testimony to how the Sri Lankan government and for that matter even the Tamil groups at that time lost this moral right and imperative, to Delhi. If Colombo does not act fast and with sense it might lose this right and hence an ethnic allegiance as well.

2-9-1990

The anatomy of anti-LTTE ism

The TULF, TELO, PLOTE, EPRLF and ENDLF have one thing in common. They have all been victims of the LTTE's drive for total domination in Tamil politics through massacre and assassination. Their future as independent and self-supporting political groups depends on the military marginalization of the LTTE.

Soon after the Accord they saw in the IPKF a force that could create a political space for them in the Northeast. Create it, it did, but it could not guarantee its permanence. Later, when the IPKF was gone they awaited the day when the government and the Tigers would fall out. They knew the LTTE better. The war began.

With the exception of the TULF these militant groups were too eager to return to the Northeast. To re-establish themselves in the Tamil areas politically and militarily is absolute priority now for them. Some of them have courted the Sri Lankan government with this in mind offering all manner of assistance to the troops in their operations against the LTTE. But the failure of the government to identify the Tiger as fascist while they negotiated with them and the gross mistake of not devising a political strategy to accommodate the interests of the democratically inclined groups, has led to the erosion of power and influence which these groups managed to retain in the Northeast and which they had acquired with great difficulty after the Accord.

Government

The LTTE made good use of the government's naivete, to clear the Tamil areas of whatever contacts or influence these groups had. They even set up a massive prison-farm in Thunukkai where they incarcerated Tamils who had been associated with the EPRLF, TELO, ENDLF and PLOTE. While many languished in Orissa, and some in Colombo unsuccessfully tried to persuade the government to change its attitude, the Tigers were busy rooting out all possible sources and means of influence the other groups had in the Northeast. The Tiger was well aware that it was their invaluable assistance that enabled the IPKF to hit where it mattered most the network of hardcore supporters who were indispensable to LTTE logistics.

Possibility

The intelligence that RAW failed to provide, the IPKF was able to gather far more easily and at a very local level through the support base of the anti-LTTE groups in Tamil areas.

Therefore, the LTTE's preparations for a confrontation with the Sri Lankan armed forces took into account the need to prevent totally the possibility of a similar role these militants could play in a protracted war. Nevertheless none of these groups have been able to move in large numbers into areas in the Northeast where the armed forces

are able to operate without much Tiger hindrance. Despite constant requests made by them the army had not been very eager to allow them to come in strength. Many want to go to Amparai where the Tiger has got holed up in the Kanjikuticharu jungle and where they still retain most of their support base. But no one has been able to go to that district and they hang around in Colombo grumbling that there is a sinister plot on the part of the government to depopulate Tamil villages and hand it over to the Muslims and Sinhalese. One possible reason for this problem may be the substantial quantities of weapons these groups buried during the TNA debacle. Most of the TNA weapons including a large number of 'heavy' ones like the Carl Gustav and the Browning 50 which did not fall into the hands of the LTTE, lie buried in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts. There may be some apprehension that the anti-LTTE militants may regroup and regain their influence with these weapons and to assert their independence.

Cordiality

Once they have the weapons with which they can defend themselves and the support of a section of the Tamil people, they may not be so pliant as they are now. It has to be remembered that even now there is a definite but latent tension under all the cordiality that is presented to the public gaze. This tension which may not be apparent now because of the war is inevitable because the principles which have informed the formulation and articulation of Tamil demands traditionally are fundamental to the politics of these groups.

A senior member of one of these organisations once told me "if we discard the fundamental principles of Tamil politics we may end up being nothing more than informants and guides".

He said this at a time when they were working with the IPKF. An EPRLF document makes it very clear. It says "This memorandum is a symbol of our will to find out a viable and sustainable alternative to Eelam which was thrust on us by the logic of history.

"The translation of the above will into actual practice depends on the Sri Lankan government's response to our above stated (demands) and the extent of confidence building that can be achieved at these talks".

However weak they may be and whatever contradictions that are bound to arise the Sinhala people cannot afford to alienate these Tamil groups if they find a democratic alternative to separation.

But if the tension traditional to the politics of devolution is allowed to resurface and if the powerful and influential lobby to destroy the geographical basis of the unit of devolution fundamental to legitimate Tamil demands can dictate policy, then there will be the real and inevitable danger of the political demise of such groups. And that is what the LTTE hopes would happen.

9-9-1990

Can the LTTE get anti-aircraft guns?

The fall of Mandaitivu had to be followed by the fall of the Jaffna Fort. The army, navy and the air force together are engaged in a massive offensive to dislodge the Tigers from their fortifications. The objective of this operation appears to be the control of the town itself or at least that part of the town in which the hospital is situated.

The success of such an objective would allow the security forces to surmount their major logistical problems in the North.

According to a *Reuter* report of Friday, military officials had said that "the security forces would try to gain control of an area around the Fort up to a major hospital about one kilometre away"

The large number of troops that have been deployed in the operation indicates such a motive. The LTTE may put up a stiff resistance in the built up area, but they will not be able to hold for long if the army gets more artillery pieces into the Fort and begins a barrage. But if what the Tiger's claim is true then there will be a basic change in the conduct of this war.

Their London office put out a statement on Thursday night that they had shot down a SIA Marchetti (SF 260) with a SAM-7 ground to air missile. The Tigers were trained to use these shoulder fired missiles in 1987. It is said that 50 of them who had done mathematics for their GCE advanced level had received this training. This

educational qualification was necessary because the missile it seems was not the standard 'Grail' type but a much more sophisticated version of it, known as the Gremlin.

The LTTE had wanted to train more people at that time but were unable to do so because the Indian Ministry of External Affairs was busy fixing up the Accord. Pulendran of Trincomalee, who was one of the 17 who took cyanide in October 1987, unsuccessfully tried to find Indian army officers who could assist them with further operational instructions.

Missiles

The Tigers said at that time that they had received some missiles. They have used two, they said. One was to bring down a SLAF plane. The other had been fired at an M-24 IPKF helicopter, but had not homed in on the target.

Another missile sans its power supply was recovered by the IPKF on information provided by a captured senior Tiger called Thavam of Vavuniya. These seem to be all that the Tigers had because they would have been able to minimize Indian air attacks if there had been more missiles in their possession.

Two weeks ago, in Jaffna, Yogi had said that the LTTE had very recently acquired the capability to 'look after' high flying SLAF planes. Even though it may be too early to say whether the Tigers can effectively counter the high flying SLAF bombers, one important aspect of the mode of fighting now taking place in the North has to be taken into account. That is the degree of infantry dependence on air cover in advancing on Tiger positions. Since in this war, the LTTE had constructed elaborate defences and had acquired a larger number of heavy weapons they were in a better position in the North to substantially impede the advance of troops.

Some very strategic camps in the North were removed from the North on Tiger requests while they were talking to the government. Therefore

when the war began the army was in a particularly disadvantageous position where it concerned their troop mobility. Camps were cut off and isolated. The roads up North were in the control of the Tigers. Advancing from Vavuniya was not attempted. The ground situation was such. As a result air and sea became more and more important for the army's logistics than land.

Troops on defensive and offensive operations had to rely on air support which had to come from Vavuniya and mainly from Anuradhapura. Fuel and maintenance facilities for aircraft and helicopters operating in the North could safely be secured only in Anuradhapura. Therefore the defence of camps beyond Vavuniya has essentially depended on aerial strafing and bombing.

However there seems to have been no serious appraisal of the precariousness of the situation that has developed as a result. This may also have been due to the naive and somewhat baffling persistence in the belief that the Indians will not assist the LTTE in any way because they fought the IPKF. There is little knowledge here that the moral argument does not hold in covert strategies. I say the situation is inevitably precarious because the real introduction of anti-aircraft guns such as the 14.5 or missiles such as the Gremlin can bring about a major change in the war.

The advance of troops and the sustenance of isolated camps in the North can suffer greatly if this were to happen.

Can Colombo be totally confident that effective and proper anti-aircraft weapons (the 50 is only a heavy machine gun) or missiles cannot reach the LTTE? I do not think so.

It is time the zeal of some politicians in Colombo that has brought about this precariousness in the North is tempered and it would be wise to rescutinize the motivations and interests of our big neighbour next door.

16-9-1990

The LTTE fails to get a rise from Jaffna

A curfew was declared in the Jaffna peninsula on Friday. There could be another major offensive, either to clear the Jaffna town or to make a thrust into another region to put up camps at strategic locations.

There had been a heavy barrage on Kadduwan,

a few miles from Palaly, by the army.

The Jaffna town, meanwhile has been declared out of bounds for civilians by the LTTE. As a result many residents, who wanted to salvage their belongings from bombed out houses and buildings, have been unable to do so. The Tigers have put up

barriers at many entry points to the town. The people have been informed that buildings and roads in that area are booby trapped and mined. The number of passes given by the Tigers to those who apply to leave the North to Colombo or India, has been drastically reduced recently.

A temporary but compulsory training programme for youth was introduced just before the army operation to take over the Fort began. Posters, bearing Prabhakaran's signature were put up all over the peninsula, urging the people to join the LTTE's proposed civilian militia, and promising weapons to all those who may join. There are more weapons, they say, than the number of people they can muster in the peninsula. They have been lambasting the Jaffna population for not contributing enough youth for their army.

The lists of those killed in action put out by the LTTE in the Jaffna dailies show that many who have died fighting in the peninsula are from the Eastern province and the Wannai. Tiger propagandists have warned the people many times that they will not be able to defend Jaffna for long if they have to use boys from other districts to do the fighting there. After 1985 the Tamil groups found that there was a sharp drop in the number of youth turning up for recruitment in the Jaffna peninsula. From that time more and more youth joining the militant organisations came from the poorer sections of the Wannai and the East.

Some of the best and most loyal cadres were recruited in Mannar and refugees from Trincomalee who had come to Mullaitivu. The LTTE was able to recruit a large number this time from the people who had fled into Mullaitivu from Trincomalee. It is apparent from the number and ranks of some Tigers killed in Jaffna and Mullaitivu that many senior and experienced cadres from Amparai and Batticaloa districts have been sent to the North to make up for troops shortages.

Dilemma

The LTTE faces a dilemma in dealing with their manpower problems. Their objective is to defend and hold Jaffna but they believe that the best panacea to the reluctance of many educated and able bodied Jaffna youth to join the LTTE is to allow the army to move in and expose the people to the horrors of war to impress upon them that their

survival was coupled with the survival of the LTTE.

This seems to be part of the reason for their decision not to put-up a stiff resistance in Kayts. They had engaged the army only at the Paruthiadaippu Kannakiamman Kovil where the army had landed, to fight their way and to secure Kayts jetty. When the group leader Reagan was wounded all units under his command were asked to withdraw to the interior. The army was able to move up to Thambatty along the west and Navanthanai along the road without much difficulty.

Fear

The Tigers have made use of the fear created in the area by largescale army activity to recruit some young men. The Kayts islands have never provided large numbers of youth to any militant movement. PLOTE and EPRLF had the largest support base there. But many preferred to go to western countries or to do business in Colombo, making occasional contributions to whatever group they supported.

The LTTE had to deploy troops from other areas to do military work in Kayts. So where they were able to get only money the Tigers have been able to get what they want most men. But yet the recruitment in the peninsula has not met their needs. If there is a serious manpower problem in Jaffna which has put the LTTE in a dilemma which can jeopardize their basic claim as 'the' defenders, then why are they pulling out some of their best cadres from the East where the army has taken the upper hand?

The reason is that the LTTE needs the peninsula because of its proximity to the rear base which has now become indispensable for it to keep the war going. Jaffna provides the best infrastructure for the massive sea operations which bring supplies and take the wounded across for treatment. The logistics of the LTTE's war would receive a major blow if the peninsula were to fall. It poses the threat of a vital link severed. The *Pinthalam* or the rear base is still the most important factor. This is why the Tigers defend it even though they may not be very happy with the support they get in Jaffna by way of man power.

23-9-1990

Why was the Jaffna Fort vacated?

The army has withdrawn from the Fort: A tactically useless and a military futile prize. It cannot be said that the government has not gained anything from the withdrawal. Ranjan Wijeratne's insistence that it was done out of concern for the medical needs of the Jaffna people can substantially damage a tenet fundamental to hardcore Tamil militarism: that the Sri Lankan government is ulteriorly driven by an irrational belligerence rooted in chauvinism. In this, the present government, more than any other, seems to realize that what is at stake is not the consolidation of armed victories but the legitimacy to govern and represent the interests of a section of its people.

There are some, like Mr. Athulathmudali the minister in charge of the country's education, who argue that it is necessary to take the upperhand militarily before negotiations are attempted. In a way they may be correct. But the problem is that what may be considered a clear victory by conventional warfare strategists can always be made out to be tactical retreat by guerrilla leaders.

As long as they can secure some support from the people, a guerrilla organization can carry on without perceiving or acknowledging defeat. Tactical retreats and survival are priorities. Even in conventional warfare a victory can finally be claimed only when one's opponent has accepted it as such. But how do you define victory when your adversary can define it as a tactical retreat? Mr. Athulathmudali's project can become indeterminate and indefinite. At what point can one be satisfied that one has taken the upperhand militarily and therefore opened the door for negotiations? And then wouldn't the option of finishing off one's guerrilla adversary present itself? The IPKF bashed up the LTTE. Most of Prabhakaran's senior lieutenants were killed. Some of them starved to death even in Vadamarachchi, their traditional strong hold. They were militarily crushed and marginalised.

Prabhakaran made a public appeal to Rajiv Gandhi sometime after the war when much of his

organizations was intact, beseeching him to halt the offensive. He also tried to negotiate a peace through the RAW in Madras. But Delhi wanted to take the upperhand militarily. They did that within a short period. But what happened? The Tigers struck a deal with Colombo which had at that time made known its determination to send back the IPKF. They also plugged into separatist Tamil nationalism in Tamil Nadu. Both alliances provided them with the necessary backup for survival.

Thus the argument that military dominance on the field is a precondition for opening the doors for negotiation is untenable and spacious in the present situation. On Thursday a State run paper commented "The government has gone out of its way to show its utmost goodwill to the people of Jaffna. The ball is now in the court of the Tigers". If it is sincere, then the attitude and approach of the government is correct and commendable. It seems that the government is ready and willing to restart the dialogue with the LTTE. The government and the Tigers now have the means to establish contact with greater facility than it was possible for them to do so before 1989. However, it is also possible that Colombo may have withdrawn from the Fort and Mandaitivu for two other reasons. One to pre stall any kind of Indian intervention, the other to avoid LTTE's divers in many attacks outside the Northeast which could precipitate the flight of capital, resulting in a direct and serious destabilization of the economy.

If the government, at any time has considered with concern the prospect of a black Tiger assault on Colombo then that consideration could have carried more weight with political decisions than other long term and short term strategies devised to address the ethnic problem. A militarily inconspicuous but strategically crucial region was quite unwillingly handed over to the LTTE by the government when that organization was allowed to over run PLOTE camps which controlled the jungles and the coastal stretch to the south of Mannar and to the north of Puttalam. He who controls this region and he who has very effective naval

capabilities can be a force in the Gulf of Mannar outside the Indian territorial waters.

To have a foothold in Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin, on the Indian side and in Mullikulam, Pookulam and Kudiramalai point on the Sri Lankan side is necessary to those who may have military designs on the west coast. The LTTE it seems, has invested heavily in its naval section. Recent reports in the press confirm this.

The control of this region and its recently acquired naval capability in the Gulf of Mannar combine to give the LTTE what it may consider to

be its triumph card: a vulnerable West coast.

In 1986 Kittu discussed a naval operation which had the West coast as its target area, with two persons from the South. The operation was mainly intended to clear up major banks. The deal fell through because of political differences and because the LTTE had no influence or control in that strategic region on the North Western coast. But now due to the shortsightedness of some strategists, the LTTE has acquired a very valuable triumph card it could have never had before.

30-9-1990

The LTTE and the Muslim phenomenon

The Muslim-Tamil antagonism in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts has reached a critical point.

Communal tension and mass displacement in these areas have shifted the focus away from the LTTE.

The Tigers, the Muslim political parties and the government have contributed in their own irresponsible and foolish ways to a massive social disaster, the magnitude of which apparently doesn't seem to have caused much concern in Colombo.

In these two districts there has been nothing so far that can be called a war; only minor skirmishes and raids.

If it is so, how come there are so many thousands of refugees here? How come that a large number of villages have been deserted and thousands of houses and huts have been looted, damaged or destroyed?

In the East, the smouldering enmity between the Muslims and Tamils threatens to wreak havoc once more.

Tamil parties in Colombo have blamed the Muslim Home Guards for much of the violence, while the SLMC asks for more Home Guards to defend Muslim villages.

Sensitive

The government, at least during the course of its offensive against the LTTE, should have realized the sensitive nature of Tamil-Muslim relations in these areas. Either both communities should have been strictly excluded from law and order

requirements or should have been co-opted for such purposes with the latent communal tensions in mind.

The LTTE prepared the ground for the present state of Muslim-Tamil relations in the East by its desire for total control of the Northeast and its camouflaged Tamil chauvinism which wants to deny and subsume the distinct social and political identity of the Muslims.

Mutual fear and violence in Batticaloa and Amparai has been more useful to the Tigers than anyone else who may have thought of gaining anything out of it.

Many Tamil youth fearing the Muslim Home Guards have gone across the lagoon to areas which are still dominated by the Tigers. The actions of the homeguards and the bloody massacre of innocent Muslims by the desperate Tigers have resulted in a cycle of violence and hatred that has acquired its own momentum, which can undermine the outcome of many political deliberations in Colombo.

Refugees

There are more than a 100,000 refugees in Batticaloa Tamil villages, that still remain intact, feel threatened and harbour a deep hatred towards the Muslims. This hatred is such that even the murderous rampages of the LTTE in Muslim villages tend to be looked upon and sometimes approved of as acts of revenge. The important question now, however is whether the Tigers are going to continue with their strategy of massacring innocent Muslim civilians as a means of cowering their community into submission. There is a difference in opinion within

the Tigers about the way in which their leader in the Amparai and Batticaloa districts had decided to 'deal' with the Muslims.

It remains to be seen whether there has been any change. But even if there is one the Muslim Home Guards would be attacked and killed; and that may lead to more friction.

That the LTTE has asked more than 75,000 refugees at the Eastern University at Vantharumoolai and nearby * Sithandy temple premises to leave has given rise to some speculation among the Tamils that they are preparing for attacks on Muslim villages. These refugee camps lie between the Muslim areas of Ottamavady and Valaichenai to the north and Eravur to the south.

The General Secretary of the TELO Mr. Karunakaran (Jana) issued a statement on Thursday saying that they consider that there is a connection between the LTTE ordering the refugees to leave and the arrival of one of their senior leaders with several hundreds of his 'troops' with the intention of carrying out terrorist attacks in Batticaloa.

The TELO statement probably refers to a rumour in Batticaloa that Mahathaya has come to Verugal, north of Vakarai, with a large number of his men. Although it does not seem to be true that Mahathaya has come to the East there is a definite increase in the number of armed Tigers in that region. Tiger activity has also in recent days increased and expanded into many areas from which they had pulled out sometime ago. They also move into the Batticaloa town after dark to scare potential informants.

Not easy

The Tiger build-up in Batticaloa, I think, is mainly to take on the army and if possible to attempt to isolate camps and mainly for the purpose of massacring Muslims as popular Tamil opinion would have it. But given the antagonism of the Muslims and the geography of the region the task will not be easy.

