

Report 8

The Debasing of Law and of Humanity and the Drift Towards Total War

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P R E F A C E

The theme of this report, as the title suggests is the relationship between the large scale violation of human rights by government forces on one hand, and on the other how this is used by the LTTE, not just to legitimise its increasing repression in the North, but also to interfere with basic freedoms in such a manner as to build the ideological and social machinery for total war. The conduct of the government forces in the East, characterised by arrogance, massacres and disappearances, and the LTTE's massacres of Sinhalese and Muslim civilians, as we have pointed out in earlier reports, reinforce the two pernicious and opposing ideologies. Our inquiries also suggest that the appointment of a commission of inquiry into the massacre at Kokkadichcholai has failed to arrest the spate of violations by the armed forces, whose mood is increasingly characterised by self imposed frustration and defeatism.

If one's aim is to divide this country and its people, one could adopt destruction as one's main weapon and it is very easy when the other side is also like-minded. How much of Jaffna society has been destroyed is evident from a remark made by a traveller from those now distant parts, "The people in general are not at all serious about Eelam. They are afraid of the government and are simply thinking of survival. In coming to justify this war of survival, as many see it, they have also come to accept torture, disappearances, deceit and killing as necessary. The level of public morality has plummeted to a level, where to talk about ideals like socialism, as in bygone days, has no meaning. We need to start from slogans about the value of life." Those in other parts of the country have been through similar experiences at various times and the comment of this observer has thus a wider application.

On the other hand those whose stated aim is to unite the country and its people, must not just be creative, so as to overcome the inertia of recent history, but must also show a much greater moral commitment. Sadly, we do not see a concerted endeavour in this direction.

The following remarks are for the reader who will find this volume tiresome reading at one sitting. The main theme is covered in chapters 2,3 and 5. The priorities can be gleaned from the contents page. Chapter 1 reflects on issues brought to the surface by a year of war. Chapter 4 deals with the dilemmas faced by an important minority among the Tamil speaking people - the Muslims. This can be read as an independent feature.

We wish to thank a number of individuals, organisations and institutions, without whose help the research for, and the production of this report would not have been possible.

CHAPTER 1

THE WAR - ONE YEAR ON : 11TH JUNE 1990-AUGUST 1991

THE WAR - ONE YEAR ON

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

When the war began a year ago the state appeared to be in a strong position. Many thought that the state had learnt from a decade of blundering, while the LTTE had made many enemies among its own people. The LTTE's triumphal entry into Batticaloa in December 1989 resulted in 200-300 TNA conscripts being massacred under the gloating eye of the Sri Lankan government. So little did the LTTE care for the dignity and security of Tamils, that the remains of these hapless victims were towed away in municipal rubbish trucks for disposal. It was the same wherever the LTTE went. Only, unlike for the Easterner, the LTTE had a little tactical concern for the squeamishness of the Jaffna man and his expatriate contacts. He was thus spared such a public exhibition as in May 1986 when TELO cadre were massacred where the public display was less in extent. In the North the deeds were done in secret places - in lone cemeteries and in the Palk Straits. The Sri Lankan forces gleefully obliged with aerial and naval support, until 7 months later, on 11th June 1990, the government seemingly woke up to discover that the "law of the land" was in need of restoration. It nevertheless set about the task turning the law into utter shambles.

To the Sri Lankan state's misfortune, it was drunk with the heady wine of success against the JVP, and its hands were dripping with the blood of slain southern youth. President Premadasa's promise of June 1990, to do to the LTTE what was done to the JVP, was a bad omen. The specificities of an ethnic struggle were not appreciated. While those disenchanted with the government and the JVP in the South had other functioning opposition parties to fall back on, once the government by its actions cornered the Tamils collectively, the only functioning alternative the Tamils had was the LTTE. For those who rejected both, the course was thorny, untried and uncertain, often hunted by both the warring parties.

When the war commenced, it looked as if the LTTE had miscalculated. Its initial weakness was evident in the precipitate abandonment of well bunkered defensive positions in the Batticaloa District. But venality combined with obtuseness on the part of the state, linked to the LTTE's readiness to prosecute the war without any obligation of responsibility and no concern for lives, worked to the latter's advantage. Needless to say that the Tamil people lost irrevocably. [\[Top\]](#)

1.2 A Confrontation in Batticaloa - the State's Nelsonian Eye:

The scene was the Town Hall in Batticaloa, about a week before the tragedy in Kakkadichcholai of 12th June 1991. Addressing the people of Batticaloa, the Prime Minister asked them to forget the past and informed them that normality had been restored. With the PM on the platform were service chiefs serving in the region, with some clergy and others sent up to improve the decor. Some of the leading citizens who had been assured that the

occasion would be more than a monologue were dismayed when the PM proceeded to walk off the platform on finishing his piece. In a gesture of apology, the DIG of Police who accompanied the PM stopped him next to a Jesuit Priest who was introduced.

The elderly Jesuit, a member of the Batticaloa Peace Committee, told the PM firmly, "You must not believe what is in the papers. There is a lot of fear in Batticaloa. As long as there is fear and uncertainty there can be no normality. About 12 persons have disappeared in the last week." He then proceeded to name persons, some of whom had been picked off in public view. One of them, Mariyadas, a mechanic, had only the previous evening repaired the Police Superintendent's type-writer. There followed an exchange where the PM attempted to push the line that now there was nothing to fear, things are looking brighter and that disappearances would taper off. A few feet behind in the PM's entourage was a general who, listening to this exchange, had been getting worked up. As the PM moved off to his next audience, the general came towards the priest, his forefinger wagging. "Father, you must know there is a war going on", he blurted, "In a war people die. People disappear. Look what happened in Japan!". One wonders who calls the shots here, the General or the PM?

Next week the Kokkadichchola massacre happened and others less known followed. The PM too returned. The manner in which he was prevented from meeting the victims, even in Batticaloa town, made it obvious that he was not calling the shots. In the meantime the list of missing persons with the Batticaloa Peace Committee, mostly from an area within a 10 mile radius of Batticaloa, climbed to about 2500.

It was evident that the army was in no mood to reflect on its colossal failure. It was operating in the same frame of mind as when confronting the JVP in the South. This is also reflected in a recent interview the Army Chief, General Hamilton Wanasinghe, gave 'The Observer'. He said that unlike the Sinhalese public which supplied information that helped to crush the JVP, the Tamil public is not doing so because of a fear of the LTTE. The corollary to this, as the late Defence Minister, Gen.Ranjan Wijeratne, said almost explicitly during the anti-JVP campaign, is that the state must become a greater source of terror to the ordinary people than its adversary.

A senior member of the Batticaloa Peace Committee said that they did not raise issues when the LTTE was in charge, nor did they do any documentation on human rights violations by the group, because it pretended to be everything and was not interested in talking to or tolerating anyone else. That some officers of the state now appeared to be responsive was appreciated, although little that was tangible had happened. If the state was creative, it should have built on this by conferring dignity and accountability to the people, thus rebuilding its legitimacy in the nation building process, rather than contemptuously reiterating how the people were silent under the LTTE's regime. [\[Top\]](#)

1.3 The Political Establishment and the Media

What is even worse is that the political establishment has not found the capacity to tell the people the truth that great blunders have been made, not just by past governments, but by this government as well, and that this history will have to be re-evaluated and its direction changed. Instead it has allowed the army and ordinary people to take the punishment for its absence of direction, while it plays its desultory games. The current one is an attempt to prove that Mrs.Bandaranaike through her electoral ally Chandrasekaran of the UPF, supplied

arms to the LTTE - a charge very remote from known facts. Such are only seen as ploys to divert attention from shameful dealings of the governments.

In the current drift, what the Sinhalese public is told is extremely unhelpful. While the press is taken to task for the slightest adverse comment about leading politicians, the Sinhalese press in particular, is full off chauvinist crap that can only be described as rabble rousing. Attempts to send food to starving Jaffna folk were decried as feeding the Tigers and individuals involved in such attempts are ascribed sinister connections without a shred of factual support.

Armed forces personnel fed on such crap can only be more undisciplined and alienating in their actions. Such reporting is obviously a contributory factor to the shelling of the civilian population in Jaffna and the indignity to which ordinary Tamils are subject even in Colombo, through sheer ignorance and prejudice.

In keeping with a politics that denies the people dignity and intelligence, the state of hysterical insularity among the Sinhalese people, combined with indiscipline among the forces, is dangerously reminiscent of the state of mind resulting in the tragedy of July 1983. Chauvinism - whether of the Sinhalese variety or the Tamil - makes a people small, foolish, and then violent. [\[Top\]](#)

1.4 The Glamour of Militarism, Liberal Sentiments and Aspirations of the people:

During July 1991 the LTTE launched its largest operation to dislodge the army from the Elephant Pass camp. Preparations had been going on for a few months by welding girders and improvised armour plating onto tractors which were used to make suicidal thrusts to breach defences. It also showed that with the community cornered by ruthlessly crushing any political alternative, rendered fools, and the young brainwashed into thinking that they had only alternative forms of death to choose between, the LTTE could wage a war without any concern for lives. Victory or martyrdom - both abounded to the greater glory of the leadership.

By now the LTTE was being credited with being a conventional army carrying the Tamil struggle to a new glorious peak. For those whose eyes have been largely on the military aspect of the struggle, the LTTE'S performance at Elephant Pass was symbolic of a strong liberation movement, enjoying massive support from the people. These were also sentiments of the very people who have ignored ordinary Tamils their tragedy, their helplessness caught between the callousness of two forces, and the resignation with which they watch their young being cajoled, spirited away and then cornered into an abject fate. Despite their stated repugnance for violence, without depth of understanding, many so-called liberals become admirers of violent success and contemptuous of ordinary people and their less romantic aspirations. Their shallowness is such that they forget the lessons of history where the sudden collapse of societies after astounding military successes, has shown them to have been hollow within. What is of greater significance is the corrosive influences that are legitimised within a society ever trapped into opting for pure militarisation, spurning every sane alternative and pretending that such do not exist.

Thus those, including editors in the South, who have been obsessed with the military scene and have persistently ignored the Tamil people, suddenly plunge into awe for the LTTE,

silence their war drums and speak of finding a political solution. Elephant Pass suddenly wakes the government and the opposition into mooting a parliamentary select committee to seek a political solution after years of head smashing and foot dragging. Thus the inertia of the Sinhala chauvinism of the southern polity in the end only leads naturally to admiration and legitimisation of the destructiveness of the LTTE.

One need not go far to discover the ignorance of those who romanticise the LTTE. If the people of Jaffna are squarely and wholeheartedly behind the LTTE, why does everything in Jaffna have to be a lie - from senior academics who say, 'one day we must all become great heroes', and are then not prepared to take up stands when students are taken away over false allegations, saying it is dangerous to talk about it, or send their own children to Colombo; to the Diocesan Council of a church that wants the government to appoint a commission to go into disappearances in the South as if it cared for the Sinhalese while actually being silent on the continuing massacres of Sinhalese and Muslims by the LTTE; to the leading Hindu religious personality who privately laments the politics which drives our youth along the path of suicide and then speaks on LTTE platforms?

Ordinary people who feel the tragedy in their bones, despite the burden imposed on them by the community's history and by external factors, through all the ambivalence and confusion long for the time they can live in truth.

Every life that is snuffed out, whether martyr, traitor or civilian, makes it more difficult for the LTTE to adopt a reformist course and face up to its responsibility for this tragedy. What has been evident is a rise in hysteria and sadism in the group which binds the Tamils in a fatal plunge.

This is nowhere more evident than in the movement's unspeakable attitude to Muslims. Some of the worst blunders made by the Sinhalese polity in respect of Tamils are being inflicted on the Muslims by a group styling itself a liberation movement of Tamils. Can any political force exercise benign power in the North-East through humiliating the Muslims and ruling by coercion alone? [\[Top\]](#)

1.5 The Government Forces

If these forces showed some confidence in March and some tendency to strike an enlightened course of not punishing the Tamil people, these signs have been overshadowed. The gains then made by stopping the aerial bombardment of Jaffna and easing the supply of food and medicine have been thrown away. The new bout of killing civilians through massacres in the East marks a disintegration of discipline in the ranks, and an incapacity for conceptual reassessment at the top. The fact that the appointment of a commission to go into the massacre at Kokkadichcholai has made little impact in the day to day behaviour of the army is indeed disturbing. The officers, even if they have the will, appear too frightened to probe deeply and impose discipline [see reports].