The Tiger leadership has very practical reasons to be worried by the alienation of the Muslims, some of whom were their staunch supporters until the Kathankudy and Eravur massacres. The Tigers forgot too soon and with characteristic arrogance that they were able to survive the IPKF offensive in the East mainly because of the Muslims. (The Indians had even identified some Muslim villages as Tiger strong holds). They would have starved in the

jungles if not for the few supply lines through some Muslim areas and the support of people there.

During their drive to secure the allegiance of the Muslims through the new found PFLT they recruited a large number of Muslim youth, having realised the value of the Muslim factor in the East when the Indians pushed them deep into the jungles. It was also presumed that they could permeate and establish total control of the Muslim community by increasing the number of Muslim youth in their organisations. In this the LTTE was repeating the mistake made by many Tamil politicians: the failure to grasp the simple principle that it is policy and not numbers one needs to solve a political problem.

The combination of Karuna's — the military commander for Batticaloa — political backwardness and the ignorance of a Jaffna centric leadership is some of the peculiar intricacies of the East; it can push the LTTE in the coming days into complications which will not be to their liking. In the East an uncompromising and antagonistic Muslim population can, to some extent jeopardize their military strategies. If for some reason the government, which is extremely reluctant to allow the other Tamil groups to operate in Batticaloa and Amparai, lets them regain some of their former influence in part of the Tamil hinterland passage through several Muslim villages will become inevitable and indispensable for the LTTE. In such a situation it will certainly be necessary to at least ensure the neutrality of these villages. (But the government's recent and discreet disaffection with some Tamil groups and the wisdom of according them no more than a rubber stamp status, may make things easier for the LTTE.) Hence there is a possibility that these practical considerations may discourage the Tigers from massacring Muslims.

But the Tigers like many other Tamil militants can be compelled by popular Tamil sentiment which now wants revenge for the heinous crimes perpetrated on them by the Home Guards.

On the other hand, among some sections of the Muslims there are definite indications of a desire to terrorize and depopulate Tamil villages in certain areas. If that desire has official sanction, then the government's persistent claim that the war is not one against the Tamils can turn out to be an unpardonable and cruel joke.

27-10-1990

Military measures alone will not do

The State Minister for Defence Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne on Thursday, said that there was a movement of men and material for a major strike on the Tigers. "We are about to launch the thrust from certain fronts". His arch foe, Mr. Prabhakaran who, he claims, is as dead as a dodo, meanwhile has had plenty of time to make extensive preparations to face another major assault of Jaffna by the security forces.

Complications

It has become a season to sow mines. Little signposts have been put-up along some roads that lie in the many open spaces of the peninsula, which warn people not to stray beyond a few yards from the road for the Tigers, now, manpower is precious. Hence the greater reliance on all kinds of mines, booby traps, mortars and heavy machine guns.

The complications in the East have been very useful for them. There, a large number of able bodied youth who fled to Tiger controlled areas have been recruited for being trained and armed. Like many others before them, they also may be taken to the North once the Sri Lankan Army begins a major offensive.

The continuous supply of various explosives in large quantities keep up an 'accelerated programme' to produce mines, mortar shells, grenades etc. This supply is ensured by Prabhakaran's vast investment in sea operations. It has always yielded very good dividends; and these operations, it is clear, have not been very much affected by the war in the North. Intact supply lines and enough time to recuperate and build-up; what more does one need in a war such as this? A situation has developed where the LTTE is also in a position to organize the movement of men and material. Therefore, they are capable of taking a range of counter measures which in other circumstances would only be possible for a conventional force. The war can drag on and on;

because of this, it has to be realized that the LTTE has developed an extensive infra-structure to service their military operations. It cannot be busted overnight. It is like that of a multinational. As long as this infra-structure is able to function without any major disruption the government will not be able to militarily marginalize the Tigers.

Expectations

To applaud one or two victories in this war and create false expectations, which in turn lead to wrong political calculations, are matters proper to the business of sycophants and gulls. The problems that face a military endeavour to weaken the Tigers, are those that can finally be traced back to a fundamental reluctance to secularize in a multi-ethnic society.

The causes of these problems become more and more clouded due to a tendency to see the war in technical terms. As the fighting goes on it is also inevitable. Technical descriptions of military conduct can woefully be out of context. They can eventually drag even a politically enlightened ruler into a quagmire of false priorities and expectations.

This is a conflict that involves a community of the country. To approach the problem in terms of conventional war-fare or anti-guerrilla operations can only lead to a futile escalation of violence and bitterness. The LTTE's network that provides it with a constant supply of men and material is sustainable not because the Sri Lankan Army's resources and intelligence are poor but because it is a Sinhala army operating in a political atmosphere that has evolved for more than forty years on the perception of an inequality imposed on the Tamil community. When there are no serious and practical moves to overcome this handicap, all the crises and troubles that plagued even meticulously planned military operation in 1983-87 will surface once again, even if there is an addition of sophisticated weaponry.

14-10-1990

Stirrings in Tamil Nadu

Chief Minister Kalaingar Karunanidhi is still an uneasy and ambivalent patron of the Tiger. His opposition continues to resist his lever attempts to sow the seeds of perpetual discord within its ranks. His recent manipulations or the purpose of promoting and consolidating the Thirunavukarasu group of his main opposition party — the AIADMK have not produced the desired results. Thirunavukarasu and Sathoor Ramachandran who were influential ministers in MGR's cabinet fell out with Ms. Jeyalalitha. Having taken along with them some MLAs, they claim that he had been sacked from the party and that their action was the 'true' AIADMK.

Party symbol

Both factions wanted to take over the party headquarters. The police intervened to settle the dispute. (But it appears that the Tamil Nadu police enabled Thirunavukarasu to go off with the key). There were moves to claim the party symbol as well. One of Karunanidhi's sons M.K. Muththu joined the AIADMK of Thirunavukarasu. Despite the calamity that descended on her, Ms. Jeyalalitha has managed to retain much of her political influence in Tamil Nadu. That the AIADMK of Jeyalalitha and her ally, the Congress-I, continue to be a formidable opposition is what bothers Karunanidhi. A recent opinion poll by the DMK has shown that the AIADMK — Congress-I alliance can gather the majority of the Tamil Nadu vote.

Elections

Hence Karunanidhi is not very keen to hold elections to local government bodies. The DMK fears Jeyalalitha's revenge. One of Karunanidhi's men has said that they would become Liberation Tigers if she were to come to power. The crisis in the V.P. Singh government has unnerved the DMK further. A major crisis can either lead to fresh general elections or the Congress-I forming the government. Such a crisis will arise if the BJP were to pull out over the Ramajenma bhoomi issue. V.P. Singh can't afford to submit to the Hindu chauvinist

demands of his ally. Karunanidhi who has associated himself so closely with the National Front fears the return of the Congress-I could mean a possible dismissal of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu.

State Assembly

(After MGR's death Rajiv prolonged Governor's rule until he was certain that the Congress-I and AIADMK could do well in the elections to the State Assembly). The political atmosphere in Tamil Nadu is gradually heating up. The constituency which the DMK, AIADMK and the Congress-I, seek to win over is a large one. It is the constituency of MGR's sympathisers and fans. An important aspect of MGR's political legacy was his role as the generous patron of the Sri Lankan Tamil militants in general and the LTTE in particular.

Eelam cause

The man who had built a temple to MGR had told Time magazine's Anita Pratap that the actor-politician was worshipped because he looked after the poor and helped the Sri Lankan Tamil militants. Therefore, one way of appealing to the important MGR constituency is to assume the role of an effective patron, of the Eelam cause.

Recently Nanjil Manoharan, a Minister of the DMK Government said that had Tamil Nadu been an independent country they would have locked up the Sri Lanka President in Vellore prison, this is not just bravado but a bombastic political gesture intended to build up the DMK's image as the most powerful guardian of Tamil interests.

Karunanidhi is anxious to bring about a settlement that would be favourable to the Tamils in the Northeast during his tenure. By this he may be able to prevent the dangerous prospect of being branded by his opposition as the arch opportunist who abandoned the Sri Lankan Tamils unlike MGR. His opposition has already started blaming him and V.P. Singh for messing up the Sri Lankan Tamil

problem. Jeyalalitha's AIADMK and the Tamil Nadu Congress-I want to show that only they, in the state and in the centre will be capable of ensuring the 'safety and security' of the Tamils in Sri Lanka's Northeast.

Public actions

Ms. Jeyalalitha who had been indifferent in the past to many developments across the Palk Strait has taken a keen interest in the conflict here. The cause of this change I think is the split in her party. The Thirunavukarasu faction chose to address the MGR constituency by taking up the Sri Lankan Tamil problem. Although Jeyalalitha is popular, she doesn't have enough influence to go it alone sans the posthumous charisma of MGR. The first important public action of the Thirunavukarasu faction was a demonstration in front of the Sri Lankan mission to protest against military operations in the Northeast. Ms. Jeyalalitha could no more remain nonchalant. She had to show that she was MGR's political heir in every way. Jeyalalitha also has a social handicap to think about. She is a brahmin. A concern with her social origin — which is an arch-anathema in Dravidian politics — can affect her in the way it affected MGR who was not totally insensitive to the fact that he was a Malayali (Keralite). Some of his more unscrupulous detractors did not fail to make use of this fact. MGR who saw himself as a natural leader of the Dravidian movement was anxious to prove his 'Tamilness'.

Tamil movement

(A book was published while he was Chief

Minister which endeavoured to prove that he was descended from the Tamil Kongu Vellala cast which is found near Tamil Nadu's border with Kerala). One way in which he did it was by becoming the most generous patron of an armed Tamil movement that was fighting to create the first independent state for the Tamils in modern times. Jeyalalitha, like MGR may also be compelled to prove her 'Tamilness' by wooing the Tigers. The political fortunes of the Tamil Nadu Congress-I are so bound to those of the AIADMK that Rajiv Gandhi will have to back Jeyalalitha if she deems it prudent to court the Tigers.

Congress-I

Those who argue that the moral factor would prevent the Congress-I from having anything to do with the Tigers are ignoring a basic tenet of statecraft: there are no permanent alliances but only permanent interests. It has to be also pointed out that the LTTE has also, in recent times, shown a patent interest to regain its influence with India's officialdom. Prabhakaran has always said that India should recognize his organization as it recognizes the PLO and SWAPO. I think that he believes that such a gesture by India is a necessary condition for the success of his separatist war. This, certainly would seem to be a naive illusion to many geopolitical 'realists'. Some illusions, before they are laid bare by history, can do irreparable damage to some comfortable assumptions of reason.

21-10-199

Coming to terms with Muslim nationalism

All Tamil parties must accept two things in principle about the Muslims. Firstly that the Muslims have a distinct political and cultural identity. Secondly that they have the right to look after their legitimate interests and maintain their distinct identity through an appropriate system of devolution.

The Tamil parties which have also accepted the democratic means of advancing their interests and those of the people whom they seek to represent, must not only acknowledge but unequivocally declare what they have acknowledged in principle about the Muslims. This has to be fundamental to any programme that is intended to bring about a

political settlement in the Northeast. The Tamil movement as a whole will have no moral right whatsoever to speak as a wronged minority if they cannot recognize the grievances of a minority within and its desire to assert its distinct identity. The rise of armed Tamil nationalism has seen concomitant rise in intolerance and injurious suspicion.

Nationalism

Thirty four years ago, in Trincomalee the Federal Party resolved that the Muslims, also should have a federal unit of their own. The political pluses of a broader linguistic nationalism have been

rendered to the short term needs and localised perceptions of a multi-racial society. (The forced evacuation of Muslims in the North is the result of fear on the part of the LTTE that these people could become the foci of political instability in any system of government which they have in mind or which may be imposed on them). That the LTTE is not part of the present efforts in Colombo to work out a plan for devolution in the Northeast does not in anyway undermine the validity of these efforts because it is necessary that a system is in place to counter their claims and prevent the effective propagation of their Tamil chauvinist view of the Muslim question among the Tamil people of the Northeast.

Turmoil

The confusion and turmoil which can be created by Muslim-Tamil tensions will become greatly reduced if there is a suitable mechanism to resolve conflict democratically. At present the democratic means of conflict resolution in regions where Tamils and Muslims live together and share common resources, are ad hoc. (A peace committee comes into existence only when there is violence). Therefore the LTTE factor should not retard the efforts to forge a solution to the Muslim problem in the East as well as the North.

The Tamil and Muslim parties that have held several rounds of talks are yet to reach an agreement. The SLMC leader Ashraff has presented a tentative proposal, which in some of its aspects appears to be reasonable as well as viable. The Muslim Congress has been demanding consistently that there should be a Muslim regional council with Amparai as its geographical 'base'. The DPA agreed a principle that there could be one.

The idea was put in hold after the SLMC's anticipation in the Northeastern Provincial Council. But it is now clear that the political, economical and social causes for Muslim-Tamil animosity in the East cannot be successfully addressed by the provincial council system constituted under the Accord. The developments after the TNA debacle and the IPKF's departure showed it to be woefully inadequate as a stabilizing mechanism in Muslim-Tamil affairs. It is necessary, therefore that a 'Muslim Council' be part of any political solution in the Northeast.

Some may object that this council cannot be constituted under the unitary constitution. They may argue that it should be first investigated as to what could be worked out within the ambit of the 13th amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution. His objection will have to be considered but it

should not exclude the possibility of setting up a Muslim dominated body under the 13th amendment, since it would be similar to a federal unit that will contravene the constitution and not a body with the functions and powers of a provincial council.

The SLMC has suggested that a Tamil dominated Provincial council and a Muslim dominated council can be set up under one regional council with one governor — for the entire Northeast. The regional council, in addition to the two provincial councils will have a development executive board, which will be in charge of "the common development programme of the region in the areas of the subjects to be specified". The problem, however, is in carving out "ethnically oriented zones" which will function as the electoral districts for the two provincial councils, and in carving out "ethnically oriented" local bodies within these zones.

The Muslim Congress wants to have part of Amparai along with the Tamil areas of the district to ensure political contiguity. This will be the Muslim ethnic zone that will function as the 'base' of the Muslim dominated PC of the Northeastern Regional Council.

Many anti-LTTE groups feel reluctant to cede the Tamil villages that lie between Muslim areas in Amparai. They feel that they are politically obliged to keep these traditionally important villages within a Tamil dominated body. Many leaders and senior members of these groups have come from the villages of Karaitivu, Thirukovil and Thambiluvil. Karaitivu was one of the first places where the EPRLF was able to gain a foothold in the East after the signing of the Accord. They are uncertain of the support that they may have in the North. In the East the situation in Tincomalee is volatile. In the event of the creation of a Muslim zone in Amparai inclusive of all its Tamil villages, the Tamil groups will be left with Batticaloa as the only Tamil dominant district. When such a situation obtains in the East they can be politically obliterated by the LTTE with greater ease.

Muslims

On the other hand if they do not have Amparai, the Muslims will be faced with the uneasy prospect of managing a series of 'zones' scattered in the Northeast. A compromise on Amparai may be reached if the Tamil parties are prepared to recognize the Muslim dominant Musali region of the Mannar district as a Muslim zone that will come under the Muslim Provincial Council. The Tamil parties should realize that keeping the Musali

region under their political control can only create tension which can emanate into other areas and destabilize them.

prelude to many other intricate issues that have to be negotiated before the Muslims and Tamils in the Northeast can feel that they can live in amity.

A compromise on Amparai can be a healthy

28-10-199

The entrance of the 'Monsoon' Tiger

Deep in the Kanjikudicha Aru jungle there is a place called Vadamusa. It takes more than half a day to get there on foot if one begins the journey from Thangavelayuthapuram an inconspicuous hamlet that lies on the jungles' edge; Vadamusa is peculiar. It is a woodapple grove in the middle of an expansive dry zone jungle. Thousands of woodapple litter the ground. The giant squirrel and the horned bill frequent the grove more than many other parts of Kanjikudicha Aru. Juicy wildboar is abundant. Then the monsoon comes.

The idyll in the jungle turns into miserable tedium. The many picturesque streams and rivulets turn treacherous. They suddenly change into impetuous flash floods which take even the seasoned tracker by surprise. Only the hope of finding the retained warmth of rocks and hillocks that are just above the flood keeps one from despairing.

Snakes

Deadly snakes and other slimy creatures may also come upon one with the rushing waters. Ruined provisions, festering wounds, muddied tracks and the nasty shudders of malaria are all inevitable when the monsoon descends on these jungles.

But for the Tigers who are now setting up new training camps in such areas of the East this is a season when their new recruits cut their teeth. The extremely hard life in the jungle during the rainy season can teach many things to the young Tiger which he may never learn from his trainers. In the monsoon the young Tiger learns the most important lesson that makes him fit for survival; the lesson of endurance.

When the rainy season is over in the Northeast the Tigers will have a large number of cadres who have been put through the endurance test. Many will be sent on operations or to the battle front mostly in the North. Some will continue to maintain and shift camps till the next round of recruitment takes place.

In the Paduvankarai region west of the Batticaloa town from where the LTTE recently recruited a very large number of youth they now turn back young people who go there to join up. The training camps are full they are told. Many have nowhere to go except refugee camps which in some areas have been badly affected by the rain. So they hang around Tiger bases as temporary helpers, messengers and workers.

Dependent

There has grown a population in the East as well as the North that has become economically dependent on the Tiger war-machine for their day to day survival. They are those who dig the bunkers, construct fortifications and transport building materials. Many of them have no other way to get their food. They go to work on Tiger sites because they are assured of meals. The Tigers seem to be getting enough food supplies to feed their own cadres as well as the people who work for them.

The thousands of refugees who left the Vantharamoolai and Sithandy camps hang about in the Tiger controlled Paduvankarai region without food or shelter. Some of them have been offered jobs by the Tigers. The new recruitment drive has led to some infrastructure building requiring civilian workers. But once the work is over many would become destitute again.

The number of monsoon training camps that have been set up in the East, from Kanjikudicha Aru in the Amparai district to the Peraru jungle, north of Trincomalee, indicates that there will be more work for the dependent population. Since all these dense stretches of jungles are situated on the eastern border, training operations may involve raids across the border.

Not tough

The Tigers who were recruited and trained during peaceful times in or near urban areas have not performed well. Some of them had not been hardened enough to take cyanide when arrested by the army. In some instances they had run away

when fired upon. Weapons were dropped by these fleeing boys.

The LTTE subsequently devised some methods by which the very young recruits could be made more battle worthy. The first one was to deploy them in areas with which they were not familiar. Many in the East were sent to the North. Those in the North were sent to the Wannu. By doing so it was assumed that the adverse effects of having one's kith and kin in one's area of operation could be avoided.

The second method was to expose as many as possible to positional warfare which the LTTE attempted in the North; to make them become accustomed to the bombing and strafing that accompanied all major operations by the army in the North. This could give them the valuable experience of operating in the bunker system.

The third method was to start the monsoon raining camps. In these the most dangerous type of Tiger is created. One who may not fight well but who can go on and on surviving and striking.

Vadamusa in the dry season can be romantic but when the monsoon comes it can be a nightmare. The LTTE is sending hundreds of young recruits to such places to 'break' them and harden them.

UNP

The UNP leadership will be greatly mistaken if they think that this matter can be handled by carrying out successful strikes on these monsoonal training camps. It is worth reflecting that mass dislocation and devastation in the East is the root cause of the swelling Tiger ranks.

Unless the people are drawn back to normal life and are assured of some safety and security the Tigers will have large numbers to recruit for their monsoon training camps. If this political task does not receive priority military objectives can constantly be upset.

4-11-1990

Implications of the Indian overturn

Rajiv Gandhi will return to power — there will be an element of revenge in his policy towards Sri Lanka: A diabolical prognostication? It is time to do some serious thinking about what the man will do, when (not if) he becomes the Prime Minister of India again.

It has been reiterated in these columns that a renewed Tiger-Delhi nexus under a Congress-I government is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. To take refuge in the moral argument will not help. The moral argument presumes that the Indians will not assist the LTTE because they betrayed them and fought their army. For India the Tiger was also an effective instrument and will be seen again as one if the need should arise. Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne still insists, for reasons best known to him, that Rajiv Gandhi will have nothing to do with Prabhakaran. At Thursday's press briefing he had said "The LTTE killed 1500 IPKF personnel and maimed 3000 others. Rajiv Gandhi had to spend 500 million dollars on Sri Lanka during that time. The message is clear".

Meaningless

It is precisely because of all this that he may

want to do something in Sri Lanka. For, he has been accused in his country of involving its army in a useless and meaningless war. He had little gains to show except a confused army which had been told rather unceremoniously to leave. Although officials in Delhi were keen to make it known that under the new government there would be a continuity of policy on Sri Lanka, there were some far reaching changes behind the scenes. V.P. Singh did not seek to discontinue the broader designs on Sri Lanka which had gradually taken shape over the years. He slowly and carefully dismantled and reorganized certain crucial sections of the policy apparatus. His objective may have been to transform it into a more sophisticated and efficient system which could still achieve India's goals in the region without overt aggression or embarrassment in international and regional fora. The Sri Lankan operation was a case in point.

Policy Instruments

Cover plans had been implemented openly and sometimes crudely. Hence V.P. Singh altered policy 'instruments'. The 'alterations' was discreet. What his real aim was, in taking such measures, we may not know since he was in power for not more than

11 months. (Perhaps the good opinion some in Sri Lanka had of him might have changed if he had continued as PM). The Congress-I was clearly disaffected with what Singh had done with Sri Lanka. The alterations in Delhi may also have been cause for resentment. Chandra Shekhar who has become the new Prime Minister had all this in mind when he was recently (while he was in the Janata Dal) interviewed by Cho Ramasamy — the controversial actor, politician, journalist — editor of the mass circulation Tamil political weekly 'Thuglak'. Cho asked Chandra Shekhar, "What do you think of the manner in which V.P. Singh's government is handling the Sri Lankan problem? The peace that was established through the Indo-Lanka Accord has been ruined. The Tamil Council has been dissolved. The Northeast merger has become doubtful. Hundreds die daily. The refugee influx is turning into a big problem in Tamil Nadu. Militants are coming and there are weapons. Under these circumstances what is your opinion on how the Central Government deals with the Sri Lankan problem?"

Tamil Council

I will quote a relevant part of Chandra Shekhar's long reply to Cho's question. "We may have our own opinion of the previous government's policy on Sri Lanka. It should have been our responsibility to take over and improve upon what that government had done in Sri Lanka. The attempt to change what the previous government did (in Sri Lanka) was not prudent. To assume that we are going to do something new and destroy whatever there is, is not proper to the conduct of statecraft". The message is clear. The new Prime Minister of India has opined that V.P. Singh's government was wrong in having made changes in what Rajiv Gandhi had brought about (!) in Sri Lanka. Chandra Shekhar must have had the support he would need soon from the Congress, in mind when he said this.

From the time he was denied Prime Ministership in December last year he has been engaged in all manner of intrigue within and without the Janata Dal with the sole aim of pulling down V.P. Singh. The Congress Party saw great opportunity in his unscrupulous ambition which has now cost India a stable and regular opposition. Chandra Shekhar was useful to Mrs. Indira Gandhi when a split occurred in the Congress in 1969. He was backed by her at that time to discredit Morarji Desai and other seniors like 'king maker' Kamaraj and Nijalingappa. Now he is unwittingly offering his services to the son. Rajiv Gandhi dreads a general election right now. His popularity in northern India is at an all time low.

Chandra Shekhar will do the job for him until the Congress feel that they can face elections. Shrewd politicians who are uncertain of their votes frequently have recourse to the strategy of sowing dissent within their opposition and severely discrediting it in the public eye. (Our subcontinental neighbourhood has many politicians of this genre). The Congress began the job as soon as the Janata Dal was put together.

During the election campaign they endeavoured to impress upon the people that the National Front would soon fall apart, bickering, and that therefore the country's stability was at stake. When Rajiv Gandhi is satisfied that his opposition's financial resources are in bad shape and their organisational capacity seriously impaired he will pull the carpet under Chandra Shekhar's feet, and if that helps Rajiv to get plenty of votes and return to power he will definitely have something to do in Sri Lanka. The south of India has been too important in his career as a politician. The Sri Lankan Tamil problem will be one of the issues he will have to address there.

11-11-1990

From crisis to crisis

The latest economic stabilization programme the government has worked out with the IMF and the World Bank vests on two precarious assumptions. That there would be progress towards a settlement of the Northeast and that the Gulf crisis would not precipitate into a war. The burden of also studying the dark intentions of Saddam and Prabhakaran will also be upon the pecuniary

pundits who advise the incumbent and steer the economy.

The two assumptions form the basis of growth budgetary and balance of payments projections for the next three years. Even if Bush and Saddam endlessly procrastinate hostilities the budget could still be heavily strained by the high cost military

operations against the Tigers. The cost can get higher and higher as the LTTE reorganizes and acquires new weapons.

Indian threat

The threat of a renewed Indian effort to intervene diplomatically or covertly may also push the government into taking expensive military measures. But then the Fund/Bank conditionality requires strict fiscal discipline. Can the stipulated discipline be sustained under these circumstances? It can be very difficult not only because of the cost of war and an unfavourable external trade environment but because of the perceived political exigencies of the UNP in the South.

The politically adverse effects of the current 'austerity' programmes can make it extremely difficult for the UNP to resist further public investment programmes to maintain its credibility.

The adjusted fiscal deficit has to be reduced to about 9 percent of the GDP next year and a further reduction it envisaged for 1992 and 1993. This means among other things that the UNP has to restrain spending on major public investment projects for some time.

JVP

The second stage of the system B of the Mahaweli scheme seems to have been put on hold,

as a result. The post JVP sensitivities of the present government have apparently prompted them to promise major development programmes in the South. The J.R. regime also tried to bring about some measure of fiscal discipline with less social costs — many subsidies were in place, public sector was not dismantled, etc.

J.R. Jayawardene

In the early eighties there was an effort by that regime in the face of emerging economic imbalances and problems, to reduce the budget deficit and its financing requirement from the banking system.

According to Dr. Warnasena Rasaputram, first it attempted to raise revenue through consumption oriented taxes.

Secondly action was taken to reduce the level and growth of government expenditure. Hence expenditure cuts were imposed and capital expenditure programmes were rephased. Because of these measures the J.R. regime was able to reduce its budget deficit to 10 percent of the GDP (The percentage that was projected for this year in the current stabilization package) by 1984 and eliminate the use of inflationary bank borrowings for deficit financing purposes.

18-11-1990

LTTE sustaining the tempo

A long haul can bring many calamities upon the Tigers as well, and one of those, perhaps the worst, is the indifference that creeps on the people of Jaffna. One that can turn sheer and fatalist. There are two ways on which the Tigers generally combat the mood whenever they feel it coming. One is to step up on mass propaganda. The other is to allow the Army to move in. I think that they now will try both means to ensure the allegiance of the Tamil population to their cause. The Great Warrior week is necessary for the LTTE to keep the people mobilized.

Families

The families of Tiger members who have died in action have been promised Rs. 250 per month for five years. Demonstrations and rallies were planned on a massive scale. The government, it is apparent,

is determined to thwart the LTTE's mobilization effort. But it is important to note that the Tiger has come of age.

The territory they hold is definitely less important than the allegiance of the people. Over the years they have come to believe that Tamil nationalist favour can be rekindled and sustained by exposing the Tamil population to the Army.

On many an occasion Tigers have grumbled in public about the indifference and the lack of active support and participation of the Jaffna people in the war. Boys from the East and the Wannai had to be brought to Jaffna for fighting. Therefore if the Great Warriors week and other similar efforts at mobilization do not succeed in producing the desired social effects then it may not altogether be wrong to say that the Tiger will in some areas

withdraw with little resistance. The problem now is not the decline of nationalism but a confusion about its goal.

If all wars have to end at the conference table and if the Tigers and the government are talking in London now then what is the purpose of all the misery? This is a question that can fundamentally disrupt the Tiger project for kindling nationalism.

Dr. Balasingham has claimed recently that the LTTE would go for any substantial negotiation with Colombo only if there is India's mediation. Whether he was serious or not the message therein can confound the rationale required to carry on the war.

On the other hand the zeal of the army in combating the Tiger is also partly derived from its Sinhala-Buddhist perceptions which have evolved under the strong influence of communal politics of Sri Lanka. And this zeal may also lose its cutting edge when the possibility of another round of negotiations is constantly present.

Acknowledgement

Although the Tigers realise and sometimes acknowledge the need for yet another round of negotiations they dread the ennui that they think ruins even their best men during peace. Their Commander for Batticaloa and Amparai, Karuna of Kiran, was recently relieved of his post on charges of inefficiency. He has been banished to the Amparai district as an ordinary soldier. The two districts are under the supervision of Mahathaya.

The Great Warriors' week is an indispensable cathartic. It has to be celebrated at whatever the cost because the Tiger does not take Tamil nationalism for granted. They discovered that, contrary to what they had believed and asserted, Tamil nationalism and separatism were not natural to the Tamil people nor were they inexorable.

25-11-1991

The LTTE is now a conventional army

Nine years ago in Jaffna, at a time when the debate between proponents of pure militarism and those of protracted people's war had become quite serious in some intellectual circles which were on the fringes of the armed Tamil groups, one of Prabhakaran's friends, who apparently was eager to show that his friend knows what he was talking about, gave me a handsomely illustrated book on military history.

The IPKF and the EPRLF's Provincial council have laid the illusion that Tamil nationalism did not need organization. For many years they failed to realise that their 'Foco' theory of carrying on guerrilla war with small armed bands worked because the Federal party, the Tamil Congress, the communist parties and later the TULF had all worked hard for more than 40 years to get the Tamil people organised.

Rebellion

The decline of the TULF after 1983 did not greatly undermine the mass movement that had been organised by it in the Northeast for many years because the memory of the 1983 anti-Tamil violence was still fresh and because the other major Tamil groups were committed and motivated by the idea of organising the masses as a precondition for armed rebellion. They either were endeavouring to take over what was left of the TULF's mass fronts or were building up their own people's fronts.

Nationalist

The LTTE took the Tamil nationalist feeling that was generated and sustained by these efforts after 1983 for granted. Pro-Tiger intellectuals debated and often ridiculed the efforts of the other groups to politically educate and mobilize the people before engaging in armed struggle

They claimed much to the LTTE's satisfaction that the call to set up mass fronts was a feeble cover for military incapability. None of those groups are there now. And the Tiger has come to terms with a bitter reality. That nationalism has to be organised and sustained. And so they will have to celebrate the Great warriors' week even if they have to lose many of their men at Mankulam.

The book was from one of LTTE's underground libraries. (Prabhakaran is known to spend vast sums of money on acquiring books on war and weapons). It was in that book that I first became acquainted with the work of General Antoin Henri Jomini. He had been a voluminous writer, a lesser known contemporary of the famous Carl Von Clausewitz.

The Mankulam attack and the discussions on

strategy in their recent official publication, which is prepared by some of their experienced soldiers, in Jaffna, reminded one of General Jomini's observations on war.

Propagation

In the beginning the LTTE's role model was Che Guevara. They keenly encouraged the propagation of his ideas and insisted, sometimes adamantly that the concept of evolving a large people's army was wrong in the context of the Tamil movement at that time.

In the first issue of their official paper '*Vidhuthalai Pulihal*' they even decided to carry an article by a Stalinist Sinhala revolutionary who has now become an arch promoter and apologist of *premaestroika* on the merits and methods of guerilla warfare. But the latest issue of the '*Vidhuthalai Pulihal*' claims that after 15 years of guerilla war, the Tigers have now become a conventional army. The ambition of our leader Prabhakaran has been to build up a powerful Tamil National Liberation Army. He wants to strengthen and modernize it as much as he can. The lengthy discussion, accompanied by maps, on the Fort operation is, it is clear, informed by principles and concepts which belong in discourses on conventional warfare. That this extensive discussion is quasi-scientific does not diminish the validity of the transformation that has taken place in the Tiger's perception of achieving its goal through military means.

Guerilla group

The LTTE which began the war in June this year is no more a guerilla group. It is not only functioning as a conventional force in the North but is also thinking and devising strategy as one.

It would be judicious and prudent, at least at this juncture, to reckon with the fact even if they are in future marginalized by superior fire power and overwhelming logistical capabilities they would have acquired to knowhow and the necessary experience to raise and effectively use a conventional army.

The era of the Tiger as a guerilla strategist is drawing to a close. The fall of Mankulam is another indication of it. A keen student of the LTTE's evolution will find that the conceptual tools that he culled from the writings of Ernesto Che Guevara may not be useful now in understanding their thinking. The book wherein came upon Jomini may have satisfied the curiosity of a bumbling novice at that time but not the urgent needs of the hit and run tactician.

The strategic planning that seems to have been involved in the siege and assault of the Fort and now in the Mankulam attack has to be assessed. The thinking of the post-IPKF Tiger shows a pre-occupation with macro planing and with eliciting the general principles that govern the over-all strategy of the security forces.

Principles

The LTTE observes that in the North there are three principles that influence the military planning of the generals. The first one is ensuring of supply routes (air, land and sea) to the camps. The second one is having possible and safe lines of withdrawal from camps and detachments in place. The third one is strengthening the camps by relocation and/or addition of troops.

For operating in the North with these three principles governing its actions, until such time when other strategies become possible, the army will have to depend on a certain number of elite troops which have to be moved to different locations according to requirements necessitated by pressures that may unexpectedly develop or to meet pre-planned strategic needs.

Contingencies

Priorities that arise from contingencies are seen to determine, in the short term, the distribution of these troops. The perception of these priorities are in turn determined by the three general principles. The army's operations in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Jaffna Fort and Mannar are such examples.

The LTTE observes that elite troops' strength was allocated to each of these situations to relocate camps by the coast as in the case of Mullaitivu and Fort or to secure supply and withdrawal lines from the coast as in the case of Thallady where constant efforts were made to link it up to the coast by pushing out of Silavaturai and from Puttalam and by setting up a detachment on the Vankalai coast by cleaning Mannar island and now the Kilinochchi camp was withdrawn into the one at Elephant Pass.

Decisive point

When the pressure on a decisive point is substantial, political and strategic priorities however crucial they may be are sacrificed and the three principles appear to become the final determinants in the decision making of the field command. It is therefore only logical that the LTTE selected the camp at Mankulam junction if their perception of the army's strategy was such. This is

why when the baby brigade struck, the men of Mankulam withdrew. After nine years, excerpts from another work on General Jomini would, I think, help put Prabhakaran's new thinking' and strategies in perspective.

Psychological factors

Critics like Clausewitz, who doubted the validity of any theory of war failed to distinguish between a theory of systems and a theory of principles. Principles were guides to action, not infallible mathematical calculations. The specific application of principles would vary with the thousand changing physical and psychological factors that made war a great drama.

The principle of manoeuvring the mass of an army so as to threaten the decisive points in a theatre of war and then to hurl all available forces against a fraction of the enemy force defending those points is, Jomini admitted, very simple. Almost without exception the enemy flanks and supply lines would define the decisive points for attack; an army could not survive without supply and to threaten its base would compel it to fight no matter how unfavourable the circumstances. Jomini stressed that beneath the chaotic changes in modern warfare lay strategic universality.

Historical cases

Most commanders make bad strategic choices because they are misled by common sense (a phrase not used by Jomini but strongly implied by his endless discussions of historical cases). Attempting to defend territory or a weaker army, they let the enemy decide where, when and how to attack. Uncertain how to protect or exploit several natural lines of operations they hedge their bets by dispersing force among several possibilities.

The uncommon sense of Napoleon and usually of Frederick and of all victorious commanders had always been - says Jomini to attack with massed forces against some enemy point judged to be 'decisive'. Properly understood, the apparent recklessness of such strategy, which leaves some areas weakened or vulnerable is actually prudence. Aggressive offensive action deprives the enemy of time to think and act while superior force at the time and place of battle is the best guarantee of victory. As simple as these formulations may seem, he reiterated them throughout his writing because in the actual conduct of warfare they were so often ignored with disastrous consequences.

2-12-1990

The Tiger as pan-Tamil phenomenon

The admiralty charts show a group of unnamed islets off the southern coast of Ramanathapuram - the narrow strip of land that projects from the southeastern coast of Tamil Nadu into the Gulf of Mannar towards the Adam's bridge.

One of these islets is called Musaltivu (Rabbit's island) by the local fisherman. It is a coconut plantation which they say belongs to a rich Muslim on the mainland. The man may not be getting coconuts from his islet estate in the sea but the armed young boys who come there at night in powerful speedboats find plenty to quench their thirst after long hours at sea. Fishermen and seaweed collectors from Vedalai and Seeni Appa Darha - Muslim villages on the coast - know well the activities of the 'boys' but do not mind them.

Smuggling has been going on in these parts for generations. Sea trade had flourished in early British and pre-British times. It takes only a day and

a half by trawler to get to Batticaloa. (The people in some of these villages use archaic Tamil words long thought peculiar to the Batticaloa dialect of Sri Lankan Tamil). Mannar and Jaffna are only hours away.

The hue and cry about the danger to the law and order situation in Tamil Nadu posed by the LTTE on its southern coast may not mean anything to the people in Vedalai or the fishermen who may chat up sea Tigers at times when they have to stop over at Musaltivu to mend nets or sort out the day's catch. The whole thing has become so much part of life that there is little anyone can do to get these people to discourage the Tigers from coming there.

This attitude of the locals, the location of the islets, the type of tidal action peculiar to this region and the scorpion and thornbush infested arid terrain on shore interspersed with coconut groves having very few direct roads to the coast, make it well nigh impossible for the local authorities to do

anything about the Sri Lankan Tamil militant operations, even when they are given express orders at times.

After the war began in June the local police, it appears, has been trying to clear the Mandapam area of the EPRLF for the convenience of the LTTE.

There are some local notables who discourage attention being drawn to sea Tiger activities. I know of a Congress-I stalwart in Nagarkovil further south, who remained a staunch supporter of Prabhakaran, even during the IPKF-LTTE war.

Although the Congress-I keeps accusing the DMK of colluding dangerously with the Tigers, there are several important people of that party in the southern and south eastern coastal belt of Tamil Nadu who sympathise with the LTTE. I think that the Chief of Tamil Nadu Congress-I, Vazhapadi Ramamurthy may himself be aware of this. The sea Tiger operations cannot be totally supervised or controlled on the coast of Tamilnadu.

The claims and counter claims made by politicians in Madras and Delhi can at most be political. The sole aim of the Congress-I is to get rid of Karunanidhi. For them the presence of LTTE in Tamil Nadu has come in handy only for the moment. The local media which seems to expect the imminent downfall of the DMK with much glee, should pause for a moment to contemplate the intricate methods of intrigue in 'democratic' politics. Karunanidhi and some of his colleagues are now convinced that they will soon be thrown out of office.

In a poem he wrote recently for the *Murasoli*, the party paper, he says "the comfort of office and the luxury of wealth are like writing on water."

Chandrasekar had told the DMK emissary Nanjil Manoharan that Rajiv had agreed to support him on condition that the State governments in Assam and Tamil Nadu be dismissed. Delhi has intimated to the Tamil Nadu Governor Surjeeth Singh Barnala to prepare a list of charges against the DMK government. The DMK called a meeting of MLAs and MPs on November 24th at their headquarters 'Anna Arivalayam' to discuss the mood in the electorate and to draw election plans. The party has decided after much deliberation to continue as a member of V.P. Singh's National Front. The DMK also decided to give pre-eminence to its youth front and its leader M.K. Stalin in the election work.