In village after village in the East it becomes very evident that the cause of the army's discomfiture is the license it received to breach the law and inflict pain without accountability. In many villages the young are missing. The army did not give them the option of staying at home. Many of the remaining adults have been beaten repeatedly, often to the point of disablement.

The only redeeming feature is that several of the intelligent officers have understood the

problem at far greater depth than the political establishment or the press in the South. An STF officer told a citizen in the East, "The root of the problem is the inconsistency of the government. They have their talks and make their pacts and accords. When these break down we are sent in again. We lose our men and do the same horrible things to the Tamils. Whom can the Tamils then trust? They cannot trust the government and they cannot trust us. So they have to be with the LTTE." [\[Top\]](#)

1.6 Whither Sri Lanka?

We have stressed in previous reports that the most hopeful way forward is for the democratic forces in the South to rise to the occasion and force the government to take responsibility for the Tamil people. If the government takes the initiative to respect the human rights of its people and give them dignity as people of this country, the humiliation of having to bow to ambivalent strictures regarding human rights from other powers can be avoided. One of the first tasks is to defuse colonisation as a running sore. The Sinhalese settlement in Weli-Oya has been much vaunted as a scheme to sunder the contiguity of the Tamil region. High ranking STF men have admitted privately that there are 'political reasons' why security is being withheld for Tamils to go back to Pottuvil, Veeramunai, Malwattai and Central Camp, from where Tamils were killed or driven away by the forces last year. [see [Special Report No.3](#)]. Such moves by the government are stupid besides being wicked, because they perversely legitimise any action in these areas from attacks on troops to massacring civilians. The LTTE gains in legitimacy when people come to believe that only the LTTE and its methods can teach the government a lesson and make it wilt. There must also be a credible inquiry, with a view to providing redress on account of those thousands brutally murdered by the forces.

A chauvinistic politics has taught Tamils to blame everyone but themselves. The motivating slogan of this politics is that the Sinhalese cannot be trusted. The consequent disintegration of trust among Tamils themselves is seldom acknowledged. To stubbornly insist that Sinhalese cannot be trusted is not just a slap in the face to those who attempt genuine reconciliation, but leaves the Tamils with just two destructive alternatives. For this politics to succeed, it must constantly work to close every new crack in the ideology of Sinhalese chauvinism in order to go on maintaining that Sinhalese cannot be trusted. This is part of the logic behind massacring Sinhalese and conniving at massacres of Tamils through provoking the worst instincts of the state and the people. On the other hand if the state shows greater restraint and sophistication, it could seriously embarrass the LTTE cause.

CHAPTER 2

BATTICALOA & AMPARAI DISTRICTS

BATTICALOA AND AMPARAI DISTRICTS

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2.1 General

The major event in this region during the period covered by this report is the massacre at Kokkadichchola, where over a hundred civilians, mostly women, children and elderly persons were killed and burnt by troops. There had been many incidents during this war resulting in a large number of disappearances, and several massacres with comparable or greater loss of life. But this has been the first to receive widespread publicity, and a presidential commission has been appointed to go into it.

This situation contrasts with that prevailing particularly in the Amparai District last year, where isolated communities were served by priests travelling long and lonely roads on motor cycles. Not only were such clergymen vulnerable (e.g. Fr.Selvarajah Saverimuttu of Sorikalmunai), but many of the massacres which then took place have not come to light. [See [Special Report No.3](#)]. Thus the press in the South was able to pretend that the army had fought a disciplined war, until, and very unfortunately, Kokkadichchola happened. What we show here and in the next chapter, is that the incident at Kokkadichchola was part of a pattern of army indiscipline and lawlessness. As a nemesis of its own methods, a feeling of weakness and defeatism has crept upon the army. The general sentiments such as the need for a political solution, that this war is not against the Tamil people etcetera are not being transformed into concrete deeds in every day happenings, by at least introducing an institutional input into the military machinery, to ensure that its conduct is consistent with those political goals.

Because of the importance gained by the Kokkadichchola incident, we cover it in a separate chapter. The appointment of a commission, despite a great deal of visible obfuscation, does provide an opportunity to bring about some institutional change for the benefit of the people. It is also hoped that this will not be treated as just an isolated incident.

Both the STF and the army which control this area, have become prisoners of the consequences of their own atrocious conduct, particularly last year. They have found themselves fitting into a mould of coercion, casualties and reprisals in an unstable environment.

Because of the ingrained habit among the forces of punishing the Tamils, and of frequent nastiness towards the young, there is a simmering militancy among Tamil youth leading to steady recruitment by the LTTE. For there is no other force to give them creative direction and hope for the future. In many villages, particularly in the interior, there are few young

males left. We take one village, Kiran, [Section 2.3] and describe the experiences of the people there. We also give a typical incident in one interior village, Palugamam, of the kind that is bound to have serious repercussions for the Tamils as well as the army. This is one among several which happened after the appointment of the commission.

In the STF controlled areas too there is a great deal of fear among the young. Young persons are regularly picked up from market places and off the roads and are beaten in camps during questioning. In the lanes one does come across young persons asking 'Are the commandos on the roads?' before proceeding. During June, in Kallar, an O'Level student left home in a group of 14 LTTE recruits, after telling his mother that he would rather die fighting, than die sitting at home - an understandable sentiment among most recruits. The mother not just lost her son, she is now harassed by the STF and other groups.

Extortion

There is a particular spot on the outskirts of Batticaloa where persons sent extortion letters are asked to report to the LTTE. Some are taken westwards in the night, across the main road a short distance from the army camp, to where they are held. Soldiers sitting in their camps by night know that the LTTE is out there, moving freely. They become angry and blame the people rather than their methods. Massacres are often the outcome of such anger.

Most members of the middle class in this region are very resentful of extortion by the LTTE. For this impoverished middle class, receiving an extortion letter not just causes fear and anxiety, but leads to so many other problems. For one thing they just cannot afford it - a retired teacher from Thurainilawanai with unsettled daughters, left for Batticaloa after receiving a note of demand for one lakh of rupees. Further, if they go to the particular area to meet the LTTE, the news spreads. They are then harassed by the forces and the other groups would demand from them the same amount paid to the LTTE.

Extortion is an important cause of people in the region being deprived of necessary services. Early this year, the last Tamil doctor in Kalmunai left after receiving an extortion note. In Batticaloa, it is said that the services of many NGOs have suffered because many of their senior Tamil employees have received extortion notes, and are thus not willing to go too far from Batticaloa. Thus after the incident at Kokkadichcholai, only two church organisations took relief into the area. The other NGOs distributed relief from Thalankuda, on the other side of the lagoon.

Most of those who received extortion notes appear to be sitting tight, accumulating grey hairs. To them it must surely be a strong temptation to go abroad and become vocal LTTE supporting expatriates, rather than serve the people at home. Isolated Muslims are being picked off by the LTTE. Notices have appeared to the effect, "Pardon for Kattankudy, Death to Eravur and Inquiry for Oddaimavady". Some Muslims were told by a well-disposed Tamil who went for an extortion interview, that he was promised a bungalow in the Muslim village of Kattankudy in return for paying the LTTE. As for the LTTE's intentions, the Muslims fear the worst. The Muslims have thus been given no choice but to depend on the forces.

Tamils too on the other hand have come to depend on the forces. Tamils travelling from Batticaloa would not pass through Eravur unless there is an army picket on the road. The LTTE also appears to have taken up the position but it would not allow any civil administration to function unless it is given full control. Thus army and police pickets have been needed even to bring food into Batticaloa, after the LTTE burnt 3 food lorries near

Kiran last November. Bus services and train services have also needed pickets to function.

Thus early in the morning to late in the evening one finds lines of anxious young men along Trincomalee Road, stepping gingerly on the tarred edges of the road, an automatic in one hand and a rake in the other, to ferret suspicious looking bits of soil for mines. As experience has shown, these are also the times they are most vulnerable. When there are no pickets, the traffic ceases. When a mine explodes, the local people see the other face of the army. [\[Top\]](#)

2.2 Reports

2.2.1 The massacre at Sathurukondan: 9th September 1990:

The village of Sathurukondan, Kokuvil and Panniyachchiady lie just beyond Iruthayapuram, the northern suburb of Batticaloa. Kokuvil is an ancient village. But much of this area was settled recently as demand for land in Batticaloa increased. During the evening sunset, the view from the huge lotus tank at Kokkuvil is one of astounding beauty, with a large variety of wild birds flitting along undisturbed. It is a refreshing sight for a Jaffna man, coming from a place where the lotus has ceased to bloom and the ponds devoid of life. The tank at Kokuvil was full at this time of the year because the fields in the vicinity lie uncultivated. It is only now that the survivors have begun to trickle back, following the tragedy of last September. What follows complements our earlier account of the tragedy. The date given in [Report No.7](#) is also corrected.

At 5.30 p.m. on 9th September 1990, armed men in uniform and in civilian clothes came into the area and ordered everyone to come on to the road. They were then marched to the army camp in the vicinity after being told that they would be questioned and released. Since these were troubled times, many had gone into the town and those remaining were mostly elderly, women and the very young.

What follows is taken from an account recorded on tape, given by the only survivor, Kanthasamy Krishnakumar (21). The recording was made before leading citizens in Batticaloa: "50 commandos walked about 150 of us to the Sathurukondan army camp, which we reached about 7.00 or 8.00 p.m. Four were separated from the rest, attacked with swords and kris knives and were pulled away out of the camp. All were then taken to one place, attacked and burnt with tyres..."

Krishnakumar who was injured, managed to roll out of sight in the semi-darkness, crept away to a house and asked for water. He then went to his village and stayed in an empty house, and later found his way to his cousin's in Batticaloa town.

The list of victims totals 184 (Sathurukondan - 38, Kokuvil - 47, Panniyachchiady - 37 and Pillayarady - 62). Of this number, there were 47 children below the age of 10 and several women.

2.2.2 Savukkady : 20th September 1990:

31 were taken by the forces from this seaside village between Eravur and Batticaloa, and are since missing.

2.2.3 Siththandy: 21st August 1990:

At 5.00 p.m. army personnel from the Morakkaddanchenai camp took away 44 persons from the refugee camp at Sri Murugan Temple, Siththandy, who are since missing. These were mostly students, labourers and fishermen.

This and the two preceding items suggest that the taking away of 179 persons from the refugee camp at Vantharumoolai Eastern University, was one publicised instance of a practice widespread in the Batticaloa District about that time. The testimony of the freak survivor at Satturukondan paints a very grim picture of what could have happened to the others as well. The widespread nature of these disappearances, together with the numbers involved, point to connivance at high level.

2.2.4 Mrs.Yamuna Venudas: December 1990:

Venudas was a TULF activist from Batticaloa, nominated by the LTTE to the Interim Council in 1987, later persecuted by the IPKF, and when the current war began, went into the interior with the LTTE. His wife Yamuna of Thambiluvil continued to work as a bank clerk in Batticaloa. Last December, by prior arrangement, she crossed the lagoon and went to Kokkadichcholai with some others to see her husband. According to some sources she was brought back close to the jetty in a vehicle and that this had been seen from a distance by the army. Yamuna never returned home. At the time of her disappearance, one of her little children was with her mother in Thambiluvil, and the other in Batticaloa. Later in April Karikalan's brother Satkunanandan also met a similar fate because of a family connection with the LTTE.

2.2.5 Father and Son: August 1990 & 20th December 1989:

This is one of many stories that illustrate how death has stalked many families from several angles. Aruliah Rajasundaram (65) of Eralakulam, was the father of six. His son Yesurajah (28 in 1989) was in the PLOTE and had left for Colombo when the group was banned in December 1986. He returned after the Accord to run a shop. His neighbour and rival had a brother in the LTTE, and following harassment by the LTTE he joined the ENDLF. By this time he was married and was the father of 3 girls. as the IPKF withdrew to Trincomalee Yesurajah was invited to go with them. Being a familied man, he decided to remain.

Following the LTTE's entry, he was taken from Chenkaladi, for questioning on 20th December 1989 on the promise that he would be released after questioning. Then for 3 days, the family was refused any information regarding his fate. On hearing that the LTTE had killed at least 20 persons and buried them in a particular area, Rajasundaram, Yesurajah's father, went with some help to dig up the graves in the night. One grave contained a bearded man of about 60. His identity card in the shirt pocket described him as a Vattavithanai. He is said to have spoken on EPRLF platforms.

On the LTTE's entry into Batticaloa, 200-300 TNA members were killed in town. Another 100 are known to have been killed in Iralakulam, on the way to Trincomalee. During the period of `peace' which lasted until June 1990, a further 300 are said to have disappeared from around Batticaloa, which was under Suresh.

After the war began, in September, Rajasundaram obtained permission from the army at Commathurai and went with a friend on bicycles to fetch a young person from the Eastern University refugee camp. Rajasundaran was shot dead on the way by soldiers. His friend escaped and brought the news.

2.2.6 Batticaloa: 7th July 1990:

The LTTE had fled Batticaloa abandoning a vehicle in the Teachers' Training College premises. Out of fear, those in the training college pushed this out onto Station Road. On finding out about the vehicle, the army took in 7 youths about the place on 7th July, which was a Poya day, sacred to the Buddhists. As the day ended at mid-night, seven gun shots were heard. Next morning 7 bodies were found on the road.

About this time, a 15 year old nephew of Fr. Ambrose was riding down Boundary Road on his blue bicycle. He was stopped by soldiers who sent him to his parents' shop nearby to buy cigarettes. The soldiers then took him along to the camp. The boy never reappeared. But his blue bicycle continued to be seen regularly, ridden by soldiers. [\[Top\]](#)

2.2.7 Batticaloa: The disappearances of April-May 1991:

These were highlighted in Report No.7. On the morning of 24th April 2 bodies were found near the police post at Iruthayapuram. On the same day, two girls returning from tuition classes were taken in a white van. In the evening, their bodies were found near the new bridge, where there is a police post. Two bodies were found near Lady Manning bridge in Kallady. Their heads had been removed by a v-shaped cut about the neck. One body was found in Mankerni. The two bodies found near the Peththalai V.C. are believed to be the work of a Tamil militant group operating with the forces. Two bodies were found in Kaluwanchikudy. The 3 found in Kaluthavalai are believed to be the work of the LTTE.

The most prominent among those who disappeared was the LTTE leader Karikalan's brother, Satkunanandan, who worked in the Telecommunications department. There are circumstances here that give a pointer to who was behind the outrage in Batticaloa town. One is that about this time (24th April), the A.L. examinations were being conducted in the North-East and the question papers were stored at Hindu College, opposite the Telecom. Being anxious to show that normality prevailed in the East, the government wanted the examinations to go on without interruption. Thus Batticaloa town was under heavy security at this time, and a heavy guard was placed around Hindu College and the Telecom.

Being an essential service, the Telecom personnel, including Sathunanandan, were living in the building with permission from the forces. There were also other factors. Those living at the Telecom had a pet dog. On the night of 22nd April, this dog was poisoned. There were also six watchers who slept in the building. Curiously, on the night in question (23rd), these watchers did not sleep in their usual place. They had gone to another section of the building. Satkunanandan was taken away on this night by hooded men.

In another aspect to this tragedy, on the 23rd, a young man beat his neighbour's cow, which raided his plot of sweet potato. In the ensuing quarrel, the TELO got involved and the young man was taken away accused of an LTTE connection. He was seen with his eyes blind folded near a well known security establishment, by a responsible close relative who did not recognise him immediately. The young man's body was found in the lagoon the next day, in the company of Satkunanandan's.

Our informant when asked how he was certain that the person mentioned belonged to the TELO, said that the PLOTE did not operate in that part of Batticaloa town. He further added that the TELO man was operating with the notorious Captain M, who is widely credited with a number of operations of this kind, and many murders. A senior figure in Batticaloa described Captain M as a man of obscure origins, who was promoted to the rank of an army

captain after the commencement of the war, and now operates a special unit based in Batticaloa prison. Other leading security officers, including the Brigadier, had pretended that they knew nothing of these killings. Is Captain M some kind of a scape goat, or is he a captain given so much power and autonomy that even a Brigadier nominally responsible for security in the town cannot call him to account? If the police had really wanted to investigate, they had plenty of leads. They could for instance have started with questioning the Telecom watchers. But their function is evidently not to uphold the law of the land.

According to leading citizens, there is widespread fear even to admit that a close relative or even a son is missing. This is because of an attempt by the forces to obscure and confuse. People complaining of someone taken are asked how they were certain that the person concerned was dead. Dead bodies had been found floating in sacks. One such sack floating in the lagoon was found to have contained the body of a dead dog. People are then made to wonder if other sacks too had contained dogs, and whether their relative may after all be alive. This leads to a hope that the best chance of seeing the person alive is to keep quiet and not make a fuss. [\[Top\]](#)

2.2.8 Developments concerning Iruthayapuram killings:

We earlier reported the reprisal killing of about 12 persons by the police in Iruthayapuram at the end of March. We add some information that turned up subsequently. Following the killing of a policeman, the police took in 15 civilians that morning. This was reported to the Superintendent of Police, Batticaloa - Mr. Moonesinghe. The SP then proceeded to the Iruthayapuram police station, and returned after ensuring that the 15 or so persons were released.

After the SP went away, the Iruthayapuram police took in another lot of persons. On this being reported, it is said that the SP visited the station twice more, but did not find the people who were hidden away, presumably in bunkers. Next day the bodies appeared.

Officially, the police have maintained that there is no proof of police involvement. But privately, some leading citizens were told that the 70 or so policemen were taken to Amparai and questioned individually without any further light being shed. They are then said to have been transferred to Mannar, where several of them reportedly died in attacks by the LTTE.

Assuming that all this which came from police sources has a bottom of factual content, it points to a situation where some service chiefs at least have serious misgivings, but are afraid or are reluctant to probe too deep. Hiding prisoners during ICRC visits is after all an old ruse. It is likely that the SP took the word of some of the senior officers at Iruthayapuram rather than himself have done a search.

2.2.9 Kuthiraivilunthamadu: 1st week of June:

Kuthiraivilunthamadu is between Kanjirankudah and the Sagamam tank, a mile from the first and two from the latter, lying off the road from Akkaraipattu to Komari, via Konavil and Panamkadu. At 8.00 a.m. on the morning concerned, a land mine was exploded under an STF vehicle and 3 commandos were killed. In reprisals the STF killed six persons, of whom two were working in rice fields, and two others, Suntharamoorthy and Thangarasa from Thambiluvil were travelling in a bullock cart. Several persons were taken from Kannakipuram and were later released. [\[Top\]](#)

2.2.10 Vantharumoolai: 8th June:

There was a landmine attack on an army convoy in which about 3 soldiers were killed. The army unit from Morakkaddanchenai then went on a reprisal raid killing 6 persons in Vantharumoolai. Another 4 were killed and burnt in Palaiadiththottam, Kaluwankerni. Among the latter was Chandran, husband of Saraswathy Malar. Two days earlier one soldier had been killed, and the principal of Mavady Vembu MV was badly assaulted.

Among the six killed at Vantharumoolai was Sritharan, a teacher at St.Michael's Batticaloa, and his brother, the two surviving of three boys in the family. Of the two sisters who are teachers, Sugunamathy is a student at the Batticaloa Training College. The youngest of the boys, an accountancy student from Colombo on holiday, disappeared after being picked up by the army last September from the Eastern University refugee camp. Sritharan's mother died of sorrow on 26th July. On 8th June, she was talking about her youngest son, when she received news of losing the other two.

2.2.11 Siththandykkudy: 4th or 11th June:

This was a Tuesday, one of the two days of the week on which the night mail comes to Batticaloa instead of terminating at Valaichenai. An army picket was out as usual along the railway tracks. Thillainathan, a Plate Layer, was also out examining the tracks. Some soldiers asked for his identity card and threw it into a nearby well. He was then asked to go down and fetch it. As he resurfaced, he was shot in the head, point blank. The incident was witnessed by others nearby. There was no provocation for the killing.

This incident and the previous one which took place just before the Kokkadichcholai massacre, speak of a general climate of indiscipline at a time when normality was being claimed. See also 2.3, which speaks of several people disappearing in Kiran about this time.

2.2.12 Hulannuge: 27th June:

The private bus scheduled to leave Pottuvil for Colombo at 6.30 p.m, left at 7.00. Though there was only seating for 40, there were 60 in the bus. The driver and 4 or 5 persons were Sinhalese. The rest were Muslims. There was also one Dane, Rassmussa Testerto. About 7.30 p.m. at Hulannuge near Lahugala a landmine missed the main body of the bus, but the vehicle stalled. When the passengers got down and started running, they were fired upon with automatics. According to an eye-witness account, the dead were then dragged into the bus, which was set on fire. The dead included the driver, the Dane, 8 ladies and a niece of Dr.Cader, a student of Muslim Girls' College, Colombo. Another lady was the sister of Majeed, SP, Civil Co-ordinator for the Amparai District. About 11 survived with injuries. Ahmed Lebbe, Agriculturl Officer, Akkaraipattu, escaped because he had left the bus and was buying cigarettes when the bus left.

Suspicion for this outrage has tended to fall on LTTE militants from Komary. Tamils in Pottuvil were driven out by the forces last year in the course of which about 200 of them were killed. About 120 of them, mostly young men, literally vanished in smoke after being taken in a round up in late July 1990. The Pottuvil refugees now live mostly in Komary, 10 miles north. A short time earlier, the STF had established a camp at the edge of Rufus Kulam, bordering Kanjikudichcharu, in the jungles of which the LTTE maintains facilities. The attack was also read as an act by the LTTE to signal that they were still around.

2.2.13 Pottakkulam (near Vinayagapuram): Early July:

We have remarked in earlier reports, that some young men who left the LTTE last year, were also in hiding in the jungles west of Thirukkivil, in danger from both the LTTE as well

as the STF. It was only natural for them to scrounge food from those who farm in that area. One such group of fugitives was having a meal at the field hut of K.Sinnathurai, whose son was also in the group, when they were surprised by an STF party, who had apparently come on a tip off. Three were killed when the STF opened fire, among whom were Paranirubasingam and Ruben. Paranirubasingam of Thambiluvil is said to have been close to the former area leader Mathan, and was a tractor driver before joining the LTTE in early 1990. The others escaped into the jungle.

K.Sinnathurai was reportedly taken to the Thirukkivil STF camp after being very badly beaten. His fate is unclear. The incident was reported in the press as one where the STF successfully ambushed an LTTE party. Our information is that the party ambushed did not even have arms. The villagers were clear that they were no longer in the LTTE. Still no mechanism exists for those with past LTTE links or those wrongly suspected of such links, to ensure their safety. Such is the state of enlightenment governing this campaign.

2.2.14 Kalmunai: 22nd July:

Tamil refugees, mainly from Central Camp Division 4, were settled in a piece of land bordered by the Telecommunications premises, the Methodist Mission and Carmel Fatima College to the West. Towards the onset of the rainy season at the end of last year, the Red Cross helped them to put up long huts with line rooms for the families, made of coconut thatch. These had further been covered with polythene sheets for rain proofing. With May came the dry 'Kachchan' wind. But the danger was not realised.