Dismissal

The dismissal of Karunanidhi's government

and the results of the election that may follow will have very little effect on LTTE's operations in Tamil Nadu. Despite the vehement and persistent propaganda of the Congress-I about the LTTE-DMK connection, its ally the AIADMK of Jeyalalitha has been noticeably quiet on the issue. The Tigers will have to worry only if the AIADMK should launch such a campaign.

In the event of Karunanidhi's fall it seems quite certain that Jeyalalitha will come to power with a formidable majority. S.D. Somasunderam who was a senior minister in MGR's cabinet and who later left the AIADMK to form his own party, has now become one of Jeyalalitha's confidants. He had very close and personal relations with many Tamil militants. He even consulted a militant leader about breaking up with MGR. The LTTE made a symbolic gesture in July by sending an open letter to Jeyalalitha seeking the support of the AIADMK.

Senior politicians like S.D. Somasunderam and R.M. Veerappan (who runs MGR's Sathya movies) will not be happy about the prospect of the AIADMK joining hands with the Congress-I in making a big issue out of the LTTE's armed presence in Tamil Nadu. Jeyalalitha will also be cautious in doing so because she may run the risk of being accused of betraying MGR's legacy. She can't throw stones from the AIADMK glass house.

Therefore once the expected changes take place in the political scene in Tamil Nadu one may find that things are not so bad for the LTTE.

The DMK in the opposition will be free of Delhi's dictates on the Tiger issue and it can exert pressure on the AIADMK government by whipping up public sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamil cause.

Patron

Jeyalalitha will have senior ministers in her cabinet who may not be too keen or happy to crack down on the Tigers even if Delhi insists on it. S.D. Somasunderam and R.M. Veerappan would rather play patron than act policeman for the Tamil cause. The DMK has already begun to plan the revival of the anti-Brahmin movement. It has been moving closer to the social reformist Dravida Kazhaham in recent times for that purpose. This may make Jeyalalitha who is a Brahmin, sensitive to taking up matters for which she may be branded as anti-Tamil. A crack-down on the Tiger will be one of them.

Kasi Anandan — one of Prabhakaran's early mentors — who was recently arrested at Thillainagar in Thiruchi and released immediately along with other Tigers, is in charge of LTTE's

contacts with Tamil Nadu politicians. He, having played an active role in the militant Dravidian Movement in the mid-sixties, is remarkably conversant with the personal, psychological and ideological intricacies of Tamil Nadu's politics. Hence he and his associates can, and are making manoeuvres to advance the interests of the LTTE in the rapidly changing political order of Tamil Nadu. Amidst the political complications, there are some constants one has to reckon within understanding the Tamil Nadu factor in Sri Lankan Tamil militancy. They are the coastal geography and Tamil nationalism which cuts across party barriers and at times becomes personal. The latter can even affect law enforcement. The perceptions of the

State police, which was recruited mostly during the Dravidian era of Tamil Nadu's politics, has been affected by the pro-LTTE policy of MGR and Karunanidhi.

Policemen with party backgrounds can be influenced by party policy as is the case in many Third World countries. The Tamil Nadu State police began a programme to recruit 2000 men from November 4th. One hundred thousand applied. A police officer told the 'Junior Post', "the people are unhappy because there is a feeling in Tamil Nadu that the jobs will go to DMK men."

7-12-1990

The LTTE's 'Jaffna First' policy

The Eastern province is a political and ideological priority for the government. It can be a costly one. It has to protect Sinhala villages on the border, manage Muslim-Tamil tensions, and consolidate military gains by setting up camps and detachments. From Weli Oya in the north to Panama in the south more and more troops are required to check Tiger activity. Many difficulties are bound to arise because the military task can be compounded by political and ideological difficulties, in turn, create the need for more troops. In this situation one cannot but take note of a dilemma: that would present itself when one studies the history of LTTE's strategy for the east. The dilemma is whether to disperse troop strength in the East and allow the LTTE to build up in the North from where they will try to move into the East by land and sea or to advance in the North with a large number of soldiers withdrawn for the purpose from the East.

An impartial scrutiny of the history of the military thinking of the Tiger, would, I suppose, reveal some advantages that have accrued and perhaps may still accrue to them from their policy of first in the North and then in the East. When the war began in June this year, the LTTE, transferred many heavy weapons and troops to the North. The LTTE leadership in the East openly grumbled about it. Prabhakaran had told a person who had visited him sometime before the fighting broke out "we will go to Trincomalee town last."

From the time that they enunciated their military strategy for achieving their goal, the LTTE has said that they would first build up their strength in the peninsula through urban guerrilla warfare and gradually spread into the Wannai and the East

once they were sure of their military power and resources in the peninsula.

They argued that the first stage of their evolution had to be low-intensity guerrilla war which required the sympathy of the general population for its success, and that the level of popular support which was needed to engage in hit and run would be forthcoming only in the peninsula. This strategy of the LTTE was, I feel, more an excuse for the dearth of cadres and influence in the Wannai and the East than the result of a careful study of the political and military geography of the Northeast.

This view also suited their aversion to setting up political fronts. Some of the best fighters of the LTTE in the East and the Wannai were operating in the peninsula at that time when they upheld this idea.

Victor of Mannar and Seelan of Trincomalee learned the art of guerilla warfare in the Jaffna peninsula. The Tigers who were not a big group during this period (79-83) were thoroughly castigated by the other armed Tamil organizations and prominent intellectuals for their reactionary Jaffna centrism.

The marxist oriented groups like PLOTE held a view diametrically opposed to that of the LTTE on the identification of region that would be sympathetic and conducive to guerilla war. They argued that the middle classes of the Jaffna peninsula who were in majority there would turn against the war if and when they felt that their material interests were directly threatened by it. Only the people who had little or nothing to lose would support the Eelam war to the very end, they said.

The majority of the Jaffna middle classes who were the vociferous advocates of an armed movement for Eelam would back out and then betray once the war comes to their doorstep, it was prophesied.

There were many incidents in the peninsula which the 'Eelam' left adduced in its case against the Jaffna centric strategies of the LTTE. Woo the poor peasants of the Wannai and the Eastern province or the cause will be doomed, they said. The fervour and gravity of the general opposition to the Tigers' view that the Eelam cause had to be consolidated in the Jaffna peninsula first can be seen in the famous Tamil poem 'The Village on the Border' by Cheran, one of the best Tamil poets of recent times.

The poem which is addressed to the 'Urban guerilla' was based on a journey he made with this writer to the remote and obscure villages of the Vadamunai jungles in the Batticaloa district.

The popularity of the poem incensed the Tigers in general and Mahathaya in particular. Despite such criticism and the great disadvantages in terms of recruitment — the largest number of Tamil youth who were prepared to join the ranks of the armed movement were from the East — the Tigers persisted with their 'Jaffna first' military policy.

And although there were drawbacks in number and popular support in the East they have been able to emerge as the most powerful armed Tamil group. This policy still informs their planning for the East. The 'Tamil base' of the East, was under the command of people sent from Jaffna till the appointment of Karuna in 1987.

One of the most senior Tigers, Pasi Sinnathurai of Vantharumoolai in Batticaloa was maintained only for political reasons. The Tiger leadership depended successively on Ramu, Kaka, and Kumarappa from Jaffna to run their operation in Batticaloa till they were sure that the East could manage on its own. But once again they had to send Mahathaya to Batticaloa 'to tidy up' and re-organize the LTTE there. (Mahathaya has returned to Jaffna and written about his brief sojourn in Batticaloa in the official organ of the Tiger).

The 'Jaffna centric' strategy of the Tiger has, it is obvious, paid some dividends in the long term,

despite criticism from many consequential quarters of the Tamil movement. The class analysis of the Tamil left, no doubt, was correct. The Tigers themselves indirectly acknowledge it when they scold the Jaffna people for failing to directly contribute to their war and say that they have to count on boys from the East to fight the war in the peninsula.

If the class analysis was correct what was wrong?

The North in general and the north western, northeastern coast and the Jaffna peninsula in particular were strategically and technically crucial for the Eelam war. The organizational and technological level of the warfare that was brought about by local skills and Indian involvement made it necessary for it to be linked up to a vigorous and developed economy. It soon became a guerrilla war that could not have survived on a stagnant peasant economy. The financial, technical, and organizational infrastructure of Jaffna and Tamil Nadu became indispensable to service the high-input guerrilla war in the North as well as the East. The firepower and fighting skills of the Sri Lankan army had to be faced. With the rapid intensification of the conflict the East-based and Wannai-based left groups found their command centres functioning in Jaffna and Madras even though their fundamental and proclaimed objective was to deprive the reactionary Jaffna middle class of its political power and make the 'proletariat' and the poor peasantry of the Wannai and the East the vanguard of the Eelam war.

That the intellectual labours of the eager but bookish Marxist may not always serve the interests of the military planner was a fact that was considered seriously by the Tamil left groups too late. Like these groups in the past, the East is crucial for the government for other historical and political imperatives.

The LTTE sticks on to its old policy of consolidating the North and then moving to the East. It remains to be seen how the Sri Lankan government will handle its priorities in the East and reckon with the effects of LTTE's fundamental idea of the geographical stages of its military plan.

23-12-1990

India' Changing Sri Lanka policy

David, the official of India's external intelligence agency, who was in charge of training and arming the TNA, that unfortunate bunch of juvenile conscripts, recently visited some refugee camps in Tamil Nadu. There are many former TNA cadres in these camps who fled the country when the LTTE, backed by the Sri Lankan Government, made short shrift of RAW's make shift army which it was believed could serve the interests of Mr. Varatharaja Perumal's provincial rule. David may be interested in renewing contacts. No one would ever be foolish to suppose that another TNA was on the way except as cannon fodder for the Tigers, or to presume that their bloody intransigence could be dealt with by financially and militarily promoting the anti-LTTE groups.

There are clear indications now that some sections of the Indian government which handle Sri Lankan Tamil affairs have become busy. Their first task will be to get their bearings clear about the anti-LTTE camp in Tamil politics, and make efforts to bring it back under Delhi's direct supervision. The anti-LTTE groups are indispensable if India plans to play a major role in the conflict. These groups were on the verge of 'estrangement' due to an atmosphere of a bureaucratic apathy on the part of their original benefactors.

Reshuffles

This low level of interest was more the result of reshufflings in the higher echelons of Delhi officialdom than that of radical changes in policy.

Although the broad policy on Sri Lankan Tamil matters that had been developed over the years remained in place, V.P. Singh's brief tenure prevented him from taking any crucial and conspicuous decisions on the issue which led to an unwarranted belief here that it was the effect of a principle of non-interference. Certain changes he made in sections of the Indian government which deal with Sri Lanka's ethnic problem were at times favourable to the LTTE. A senior official whom the

Tigers thought was the cause of all their calamities had quietly been eased out of his powerful post; Karunanidhi obliged them using his clout with the National Front government. But the men who replaced the old hands were people who were well accustomed to the line of thinking that had informed the decision making of their predecessors. Things have changed after V.P. Singh's fall.

Delhi's oft repeated claim that political transactions do not affect its policy planning, does not seem quite plausible in view of what's going on under Chandra Shekar's government. The institutional power base on which Rajiv Gandhi depended and many times used, to enhance his political power has begun to reassert itself. There have been many intelligence officials and bureaucrats in the past who have been better rewarded by India and Rajiv for their services than members of their own party. The re-emergence of Rajiv's men in many crucial sectors of the government may have its first impact on Sri Lankan affairs

No Cause

Barbara Crossette of the *New York Times* Service writes, "under Mr. Shekar they say there has already been a trend towards weakening of established institutions and a slide into the personalized styles of Third World governments. Government departments, intelligence agencies and state administrations are being restaffed wholesale often without apparent cause to remove appointees or elected supporters of V.P. Singh".

The PMO (Prime Minister's Office), the RAW and the IB were the most influential sections of the government under Rajiv Gandhi. The PMO's Ronen Sen, RAW's Chief Verma and IB chief M.K. Narayan used to be present regularly at most of Rajiv's high level political consultations.

Ronen Sen's friendship was carefully cultivated by some aspiring politicians and their associates from neighbouring countries.

None of these men hold these jobs now. But the institutions to which they belonged may again become more influential than they ought to be; local politicians are already seeking the connivance of bureaucrats and intelligence officials who were active under Rajiv and who were not removed from their department's under V.P. Singh. Jeyalalitha's confidante Nadarajan sought appointments with senior IB officer Naranayan for the purpose of negotiating two cabinet portfolios for the AIADMK in Chandra Shekar's government. Naranayan was an intelligence officer who was entrusted with the final preparation of the list of candidates of the Tamil Nadu Congress-I in the last parliamentary elections.

Many officials, it appears, are discreet in showing the power that has come to them now. But the predicament of Chandra Shekar and the outstretched expectations of Rajiv Gandhi will impel them gradually to lean on the old hands in the bureaucracy and the intelligence agencies. If this trend lasts beyond the possible outcome of the next parliamentary elections it can be expected that the task of re-Indianising the Tamil groups i.e., of making them more dependent on India will receive priority. The task has already begun.

Perumal has renewed his hopes making his rounds in Delhi, (take a copy). What will the LTTE do in these circumstances? What, while it woos the other Tamil groups, can Indian officials do about the LTTE?

The LTTE is much surer now of the back up it can get in Tamil Nadu. It can count on the Tamil nationalist reservoir there to sustain many of its major activities. Then there is the corruption that the LTTE exploits with great ease at all levels in the state.

Interpol

Congress-I MP Rangarajan Kumaramangalam had queried in Parliament about the Interpol report that was sent to a relevant agency under V.P. Singh's government. The report drew attention to a major run running operation through Tamil Nadu. Chandra Sekhar also wrote a letter at that time to the Home Minister about the Interpol report. The

ramifications of the operation were too great and sensitive for the Central government to bust it up overnight; and then it is doubtful whether they want to do anything about it.

Whether the DMK is in power or not is something that does not greatly bother the LTTE, because the network that they have developed in Tamil Nadu to sustain the operation to which the Interpol had referred to is almost, one can say impregnable.

On the other hand a militant source speculated that there may be an 'understanding' at the 'source', hence the silence about the report in Delhi. The LTTE also knows that if they are the dominant group on the ground, Delhi will have to come to them if its relationship with the Sri Lankan government is strained. They may also be aware and counting on the argument that has been advanced by some Indian defence analysts since the IPKF got embroiled in the war with the LTTE.

The argument in essence holds that India should allow the process of natural selection to work among the Sri Lankan Tamil groups and cement a relationship with the one that survives as the fittest. India, it should be pointed out, still insists on its legal right, by virtue of the Indo-Lanka Accord to have a say in the affairs of the Tamils of the Northeast. The primary concern is with this legality and less with having a pliant regime in Colombo.

The legal right, which India believes it has acquired through the Accord, can be exercised to its advantage only if there is an endemic inability to resolve the conflict. Therefore by getting most of the Tamil groups, including LTTE to once again transfer the right or the potential for mediation to it, India will try to demonstrate and realize the gains of the Accord. It may be useful to study how another kind of legality was exercised by India to achieve certain objectives in Nepal.

The anti-DMK political weekly 'Tharasu' reports that Perumal has been to the capital recently to discuss the Karunanidhi-LTTE nexus in detail, with Rajiv Gandhi.

30-12-1990

Beyond the shattered ceasefire

No causes belli this time however frail or awkward. The momentum gathered by the war made the ceasefire extremely fragile, hence there was no need to look for one from the time the LTTE 'sprung' the offer upon the government.

The opinion of those engaged in the actual conduct of the war was too serious to be ignored even in a rare Third World country like Sri Lanka where more often than not it is casually assumed that the military is under non-compromisable civilian control.

The leniency that was subtly insinuating and responses of the state on the Tiger gave some room for interpretation and speculation that the government was shrewdly planning to deny what the LTTE may have desired to get out of their offer: political advantage.

In the meantime there were reports in the press that indicated the army's position.

However in the very early hours of Friday morning the army resumed its operations against the LTTE. The government announced its decision to reject the Tiger ceasefire around 11 a.m. on Friday. The decision was not officially communicated to the political parties which had been consulted the previous evening.

The political leadership of the country may have deemed it judicious to add an element of surprise for reasons best known to them, to the cornerstone of their policy: consultation, compromise and consensus.

The government's seven day interregnum ended at 12 midnight Wednesday. Of course the army had a point. Stop the offensive and you lose your best means of defence; and there certainly was a convergence of interest this time between the army and the armed Tamil groups which were operating with it. The offer came at a juncture (or was it timed?) where the army has no option but to be extremely reluctant to accept it. They were yet

to be satisfied that conditions on the ground were in their favour to even cautiously needle with the idea of talks.

The LTTE's position in the North was such that offensive operations of the army had become indispensable in defending their camps and 'maintaining' territory that they had wrested from the Tigers. It was very clear therefore that a cessation of fire was suicidal. The Tiger could not be allowed at any cost to move near camps to build the kind of bunker that is necessary to launch the Paseelan 2000 or the more powerful Kumarappi 5000, huge projectiles, the launching barrels of which are too cumbersome to be moved around under fire.

The army has also acquired greater fire power in recent times. It may have been thought that the LTTE was neutralising that through the ceasefire. However it does not seem that in all this an important question has been addressed adequately. Will the military gains, the army may feel it has secured by recommencing the offensive substantially outweigh in the long term, the political advantages that may accrue to the LTTE and perhaps other interested parties as a result of the government's rejection of the unilaterally declared ceasefire?

It is not altogether wrong to say that the LTTE's offer was mainly motivated by their military needs. They obviously cannot carry on with the war unless they are sure of their supplies. An uninterrupted flow of ammunition is absolutely vital. All major dealers in the international arms bazaar are supervised by global and regional hegemons. If one is an internationally acceptable political pariah, one might find many deals falling through.

The LTTE had either to woo the Indians and coax them into supplying or they had to make themselves more acceptable to some countries in the West which have been taking more than routine interest in the Tamil affairs of Sri Lanka.

(It seems that Thilagar, the Tiger spokesman in Paris, had suggested that Norway could be made the venue for talks between the government and the LTTE.)

To 'soften' international opinion and to demonstrate unequivocally that it is the Sri Lankan government which is the war monger is absolutely necessary for the Tiger to push its case with interested western countries and/or get Indian patronage once more.

The specific military needs of the LTTE cannot be fulfilled unless they can secure covert assistance through the political justification of their cause.

A high level meeting had been convened at Kuvattithurai two weeks before the ceasefire declaration. Prabhakaran had also marked his presence briefly. Sympathisers had been told that the meeting had been called to discuss their relations with the Indian government.

India welcomed the ceasefire as soon as it was declared. The Sri Lankan government officially

responded only on January 3. Very rarely does one get knee jerk reactions from the Indian External Affairs ministry.

Despite Delhi's professed aversion to the LTTE, External Affairs Minister V. C. Shukla will press the government to find a negotiated settlement with them. We may hear and see more if Mr. J.N. Dixit is appointed Foreign Secretary. The other candidate to the post Ghare Khan, who is India's permanent representative at the UN, may continue there because of India's membership in the Security Council from January.

Ghare Khan, who served in the Prime Minister's office under Indira and Rajiv has been appointed chairman of one of the committees under the Security Council. Therefore Mr. Dixit may be preferred for the post. He also seems to be Rajiv's choice. Careful attention has to be given to what the LTTE is going to achieve with what it wanted and got through the ceasefire.