On the morning of 22nd July, about 10.30 a.m the hut bordering the Methodist Mission wall caught fire by accident - either by sparks from a cooking fire or from an electrical short circuit. At this time most of the adults were out on business. Those inside were mostly elders and infants. Under the given conditions the fire spread rapidly. Those in the surrounding areas saw smoke, heard the crackling of bamboo supports, and assumed that a gun fight was going on. People thus stayed indoors. Some of the refugees who were near enough to take alarm rushed to their huts. The belongings of some were saved. Others lost everything including children.

It was left to the STF to offer any concrete help, which according to reports was promptly and unstintingly offered. STF men rushed into the flames and rescued several elders who were trapped. According to some sources 5 infants and a lady died in the fire. The wife of a senior church figure who visited the scene said that she saw 7 bodies of infants laid out. She had also seen on STF man with burn injuries. The refugees have now been moved elsewhere.

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2.3 The People are for beating - The story of Kiran

In order to get a total picture of how people in rural areas are affected, we take one village. Kiran is 11 miles north of Batticaloa on the Trincomalee road. It is not an interior village because it is on the main trunk road to Batticaloa. Kinniyadi, Koralimadu and Karuwakerni are nearby villages off the main road. But it is a rural area with a very small middle class - mostly government servants and teachers. Because of its position, the army is very much around, with camps in Morakkaddanchenai and in Kiran itself. In recent times the village has had the presence of the IPKF, the LTTE and now the Sri Lankan army. The people complain that every force tends to accumulate the bad habits of the previous forces in addition to its own.

When the IPKF went on the offensive in October 1987, nearly everyone was beaten. When the IPKF began moving towards Batticaloa, the people were made to sit on armoured cars and in trucks as human shields. Included in the shield were the local doctor and the AGA.

Following the onset of the current war, the army started moving towards Batticaloa. On 20th June 1990, several bodies with cut injuries were seen on the northern outskirts of Kiran. One man said that he had counted 13, but cannot say how many were killed by the army, because the bodies were spread over a wide area.

Many refugees then moved into Christa Seva Ashram, under the care of Sevak Sam Alfred, and many of them later moved to the Eastern University. In August 1990 a rumour went around that the LTTE had buried mines in the surrounding area. The army was re-established in the area following the LTTE's withdrawal after failing to overrun the army camp at Kiran.

The army then came to the Ashram refugee camp and took away about 60 persons. These persons were marched in front as mine sweepers, and the army came behind. They were marched along several paths and were finally released at Sungankerni. Some in the mine sweeping party complained that an ICRC vehicle passed them on the main road, but did not stop to ask what this strange scene was about. Instead they say that the foreign ICRC person exchanged hand waves with the army and drove away.

This incident may have other explanations, since the ICRC avoids public confrontations. Unlike in Batticaloa town, the ICRC is generally not understood in the villages. Skepticism about the ICRC in Kiran has remained, and is thought of as being closer to the army.

Also during August 1990, Perinpanayagam, a father of 3, went to Siththandy on business with his 12 year old son. Both were taken in by the army at Morakkaddanchenai. The son was later released. But the father is since missing.

On 26th September 1990, Pathmanathan, who worked for the Government Press in Kiran set off to Colombo with a clearance letter from Captain Wickrematilleke of the Kiran camp (now in Mankerni). He was arrested by the army in Valaichenai and is since missing.

During October 1990, 3 young boys, all aged 12, went to the outskirts to collect palmyrah fruit. They are missing after being allegedly taken by the army.

On 23rd November 1990, the LTTE and the army battled each other at Kiran junction. 4 shells fired by the army fell inside the Ashram refugee camp, which then had 500 refugees under Sevak Philip. A child of 12 was killed and several were injured. The army later provided medical aid.

About this time, 3 food lorries were burnt by the LTTE at Kumburumoolai junction.

On 26th November 1990, Sundar (22), with two other residents of Kiran set off eastward to the interior at nightfall, as the LTTE wanted residents to vacate. They were stopped by the army at 7.00 p.m. and are since missing.

Apart from beatings, the situation was relatively calm until April 1991.

On 1st May 1991 John Selvarajah (35) who was carrying his infant son was taken by the

army with two others during a round up. His wife was abused by soldiers in filthy language. When those at home protested, they were assaulted with belts, gun butts and folded knees. The three were taken to the jungle and were beaten and held from 11.00 to 4.00 p.m. One of them, Karuval Krishnapillai died under beating. The other two were released. Selvarajah is partially disabled, and has not worked for 4 months.

On 11th June 1991, the first anniversary of the war, a curfew was declared on the other side of the lagoon, and the army was out. Visuwaratnam, Kanthasamy (24) of Koralimadu and Chandran were taken in by the army and were tortured for several days. They were assaulted, burnt with cigarette butts, creased with knives, boiling water poured over their bodies and were often kept buried up to their necks.

Visuwaratnam is believed to have succumbed to torture. Kanthasamy and Chandran were released through the police after 40 days of detention. While in camp, they had seen four bodies of persons who had died under torture. They have all the marks of their treatment, including burise marks down to their legs. Kanthasamy is for all purposes a cripple. All his limbs have been impaired. The use of his hands is limited. He can only move two fingers in his right hand. At the time the three were taken, there was no incident involving hurt to soldiers.

On 13th June 1991 (the day after the Kokkadichcholai incident), Sivaguru (26) teacher at Kiran MV, with his student Thangarajah Anandan, went towards the sea to purchase fish. While returning, they were taken by the army at the Cadju Farm at Sinna Vembu, bordering the railway tracks. After this they were missing. Six days later, their bodies were exposed after being dug up by wild boar.

10th July - Massacre at Kinniyadi. 13 bodies found and about 9 others missing. This is covered in the next chapter. There was no provocation.

The extent of army indiscipline together with continual nastiness is evident. That indiscipline is tolerated is seen in the day to day experience of the people. Almost every adult in the village has been beaten, and many of them cannot work as a result. Army patrols regularly force people to climb coconut trees to bring down young coconuts for drinking. Those who cannot climb trees are afraid to say so because they fear being beaten. Recently, on being asked by soldiers, Gurunathan, who had never climbed a tree before, agreed to pluck some coconuts. He fell down and lost consciousness. On recovering, he found 100 rupees in his pocket. But the soldiers were missing. According to Shanmugam, some times people accosted by the army are tied to trees and left. He had released persons so tied. It is also said that few fishermen go to sea on Tuesdays and Saturdays when army pickets are out along the tracks for the train to go to Batticaloa. Many fishermen had been deprived of their catches on these days without compensation.

There is also grinding poverty in the village, once well off. This is because even those who can work cannot find adequate work. Like in many villages in the area, a large number of the villagers used work in rice fields across the lagoon to the west, which is more an LTTE domain. Hence those going frequently across the lagoon become suspect by the army. Unemployment is found preferable. People in Kiran are conspicuously thin and aged before their time.

About 50 have been killed in Kiran since the beginning of the war and about 150, mostly school boys, have since joined the LTTE, according to the villagers. The biggest reason for this is given as regular beating by the army. As the number of young in the village noticeably dwindled, the army found additional stimulus for beating. "Why are you at home, why did you not join the LTTE?", they would ask while beating. Sometimes it is, "You give us John

or we will beat you," John being the local Tiger leader. People say that even when there are Tigers in the village during an army round up, they manage to beat everyone except the Tigers.

People of this village have had the world brought to them. They have seen a great variety of human beings and of human nature. There is no communalism in them. There is little bitterness, much open mindedness and no illusions. Despite all that they have been through, they are ready to laugh. Laugh at what experience has taught them to view as their fate.

CHAPTER 3

THE KOKKADICHCHOLAI MASSACRE AND AFTER

THE KOKKADICHCHOLAI MASSACRE & AFTER

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3.1 The Massacre: 12th June 1991

3.1.1 Kokkadichcholai:

In happier times, Kokkadichcholai was renowned for the famous Batticaloa curd. Pilgrims wanting this commodity from the source, would have travelled six miles south of Batticaloa along the Kalmunai road, turned right just past Kattankudy and Araipattai, then through the Muslim village of Ollikulam to the jetty at Manmunai, and by ferry across the lagoon to a point 2 miles East of Kokkadichcholai. Today Ollikulam is in ruins, and the ferry does not function. The crossing is by fibre glass canoes, generally two or three strapped together by cross beams for balance. Passengers are invited to man the oars. On a calm morning, the journey is memorable for the astounding beauty of the surroundings. Half way across, Batticaloa town and its telecommunication tower become visible, five miles distant as the crow flies.

Now and then one does encounter bovine swimmers, a placid face with gentle eyes, just above the water, towed by canoes going in the opposite direction. Upon inquiry, one is struck by that very word that has become a hallmark of Kokkadichchulai. These are creatures bound for the slaughter houses of Batticaloa, taking their first swim, unaware that it was also their last.

According to legend, the name of the village comes from the Kokkatti tree, whose sap was really blood. From the jetty, one then goes westwards through 1 1/4 miles of uninhabited, once marshy land, now having on either side of the road, a network of square tanks with neglected bunds. This was the prawn factory, abandoned since the STF massacre of January 1987. The area then realised a death toll of about 120 which included a number of employees of the prawn factory. At the end of this uninhabited area, one reaches the Mudalaikudah Methodist Church on the left, followed by a junction. The road on the left (south) goes to Mahiladitivu, and that on the right (north) contains the main part of Mudalaikudah (Crocodile bay - it being said that crocodiles hereabouts are not man eaters). If one proceeds straight, one reaches the main hamlet of Kokkadichchulai 3/4 mile on. It is this hamlet that contains the army camp. Although Kokkadichchulai is a collective name for the three hamlets, the name refers to the main hamlet in local parlance.

When food is brought for the army, a patrol would commandeer a local tractor and set off to the jetty, posting sentries along the road, with perhaps half a dozen men at the Methodist Church. Since this is a regular operation, it is here that soldiers are most vulnerable, as experience has shown.

As for the people of this area, the dominant group is the Mukkuvar caste - mainly farmers. Under them are the service castes-dhobys, barbers etc. The caste system in Batticaloa is more easygoing compared with Jaffna, and inter-caste marriages are common enough not to be frowned upon. Unlike the Jaffna based Tamil nationalism which is based on the old kingdom of Jaffna, the root of Tamil nationalism in the East springs from the notion of a self contained autonomous system of villages, presided over by the Ur-Podiyar, elected from among the podiyars. It claims to be egalitarian in spirit and the role of the Ur Podiyar is considered more ceremonial than coercive. Podiyars in practice were the large landowners. Like the use of Singh by the Sikhs, it has become common for people of the area to prefix their name with Podiyar. The Muslim villages of the area have the same structure, with Tamil service castes playing the same role. [\[Top\]](#)

3.1.2 12th June

The army was out on a mission to collect provisions from the jetty. When the tractor was returning with provisions, a landmine was set off at a point on the road 1/4 mile from the Methodist Church and 1/2 mile from the main hamlet of Kokkadichchulai, whither the army was bound. Two soldiers in the tractor were killed. The time was 12.45 p.m. Immediately south of this point and along the road was an extension of Mahiladitivu. Those responsible for the explosion presumably escaped through this area. (Going further south, one goes through Paddaiandaveli, Pandariaveli, and Kodukkamunai to Ambalanthurai). Following the explosion, more soldiers started moving from Kokkadichchulai to the scene of the explosion. At this camp, there is also a group of 10 militants who had recently broken away from the PLOTE. Most of them are from that area and have wives, children or parents living there. Some of this group too went with the soldiers towards the scene. When they were disarmed by the soldiers, they realised that a plan was hatched to punish the civilians. They went back

to Kokkadichcholai (the main hamlet) and warned the people to get clear. Those who could not run were taken, and some went by themselves to the local school.

Mahiladivitu

Sivapragasam Tissaveerasingam, a leading person of Mahiladivitu, was attending to his lunch-time chores when the explosion was heard. A few minutes later he heard small arms fire. He ran to the end of Mahiladivitu and waited there. He then saw people running, chased by soldiers firing with automatics. He ran a further 3/4 mile south and saw fire rising above the village.

A short distance from Tissaveerasingam's house is a mill belonging to G.Kurukulasingam. Many of the people in Mahiladivitu who could not, or preferred not to run away, gathered at this mill and in the house north, across the adjoining lane. Over a hundred people were in this house. Among those in Kurukulasingam's house with him were, his wife Puvaneswary and their children Rupavathani (6), Nishantan (5), Suganthan (3) and Vivekananthan (8 months). Velupillai Arunasalam is a carpenter who had gone that morning to Manalkadu, on the other side of the lagoon, for his day's work. When the shooting began, his wife Alikipodi Revathy and daughters Bavani (10) and Tharisana (1 1/2) were among those who took refuge in the mill compound, which also contained the owner's house. A group of soldiers came running along the adjoining lane from the direction of Kokkadichcholai (west), entered the mill premises and opened fire. Those inside the mill and the compound were all killed, and those in the house injured. Four bullet holes which pierced the wall of the house are prominently visible. Soldiers then went across the lane and shot Nallathamby Subramaniam (80), who was on the verandah. This was seen by his daughter Paranchothy. The rest who had taken refuge in that house were chased away.

Velapodi Alaiyapodi (53), a farmer, was at Coloniadi Mill. He saw 7 soldiers coming from the Methodist Church, firing their automatics. They encountered Sivapragasam Thirumathi, who was chased away. He then saw 5 soldiers entering Kurukulasingam's mill, followed by firing noises. After the soldiers left, he went there to see what had happened, and noticed 7 corpses in the compound and 5 injured persons in the house asking for water. He fetched water in a bucket and gave them. Just then another group of 6 soldiers arrived, and though Alaiyapodi quickly went into the house, he had been spotted. The soldiers asked him how many dead bodies there were and how many injured. He gave them the figures. He was asked to bring the injured out of the house, and to follow them so as to fetch a cart to take the injured for treatment. Alaiyapodi went with them for a short distance, gave them the slip and came back to a house two doors away. By this time several people had gathered at the mill to see what had happened.

Alaiyapodi saw the same six soldiers coming back. They thrust about 35 onlookers into the premises and shot the whole lot, as well as the 5 previously injured. The soldiers then attempted to set fire to the corpses.

Vyramathu Santhanapillai's daughter -in- law and Alahipodi Kunamani's grand daughter, Ponnamma, was beaten while protecting her baby. Alahipodi Kunamani's son Kumarasingam Shanthilingam was 4 months married. He and his wife were in Sempar's compound. The young couple were among those dragged to the mill and shot. Vijayakumari (19) was shot in the leg by soldiers while running away. Her mother Theivanai was at the mill with her 1 year old child. Both Theivanai and the child were among those killed.

Among those killed in the mill, was a mother suckling her infant. Evidently, the mother gave the infant her breast in order to quieten it in the tense surroundings, when the end came.

Further from the junction and south of the mill was a concrete house in which a large crowd of mainly women and children had gathered. Among those there were Ponniah Visalatchi (55), a Colombo Chetty lady, her step-daughter Kanagasabai Praba, teacher at Saraswathy MV and Praba's aunt Usumundapodi Soundamma (60). There were about 50 in the room, together with Visalatchi's niece and a 1 1/2 year old child. By the time the soldiers arrived here, their murderous passions appeared to have cooled. But they were getting other ideas.

The women were subject to beating and abuse, and were asked to go to the Kanniamman Temple, north and towards the junction. At the same time a part of the house was set on fire.

One soldier grabbed Praba, tore her clothes, held her tight and began biting her. Soundamma forced herself in between and covered her niece. The soldier went into a rage and started kicking Soundamma. One kick with a booted foot struck her in the mouth, causing her to lose 8 teeth. Praba managed to get away.

About this time, the elder daughter of a prominent government official was dragged by soldiers into the house. As the crowd moved the younger daughter of the same official, a schoolgirl at St. Vincent's, Batticaloa, was dragged into a shop on the opposite side of the road. A soldier attempted to drag A.Kala, after prancing around with fierce gestures and making bestial noises. Kala's sickly mother was not there. Once again Soundamma, the sextagenarian matron, strong though minus 8 teeth, intervened, grabbing Kala and interposing herself. The beast became enraged and the face further contorted with the noises even fiercer. Soundamma was again assaulted, this time with a rifle butt, receiving some hard shots on her back. Kala was shot at once near the GS's house. She fell to the ground. A round of bullets then went over her. She then got away.

As the women reached the temple, the abuse became even nastier. Variations of an expression many remembered, was that they would only entertain the male organs of the LTTE and thus deserved to be taught a lesson. On the way, the women met some unarmed Tamil militants who were normally with the army, and had pleaded with them in Tamil to stop this. They replied sympathetically that anything they said would not be heard. The women felt that the soldiers were drugged.

At the temple, Visalatchi who was also fluent in English and Sinhalese, spoke to a man who appeared to be an officer, and pleaded with him. saying that it is a sin to do such things to ordinary people who were like his own. The man assured her that they would be safe in the temple and started walking away. The women then spotted 3 soldiers with knives coming towards the temple. She rushed after the 'officer' and told him that his words were of little use because the moment he left, others could do whatever they pleased. The man came back, spoke to the soldiers and went away. Things were then calmer.

Throughout this period there had been firing and burning of huts. Tissaveerasingam, his brother Sivalingam and 4 others cautiously approached Mahiladitivu at 3.00 p.m. They retreated when the army fired at them. While the women were at Kannaianman temple and soldiers were about making threatening gestures with knives and weapons, some unarmed soldiers also came there and pleaded with the other soldiers to leave the women alone.

After about 3.00 p.m. looting began in earnest. Soldiers got busy removing valuables, including bicycles from houses and also trying to burn the bodies. Soldiers were moving about very freely on bicycles till after 5.00 p.m. before going back. People identified the leader of the operation as a bearded man wearing a red handkerchief. The menfolk who had run away from the village started trickling back towards nightfall.

Mudalaikudah (North of the Methodist Church)

At 12.45 p.m. the time of the explosion, Motchamala Kanapathipillai, a teacher at the nursery school at Kokkadichcholai maintained by the Red Barna, was cycling home eastwards, her home being next to the Methodist Church. Her father, Kanapathipillai, was the circuit steward in charge of the church. Her brother, an employee of the prawn factory, had been murdered during the prawn factory massacre of January 1987, Motchamala lived with her father, her widowed sister-in-law and her brother's children.

On hearing the explosion in front of her, Motchamala turned back towards Kokkadichcholai. She was shot through the knees by soldiers coming out of Kokkadichcholai - by men whom she recognised as those who came to her house to ask for water and sometimes fruits.

Later 17 youths were taken, mainly from Mudalaikudah, to the crater left by explosion, where they were shot, killed and burnt.

On hearing the commotion, the teachers at the Mudalaikudah school kept the children inside and stayed there. Later in the evening the army came and dismissed the students after beating the teachers. [\[Top\]](#)

3.1.3 After June 12th

Arunasalm the carpenter was one of those who had waited on the other side of the lagoon, anxious for tidings about his family. The boatmen who had brought their boats to Manmunai, also brought news that much was amiss on the other shore. Little did he know that Revathy and the two children had fled mortality leaving behind half burnt corpses. On the 13th, people began trickling back to Kokkadichcholai, often to burst into tears of agony on reaching home.

The army stayed within the camp on the 13th. Among the early visitors on this day were the Tigers, who after their absence from the time of the explosion the previous day, had popped in to take a photographic record of the handiwork.

As the sun rose the corpses began to stink, and the stench was carried by the dry kachchan wind. About 2.00 p.m. the villagers started burying the corpses.

A helicopter circled the area on the 15th. The army came out about mid-day, asked the people what happened and returned. They were apparently testing the ground for the next day's official visit, which had been announced in Colombo.

Even as late as the 16th, limbs were found in the crater with bits of flesh sticking out. On this day an official party including the prime minister, Bradman Weerakoon and MP's

Casinadar, Joseph and Karunakaran were brought to the Kokkadichcholai army camp by helicopter. The army maintained that those killed were Tigers and that it was unsafe to go to the villages. Joseph asked Karunakaran, "You are a member of a militant group that is now with the army. Tell me, are those who died Tigers?" Karunakaran replied, "No".

The prime minister's party was airlifted back to Batticaloa and taken to the rest house. 100 yards away some of those affected were waiting at the Kachcheri, Batticaloa's administrative centre, to talk to the prime minister. This was, according to reports, disallowed on the grounds that it was unsafe to go there. The Prime Minister, who earlier that month had said that normality prevailed in Batticaloa, was now unable to meet people at the seat of administration. Joseph protested to Colombo over what he saw as groundless obstruction, saying that he was prepared to go to the villages alone. He later met the people.

By the 20th June changes had been made at the Kokkadichcholai camp and a new officer was in charge. A group of visitors came to Kokkadichcholai by vehicle after obtaining permission at the Manalpitty camp. On their return the captain at the camp stopped them for cool drinks. He told them that this kind of situation can hardly be avoided when you send village boys to fight after a few weeks' training. He also said that he was in-charge of three camps, the others being Vellaveli and Kokkadichcholai. "Who is going to answer if something happens again in Kokkadichcholai when I am not there?", he asked. On 30th June a booby trap exploded at the ferry point while soldiers were fetching provisions. Two soldiers were injured and taken away by helicopter. Immediately the shops closed and people began shutting themselves up. An officer went around asking people to reopen their shops and carry on normally. He added, "Today we die. Tomorrow the Tigers die. You need not worry." [\[Top\]](#)

3.1.4 In Batticaloa

According to a senior citizen in Batticaloa, when on 12th June the news of the death of two soldiers in Kokkadichcholai was radioed to the army command in Batticaloa, arrangements were immediately made to airlift the magistrate and the JMO to the scene. When the two were at the Batticaloa airport, they were reportedly told that a second message had arrived making it necessary to cancel the expedition. According to this message a second mine had gone off and it was now unsafe. If this is true, it raises the question about the quality of information given to the Batticaloa command, in addition to serious questions about discipline. Or was it that on discovering that things had gone hopelessly wrong, the army command was trying to cover up.

Where covering up is concerned, there does not seem to have been much change. According to the number count made by leading local citizens following a house to house check, 67 bodies were identified and buried and a further 56 were missing. Most of the missing persons are presumed dead and cannot be identified, because like the seventeen burnt in the mine crater, they had been mostly burnt to ashes. The rice mill had the largest number of bodies - 43.

The Superintendent of Police Batticaloa in discussions with leading citizens was sticking to a figure of 32 dead - this being the number exhumed, for whom death certificates had then been issued. The police also maintain that there was no rape, on the basis of certification made by doctors in Batticaloa, who examined several of the women. But medical officers have privately told leading citizens that there had been rape and that the doctors are afraid to

certify that.

Like in almost all cases during the war, the police are not taking steps to investigate anything. It is left to the people who are willing to stick their necks out, to question people and collect evidence. The role of the police seems to be to minimize the impact of evidence that has turned up in spite of them. The proof of this is the atmosphere of terror in which the JMO's, magistrates and the medical Officers function. The police who know better pretend that this terror does not exist. Whether the commission of inquiry can go beyond this insitutional obfuscation is left to be seen.

According to some sources with official contacts, several of the men involved in the massacre had been transferred to frontline areas in the North. [\[Top\]](#)

3.1.5 Rape

Women of the area appeared to have a sense of community, and were very open on the subject of rape and molestation. when they come out with names, it is with a sense of personal identification with the tragedy, without any hint of gossip. The rape victims were themselves apprehensive. According to the women, at-least 6 of them were raped. Two of them were sisters. The elder girl was found by her father trying to cover her breasts with her plaitted hair. The second girl was found in a shop building in a state of shock after some searching. All they said was "You would have heard what happened to us". According to the mother, the elder girl was taking it up better, whereas the younger is refusing to go back to her boarding school or even continue her studies. It was clear that something terrible had happened to these girls. [\[Top\]](#)

3.1.6 What was behind this incident?

We have shown elsewhere in this report that there was a general state of lawlessness and indiscipline among the forces. From August to October 1990 when there were several incidents of civilians disappearing in large groups of 30 to more than 150, there appears to have been connivance at high level. The forces have thus been trained into a mental frame that they have the power of life and death over ordinary civilians. At ordinary times this leads to petty crime and beating, for which the civilians have no recourse to justice. If they complain, they know that they will be at the receiving end. In such a situation the slightest crisis could trigger off a total breakdown. It also appears that the control exercised by the officers is also minimal. After training the men to kill and loot, the officers too would have much to fear if they were to try and impose unaccustomed restraint. Under these circumstances, the high command is bound to receive little honest information, if they wanted it.