13-1-1991

Gulf war - Regional fall out

The war in the Gulf is the first test case of a new world order. The American imperium has struck an Arab country, a regional hegemon. Whatever the outcome of this war, global powers like India will be worried.

The bipolar world of the cold war era, with its inherent checks and balances provided strategic powers as it were for aspiring Third World powers to advance their economic and security interests. The Soviet-initiated collapse of this system has been too rapid, making such countries uncertain as to the way adjustments could take place to their advantage in the new order.

India's role

It is in this context, besides that of economic impact, that Sri Lanka has to consider India's perceptions and role in the region. If the US emerges as the global top-cop after swiftly defeating Saddam's one million-man army, how will India view its designs on the sub-continental regions? Will India be tempted to further expand its own 1.2 million strong army if the US were to get bogged down in the sands of Kuwait and Iraq? An unqualified and quick victory secured by the Americans by means of high tech-warfare and

electronic intelligence will cause great concern for the Indians. The wide range of implications which will present themselves in the event of such a victory can make India review its long term plans and interests in the sub-continental neighbourhood.

India's apprehension is evident. Ghare Khan, India's permanent representative to the UN, said that his country does not consider the US led forces in the Gulf as peace keeping forces or those acting under the UN. The "Times of India" which often reflects the government thinking warned, "no matter how bright the immediate impact of Iraq's defeat appears in western eyes, the effect in the long term could be ominous for peace in the region and even outside it."

The defeat of Iraq will convince an aspiring or established regional hegemon that neither the size of its conventional force nor the experiences it may have gathered over the years in regional conflicts will be enough to discourage or ward off direct and large scale American involvement in a major crisis which might arise in the region that the hegemon has come to view as its own strategic hinterland.

US Victory

In the aftermath of a possible clear US victory

in the Gulf, a fear and concern will definitely develop in Delhi about America's new role and potential in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean. The possibility that the US would be able to interfere with greater facility in South Asia, with little deference to the economic and security concerns of India, will re-merge with greater cogence in Indian strategic and political discourse.

Troop deployment outside its borders as in the case of Sri Lanka may have to be decided in a completely different frame of reference; and what that new frame of reference is going to be, will depend on the relationship it may plan to work out with the US. Can there be another Bangladesh type operation by India in this part of the world, if India is mainly on its own and after the US has driven out the Iraqis from Kuwait and crushed their military machine? On the other hand if the Americans find much to their chagrin that it is not so easy to fight Saddam's massive ground forces even after controlling air space above Iraq and Kuwait and destroying logistical capabilities, then it will certainly boost India's confidence. It may feel that such an experience will deter or discourage the US from going hastily for showdown with a regional power if its army is large, with a proven ground fighting potential.

An opinion has been expressed by some Western defence analysts that direct superpower engagement in any conflict in the sub-continent was an unlikely prospect not only because of political factors but also because of the size of the Indian army and the conventional capabilities it had acquired after its last war with Pakistan. But the US engagement in the Middle East will lead to a re-assessment of the opinion. Even though it may be purely to the Security Council resolution calling for the use of force to retrieve Kuwait, India would wish to see the US getting into a guagmire in the desert. There are a whole lot of it in this war, but the most crucial of them would be 'if' it goes on for more than a month. Then what?

Demonstrations against the war have begun all over Europe and America. Islamic sentiments which were somewhat confused initially may unify in their opposition to US presence in the Gulf if Saddam can hold on. The American army will not be too confident about what they can achieve and how fast they engage the Iraqi army on the borders of Kuwait.

A Western analyst has noted a major drawback

in the US planning: They know what Saddam can do but not what he will do. Some of his actions in the first few days of the war have been predictable. But the repercussions even of his predictable actions may be unexpected and unmanageable.

U.S. claim

It is also not clear how credible is the US claim that they know what Saddam can do. The number and launching facilities of the Scud missiles is a case in point. Did they foresee that Saddam Hussein would be a cool and calculating martyr rather than a pragmatic individual keen on self preservation?

What to them may appear madness can to others be the assertion of Arab dignity. For Sri Lanka, in this part of the world whether the Americans win or not isn't the question. It is what new order that is bound to emerge and what kind of adjustments and perceptions that will have to evolve to carry on in that new order during and after the Gulf War that should be of central concern. This war can result in either a jittery or assertive India in our neighbourhood depending on the course taken by the events in the Gulf. There are some indications however negligible that the Soviet army and the conservatives are calling for the Soviet Union to play a more assertive cold war era type of role in the Gulf.

"Criticism of the US led operation in the Gulf appeared on Friday in the Soviet Defence Ministry newspaper but more strongly in the arch conservative organ of the Russian Communist Party, 'why is world and Soviet opinion demanding the destruction of the army of another aggressive like Israel?..."

'Why is the world community not pushing the US for attacks on Grenada and Panama?

'Can only Iraq be blamed for the war?... Was there really no possibility to prevent it?' demands *Sovietskaya Rossiya* the voice of the Russian communists.

Unless in the aftermath of the Gulf war the Russians submit to such opinion that may gather in strength within the army and the party, this country will have to reckon with our own regional hegemon, in a new geopolitical frame of reference for which we may be ill prepared.

20-1-1999

A fresh Indian reassertion

Why is the Indian Foreign Minister coming to Colombo? Seeking an adequate answer to that question will reveal issues which can perturb the complacency that seems to have descended upon Indo Sri Lankan relations in recent times.

Shukla's visit will be to re-affirm India's claim that it has a legal right, by virtue of the Indo-Lankan accord, to involve itself — however nicely and discreetly — in the political destiny of the Tamils of northeastern Sri Lanka.

It is clear that India is keen to gently or perhaps bluntly assert its commitment to the safety and security of the Tamil people.

It is also clear that India's position is that the Tamils of the Northeast (as represented by whom?) have legitimate political aspirations which are yet to be fulfilled, and that it is the Accord, wherein India guaranteed a devolution package to meet those aspirations by underwriting it, that provides the basis for working out solutions to the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka.

Will the UNP leadership prefer to overlook these premises that underline the cliched euphemisms of Indian diplomacy; and thereby choose not to overtly express what it may really feel about these premises?

The government, if it were to take its ultimate selectors seriously must unambiguously state its definite view on the status of the Accord and the quality it vests the Indian government with.

Does the UNP leadership acknowledge India's legal status in matters concerning "the safety, security and legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people" who live in the Northeast of the country it rules? — the usually hapless elector who has been terrorized into silence both by authority and counter authority.

The SLFP has stated that the Accord is not relevant. (Mr. Anura Bandaranaike said that his relationship with the Gandhi family was excellent).

Do they accept or reject India's claim that it has a legal right in matters concerning the Northeast? To say that the Accord is not relevant or dead is not sufficient because it parries the central question. Despite the changes in government, Delhi has continued to insist on the validity and relevance of the Accord.

V.P. Singh did not conveniently forget what his political rival had worked out with Sri Lanka.

In sending V.C. Shukla, the Indian bureaucracy is sending a signal that continuity in policy has not been compromised. It is not enough to brush aside that document and feel that one has matters under one's firm control. It certainly would help to ascertain the real substantial reason for India's continued insistence on a document which is about granting a system of a devolution to the Tamils.

The continuity indicates that the interest is strategic. The degree of bureaucratic involvement also points in the same directions. As long as the Sri Lankan government is oblivious to such aspects of Indo-Lankan relations, and continues to be ill-equipped in terms of long term policy, depending on initiatives that come from politicians, this country will be ill at ease with its big neighbour.

The personal conviction and integrity of a political leader is an ephemeral phase in strategic planning and hence no solution to problems that the country will have to face in the context of Delhi's long term regional objectives and designs.

There is some evidence to show that Delhi's interest in Sri Lankan Tamil affairs is historical and strategic. The India policy on the Sri Lankan Tamil movement has evolved from Nehru's perceptions of Tamil nationalism and the history of the Tamil nation.

The fundamental premise of that policy is his legacy. The premise is that the Indian state has to secure and maintain the allegiance of the Tamil nation, as a pre condition for achieving its strategic objectives as a pivotal Asian power.

Delhi assumed that the allegiance was secured in the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils through the Accord for all time; it also gave them an additional legitimacy in managing nationalism in Tamil Nadu by demonstrating that the Central government had a permanent legal status in the processes related to fulfilling the political aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamils by virtue of the Accord. This is why Delhi is always keen to distance the Tamil groups from two fields of political gravity towards which they may naturally be pulled: one is the Dravidian movement; the other the Colombo government.

By leaving a surplus of weapons with the miserable TNA they successfully and swiftly drove a wedge between Colombo and the LTTE.

By posing the threat of dissolution they have successfully driven a wedge between Karunanidhi and the LTTE. As a result the dominant Tamil group, the Tigers, are left with the option of turning to Delhi.

The subject of Sri Lankan Tamil affairs is again coming under the purview of the Indian Central government. V. C. Shukla will now stress the need for the Sri Lankan government to negotiate with the LTTE.

Tomorrow he will briefly apprise DMK Chief Karunanidhi about the basic purpose of his mission before he arrives in Colombo the same day.

These peculiar turns in Indo-Lankan affairs may seem ironic but in the pursuance of objectives, Machiavellian geopolitics can turn such movements of supreme irony into pedestrian trivia.

We may see more irony with the gradual unfolding of the course of the Indo-Lankan relations.

While he is here the Indian Foreign Minister will meet the EPRLF, TELO and PLOTE. It is understood that senior leaders of the ENDLF and TELO (in that order) have been to Delhi. Delhi, once more acquiring the authority to speak on behalf of all the Tamil groups, an authority which, may expect, would strengthen the legal status of the mediate in Tamil affairs it acquired through the Accord. Shukla's visit is the beginning of the process.

The UNP leadership seems to have realized that what is at stake is the allegiance of the Tamil people but then what are they doing about it?

27-1-19

After Karunanidhi's fall

Afear was expressed by some of those who were engaged in drawing up the Indian Constitution that article 356 there-in could be abused by governments. Dr. Ambedkar, the chief author of the Indian Constitution, assured them that Article 356 was there as a minor formality and a very last resort and hence the need would rarely arise for any Central government to use it in the future.

But in the last 40 years the article has been used on more than 80 occasions. Many of the disruptive tensions that threaten the cohesion of the Indian polity from the transformation it has undergone over the years: from a sacred constitutional device to a formidable and insidious instrument of political power. Many undesirable state governments were ruined by the Centre as a result.

Now Karunanidhi has been sacked. It is nothing to be jubilant about. The cracks that appear to the south of the Indian Union of States bode no good to multi-ethnic Sri Lanka. Those sections of the broad Dravidian movement who have been questioning the viability of the Indian Union will

grow in strength. Their sympathies lie with the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka. They are yet a minority but are articulate and organized.

The DMK chief had been promising revolt and rebellion if his government were to be dismissed. No one could take him seriously. Stone throwing and bus burning is what the politicians of Tamil Nadu have in mind when they speak about revolt and rebellion. Although violence might subside in due course as usual, the erosion of the fundamental belief in the Indian Constitution among the radicals in the Dravidian movement can have far reaching consequences.

Karunanidhi is more active when he is out of power and there will be no constraints upon him to keep away from the LTTE. Now that the DMK government has been dismissed it remains to be seen whether the activity of the Tigers in Tamil Nadu will be the pivotal issue.

It was the fear of dismissal that drove Karunanidhi to take some action against the Tigers in his State. His job was at stake. Then the

re doubts as to how far the Central government itself was serious about going after the LTTE. If they thought that the Tigers were a real national security threat they should have objected to that group being part of an arrangement to settle the ethnic problem in the Northeast. But it is very clear that they would like to see the LTTE playing a role in the process.

Whereas the government's version of the talks with the Indian Foreign Minister refers only to those Tamil groups that have entered the democratic process, the Indians have insisted on the need to talk to "all parties concerned."

Prabhakaran's most trusted and senior lieutenant was sent to India in December. It was said that he was taking a memorandum with him.

The LTTE's representative in Madras — a former police Constable — went on a mission to Delhi and stayed there for several weeks. He was put up at V. Gopalaswamy's apartment in Delhi.

A reporter of the 'Thuglak' — an anti DMK political weekly which has large circulation in Tamil Nadu — who had been to Karangkadu to verify stories about the Tiger activities in that coastal village in Southern Tamil Nadu has written that an Indian intelligence officer had been regularly visiting the village, the Christian fishermen who live there had told him that they know him by name.

The LTTE had been using Karangkadu as a base to load supplies onto their boats bound for affna.

Subodh Kanth Sahai, the minister from the Centre, who was sent to Madras to inquire into charges against the DMK has said that their concern is not so much with the activities of the LTTE in Tamil Nadu as with the propaganda done for them by the DMK and links which they are suspected to have developed with some local groups.

The Central government of India knows very well that the Tigers do not have any dangerous links with violent elements within their country. That they are worried about the DMK's pro-Tiger propaganda is also a sham.

With Karunanidhi out of power they will not find any use for the Tiger-link with Indian 'subversives and terrorists', story.

Chandrashekar and Rajiv were quite aware that the Tiger was not reason enough to sack Karunanidhi. But they also had no other way to do so constitutionally. Ms. Jeyalalitha was pressing them not to delay because the DMK was planning to introduce some popular measures in the State legislature.

P. Chidambaram argued that the DMK government could be dissolved on the basis of British parliamentary tradition, that a government has to resign if it loses more than four by-elections while in power.

The DMK has lost all the by-elections it has contested. It could not pool enough votes even in Karunanidhi's legislative assembly seat when the parliamentary elections were held in 1989. Chidambaram was careful not to raise the LTTE issue seriously. The Indian Attorney General Mr. G. Ramasamy, came to Madras on two occasions to consult with Ms. Jeyalalitha about the constitutional problems in dissolving a State government with a sizeable majority in the legislature.

That the A.G. of India should have consulted the capricious but immensely popular Ms. Jeyalalitha does not speak well for the traditions of Indian democracy. If Delhi continues to erode the democratic means of government in a state which was the first to raise the separatist cry and where the forces of secession are still active, the immediate beneficiary would be the LTTE.

3-2-1991

New Left drifts to the LTTE

Velupillai Balakumar has been made the chief of the LTTE's Eelam reconstruction programme.

Another EROS leader, Para or Pararaja Singham who was also an EDF MP has been appointed as a political organiser. Most of the EROS cadres in the

North have joined the Tigers, some willingly and some because they had no option. The substantial military and economic resources that the EROS had accumulated over the years now belong to the LTTE.

Balakumar, the bank manager turned

revolutionary, had been gradually moving towards the Tigers even before the war started in June. The story that he was put under house arrest by the Tigers could have been spread by interested parties who may have been extremely embarrassed to acknowledge that a leading progressive of the Tamil movement had joined the LTTE.

Balakumar was no doubt a skilled politician. But he may now find that working for the Tiger can be tough. Running the EROS or managing the Puttur bank would have been easier. Of course one is reluctant to cry foul at him when one considers a certain trend in contemporary Sri Lankan politics: the recruitment of leftists by the right wing. In the North also some enthusiastic leftists have drifted towards the LTTE, for various stated theoretical reasons and perhaps for some practical benefits. Their hope, since most of them continue to profess Marxism - Leninism - Marxism - Stalinism etc., is that they could be instrumental in bringing about changes in society which they once thought was possible only in the aftermath of a violent or parliamentary revolution — under a strong and stable right wing establishment. The LTTE realized that a well organized mass base and a populist ideology are absolutely necessary to sustain themselves in power despite the coercive potential they had to decimate opposition and suppress dissent, when they discovered during the IPKF period that the opposition was fast transforming itself from 'hoods' at the service of the IPKF identifying the LTTE into influential leaders with a sizeable mass support in the East, as a result of which LTTE recruitment dropped to an all time low.

Therefore, as soon as they got the opportunity to reorganize after the TNA debacle they set about, like any good right wing fascist, organizing a popular front, as another means of sustaining themselves in power for ever.

Populist slogans were raised. Tiger leaders began speaking about the poor and argued that the down trodden masses of Eelam should be and can be the backbone of their national effort. This new Tigers refrain was pleasant to the ears of some former Tamil revolutionaries.

The end-of-the week ruminations of these columns are too meagre to dislodge the finer and perhaps recondite points of theory which give rise to the phenomenon of pious marxists and erstwhile revolutionaries using their dialectical powers to sometimes convince themselves and most of the time convince others that to work for the right wing — from the subtly pseudo-democratic variety to the unabashedly fascist — is progressive.

The LTTE, knowing fully well the potential an experience that these people have, very shrewdly and carefully recruited them to run some of the very ambitious populist programmes.

The marxist Balakumar may find himself in good company. Kanthan, one time southern revolutionary who later became PLOTE's trade union leader and then a 'Naxalite' in India, has also jumped into the Tiger bandwagon, and has been put in charge of the co-operative movement in Jaffna.

Puthuvai Irathinathurai, the poet, who was near and dear to some 'Tamil' Maoists runs the very effective Tiger culture programme.

I think the main attraction that has lured such individuals into serving the right wing is the authoritarianism which brooks no opposition while professing a seemingly genuine sympathy for the masses; something with an irresistible resemblance to what the revolution in the text books promised — dictatorship but in the interests of the toiling masses. In associating themselves with such dispensation they could unburden themselves of the moral need to engage themselves in another tough round of revolutionary hardships which may not produce the desired result during their lifetime.

Another important reason that has made them grant their favours thus is that their patrons are against and are an effective threat to the order which they had come to identify with the established evils of reaction during the revolutionary days. Therefore authoritarianism at this juncture is progress, they say.

The zeal of the Sri Lankan marxist overwhelms the scruples of his critical sensibility when he willingly opts to subserve the interests of the right and hence he may often overlook or gloss over the lethal intolerance that is inherent in the new god he has installed in his Gorbachevian pantheon.

Balakumar may now dwell extensively upon the dialectics of strengthening Prabhakaran's hand in the interest of a revolution from above.

Some revolutionaries across the Palk strait have also been afflicted with the authoritarian right. S.V. Rajadurai the famous new Marxist theoretician (my bete noir a decade ago) of Tamil Nadu is now an arch supporter of the Tiger cause and recently I was surprised to learn that A.M. Kothandaraman, one of the most influential leaders of India's underground Naxalbhari movement that rocked the sub-continent in the early seventies has expressed great admiration for the LTTE.

A.M.K., as he is popularly called, is known chiefly for his marxist erudition and the theoretical rigor of his work.

The EROS now finds that its philosophy has only benefited the LTTE; it was a philosophy which held that most Tamil groups being petty bourgeoisie would eventually develop contradictions which would cancel out the potency of those groups and that it was in the interests of the working class organizations like theirs, to be a catalyst in sharpening those contradictions to bring about the dialectically inevitable disintegration of the right wing petty bourgeoisie Tamil groups. Their philosophy became quite evident when the Tamil internecine war began in earnest, and it was squarely condemned.

The EROS came to be known as the eel, as a result. But this made it possible for them to retain their military and economic resources intact through all the violent and turbulent phases of the Tamil rebellion. But the Tiger has busted the dialectic and taken over their vast assets as well as their leader, whatever that remains will soon be

pressed into service by the government in Colombo.

The immediate future of the anti-LTTE segment of the EROS depends on what they can do in the East. But they are bound to face problems there because of a large number of EROS cadres who were dismayed by the abduction and murder of Nana of Thambalagamam, who was one of their most important leaders in the East.

Nana was believed to have been killed on orders from the EROS leadership for breaking away from the organization during the general elections.

Shankar Raji whose return is awaited for convening the general body of the EROS (Colombo) will have problems in travelling because of his very close association with the PLO.