If some form of discipline had existed in the camp, at-least by 1.30 p.m. whoever was in charge should have known that something was seriously amiss. Thus even if only a section of the soldiers had planned the reprisals, not long afterwards the whole camp would have been concerned in the matter. Why was this allowed to go on for four hours? It also appears that not long after 1.00 p.m. the high command in Batticaloa was also aware that something was going on. The long duration suggests either complicity or a serious breakdown in the chain of command. As we said earlier, this was to be expected.

The bestiality displayed during rape and molestation points to something seriously

disturbing. It shows up the army as something totally alien, where the people are concerned- the very thing that accounts for the success of massacre politics. [\[Top\]](#)

3.1.7 How the people fare:

Soundaramma was taken to Batticaloa hospital by Rasathurai from Thalangkuda and was warded for eleven days. She has now been rejoined in Mahiladythivu by her two grandsons and nephew who had fled. Mothchamala was in Batticaloa hospital for 40 days and now with relatives in Kallady. Soundaramma had been urinating blood for some-time. Alavapody Nagarajah is a small made, mild, innocent man, slow of speech. He was mercilessly assaulted by soldiers who also broke up everything in the house. Nagarajah was admitted to the hospital with injuries and a swollen stomach, and was kept in the hospital for 9 days. He still has a urinary problem.

Except for the limited relief brought by the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches, no relief agency had come into the area until late July. Most of these agencies distributed relief on the other side of the lagoon at Thalankuda, to those who have left the area. Normal life there is unusually difficult. At one time bus service used to operate between the jetty point and Kokkadichcholai. Now except for those who had crossed bringing along bicycles, the others have to walk anything from 1 1/2 to 2 miles, often in the scorching sun. There used to be a government dispensary. The army said that the Tigers were taking medicines and wanted the dispensary to function inside the army camp. As the result there are no medical facilities now. The most primitive methods have to be used to get a patient across to hospital in Batticaloa or Kattankuddy.

Although organisations and individuals are persuading the people to go before the commission inquiring into the massacre, the people remain deeply suspicious. Their experience since the event has not given them confidence. A common remark to be heard is, "After putting us through all the trouble of giving evidence, they are likely to put the blame on us." However the people are said to have gained confidence after the first hearings in Batticaloa.

3.1.8 The politics behind massacres:

Behind the massacres of Tamils that have been going on for the last few years, two aspects stand out, resulting from the political bankruptcy of both sides. On the side of the state there is an undisciplined army, increasingly frustrated and prone to use vindictive terror to its own detriment. On the other is a force that received legitimacy because the people wanted their life and dignity protected, but because of its political bankruptcy, must rely on government massacres for propaganda and recruitment.

We have pointed out earlier [\[Report No.6\]](#), that this particular political tendency could necessarily brook no rivalry. When several militant groups functioned until five years ago, competition among them, made them sensitive to the need to safeguard civilians. Thus when the Chavakacheri Police Station was attacked at the end of 1984, the approaches to the area were mined in order to delay the army's arrival. This gave the civilians time to get away.

In the case of Kokkadichcholai, while there was 1 1/4 miles of uninhabited stretch, the mine was placed near a populated area. Beginning a short time later, a small number of soldiers ran amok for 4 hours without hindrance. The militant party came in the morning for its photographs. It was also essential that no one in the village should have any idea that a

mine was planted, if this kind of attack was to succeed. Thus the rebels come and go from day to day, asking for one thing or the other. People take their presence for granted. One night, presumably, a mine quietly is planted.

In all the cases that we have encountered over the years, as strongly as the people concerned are angry with the conduct of the army, they are far from taking kindly to the manner of being let down by their liberators. The latter have in many instances, taken no trouble to hide their motivations. On occasions they have said that a target of so many thousand civilians must die for the militant struggle to receive international recognition. Sometimes the camera men have come and expressed disappointment that only a small number had got killed in reprisals. The people are in general terrified to talk about it. To start with they are usually legalistic - 'How can we say the LTTE planted the mine? There are so many armed groups coming and going with similar uniforms, etc.' But when trust is established, a different record comes out - 'Yes, it was them. If they had just fired two shots, the army would not have come. They would have called the helicopter gunships. But the people would have got away. But defending the people had not been on the agenda when they had planted the mine. When the present politics destroys humanity, fighting for human rights virtually involves fighting against this politics. Even in village after village where the Sri Lankan forces have swelled the ranks of the LTTE, the question is asked, "Did we need all this death and destruction? Was it necessary for our sons to die?" [\[Top\]](#)

3.2 Incidents after the Kokkadichcholai Massacre:

In this section we look into the matter of how the appointment of the inquiry commission has affected the conduct of the army, and whether the army is developing any mechanisms to ensure that such tragedies will not happen again. This will also suggest to us whether the commission has already lost its momentum or not. We let the incidents speak for themselves. [\[Top\]](#)

3.2.1 Palugamum: 28th June

About 7.00 a.m. when the people of Palugamam were getting ready either to go to work or to go to school, the army ordered everyone to come to the compound adjoining the Palugamum M.V.(High School). When the people were assembled, 3 youths were picked up by the army. These were two students, Murugesapillai Navaneethan and Logitharajah Vallipuram, both A.L. students at the school, together with another youth, not in school. Murugesapillai, a retired teacher, is a famous snake-bite physician. The young men were marched into the school, and were subject to severe beating on the stage. Those who went there after the incident found several fragments of sticks and blood stains on the stage. Later in the morning a lorry arrived at the school gate, bringing new furniture for the school. The soldiers had the furniture unloaded outside and took the lorry inside the school. The three detainees were loaded into the lorry and the lorry was brought back with its back end covered. The driver and the cleaner were then ordered to get into the back of the lorry, which was then driven to the army camp at Poraithivu. The driver and the cleaner were then made to get out at the entrance. The lorry was then taken inside and brought back empty. The three youths have since been missing. The little information the people have, makes them pessimistic. Two days later, on Monday, the students of the school washed the blood stains from the platform. The youth detained, it is said by the villagers, had nothing to do with the LTTE. Navaneethan in fact had been shot in the knee by the IPKF, and was lame [\[Top\]](#)

3.2.2 Massacre at Kinniyadi: 10th July

Kinniyadi is a village on the shore of the lagoon, west of Kiran. It is generally known that when the LTTE, who have the freedom of movement on the other (interior) side of the lagoon come into the Kiran area, they move in the vicinity of Kinniyadi. As the result, the army is also harsh when it comes into this village. Consequently when the villagers learn that the army is coming, the young men go to the other side of the lagoon rather than risk punitive beating or worse. Thus when the army used to come and find the young men missing, it used to become more angry. Crossing the lagoon is something familiar to the villagers, because they have their fields on the other side. They also know where the water is shallow, permitting them to cross on foot or swim.

On this day when the army came just after 3.00 p.m., on receiving intelligence the villagers as usual tried to get away from the village, without realising the proximity of the soldiers. Several of them were apprehended by the soldiers. These men were taken to the lagoon shore and then shot dead.

13 bodies of those killed were recovered and funeral rites were conducted. Upto about 8 more are said to be missing. The thirteen whose bodies were discovered are: Murugan, Karunakaran, Shanmugam Chandran, Sinnathamby Pakianathan, Sivendran, Saravanamuthu Sounderalingam, Ravindra Alagiah, Sonarami Krishnan, Sinnathamby Krishnapillai, Kandiah Chinnaan, Karuval Kurukulam, Mylvaganam Thangarajah, Vairamuthu Chinnathamby and Ponnuchamy Sethuraman.

The incident was not reported in any of the national dailies except the 'Veerakesari', a Tamil daily published in Colombo. It was reported in the government media that several Tigers were killed. This distortion has impeded relief workers going into that area, because of a fear of the forces. The villagers have virtually been isolated, with even church organisations fearing to go there. The villagers are clear that neither were any of the dead LTTE, nor were any armed. According to a senior citizen in the area, only the Ceylon Red Cross went there the following day. They also went off after asking the families to come to Batticaloa and register. This did not seem very helpful, as the families are at a loss about formalities and feel afraid. [\[Top\]](#)

3.2.3 Chithaandi: 27th July

On this day the train was to come to Batticaloa and army pickets were out to provide security for the train. A land mine attack by the LTTE about 10 a.m. resulted in 7 soldiers and a member of the TELO being killed. Perhaps because the inquiry commission into the Kokkadichcholai incident was due to convene in a day or two, army reprisals took a novel form. Travellers on the Batticaloa - Trincomalee Road the following morning were confronted with a new gimmick at the Kommathurai camp. People in buses as usual got down and queued up for checking. The soldier who was to check the bags slapped many of the passengers as they came. There was little interest in looking for bombs in bags. Those who were slapped were generally slapped several times with both hands and included women. Those frequently singled out were old villagers wearing 'Verti', who could be seen progressively lowering their heads as the slaps followed. Another soldier stood with an improvised whip made of electrical wire, doing his own thing. This reportedly went on for 3 days. The officers managed to stay out of sight. The number so treated would run into

hundreds. Yet another soldier was standing with a pole, to hammer people bulging out of Batticaloa's over crowded, 'push-start' buses. [\[Top\]](#)

3.3. A History of Obfuscation:

In this section we take up the question of how responsive the forces have been, to representations made by citizens' bodies and individuals. The Batticaloa Peace Committee has made regular representations with regard to missing persons. On the 29th and 30th August 1990, the peace committee sent letters to the military authorities in Batticaloa, one with a list of over 400 missing persons in the Batticaloa area. The secretaries to the peace committee were Chellian Perinpanayagam and Arunagirinathan. Sometime in August 1990, A.Martin took over from Arunagirinathan.

On 21st September a reply was received from Brigadier A.N.U.Seneviratne of Head Quarters, 3 Brigade Group, Batticaloa. He acknowledged that 3 persons in that list of 400 had been taken and handed over to the D.I.G. for legal action. The reply added "Please note that no other person in the referred list was taken into custody by the security forces under this head quarters".

The other letter had referred to the discussion with the Brigadier of 25th August 90, and enclosed two schedules of missing persons totalling 67, mostly school boys. 'A' schedule contained missing persons from the Batticaloa district, including youth of the Chenkallady and Pullumalai Brigades. Schedule 'B' referred to the Amparai district. The reply acknowledged only one as having been taken.

On the 20th of September 90, the defence ministry was sent a list of names of 158 persons taken from the Eastern University refugee camp on 5th September.

A reply dated 17th October 1990 was sent from the office of the Minister of State for Defence, signed by Air Chief Marshal A.W.Fernando, Secretary. 31 persons were acknowledged as having been taken, and their names given. Not one of them is known to have surfaced although they are said to have been released.

On 9th October 1990 the peace committee wrote to the authorities about the incident at Sathurukondan of 9th September, with a list of 184 missing persons. This was followed by a letter about the army going to Savukkady, after which 31 persons were missing. On 11th October, about the incident at Chithandy (21 August), after which 44 persons were missing. No satisfactory replies have so far been received.

In recent times we have had the killings by the Iruthayapuram police in late March, the disappearances of April/May and the incidents described in the current report. None of these has been investigated

CHAPTER 4

THE MUSLIM SAGA

THE MUSLIM SAGA

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4.1 Aliens in their land of birth

He is middle aged, among the foremost Tamil writers, gentle in mind, softspoken, and highly cultured. Though hailing from Kalmunai, he acquired sturdy roots in Jaffna through long association with its university as well as library circles there. His enthusiasm in working for a more rational political environment and in campaigning against the ideology of Sinhalese chauvinism, was not second to that of any Tamil. He was in so many ways the ideal university don, very thorough, painstaking, articulate and willing to devote much time to the concerns of students. The beneficiaries of his labour were mainly Tamils. Today he is classed as an untouchable, unable to return to Jaffna, because in a new turn of its ideology, Tamil chauvinism turned against a large and important section of the Tamil speaking peoples - the Muslims.

Recent developments have left him a broken man. In October 1989, when the TNA's rout was beginning, three members of his family in Kalmunai were among those 12 Muslims killed by the TNA in Kalmunai - his brother, sister and brother-in-law. It barely took half a dozen months for the conquerors - the LTTE - to turn against the Muslims collectively. In the East today, Muslims are being hunted by this group wherever they are exposed. Even this criminal indignity has not prevented well heeled Tamil expatriate promoters of this ideology from eloquently addressing international fora about the oppression of the 'Tamil speaking people'. What is equally bad, the group styled the 'moderate Tamils' who influence the western media and agencies, do not readily acknowledge the serious disabilities and threat to life faced by the Muslims of the North-East.

Today our university don is a 'Scholar Gypsy' with no permanent abode. An old friend meeting him was surprised by his answers to the questions: "Where are you coming from?" - "I don't know"; "Where are you staying?" - "I don't know". The Southern universities, for their own reasons, have not accommodated him so far.

Our next interlocutor is a young Muslim intellectual from Eravur. Unlike our scholar gypsy whose state of mind is characterised by resignation and fatalism, in the case of this young man the fiery anger he feels is evident. Yet he has commanded the discipline not to blame the fate of his people collectively on the Tamils. He said, "With all that has befallen me, that I could yet sit and talk about it in this fashion, owes to a peculiar ability which God has given me".

He related the tragedy of his family: "My father is a man of moderate means who had his

fields in the neighbouring Tamil village. My uncle next door had a shop. The LTTE camp was near my house. My brother had joined the LTTE several years ago. For him it was at that time mainly a thrill. About 100 youths from Eravur had joined the LTTE, many of them when the IPKF was around. My brother had risen to become the youth organiser for the Batticaloa region (SOLT leader). On the surface at least, Eravur was a bastion of the LTTE. But I knew that important political issues relating to the Muslims lay unresolved and were being increasingly bungled. We were not generally sympathetic to the SLMC. I went to the local LTTE office a number of times and spoke to the regional commander, who used to come there. I discovered that he was a fathead where politics was concerned. Nothing would pierce his head. I realised that disaster would come sooner or later. The LTTE in the meantime got everything they wanted from Eravur, whether it was money or food. Two months before the war, in April 1990, the LTTE came to my cousin's house during the Ramazan festival. We gave them food packets for 40 persons. It is also remarkable that after the Kattankudy massacre on 3rd August, Eravur remained calm until they massacred in our village.

"I will give you incontrovertible proof that it was the LTTE that was responsible for the massacre in my village on 12th August 1990. There were firing noises and those at home thought that the LTTE and the army were fighting. Everyone gathered at my cousin's house. LTTE men then came to my cousin's and called him by name. He went out thinking they were tired and wanted water. They were the very persons who had come home and collected food packets from us during Ramazan. Those who survived can swear to this, though their names are not known with certainty. The others were then dragged out, including the children. Everyone was asked to face the wall. Realising what was coming my cousin, who was a Tamil poet, went down on his knees and pleaded. When the Tigers opened fire he died on his knees. My father and mother and two elder sisters were among those killed. The second of my elder sisters died shielding my eldest sister's daughter and son. The daughter was killed while the son escaped. All were killed except the boy mentioned, my uncle and my 19 year old younger sister. They fell, injured by ricocheting bullets. Among the 13 members of my family killed were 7 children - one of them just 4 months and another a year.

"My younger sister later stayed with me in the South and received medical treatment. These beasts took away my father and mother, the very things most precious to me in this world. I can only call them mindless and heartless beasts. They completely extirpated my links with Eravur. I am orphaned in this world. If I am to go to Eravur and ask for food, it will have to be from some distant relative. They killed 30 people in the area where my extended family lived. It was here that the killing was most intense.

"My brother in the LTTE was in Kokkadichcholai when he received news of the massacre, and the deaths at home. He was told that the army had done it. It was 3 days before he discovered the truth. He then escaped and surrendered to the army. He is in Colombo now. Most of the Muslim cadre deserted. Those who surrendered to the army were released. Many just came back to the village without surrendering. Several of them were later picked up by the army on tip-offs and were killed.

"Why did the LTTE do this to my family? I am convinced that they hoped that by killing a family with LTTE connections, the blame would fall on the army. In this they miscalculated and failed. The LTTE's intention is to enslave the Muslims. Eravur has only recently started producing intellectuals. Why do you think the LTTE killed our cluster principal, Dawood? They want to get rid of educated Muslims. There is no prospect of peace between the

Muslims and the LTTE. If any Muslim deals with the LTTE, he cannot be a Muslim. Nowhere have Muslims been so insulted. Even the Israeli Mossad has not murdered Muslims worshipping in a Mosque. These beasts have done even that. There is only one solution. The Muslims need a region which they can call their own."

The foundation for a Muslim politics articulating the slogan that Tamils cannot be trusted has thus been firmly laid. The parallel with the recent history of Tamils in connection with the Sinhalese state is evident, as is the ultimate destructiveness of such politics. The murder in the Mosque among others and the prevalence of such feelings described above, give the lie to the contention of LTTE backers (for example the expatriate journal, 'The Tamil Nation') and several peace makers, that the warring parties being deadlocked are now back to square one (ie. June 1990), and hence it is simply a matter of going back to the arrangement prevailing until 10th June 1990. The contention ignores people, their tragedies and consequently, the serious loss of legitimacy the warring parties have to contend with. How will they contend with an airing of the past which any political settlement should allow for?

We moreover note some parallels to what Tamils commonly say about Muslims. Each community in the East appears to feel that the other has a conspiracy to eliminate its intellectuals. [\[Top\]](#)

4.2 People as targets:

We give here some incidents which demonstrate the continuing attitude of the LTTE towards Muslims in the East. The massacre of bus passengers in Lahugala has been given in 2.2

4.2.1 Kottiar Bay, Off Trincomalee: 3rd April 1991: (Island 4th April)

The LTTE attacked fishing craft of the coast of Mutur, after forcing them to beach at Foul-Point. 11 bodies of fishermen were recovered by the navy. 50 others were injured.

Other reports said that nearly all the victims were Muslims or Sinhalese. [\[Top\]](#)

4.2.2 Polonnaruwa police area: 6th July: (Island 8th and 9th July)

Sixteen nearly all Muslims, including two women and children were slain by the LTTE in the village of Puddur about 11.00 p.m. The victims had been dragged out of their houses and shot and hacked to death. The dead included a one year old infant. Many of the victims were refugees from Eravur temporarily settled in the predominantly Muslim hamlet close to the Mahaweli river.

The victims were identified as A.A.Premarathna, A.Ilyas, Wellathamby, Aneza Umma, S.Aliyar, Hanifa Azwer, S.Lebbe, S.Wellathamby, S.Abubakkar, A.Mohamed, K.Jamaldeen, A.Mohamed, A.M.Mohideen, A Hameed, M.S.Omerlebbe Wijesekera died later in hospital. Among the injured was Ajmeer (6).

Earlier in the day the same group is said to have hacked to death eight and shot one of a group of ten Sinhalese migrant fishermen plying their trade in the Karapola tank off Welikanda. Among the dead were H.Dayaratne, T.Somadasa, K.V.Ariyapala, K.W.Gamini, W.B.S.Fernando, Jinadasa Jayakkody and Dhammika.

Tension was running high in the area and many families indicated that they would leave. Security forces put down these attacks as a bid to keep troops tied down here and thus reduce deployment in the North.

While the LTTE which acknowledged no responsibility can afford such methods, the Tamils who are exposed throughout the country obtain whatever protection such as exists against reprisals as in July 1983, not from the LTTE, but from the internationalisation of human rights concern. [\[Top\]](#)

4.3 How do Muslims perceive their predicament?

About June 1991 some LTTE notices appeared in the East which were seen by a large number of people. These read 'Pardon for Kattankudy, Death to Eravur and Inquiry for Oddimavady'. This same slogan having been loosely spoken of in Jaffna some weeks earlier by LTTE cadre, points to its conception at a high level. Others saw it in part as a demand for protection money. It would take an abnormally thick skin to pardon a people after murdering 120 of their close kin in a Mosque.

This was not the first time that the LTTE used Sri Lankan army methods to bring Muslims to heel. There was a massacre about New Year's day 1988, when the LTTE killed over 60 Muslims (Report by Jehan Haniff, Sunday Island, 17th January 1988). This went unnoticed in the heat of the war between the IPKF and the LTTE. The massacre followed the killing of Nazeer, an LTTE man who exercised considerable power in Kattankudy, by ex-home guards on 29.12.87. Several bodies were dumped near the Muslim school. Among those killed were Muslims of Kattankudy origin returning home after fleeing the fighting in Jaffna. They had plied trades such as vending popsicles.

Like the Tamils of Colombo and the hill-country who voted for the UNP despite repeated bouts of racial violence, the older Muslims, at least, remained open to making up with the LTTE, although, naturally, their capacity to give guarantees for the young was declining. Even during the LTTE's triumphant return to the East in December 1989 after recruiting heavily among Muslims, there were still a number of small acts of resistance by Muslim youth, while the Tamils who had hundreds of their young killed by the LTTE, received them passively.

Despite last year's massacres, as late as March this year, many Muslim leaders from Eravur to Akkariapattu were still open to a deal with the LTTE, provided the LTTE publicly vowed to leave Muslims in peace. By July, hopes of that had evaporated. Apart from the massacre in Puddur, the LTTE had since signalled its attitude through several acts. Muslims no longer travel on the road between Kattankudy and Kalmunai after a Muslim driver from Kalmunai transporting the remains of a Tamil for internment in Batticaloa, was abducted.

During the latter part of April, a van taking passengers from Kattankudy to catch the Colombo bound train at Valaichenai was attacked between Kiran and Kumburumoolai where

there was a gap in the army picket. One Ismail was killed and an injured person was admitted to Polonnaruwa hospital.

About 24th June, two persons from the Muslim colony in Batticaloa went to Kalliankadu, near the bus depot, to give Haj Festival eats to Tamil friends. The two have not been seen after they were abducted.

There are a number of fishermen living in Kattankudy wards 1 and 2. About 16th July, two Muslims fishing in the lagoon were shot dead by firing from the other side, when they dared to go too far from the shore for a better catch.

Muslim traders from Kattankudy trading in Batticaloa, have to close their shops about 4.30 p.m. when sales pick up, and rush home before the police and army pickets are off.

Thus the economic life of Muslims is greatly constricted, more particularly in the Batticaloa District. The number of pilgrims to Mecca from Kattankudy has declined to 30 in the last year from 200 in the year preceding. Moreover the Muslims are increasingly boxed into small areas where there can be no satisfactory economic life.

An incident that gives the lie to the widespread belief of Muslim prosperity is the fate of the Eravur refugees in Puddur, described in the previous section. They had been hunted in Eravur. When poverty drove them elsewhere, they were hunted there as well.

Few Tamils acknowledge the difficulties faced by Muslims. The common contention is that they are trading, they are moving about and are doing well. It is also used as proof that the Tamils have been generous - a dangerous similarity to the widespread belief of the Sinhalese that they had been generous to the Tamils.