Balakumar, it is certain, will condemn his former comrades as reactionaries, and I would not be surprised if comrade Balakumar should, in due course, come up with some weirdly funny concept like Pirabastroika.

10-2-1991

LTTE: What next?

A lawyer from Valvettithurai was in Colombo recently with a delicate brief. His mission was to meet the Minister of Education, Mr. Alith Athulathmudali supposedly on behalf of the LTTE. Before he could contact the former Minister of National Security, the lawyer however succeeded in meeting a senior official of the United National Party.

The lawyer's claim was that he was in touch with the Tiger hierarchy. The basic distrust, and the difficulties that may arise in considering any possible negotiation with the LTTE were explained to him. But if it was indeed a genuine mission and not a canard as on an earlier occasion talks were possible but only with those who mattered in the Tiger high command. Singapore was suggested as a venue. The lawyer has gone back to Jaffna and is set to return.

Whether his brief was another dead rope or it can be determined only if and when he returns. A such times self-aggrandizing charlatans of the mediating kind abound.

Given the extremely secretive organizational structure of the Liberation Tigers there is no

effective way in which indirect initiatives can be verified. There is also no way in which people who go from Colombo on their own peace missions can ascertain whether their efforts have had any serious impact at all.

A foreigner belonging to an European NGO has been to Jaffna on such a mission. Some senior Tamil politicians still persist in believing that they have an authentic line of communications to the LTTE. But all efforts run aground for two reasons. One is the Tiger's refusal to accept the idea of peaceful co-existence and the other is the difficulties involved in verifying the initiative especially when it is from Jaffna.

It seems certain that any feelers that the LTTE may send now will have an implicit condition about discontinuing relations that the government may be having with the other Tamil groups. It is very unlikely indeed that they will flinch from that position. But as the influence of the other groups (the ones that are working with the government in particular) grows the possibility of communication also recedes.

The Tigers will be ready to talk to the devil

himself if he has nothing to do with the other Tamil groups. That definitely will put the government in a quandry. The stated intention even of the army is that the LTTE has to be brought into the process of negotiation at some point. But the problem will be that even as the army may take the upper hand the Tigers will become more and more intransigent on the issue of the status of the other Tamil groups. The participation of some of these groups will be more pronounced and crucial as the army steps up its operations.

After diverting the attention of the Tigers for several weeks in the Jaffna peninsula the army struck at Vavuniya. The LTTE will now blame the PLOTE for some of their military setbacks in that area. Villages along the Thandikulam-Sasthrikoolankulam road were formerly PLOTE strong holds, and therefore despite the stiff resistance put up by the Tigers to halt the advance of the troops along that road the army has been able to have some additional tactical advantages in the fighting.

The Wannu is important for the LTTE because most of their command and logistical centres lie in that region. The involvement of the PLOTE, which is very familiar with the terrain of the Wannu and which once had a well organized mass front there, can cause much discomfort to the LTTE. This will be the main problem that they will have in mind in opening any line of communication with the government.

The means of delivering decisive and lethal blows to groups like PLOTE and TELO which participate in military operations have become few and difficult. Therefore the Tiger leadership will try to introduce political tactics to their strategy of totally eliminating all Tamil opposition. Their

political myopia, it should be pointed out, has not impaired their tactical shrewdness. Their survival instincts are sharp and excellent.

What can they do now? To insist that they have banned all other Tamil groups and therefore respect for their position in this regard is a necessary precondition for any talks might put them in a tight corner as the influence of those whom they have banned grows in relation to the gains that the army makes on ground.

In this situation of diminished military options in dealing with their opposition the only way open to the LTTE is to make the necessary moves through 'non accredited' mediators for yet another round of possible negotiations. The presentation of a set of tentative positions on a settlement which draw into sharp focus the political and constitutional obstacles will compel the other groups to make clear their stand on issues considered fundamental to the Tamil movement - such as traditional homelands, right of self-determination, rejection of the unitary constitution etc.

The LTTE leadership, it is clear, is speculating that sharp contradictions will develop between the Government and the democratic Tamil groups when such fundamental issues are taken up. They will continue to allow unofficial mediation just to keep these issues in focus.

More mediators may arrive in future with broad political mandates; the knowledge of which will put pressure on the other groups to review the position vis-a-vis the ability of the system to accommodate the fundamental issues of the Tamil problem which give these groups the reason and legitimacy to exist.

17-2-1995

The LTTE's military mind

The massacre of 45 soldiers of the Gajaba sudden and brief will lead to a re-appraisal of the status of areas in the Northeast where it is claimed that the activities of the LTTE have been reduced to a safe minimum.

The Northeast have three kinds of categories under which Tamil, Muslims, Tamil-Muslim and Sinhala regions fall. The first is one that is under LTTE's control, the second is where both the army and the LTTE operate - seeking out or ambushing or directly confronting one another, the third is one

that is under the army's control.

The second type of region is what the Tigers perceive to be of great use to their long term military strategy. In this region they can better strain the army, than vice versa, thereby diverting pressure from the areas that they hold. The maintenance of the areas under their control is political necessity for them.

They believe as is evident in some of the official publication - that to militarily hold on to

large regions, and to demonstrate a prowess to do so, definitely, is indispensable for convincing foreign powers", (there is an increasing stress on Western countries in this regard) which have taken an active interest in the Eelam cause, that a separate territorial arrangement is necessary and viable, and that the LTTE is a force capable militarily and politically of managing such an arrangement.

Incidentally there is an unprecedented concern on the part of the LTTE with Western countries in recent times. The rhetoric about independence and self-sufficiency which found currency while they were at loggerheads with India has been replaced with frequent arguments, suffused with favourable references to Western countries. Have they become, in some way, beholden to interested parties in the West? There is some anecdotal and circumstantial evidence; but hardly anything that can give a clear and coherent idea about the nature and level of involvement.

There is a definite political agenda in the LTTE's approach to territorial control in the current conflict. Since control of the second type of region requires rechanneling of manpower from the areas which they hold, the idea seems to be to harass the army as much as possible so that it will become dangerous for it to pull out troops in any significant numbers and make it extremely cautious about troop mobility. This means that the Tigers, once they succeed in these objectives in the second type of region, would be in a position to pull out their men and material according to their needs without running the risk of being unprepared in the face of a powerful assault by the army.

In the North, a part of the Mannar district affords them this possibility. They have struck a major blow there in the hope that it may become difficult for the army to transfer resources to either Jaffna or the Wannai for any major thrust to secure a real estate.

The LTTE, it is worth reiterating, is no more a guerrilla group which is interested in attack and ambush only to harass the security forces. Many of their operations in the North at least are coordinated to suit a general strategy.

Before 1987 and during their war with the JAF attacks and ambushes were done wherever and whenever it was possible to do so. 'Field groups' differing in number and fire power acted rather autonomously. Although command and control were highly centralized, military action was little coordinated.

A successful operation by a field group was

nothing more than a feather in its cap. It is quite evident that the LTTE has now discovered the advantages of controlled and co-ordinated action. They are striving to establish a centralized system of managing and directing military operations. The task has been confounded above all by the blundering inefficiency of their cadres in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts.

The groups in Trincomalee and Mannar have been the most effective and had quickly adapted themselves to this system. Whether Paduman who is the commander of Trinco or Suresh of Vankalai who is the commander of Mannar have any clear idea of the new system that their headquarters endeavours to put into practice, does not seem to affect the execution of the LTTE's macro-planning.

Prabhakaran is thus in a position in these two districts to step up pressure whenever the need arises for him to do so. These two districts which are extremely useful to the LTTE because they fall into the second category of regions have an added advantage to the Tigers in that they are contiguous with regions that are under their control, unlike the far flung, Batticaloa and Amparai.

The contiguity makes it easier for them to ensure supplies of men and material to Mannar and Trinco. The overall purpose of the LTTE strategy is to make use of region two to disperse and strain army strength while building up a conventional strength in region one, both of which will present the security forces with a major resource problem. Conventional engagement or the effective supervision of hinterlands where the army as well as the Tigers have varying degrees of access and mobility, require large resources.

The conventional strength (the LTTE is quite pre-occupied with building up a regular army) may be difficult to disintegrate in a single and swift offensive in region one because of the military plus Sinhala, Muslim civilian vulnerabilities in region two.

Conventional strength is the potential to engage an army on the ground in battalion size or larger battles, with logistics flowing from rear area to combat units on front lines.

The Tiger believes that such a strength could be achieved if they hold on to the territories they now control. The recruits who are carefully chosen for the regular troops in region one are honed in region two.

Military action in both regions they hope, would compel the state to seek more and more resources.

Their strategy is to co-ordinate and sustain action until such time that resource problems of the army reach a critical point and then to launch tentative and probing conventional offensives into region two and if possible into region three.

The thinking of the Tiger that has been briefly

outlined here is as usual impervious to a variety of non-military factors which turn out to be decisive in the most unexpected situations. The Accord and IPKF are cases in point.

24-2-199

Business as usual for Prabhakaran

The prosecution of a war is ultimately a political task. The skill of the soldier determines the battle; the skill of the politician determines the war.

The politician in charge of Sri Lanka's grievous war has been blown to bits in the heart of the capital.

The dream of modernity is to have a facelessly efficient technocracy. But the art of war constantly eludes that dream because it is the bloody form of human contest. The art of economics is modern; the art of war is ancient. The former will function best under technocratic efficiency; the latter wont. It needs a personality. Political will and military strength have to be maintained in delicate equilibrium. If not there will be setbacks and even debacles. The knack for this equilibrium can come from a Prabhakaran or a Lalith or a Ranjan. But now, in this country only Prabhakaran remains in full control of his affairs. He can step up action or come for talks.

The new State Minister for Defence, who was appointed on the day that the former minister was cremated, told the parliament: "This government is firmly committed to a policy of consultation as against confrontation". The LTTE will come for talks. The government no doubt will accept the temporary peace of the Tiger. Even if it is they who have done it the Tigers will not accept responsibility for blowing up the second most powerful man in the government for two main reasons. For one they do want to talk; for the other they do not want to jeopardize the elaborate network of operations in the West. It it should eventually transpire that they killed Ranjan Wijeratne, then almost everything becomes uncertain. Even otherwise it means the destruction of the cogent and concerted will of political authority which conducts the war. How can anyone fight the Tiger when the citadel itself is dangerously vulnerable? What are the parameters of success if the government loses its top man in charge of the war and is seen to impotently wring its

hands and make dubious claims based on circumstantial evidence?

The whodunnit pundits have worked overtime since Saturday. Their work further undermines the political task of prosecuting the war. The uncertainty within one's citadel provides the force without, greater strength than what he can gain by the might of arms. If the Tiger comes for another round of talks will it be acceptable to everyone involved in the military effort in the Northeast?

The LTTE's position is clear and the government's position is clear on the need for dialogue. The LTTE, responding to the statement on Friday by the new State Minister for Defence said that the bombing will have to stop in the North if they were to come for talks. Although the ceasefire was unilaterally rejected by the government, the LTTE kept sending tentative feelers to the government through unofficial mediators.

After their experience with India, the LTTE does not want to completely close its doors in Colombo. They now feel that internationalizing the conflict gives them greater chances of success in the long run than being politically or militarily hooked to India. They may have come to believe from their experience that only India can effectively negate their strength.

No Government, if it has sufficient reason, often nurture the hope of settling, what seems to be a militarily intractable conflict, will invite the troops of another country with which it has traditionally felt uncomfortable. And so the LTTE intent on offering the olive branch to Colombo although their ultimate interests may be the military power.

The Tigers, in a document which they distributed among their hardcore supporters when they first came for talks with President Premadasa claimed that India is the real threat to their goal

separate state and that it is the only country that as the might and the essential interest to obstruct the creation of Tamil Eelam. Unless India freely interprets the Accord to suit its own interest, it cannot send troops here unless invited by the government in Colombo.

To keep India out if it will not favour them and to have the goodwill or perhaps even the good offices of the Western countries which take an active interest in the Tamils of Sri Lanka are currently the two main objectives of the LTTE.

A dialogue or the possibility of it with the Sri Lanka government would help them to achieve both objectives. They hope that if they gain a fair amount of credibility with the economically powerful governments in the West through demonstrating their political flexibility by frequent ceasefires and negotiations then there would be a useful degree of checks and balances both on India and Sri Lanka. It also buys them time through non-military means — the most crucial factor in such conflicts. And it also increases their bargaining power all round particularly with India, which can never allow itself to sit back complacently and watch Prabhakaran have his way.

He thinks that if it can make its political and

military dominance a near "accomplished fact" then India will be forced, when it has few and impotent options open to impose its will to take the view "if you can't beat'em join 'em". That Indian officials are unusually keen to labour the point that they don't and won't have anything to do with the Tigers might indicate matters to the contrary.

A statement purported to be by the Indian Foreign Secretary, Muchukund Dubey, that Delhi now recognizes that the LTTE has the popular support of the Tamil people of the Northeast, has caused some consternation among the other Tamil groups in Colombo. There has been no clarification on this agency report.

The non-LTTE groups in Colombo which are either pro-Indian or pro-Sri Lankan will be in a bad way if both Delhi and Colombo were to secretly or openly tilt towards the Tiger.

The Sri Lankan state is impotent because it can't safeguard its own man who ran the war, the Indian state is impotent because it can't gather up its political and bureaucratic will to come to any clear decision on the LTTE.

But for Prabhakaran it is business as usual.

10-3-199

Silavaturai — Why did LTTE do it?

Why did the Tigers make that suicidal attempt to overrun the Silavaturai camp?

Their high command had sent large numbers of cadres from Jaffna. The attack group had taken coffins with it in anticipation of a large number of casualties.

The fall of Silavaturai would have given the LTTE total control of that stretch of the Mannar coast which lies between Kudiramalai point on the northern end of Puttalam district and Arippu the estuary below the island of Mannar.

The LTTE's project of total military domination of the Northeast of Sri Lanka requires them to have a coastal point in India from where they can supply any point in those two provinces.

This segment of the Mannar coast is important for LTTE's naval operations for three reasons. First, the safest run from Tamil Nadu to the north of Sri Lanka is the one that zig zags through the shifting sand banks which make up the Adam's Bridge

between Dhanushkodi and Talaimannar. It is also safe when it is off season on the Pt. Calimere-Jaffna run when the sea generally is as calm as a pond. No seasoned boatman would want to try his luck on a sea that is not manageably tumultous.

To carry on a regular and effective operation on this run one must have at least partial control of this segment of the Mannar coast. The army has been trying to neutralize this stretch and its hinterland by setting up mini camps. The direct or indirect outcome was the de-population of some villages including the crucial Vankalai. The army was able to achieve a considerable degree of mobility in the hinterland of this coast after June.

The sacking of the main camp at Silavaturai or delivering an unnerving blow would have negated this mobility. The control of a coast's hinterland is crucial for the transfer of large supplies to the areas under full Tiger management.

The army wittingly or unwittingly has tried from 1986 to interdict the vital supply lines that

link the Madhu jungle region to this coast; one move was to set up a camp at the Uyilankulam junction on the trunk road to Mannar. The other was the massive Adampan operation in which one of Prabhakaran's best and most trusted commanders was killed.

The army's objective in launching the Adampan operation was not clear; but if it had succeeded the Adampan-Parappaikadanthan-Madhu Road which formed the indispensable second half of the coast to jungle base supply link, would have become ineffective which in turn would have knocked out the Adam's bridge - south Mannar run to some extent.

However persistent effective interdiction is not possible in that region because the Tigers are able to limit the activity of the government troops. But the LTTE can safely transfer large and precious supplies only if they can totally incapacitate the army in that region.

The second reason is the newfound influence of the Tiger on the coast of Ramanathapuram. The LTTE secured this part of Tamil Nadu coast during Karunanidhi's rule.

The great advantage of this region is that it is possible to reach any part of the North or even the East by sea from there. Whereas this is not possible from Pt. Calemere or Nagapattinam.

The LTTE's project of total military domination of the Northeast of Sri Lanka requires them to have a coastal point in India from where they can supply any point in the two provinces. Therefore if the main sea supply operation of the Tiger has been

shifted to Ramanathapuram district, then it is not logical that they have to secure the stretch of Mannar coast between Kudiramalai point and Arippu estuary, which is necessary for the safe run of all from India.

The third reason is the unsuitable coast and hinterland to the north of Mannar. The coastal hinterland segment that lies between Vidattattivi and Pooneryn has very few fishing villages that are linked to the Mannar-Pooneryn road. This makes it difficult to find landing spots traditionally identified by local fishermen as suitable and safe to transfer supplies. Then, the sea off this coast is not considered to be as safe as the one off south Mannar or that part of the Palk Strait above the Jaffna Peninsula. The Navy at Karainagar, Nainativu and KKS Supervise this sea frequently.

Traditionally there has been little smuggling here. Hence it is difficult to find enough boatmen who are experienced and have a good knowledge of landing points.

The power and influence of the LTTE's Mannar group - which is led by Suresh from the now abandoned coastal village of Vankalai has come from its pivotal role in sea operations, next only to Valvettithurai. The Mannar group would not have wanted to gradually lose their influence with the Tiger leadership with the decline of their most important function. The Tigers of Mannar will not try hard to limit army activity in the hinterland of the coast between Kudiramalai and Arippu and regain their influence within the LTTE.

31-3-1991

National issues must figure in local election

The local government elections will confirm the new order in the UNP. Can we take its outcome as a popular endorsement of the policy it has followed on the Tamil problem in the Northeast? In these elections the issues that may pre-occupy the voter will be local. The grand national pronouncements which are demanded by the presidential or parliamentary elections may seem out of place.

Crisis

Yet in view of the crisis that lies ahead crisis that may be generated by the conflict in the Northeast, it is necessary for the UNP and the SLFP

to take this opportunity to present the voter with their respective projects for dealing with the ethnic question.

If glossed over there will be chargin at critical moments when one may find that his or her stance on the ethnic question may not be compatible with popular sentiment.

Accord

The signing of the Indo-Lanka accord is a caution point. The mind set of a sizeable section of the Sinhala people was taken for granted by J.R., but the march of events in the Northeast forced him into a situation where what he had taken for

anted blew up in his face; the wave of anti-Accord eling on which the DJV rode to rapidly gain mass tency.

No one is now sure about what course the war the Northeast could take in the next one or two ears. There may be developments that can be favourable to the UNP or which can call into uestion the SLFP's prevarications on the Tamil sue. These developments which can result from e conflict in the Northeast will be financial, ternal and political or compounds of the three in rying degrees.

There isn't sufficient reason to rule out an TE-Rajiv nexus, or the introduction of anti-rcraft weapons into the war or multiple crisis hich result from protracted bleeding.

How sensible is the UNP or for that matter, the LP in pretending that the bloody Northeast can e wished away by temporizing while talking about e nebulous 'lasting solution'?

The national parties should not face the nhala people in these elections with this pretence. om a national perspective it would be indeed mfortable because the issues are local; a game ore suitable for the small time politician.

The UNP and the SLFP must put forward hatever packages they have to solve the ethnic isis, because they will have to wait till the next eneral or presidential election to find the reaction e Sinhala people.

The new order in the UNP can be saved only if is ratified along with the party's unequivocal sition on the Tamil problem.

A new UNP with an unsettled Northeast can e easy prey to Delhi if it wishes to step in for some ason.

A 'geopolitical compromise' is inevitable when rivival is at stake. But the mood of the people in ese matters has not been fathomed since the rupt and gory termination of the DJV/JVP.

Masses

There are some who say that a sense of sheer difference is enveloping the Sinhala masses: the sult of a surfeit of sensations and a confusing nsity of events since 1987. In addition it is said at chauvinism has lost its cogency because it uld not conceal its fundamental insincerity that e emotions which fired mass hatred have been pleted. Even if that is the case it would be still olish to carry on with the election propaganda

minus the ethnic issue mainly because in some' places the local bodies themselves can be cause for ethnic grievances and therefore issues in the current polls in those areas.

A complaint, sometimes muffled sometimes articulate and forceful, is heard from among the ranks of the CWC as well as other politically minded groups and individuals among the upcountry Tamils that there has been a studied and systematic effort on the part of the government to deprive them of or diminish their political power in the local bodies which are in regions where they are in a clear majority.

This issue can be particularly appealing to a number of politically conscious upcountry Tamils in the trade unions including the CWC since they have been disgruntled by the results of the last general elections: no Tamil representative was returned. Thondaman had to go to parliament on the UNP national list. The only successful CWC candidate was Sellasamy who contested in Colombo. Therefore there is a feeling that it is imperative that this local government elections should be made use of to acquire some political clout for the upcountry Tamils at least in the local bodies in the Nuwara Eliya district. But then, except for the Nuwara Eliya and Ambegamuwa Pradeshiya Sabha electorates the Tamils are in minority in all other local body areas in the hill country. That in the Nuwara Eliya Municipal Council and the Hatton-Dickoya and the Talawakelle-Lindula Urban Councils the Tamils are in a minority and hence cannot politically dominate those bodies, has been cause for some grievance.

Power

The charge is that this situation has been brought about by deliberate attempts to deny the Tamils political power in areas where they are in a majority. The Nuwara Eliya and Ambegamuwa Pradeshiya Sabhas which had CWC members - Sivalingam and Renganathan respectively - as presidents have been generally ineffective. These issues at the local government polls in the hill country will gradually prepare the ground for the development of another deleterious divide.

It is not in any one's interest to leave the upcountry Tamil's feeling that they have been deprived of legitimate political representation at the local as well as national level.

Deprive the local government elections of national issues and one day it might blow up in your face.

Prabhakaran's hold on Tamil Nadu

Captain Pirabakaran' is ready for release. It has been timed for the elections in June for the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly and the Indian Parliament. Vijayakanth, an ardent fan of the Tiger leader and one of the top box office stars of Tamil filmdom's formula movies, has expressed hope that his role in 'Captain Pirabakaran' would bring him respect. Last year he named his son after his real life idol. Vijayakanth is an actor of the DMK camp. A cherished goal in his life, he has said in a recent interview, is to meet Prabhakaran.

T. Rajendar is a big time producer, actor, director, distributor script writer etc., with several box office hits to his credit and a propensity for not too pleasant alliterative harangues. Rajendar also belonged to the DMK once. He was sacked from the party in 1989 for publicly opposing and criticising Karunanidhi's leadership and revealing details of the corrupt practices of the DMK leader's son M.K. Stalin. Later Rajender founded a party called *Thayaha Marumalarchi Kazhaham* — party for the renaissance of the homeland. Last year he was one of the main organizers of the meeting in Madras to mark Prabhakaran's birthday on November 26. Now he is said to have formed an umbrella organization called Tamil United Front. This organization will call upon Delhi to give assistance to the LTTE to set up Thamil Eelam and to recognize them as a legitimate liberation organization like the PLO.

Dr. M.S. Uthayamoorthy is a prolific writer and one of Tamil Nadu's most influential opinion makers. He wrote an article in a weekly with a very large circulation in the state that the 'soft McCarthyism' which is being practised in Tamil Nadu to suppress opinion in favour of the Tiger cause should be done away with. He is one who has regularly criticised the DMK government. He says "some prominent persons and papers are today reluctant to talk or write about the problem of the Sri Lankan Tamils.... If there were talk of Eelam there are cries that it is a plan to separate Tamil Nadu as an independent country. Once there was a senator called McCarthy in America... He used this

(anti-communism) to brand even people whom I did not like as communists. Many reasonable and innocent government officials were removed from their jobs as a result. Those who criticised him were accused of being communists and he ruined their lives... we must not allow McCarthyism in Tamil Nadu.

"The intelligent Tamil people must understand the truth of the Sri Lankan problem. Who are the perpetrators of this lenient McCarthyism in Tamil Nadu? They are those who wanted to remove the DMK from power. I am sad that the Sri Lankan Tamil problem was made the scape goat for dismissing the DMK from power. Didn't they have the Sarkar commission and thousand and other reasons to do so?

"Did the DMK give an uncorrupt, clean government? Did they work with foresight?.. (go on to describe corruption and abuse of power under DMK rule). In other countries they would have taken up such reasons to remove a state government. If one cannot rule with responsibility we can look to another.

"But it is deplorable that rather than follow such a course of action, McCarthyist methods were used and the problem of the Sri Lankan Tamils found victim. The Sri Lankan Tamils have been fighting for their basic rights against an authoritarian regime for many years. They have lost their homes, lost their kith and kin and shed blood in the struggle. We must respect their courage and determination.

"Some politicians speak as though Prabhakaran should conduct himself as a blameless saint when comes to waging a war. They forget that in war even Ram had to kill Vali by perfidy.... Indira Gandhi who created Bangladesh as a separate nation helped the Sri Lankan Tamils to run training camps here because she understood the validity of the reasons for the Sri Lankan Tamil problem. This is why Rajiv Gandhi took the step to send in the airforce to drop food although it was a violation of a neighbouring country's sovereignty.

"Can we continue to ignore everything that the dian government has done? The Sri Lankan Tamil ould be enabled to get their legitimate rights. If ose are not granted, assistance should be given r setting up Eelam. Some would say that if Eelam created then Tamil Nadu would also separate, it ll be a threat to India.

"This is an insidious cry that seeks to cover the ith." Dr. M.S. Uthayamoorthy is a pan-Indian tionalist who does not share the views of the avidian movement.

'Gnani' is a leading intellectual of Tamilnadu ant garde. He belonged to the elite circle of Tamil erary magazines which discuss matters ranging m post structuralism to forgotten forms of folk eatre apart from producing some remarkable ort story writers, novelists and poets. The *nanda Vikatan*, Tamil Nadu's oldest and the most pular magazine, invited him to comment on the itical trends in Tamil Nadu in the 80's for its first eek's issue for 1991. What he wrote astonished any and was promptly dismissed by some more, I spect, out of fear of the consequences of knowledging at least some aspect of Gnani's ews.

The basic trends in the politics of Tamil Nadu the eighties, he argued, were set in motion by the rect and indirect influence of two people MGR d Prabhakaran . The duplicity of Delhi's attitudes

towards the Sri Lankan problem had disillusioned many youth in the state and coupled with the opportunist of Tamil Nadu's politicians is leading them away from the traditional interests of the established political parties, he avers. In conclusion he wrote that many leading politicians of Tamil Nadu today may fade away towards the end of this century as a result of the impact Prabhakaran and MGR made on Tamilian politics.

The opinions and convictions of Vijayakanth, T. Rajendar, Dr. M.S. Uthayamoorthy and 'Gnani' are the dividends of the LTTE's long term and useful ideological investment in Tamil Nadu; more effective and stable than the patronage of an MGR or a Rajiv. These dividends will gradually place Prabhakaran at the critical interstice where a potential tension may develop between the covert desire in the west to see fissures to the Tamil South of the Indian Union and Delhi's determination, however muddle headed or counter productive in its manifestations, to hold it together. And then Colombo will loose its significance in the LTTE's scheme of things. Prabhakaran's stature, potential and real, in Tamil Nadu will present Delhi with two options: terminate him or win him over to their side. When they calculate the ideological and material cost of the former they will be impelled sooner or later to try the latter.

14-4-1991

The shadow of Congress-I

The Congress-I and its ally in Tamil Nadu the AIADMK put out their election manifestoes last week.

AIADMK has said that it will urge the Central government to implement the Accord and take measures to ensure the rights of the Tamil people. It riously added that the Tamil militants have lost e sympathy of the people of India and the ortheast of Sri Lanka.

That section of the Congress Party's manifesto hich deals with foreign policy criticises V.P. gh's Janata Dal Government for neglecting dia's significant role in international affairs.

The basic thrust of the policy statement is that dia should reassert itself.

"Immersed in their internal squabbles, the tional Front government neglected international ations and failed to assert and defend India's

interests in world fora. They were unable to grasp the nature of the unprecedented changes taking place in the world or to develop a vision or strategy for India's role in the changing international scene. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Shrimati Gandhi and Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the world listened to India's voice with respect and attention."

The question is will Colombo, in the event of Rajiv's return, listen to Rajiv's voice with respect and attention. Politically the government simply cannot afford to listen. But then how will India, under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, re-assert itself in this part of the region?

The Congress itself and the foreign policy establishment of India realize fully well now that the region has to be secured through more subtle methods, that geopolitical thuggery and menacing gestures are outmoded. So how this reassertion? To be a gentle neighbourhood.

India's endeavours to find solutions to problems relating to the Tamils and ensuring Sri Lanka's territorial integrity are linked to safeguarding its national security interests in the manifesto.

The stated foreign policy intent of the Congress-I notwithstanding, Delhi would continue to behave as it did during V.P. Singh's time where Sri Lanka is concerned. The first reason is that the role of external intelligence has been re-assessed. And that re-assessment, I think, would stand although it was done during V.P. Singh's tenure. The overt involvement of the Research and Analysis Wing in Sri Lanka will not be repeated again.

The role of external intelligence had become more of a hindrance than convenience as a result of the publicity it received not only in Sri Lanka but in many other parts of the region as well. The publicity gave the RAW a desired and somewhat necessary image but caused embarrassment where it was expected to supplement diplomatic or military endeavour.

The Chakma rebellion in Bangladesh, the Bodos in West Bengal, the Jiye Sind and the Mojahir problem in Pakistan and the Sikh affair gave so much publicity to the RAW that Delhi was regularly faced with the prospect of thwarted diplomatic manipulation.

Coercion through covert action can succeed only if the operations are covert enough. Unlike in the case of America's attitude towards its abject back yard in Latin America, India cannot too often be disrespectful of the sovereignties of its smaller neighbours because of the countervailing factors of China and Pakistan located in or on the edge of the region.

Delhi has seriously taken note of the fact that its primary objectives were achieved only when intelligence operations were effectively covert. If Colombo is sensible it will have to view the pronouncements of the Congress Party in that context.

Even under Rajiv, India's agenda for Sri Lanka will be: keeping the Tamils of the Northeast on side; successfully impress upon Colombo that the Accord is a working document; improve bilateral trade relations to India's advantage; and lastly, gently and imperceptibly re-assert its influence in Colombo.

If and when Rajiv comes to power, his 'voice' presume, would be limited to statements on the need to implement the Accord.

Mani Shankar Iyer's agenda to call the LT and the other groups to Delhi for working on various proposals may not be taken all too seriously given these developments after 1984. Despite Rajiv and his desire to be heard and respected, Delhi would follow a policy of friendly and cordial diplomacy and where possible effectively covert coercion.

Kittu and Prabhakaran's one time mentor K. Anandan give one the impression that they are eager to see India in a mediatory role once again. It seems that India will not mediate on anyone's behalf this time. Unless of course Rajiv Gandhi over-rides the bureaucrats of Delhi, which is very unlikely because he may find it too sensitive an issue to ignore this reappraisal of India's external intelligence.

21-4-19

The Third Force in Tamil Nadu Polls

Prabhakaran will contest by proxy in this month's elections to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. For the first time since the DMK gave up its demand for a separate state of Dravidanadu in 1962, parties that espouse Tamil secessionism and the right of self-determination of the people of Tamil Nadu will take part in the State elections. Most of these parties look up to Prabhakaran as the 'true' leader of the Tamil nationalist, secessionist cause, or as in the case of the *Pattali Makkal Kadchi* regard him as a hero of their social group.

Four alliances will be contesting the Tamil Nadu polls. (The BJP seems to be going it alone). The two major ones are the AIADMK Congress alliance and the one formed by DMK, Janata D and the Communist parties and Thirunavukarasalai faction of the AIADMK.

The other two alliances are the twelve party Tamil National Front led by Prabhakaran's follower and movie mogul T. Rajender and the six party alliance led by the *Pattali Makkal Kadchi* (Tamil Proletarian People's Party). In these two alliances

ere has been an unprecedented coming together of caste organisations. Tamil nationalist secessionists and the underground revolutionary front of Tamil Nadu.

From the time of the Dravidian movement's under E.V. Ramasamy Naicker caste, class and Tamil secessionism, have tended to vacillate towards each other. In Tamil Nadu caste and class have been the common ground of the Dravidian movement and revolutionary left. (As a result beginning with VR, many have moved from the left to the social reformist Dravidian movement.) The Tamil National Front includes Tamilaha National Self-determination Party, Rajender's Party for the Renaissance of the Motherland, Tamil National Forward bloc, Tamil Republican Party, Christian People's Party (a caste organisation of the christian Adaar caste), Kongu Velalar Kavunder Peravai, Chevar Pasarai, Yadava (sheperds caste) Maha sabai, Cheenavar (fisher caste) Peravai and Nadar Munetru Munani (Hindu nadaar).

Unlike Karunanidhi's DMK and Ms. Jayalalitha's AIADMK, the Tamil National Front and the alliance led by the *Pattali Makkal Kadchi* (PMK) are unequivocal in their support for the LTTE and for the creation of Tamil Eelam. This is an important and critical development in the political history of Tamil Nadu where caste, class and Tamil nationalism have in modern times defined the nature of the state's polity, but often carelessly dismissed by the pundits and politicians of North India. That this development should have taken place at a time when the leader of the Tamil's *Tamilinath Thalaivar* Muthuvel Karunanidhi had shown a patent interest in projecting his image as a leader at the Indian National level, the consequence of his role in V. P. Singh's National Front, is also quite significant.

The Dravidian movement is manifesting itself in Tamil Nadu while the present Dravidian leadership of Tamil Nadu leans more towards pandianism. Caste based organisations and underground Maoist revolutionaries of Tamil Nadu have found common cause with this Tamil nationalist movement, for their own reasons.

A very important crystallization of social and political forces have begun to slowly take place in Tamil Nadu. These two alliances which have resisted all attempts to woo them towards the DMK, AIADMK and the Congress-I are the most clear indication of this trend.

However inconsequential their impact on the outcome of the polls, they would have emerged in these elections as a third and potential force in

Tamil Nadu. The PMK will contest 206 seats while its allies will contest the balance 28 seats to the state legislature.

Out of the 28 seats 19 will go to the Samad faction of the Muslim league, five to Prakash Ambedkar Movement (a party for the scheduled castes), one to the Tamil National Communist Party, one to the Jihad Committee (led by Palany Bawa, a Sakkiliya caste leader who embraced Islam) and three seats to the Tamil National Movement of P. Nedumaran, one of the most zealous followers of Prabhakaran.

P. Nedumaran, in recent times has been one of the most vehement advocates of the right of self-determination for the people of Tamil Nadu, and is also one of Prabhakaran's main representatives there. The PMK which leads this alliance is the political party of the Vanniyar Sangam, the most powerful and the largest caste organisation of Tamil Nadu.

Both MGR and Karunanidhi have tried in the past to woo or placate this caste and its organisation led by Dr. Ramdass. MGR promoted Pandrutti Ramachandran — a Vanniyar — in his cabinet, Karunanidhi tried his best to forge an alliance with Dr. Ramdass, for which purpose he used the Thirunavukarasu faction of the AIADMK to which Pandrutti belongs now. Having failed at that he coaxed the Thirunavukarasu faction to come to an 'electoral arrangement' with the PMK, but Dr. Ramdass did not agree to that also.

Karunanidhi is quite mindful of the fact that for him to be effective in the opposition, the Vanniyaars should at least be not against him. He has not forgotten how the MGR government was once rocked by a Vanniyar caste agitation. The Vanniyar are a numerous caste and are mostly agricultural labourers.

The Vanniyar are in a majority in several districts of Tamil Nadu. The Vanniyar Sangam six years ago demanded that a state be carved for them from Tamil Nadu comprising three districts. Their influence is in the northern districts of Tamil Nadu where the DMK also has a base. This is another reason that compelled Karunanidhi to woo the Vanniyar. When it was clear that his government was going to be dismissed, Karunanidhi released all those belonging to the Vanniyar Sangam who had been arrested for taking part in the Sangam's agitations.

Later he tried to approach Dr. Ramdass through V.P. Singh, but the PMK leader refused to meet him. T.R. Balu of the DMK told the Vanniyar, "Our

government was dismissed by the high castes. It was we who appointed Vanniyar to high posts in the police and the Service Commission. The Vanniyar must not forget all this".

The PMK won't have anything to do with the DMK because if it does it will have to compromise its position in many electorates where the DMK had fielded candidates from castes with whom the Vanniyar have had acrimonious relations particularly the Mukklathor castes. Edgar Thurston who wrote the monumental *Castes and Tribes of South India* in 1909 says "writing of this caste the census Superintendent in 1871 records that a book has been written by a native to show that the Pallis or the Vanniyar of the South are the descendants of the fire races-Agnikulas of the Kshatriyas and the Tamil Palli (Vanniyar) at one time the shepherd Kings of Egypt.

At the time of the census of 1871 a petition was submitted to the government by representatives of the caste saying that they might be classed as Kshatriyas and 20 years later in connection with the census of 1891 a book entitled 'Vanni Kula Vilakkam' a treatise on the Vanniyar caste compiled by T. Aiyakkannu Nayakkar in support of the cause claimed they be returned as Kshatriyas.

In 1970 a book entitled 'Varuna Tharpanam - mirror of the castes' was published in which an attempt was made to connect the caste with the Pallava kings.

"Vanniyas", Mr. Nelson states, "are at the present time a small and obscure agricultural caste. There is reason to believe that they are descendants of ancestors who in former times held a good position among the tribes of South India".

Thurston also informs us that the Vanniyar worship Kulasekera Aazhvar, a warrior Chieftan who became a Vaishnavite Saint. Now how do the Tigers figure in the politics of the Vanni people?

The conscious intervention of the British in the social relations of what was then the Madras Presidency created the conditions for the upward social mobility of some castes. Books were written to invest a caste with historical and hence social respectability in the caste hierarchy. The Vanniyar it is clear like the Karava of Sri Lanka in the same period, used Kshatriya ancestry for the purpose. Unlike the Karava of Sri Lanka's south the lot of the Vanniyar has not improved very much. Then came the Tiger who fought the mighty Indian army in the Wannu Jungles.

The pro-Vanniyar papers boasted that it was their people who fought valiantly in the Northeast

of Sri Lanka. Karunanidhi tried to capitalize on this situation by writing the famous novel 'Payum Pa Pandaraha Vanniyar'. (The Leaping Tiger Pandaraha Vanniyar).

The novel spoke of the Vanni chieftan who fought the British in 18th century. For the Vanniyar who had been from the time of British rule trying to prove their martial Kshatriya identity, the Tiger was a boon. There has been a lot of involvement of the Vanniyar in Tiger affairs since then. The manifesto of their party says "The PMK feels that the declaration of Tamil Eelam is the only solution to the Tamil issue. It will press the centre to recognize Tamil Eelam and pass a resolution in the state assembly reiterating the same. The Government of India should recognize the Tamil militants (referred to as Tigers) just as it had accorded recognition to Nelson Mandela and Yasser Arafat."

There is another unseen factor in the Tiger-Vanniyar and Tamil secessionist alliance. The changed strategy of South India's revolutionary Maoist underground otherwise known as MLs (Naxalites). Their view now is that they have to work through the Tamil Nationalist movement. That they have to exploit the great potential of Tamil secessionism in Tamil Nadu. The theoretical reasons for this new strategy of theirs would claim countless tomes. (Many of them have tested their nocturnal endurance trying to expound the aforementioned theoretical reasons.) The Vanniyar among whom they have had a base in South Arcot, Thindivanam and Vizhupuram, have been useful to them in establishing the connection between the support base among the Vanniyar and other scheduled and oppressed classes and castes, and Tamil Nadu's Neo Dravidian secessionists and the godfather Velupillai Prabhakaran.

They feel that their interests could be promoted through this combination. Former Maoist revolutionary Maniarsan's party which is also contesting the Tamil Nadu elections is a result of this trend.

Caste organisations in this mannan are seen to be useful in among other allied castes as well. The scheduled castes and tribes of Tamil Nadu were the stratum of Tamil society which MGR cultivated against the Mukkulathor-Kallar, Maravar and Ahambadiyar among whom the DMK had built its base. The AIADMK has to still count on the stratum. This is why Jeyalalitha chose Kangeyam in the Periyar district, a strong hold of MGR, where each electorate contains more than 30 percent of the Arunthathiyar caste (Sakkili). She had to give her former electorate Podi as a result of a big cast riot between the scheduled castes and the Mukkulathor. (She was accused causing it).

The Tamil National Front lambasts her that she is an alien to the Dravidian tradition and she is othered of the Vanniyar's alliance with the Harijans, (Dr. Ramdass has dared V.P. Singh and Arunachalam to appoint a Harijan as chief minister) and the scheduled castes and tribes and then she shows that she is not rich enough to buy her past — (Liberation Tigers' support for the LTTE).

This is why even though she is sure of her victory she has to play the Eelam card.

The DMK knows this fully well and hence Arunachalam's son M.K. Stalin is able to confidently declare "I swear by Anna we do have a relationship with the LTTE" and Karunanidhi's right hand, G. Gopalswamy is able to thunderously proclaim "if the butchering of Tamils is patriotism we do not want the patriotism. All those Tamils who have

dignity are Liberation Tigers." (at a meeting in Nungambakkam in Madras).

But Ms. Jeyalalitha has to toe a delicate line when playing her Eelam card, "If the genocide does not stop in Sri Lanka, India can think in terms of a military option as Indira Gandhi did in the case of Bangladesh" she told the press in Tamil Nadu.

This may be just rhetoric but she may not be able to reckon with the social and political forces that have gradually begun to stir in Tamil Nadu with the coming together of caste, class and Tamil nationalism as a potential third force in the politics of Tamil Nadu with the LTTE as a catalyst, with mere bombblast.

5-5-1991

Coercive air power in the Eelam conflict

The use of air power has been the most salient feature of the current conflict in the Northeast. As a consequence of the fact that the LTTE 'controls' a substantial portion of the North — the interior — there have been two types of air operations: tactical and strategic.

Tactical air power is used on the battle field. Strategic air power is used to attack targets behind the battlefield — in the opponent's territory. Tactical air power is part of ordinary military action which seeks to rout opposing forces on the battlefield, whereas strategic air power is coercive, that military coercion seeks to change the opponent's mind — (agree for a ceasefire, give up conditions or territory, agree to hold talks on terms favourable to the assailant etc.) — and indirectly affect the opponent's ability and will to sustain battlefield operations.

Right now in the context of the government's stated and expressed desire to conclude, a temporary peace at least, the concept of coercion becomes crucial in examining the role of air power in the war against the Tiger. At the conventional level the military instruments traditionally used for coercion are strategic air and naval forces, while tactical air and ground forces are concerned with directly influencing events on the battle field, (given the reduced vulnerability of modern states to naval blockades, air power has emerged as the main tool of conventional coercion.) Although technically this country cannot be said to possess a strategic

airforce the need to affect the LTTE beyond the warfront in the territory it controls, has given rise to strategic bombing.

The central question is, in the North, under what condition is strategic bombing with conventional munitions likely to create the desired coercive leverage? Coercive air power can be directed at civilian and/or military targets. There are two models which exploit the vulnerability of the civilian population in the opponent's territory.

The first which seeks to gain the enemy's compliance by slowly raising the risk of civilian damage is called Schelling model — (the idea of manipulating the risk of civilian punishment for political purposes has largely come to be identified with the work of Thomas Schelling. Others also shared in the development of this idea, chief among them Morton Kaplan, in his Strategy of Limited Retaliation).

Key

Under this strategy, bombing would gradually be escalated in intensity, geographical extent or both. "The key however, is not to destroy the entire target set — (population concentrations and the economic infrastructure that provides the population with essential goods and services) — in one full swoop". This model's premise is that coercive leverage comes from the opponent's anticipation of future damage and hence spares a

large part of the opponent's civilian assets in order to preserve the threat of further destruction. In addition the assailant, in this model, gives a clear signal that the bombing is contingent on the opponent's behaviour and will be stopped if he complies with the assailant's demands. ("To be coercive, violence has to be anticipated. It is the expectation of more violence that gets the wanted behaviour if the power to hurt can get it at all". Thomas Schelling — 'Arms and Influence')

The second counter civilian strategy is called the Douhet model — after its chief proponent Giulio Douhet. It rests on the belief that infliction of high costs can shatter civilian morale which is the social basis of resistance and causing citizens to pressure the opponent to abandon his territorial and political ambitions. The Douhet model is simply what is known as terror bombing. However the military theoreticians and generals of the West have established the euphemistic concept instead, Under this strategy it is expected that civilian morale could be damaged by exposing large portions of the populations to the terror of destruction, or by causing severe shortages of services and goods such as food, water, textiles and industrial goods.

Like the Schelling model, the Douhet model focuses on population and economic targets. There is however a fundamental difference. The Schelling model holds ultimate ruin in abeyance. The Douhet model calls for immediate devastation.

The third and final strategy of coercive air power is the Interdiction model. Unlike the Douhet and Schelling models which aim at civilian vulnerability, the Interdiction model aims at the opponents' military vulnerabilities. The fundamental premise of the model is that coercive leverage could be secured by attacking rear area military targets.

"The goal is to neutralize the enemy's military potential before it can be brought to bear on the battlefield". Aerial interdiction sometimes includes economic targets to the extent that those are assumed to be part of the opponent's 'war machine'. (The 'Industrial Web Theory' put forward in the 1930's emphasised precision attacks against critical economic bottlenecks to cause on adversary's war economy to crumble. During the bombing campaign against Germany, the eighth air force targeted armament, ball bearing, and synthetic oil production as well as the German transportation network).

The Interdiction model assumes that in a conventional dispute or in a guerrilla war which is in the process of incorporating conventional methods,

battlefield demands for resources are often inelastic especially in high input conflicts, and therefore successful aerial interdiction of critical supplies can quickly lead to military disaster.

Air operations in LTTE controlled territory the North can be tentatively classified into the Schelling and Interdiction models. How effective was the Schelling model in undermining the LTTE will to sustain the war? (The Douhet model is not possible in Sri Lanka for two reasons. One, it does not possess a modern strategic air force and the necessary conventional munitions. Two, the Tiger is not another government). The counter civilian strategy prescribed by the Schelling model intended inter alia to distance the people away from those prosecuting the war, by posing the risk of destruction and hardship. It certainly led to an exodus to Colombo from the peninsula and presented the Tiger with a possible manpower crisis. But this strategy did not create the desired political crisis for the Tigers because civilian hardships were offset by supplies from Tamil Nadu and the extraordinary volume of expatriate remittances.

Valvettthurai

The last occasion on which Valvettithurai was bombed 'thoroughly' — only the Tiger base there was spared — it did not create the necessary volume of open civilian 'displeasure' to coerce the Tiger leadership into considering methods other than war to mitigate the suffering of their kith and kin, their township. Coercive airpower in the form of counter civilian Schelling model as used in the peninsula apparently failed to take note of an important fact; that from the late fifties one of the main tasks of Tamil politics has been to impinge upon the Tamil population, the need for countenance, tremendous civilian punishment to achieve important political and later territorial aims.

The pogroms of '56, '77 and '83 clearly strengthened the case. The net result is an almost indelible association among the ordinary Tamils between putting up with destruction of civilian assets and lives and the achievement of political objectives or the extraction of concessions from Colombo.

The counter-civilian models of coercive bombing presuppose that economic devastation will undermine civilian morale which in turn would divert the opponent's attention away from the warfront.

Major Muir Fairchild, Britain's Director of A

tics and Strategy in World War Two, referring to counter-civilian coercive airpower had remarked, "We obviously cannot and do not intend to kill or injure all the people. Therefore our intention in deciding upon this method of attack must be to so reduce the morale of the enemy civilian population through fear — fear of death or injury for themselves or their loved ones — that they would prefer our terms of peace to continuing the struggle and would force their governments to capitulate." This approach is typical of the military leadership in societies where it is unequivocally under civilian authority dependent on the popular will for its survival.

Did the government gain any coercive leverage through the Schelling model of strategic bombing in the peninsula?

The Tiger's unilateral ceasefire in January, 1975 may tend to argue was a consequence of this. This is incorrect because civilian vulnerabilities — the objective of the Schelling model — as it was not evident as soon as the ceasefire was called off did not affect the political will of the LTTE to begin rapid and intense escalation of its military operations. It is a fallacy amply exposed by many scholars on modern warfare that the punishment of civilian populations by strategic bombing with conventional munitions (unlike in the case of nuclear or biological munitions) can undermine or challenge the real or assumed leadership of that population. But it continues to claim many adherents in modern military establishments only because the equation involved in the inter-civilian models is simple.

The LTTE ran a war machine which is not an integral part of the Northern economy. The war machine or in other words the infrastructure that is necessary to maintain its troops and battle field operations is located in the 'interior', the Tiger controlled portion of the North. Therefore the interdiction model is extremely crucial in determining the outcome of battles as well as in militating the LTTE's ability to 'oil' its war apparatus.

Deep interdiction in the 'interior' theoretically,

has to be aimed at ammunition storage facilities, food, fuel and explosive supply points, communication base camps, and factories where mortars, shells and other war material are produced. Then it has to thwart the LTTE's ground strategy by choking off the logistical flows on which the strategy is dependent; aerial interdiction of lines of communication between the battle front and bases or population centres.

Deep interdiction can be successful only if targets are correctly identified and if the industrial infrastructure necessary for the production of mortars, shells and mines is part of the Jaffna economy. The problem, however, is that this industrial infrastructure that is necessary for metal casting, making of moulds, precision lathes, etc. is located in Tamil Nadu.

Although camps had been on many occasions correctly identified, they were more often than not bombed days after the Tigers vacated them. This rotation system of setting up camps in the peninsula has posed difficulties for aerial interdiction.

The often declared curfew in Kilinochchi is obviously for the possible aerial interdiction of LTTE's lines of communication with the battlefield since Kilinochchi's open spaces, roads on irrigation bunds and channel banks can drastically expose and jeopardize Tiger supplies through the district. But this tactical interdiction's success is possible only under the following conditions; that Tiger supplies of men and material emanate from Jaffna; that the supplies are large that they send convoys during the day when detection is possible as a result of the curfew which would preclude the possibility of civilian transport. Deep interdiction may seriously affect the LTTE when it launches a full fledged conventional war dependent on an economic and industrial infrastructure located in the North. But that may never be because of the Tamil Nadu factor. The LTTE rear base where its basic war material is secured is still Tamil Nadu. Hence tactical interdiction may play a more crucial role in the future use of air power for coercive leverage.

19-5-1991

The Nehru - Gandhi dynasty and the Tamil Question

The dynastic concern of the Nehru family with the Tamil question has drawn to a close. For seventy five years (1916-1981) leaders belonging to three generations of the dynasty have faced the Tamil question. Now the last one has been killed in Tamil Nadu.

The personal element in India's involvement in Sri Lankan affairs has been cancelled with the brutal murder of Rajiv Gandhi. India's involvement had become Rajiv's involvement, a personal commitment. All the leaders of the Sri Lankan Tamil movement — Indo-Lanka accord, the landmark of his political career — were known to him and he had given his word to them that he would actively assist them in realizing their legitimate political aspirations.

Commit

He had dared to publicly commit himself to ensuring the safety and security of a community belonging to another sovereign country and now it is said that the LTTE which rapidly became the most powerful organisation of the Sri Lankan Tamil community during the early years of his premiership has murdered him.

Politics

The question uppermost in the minds of some of those in Tamil politics is, will this act critically distance their case from India? Will the Rajiv-Jayawardena accord become a dumb document, now that Rajiv Gandhi has been murdered and J.R. retired? The Thimpu talks and the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement led to fundamental changes in the attitude of Tamil politicians which had hardened over forty years of mistrust. The Thimpu talks were important in the development of the Tamil militants for two reasons.

One, that they had to one day or the other work it out with the Sri Lankan government; two it was at Thimpu that the fundamental principles of

the Tamil movement were formulated; principles that still inform the political demands of all the original Tamil groups. The Accord no doubt technically internalized and democratized the Tamil groups with the exception of the LTTE course.

Process

This whole process it is worth noting was the consequence of a commitment personally made by Rajiv Gandhi to the Sri Lankan Tamil leaders in exile soon after his mother's funeral, a person whom they had taken very little interest in cultivating while he was being groomed in the Congress-I.

Although Mrs. Gandhi had rejected a request by a section of the Tamil leadership to form a government in exile in March 1984, his involvement I suspect may have seen the conflict being concluded with *de facto* separation under Indian supervision.

Army

Colonel Edgar O Ballance, one time Editor-in-Chief of the British Army news service has made a pertinent observation in his otherwise mistitled book, 'The cyanide war', that unlike his mother, Rajiv was keen to promote a negotiated federal settlement since the violence could backfire and stimulate his own separatist problem. He went ahead and signed the Accord, it was understood, against the advice of his top intelligence agencies, the IB and the RAW. Dixie's vehement argument that the prolonged sustenance of the armed Tamil groups would one day rebound on India in the form of separatist violence in its own Tamil Nadu apparently carried more weight with Rajiv.

Background

Many Sri Lankans who are and cannot

vare of the background realities would tend of see the man in a different light. Despite the fact that aijv rushed the Accord he could not pre-empt the llout in Tamil Nadu, a fallout that has now taken s life. The wire service reports proclaim the end 'a dynasty.

If that is so, it may also be the end of a deep /nastic involvement in the destiny of the Tamil ovement. It was not just personal but arose out of s dynasty's perceptions and apprehensions about e Tamil south. It has been repeatedly pointed out these columns that India's approach to Sri Lanka partly Nehru's legacy.

Long before Jinnah dreamt of conspiring to urve out Pakistan, and long before many of today's kh militants who violently demand the creation of alistan were born, the South Indian Liberal /ederation became a great challenge to the Indian sedom movement led by the Congress.

The powerful movement of Tamil liberals was ndermining the Indian National Congress in the outh. The South Indian Liberal Federation which is formed in 1916 demanded that the large adras Presidency be carved out as a separate state, ssibly in collusion with the British.

Question

It was the Tamil question that for the very first ne presented the young Nehru with the spectre d possibility of India's division or splintering and e divide and rule manouvres of British perialism. The first regional demand made under e India act of the British Raj in 1935 was for a arate Tamil Nadu.

Later, many years after the British were gone, rs. Gandhi saw the mass turmoil in Tamil Nadu for e certain of a separate state; and she was opelled to power in the Congress and made the ime minister by Kamarajar of Tamil Nadu, the wperful 'kingmaker' of the Congress party.

Indira Gandhi had to collude with ex-Dravidian aratist Karunanidhi in 1972 to undermine ararajar's powerbase in Tamil Nadu so that she uld do away with the kingmaker who had chosen r, for he had assumed that he could control her. was this 'collusion' that led to the decline of the ngress party's hold on Tamil Nadu and paved the y for the rapid rise of MGR's ADMK in the cum created in Tamil Nadu as a result of the ira-Kamraj split.

Consequence

The Congress party has had to lean to this day

on one Dravidian party or the other to come to power as a consequence. Therefore Indira had to count on MGR rather than her own little Congress-I (at that time) in Tamil Nadu when she fell out with Karunanidhi for dismissing his government. And then MGR became the patron of the Sri Lanka Tamil militants.

The personal connection of the three generations of the Nehru-Gandhi family with the phenomenon of Tamil nationalism is not a series of events. Only the yupee pundits, journalists and diplomats who hoot down history can comfortably afford to be naive in their lifetime. It is from the South Indian Liberal Federation which first presented the young Nehru with the phenomenon of separatism that the Dravidia Kazhaham emerged.

Manifestation

The unofficial Godfather of the DK is now, the most ruthless and bloody manifestation of pan-Tamil nationalism — Prabhakaran. It is the DK support base, more than any thing else that sustains the LTTE in Tamil Nadu. The vast supplies of explosives originate from areas which are DK strong holds in western Tamil Nadu.

Rajiv Gandhi, then inherited the special sensitivity of his dynasty to the Tamil question to and hence he, in time became personally involved with the Sri Lankan Tamil militancy which had become integral to the Tamil question in South India, mainly because of MGR and his mother's policy.

His personal involvement in the matter must be examined along with the rise of the RAW as a much publicized player in the Tamil problem. It was the degree of autonomy that it enjoyed under the inexperienced Rajiv and the policy it adopted towards the Sri Lankan Tamil militants that mainly contributed to the rapid rise of the LTTE. However it is he who had understood Nehru's thinking on the Tamil question.

Apprehension

People like Jyothindranath Dixit conciously or unconsciously reflected Nehru's political legacy and the apprehensions that informed it when they warned about the dangers of having a militarily powerful and politically appealing Tamil facist force on the edge of Tamil Nadu. Nehru's policy was to contain Tamil separatism by democratizing it with big presents (The creation of Tamil Nadu as a linguistic state) and critical threats (the constitutional ban on seperatism in 1962). Dixit's argument (what's gathered from conversations with

him) that a Tamil separatist force was not amenable to this approach of democratization precisely because it was irredeemably fascist, and hence a threat to India's interest in the longrun.

Accord

Rajiv Gandhi like his grandfather, thought that he had given neo-Tamil separatism a big present in the form of the Accord, along with a potentially punishing force — the Indian army; and when he thought he had successfully coaxed Prabhakaran on the eve of the Accord to nebulously accept it, little did he realize that the LTTE unlike its predecessors in Tamil Nadu, was not amenable to presents or punishments.

In 1962 also, it should be pointed out, when Nehru contained and democratized Tamil separatism, there were groups which like the LTTE cried treason at the others and dropped out of the Dravidian parties which accepted Nehru's terms. They were marginalized in the next decade but survived.

The LTTE was also marginalized by his grandson but survived mainly because of the RAW and the Sri Lankan government. Perunchithirana's

group which dropped out in 1962 clinging to the Tamil separatist cause, now looks up to Prabhakaran to broaden their ideology. Chitthirana's son Pozhilan is one of the chief proponents of taking up the armed struggle to prise Tamil Nadu from India as a separate country.

Personally I would say that if Rajiv had comprehensively inherited Nehru's sense of history, his early experience with Tamil separatism, his apprehensions about the Tamil question under the British, then he may have been still alive. He would like to pose a problem to those who may unconsciously feel satisfied that the dynasty that held India together and ran it as a formidable hegemon is finished.

The problem is, in the absence of the Nehru dynasty, which over three generations held Tamil nationalist separatism in check and weaned it away from violence with presents, threats, coaxing and punishment, what would be the future of pan-Tamil nationalism and secessionism? It would certainly be a sad mistake to see it only in terms of a simple military exercise covered for, by the most sophisticated political equivocation.

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தமிழ்நாடு
சென்னை, 15 ஏப்ரல் 1997

The well informed "Taraki" known to be a Tamil who, once belonged
a Tamil militant group...

Tamil Times, 15 April 1997