But the trauma of a community which daily feels hunted and whose birthright is being denied is daily visible and too dangerous to ignore. A typical scene was Batticaloa station. Muslims feel safest travelling by train when the train leaves from Batticaloa. Muslims, mainly from Kattankudy came to Batticaloa at dawn and joined the queue near the station. There were a large number of women carrying infants. The people are normally allowed in by 8.00 a.m., but on this day there was a delay. The sun climbed. Many of the Tamils were able to go to houses of friends or into neighbouring premises for rest and shelter. But few of the Muslims dared to do this. They clung to such little shade as was afforded by fences on Station Road. About 12.30 p.m. it was announced that the train was cancelled.

Muslims in general despair at the prospect that is widely taken for granted, that in the destructive context of Sri Lankan politics, the only conceivable end to this conflict is for the government and the Tigers to strike a deal along the lines of that which broke down last year. A group of leading Muslims put it thus: "With all its drawbacks we can survive in the present situation, if needs be, on kanji (rice porridge). But if the government and the LTTE start talking, we are finished! Our experience of the LTTE's intentions is that they would either finish us off or chase us away." Referring to other Tamil groups they said, "Their minds are not pure where the Muslims are concerned.."

At the same time many Muslims are conscious of the fact that they have to live with the Tamils. A senior Muslim in the Amparai District who is politically active put it eloquently: "We have to live with the Tamils. Otherwise we must go elsewhere. Our whole economic life

is integrated with that of the Tamils. If we try to live separately, we will be left clinging to the Pallivasal (Mosque) and the thoppi (prayer cap)". It is therefore imperative that while the opportunity exists, Tamils must make every effort to seek reconciliation with the Muslims.

Those Tamils who feel bitter about the violence that has come out of the Muslim community should also examine the context and look at the violent response of the Tamils themselves, to the bigotted institutional violence of the Sri Lankan state. This response led to routine massacres of Sinhalese civilians with its degeneration. Lumpen politics breeds a lumpen response, often of a more potent and self-destructive kind. Even so, the extent of militarisation of the Muslim community has been remarkably low. There has also reportedly been talk among the armed forces of the supposedly inadequate support they have received from Muslims.

Every instance of violence by Muslims in the last ten years has been preceded by robberies, kidnappings, other acts of violence by Tamil groups and very importantly, by attempts on the part of local Muslim leaders to negotiate from a non-aggressive position. When the Kattankudy Muslims were massacred in Kurukkalmadam on 12th July 1990, Muslim leaders sought the intervention of the Roman Catholic Church. It was the Mosque massacre 3 weeks later that triggered a breakdown of communication and the recruitment of homeguards. When violence did erupt, the Sri Lankan state did what it could to widen the rift. The provocations against Muslims in the last year by the LTTE have been far more serious. Tamils who have a vivid memory of equally deplorable violence by Muslim elements, are generally careless about the sequence of events. [\[Top\]](#)

4.4 Muslims in the South

The scene was a faculty meeting in one of the two older and leading universities in the South, on 13th February this year. The faculty concerned was presented with a request by the UGC to take in 76 students displaced from the University of Jaffna. It was evident, but not mentioned, that they were nearly all Muslims. The attitude to the request was generally negative. One don said, "If we had space, we could have taken in more of 'our' students". Another said that there was no provision to enable students from one university to follow the rest of their course in another. A faculty member (a Sinhalese) who was disturbed by the direction of the discussion, pointed out that a precedent existed. The Ruhuna University lacking facilities in its early days, its medical students had been allowed to follow the more advanced parts of their course in the University of Colombo and be awarded Ruhuna degrees. This fell on deaf ears. The discussion proceeded as if he had not spoken. The request was then declined in polite language which did not reflect the crudity of the discussion. An outside member said that he was ashamed by the communalism displayed, but had not wished to intervene on account of it being his last meeting.

Thus among those who would shed the last drop of their soldiers' blood to keep the country united, there was not the slightest inclination to share in the trauma of their minority brethren or to make sacrifices of the kind that would give substance to the desired unity. Such is the communalism routinely found in high places, that would make many ordinary people feel shy.

The problem of displaced Muslim students remains unsettled. Ad hoc arrangements have been made for them to follow lectures in Southern universities often without being allowed library facilities and without a sense of belonging or being cared for.

This is just one sign of the widespread prejudice that exists in the South towards minorities, with strong hint of contempt for the Muslims in particular. This had spilled over into anti-Muslim violence in Galle and Puttalam in the 70's. A recent incident took place on 8th May when about 30 policemen in civies stormed Jumma Mosque in Yonakapura, Dickwella, assaulting Muslims at prayer, leaving six seriously injured. The incident took place after a Muslim had refused to give his motor cycle to a policeman. [The Island of 8th June, quoting M.A.C.Mohamed, Chief Trustee of the Mosque]. [\[Top\]](#)

4.5 Are Muslims different?

Common contentions about Muslims among Sinhalese as well as Tamils are that they are shrewd, conniving, thick as thieves who will not give a peep into their intentions, grabbing and so many other similar attributes. After the recent accidental fire in a Tamil refugee camp in Kalmunai, resulting in some deaths, rumour quickly took wing among Tamil children that some Muslims started it to chase away Tamils. The expulsion of Muslims from the North by the LTTE was greeted outside with casual approbation in many quarters. It was maintained that if you give them a little room, they would climb on your heads. What we have recorded earlier, shows that Muslims have suffered greatly and unjustly and suggests that their behaviour is explicable in purely human terms. Given what the Tamils have been through as a minority they should have been more sensitive to the harm resulting from stereotyping. We shall examine some specific instances.

A large number of Muslims, about 90,000, expelled from the North mainly from Mannar, came into the largely Muslim Kalpitiya area north of Puttalam. Most of them had lost everything. A Tamil lady, a rehabilitation worker, went to some Muslim businessmen in Colombo and asked them to raise Rs.5 lakhs (the price of the cheapest motor car) in order start a self employment project among the displaced. After some prevarication it became clear that the money was not coming. The Mannar Muslims then told her, "We told you not to waste time with Colombo Muslims. We knew from experience that they would not give." The Muslim parliamentarians were no more helpful. At length she went with some refugees and met a Muslim MP belonging to the SLFP. He generally avoided the refugees and spoke to the lady. He promised to ask some Muslims in London to support the project. In the end the money came from a church organisation.

The Muslims in Puttalam happen to be a very neglected and traditional lot, while those from Mannar were often educated and enterprising. Soon a clash of interests developed. Some of the Mannar Muslims began trading and buying up land. Having been neglected in the past, the Puttalam Muslims resented rehabilitation efforts directed exclusively towards the refugees. Once a small provocation led to fisticuffs. Two Muslim O.Level boys from Mannar who were refugees, went to watch a Tamil film outside the refugee area. Some conservative local Muslim women came to the theatre wearing veils. The two boys asked jokingly what they could see through the veils. As an angry crowd began to chastise the boys, others from the refugee area rushed to join in a festival of fists. All these experiences were an eye opener to the lady who had come with preconceived notions about Muslims. She said, "They are no different from the other communities. Like Sinhalese and Tamils in Colombo, Muslims in Colombo would be much more anxious about bombs exploding in Colombo than with the woes of their brethren in the provinces."

We take some of the notions about Muslims in the Amparai District and compare it with

the situation in the Batticaloa District. It is commonly said by Tamils in the Amparai District that Muslims commonly provoked disturbances or used such to chase away Tamils from their homes by violence to loot them, desecrate their temples and then remove all the timber, doors and windows, and chop up their fruit trees so that they cannot return. Their properties and paddy fields it is said are then bought for a song. [We have dealt with the matter at some depth in [Report No.7](#)]

Along the road from Araipattai to Manmunai in the Batticaloa District, one sees the remains of an orgy of the kind so vividly described. There are rows and rows of houses with rafters, titles, doors and windows together with their frames missing and walls crumbling. What remains of red polished floors and shells of shops speak of its past inhabitants as a reasonably well to do community. There is also a ruined Mosque. This was the Muslim village of Ollikulam, an extension of Kattankudy. What is more disturbing about this is that it was not done by a group of hooligans with the tacit backing of bribed policemen, but at the instigation and lead of the 'sole legitimate representatives of the Tamil speaking peoples' - the Tigers - early in the current war.

Other stories one hears in Kattankudy have a familiar ring. Muslims had to flee the isolated village of Nochchi Munai and sell their land cheap to Tamils, after the LTTE's New Year massacre of 1988. Karbala village was developed as a National Housing Scheme project in 1981 and 40 houses were built on Muslim land to which title deeds were held by Fareed Meerabai. This village, east of the main road, was also conceived as a means of linking New Kattankudy with the isolated Muslim seaside village of Palamunai to the south. Karabala village had to be abandoned after the disturbances of April 1985. Furthermore, Muslims cannot go out and cultivate, and the paddy fields belonging to Kattankudy and Eravur residents on the other western side of the lagoon have virtually passed under LTTE supervision. It is not surprising if these Muslims see Tamils in their neighbourhood as envious and grabbing. The LTTE, as well as other groups in the past have on occasions encouraged them to loot Muslims under their protection. The Muslims could also contend that they have not been wanting in generosity. The Kattankudy hospital which is situated in Araipattai was built on land donated by a Muslim.

The complaints one hears from Muslims in the Batticaloa District, are the mirror image of complaints one hears from Tamils in the Amparai District. The two sets of grievances have different complexities involving interactions between a chauvinist state and a flawed Tamil nationalism. It was last year that the actions of the state against Tamils in the Amparai District reached proportions of mass murder paralleled with qualitatively similar actions by the LTTE against Muslims and Sinhalese. However the temptation to wrongly single out the Muslims for lumpen behaviour must be avoided.

There is also a particular injustice that Muslims have suffered in the Batticaloa District. Both sections of the population have found the need for additional land because of natural increase. Thus the population of Batticaloa town has expanded into new suburbs and old villages. The common name Puthukudiyiruppu, symbolises new settlements. But the expansion of Muslim residential areas has been comparatively limited and often strongly opposed. The fates of Karbala village and Ollikulam are signs of this opposition. Kattankudy is said to be one of the most densely populated areas in the world. One passes through Eravur by bus almost before blinking a couple of times, and about 37000 Muslims live there. Many Tamils in speaking betray a feeling that they have been generous enough and that the Muslims should not expand anymore. It also contains the implication that this land does not also belong to the Muslims. The feeling of being boxed in and hunted with their economic

life crippled, is unpleasant to live with, and in human terms, is one pregnant with violence. We should be thankful that things have not yet gone out of control. _

CHAPTER 5

THE NORTH

THE NORTH

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5.1 JAFFNA: THE UNSEEN BATTLE & THE PROSPECT OF TOTAL WAR

5.1.1. The mood of total war:

As in all wars, the sensational siege at Elephant Pass, the suicide assaults, the sea landing, the relief column hopping from one Dutch fort to the next in imitation of the thinking of Dutch strategists three centuries ago when air power was not dreamed of, the victory of one side or of both; this was the fare dished out by the media and eagerly swallowed by the public. Recriminations of one section of the forces against the other, a hasty news conference summoned by the Air Vice Marshal to counter allegations, unaccustomed questions raised about the tardiness of the political establishment in putting forward a political solution, all suggested that the Colombo establishment was shaken. We will not know for some time what questions were raised within the ranks of the LTTE, which it is reported lost 65 women of its cadre on the first day alone. In an Eastern town where business was generally down, a Muslim news agent said that there was a tremendous increase in newspaper sales. Easterners were generally eager for developments in the North in a manner not even slenderly reciprocated by the Northerners. It would thus be true to say that every community felt that something momentous and perhaps decisive was happening at Elephant Pass.

We draw attention here to a battle that has been fought behind the scenes for months, which has not been written about and whose effects are much more far reaching. Now that the dust

has settled for the present on Elephant Pass, those who wish this country and the Tamils well must look more closely at these pernicious developments. It is true that the LTTE banked much on Elephant Pass. Jaffna had been literally plastered with notices saying that Elephant Pass was the 'last army camp on the soil of Tamil Eelam', that it was some kind of a final battle, and calling for the whole-hearted support of the people. All indications coming from Jaffna suggest that the LTTE's real motive was to secure the surrender of the camp with hundreds of its men and equipment, and use it as propaganda as well as a bargaining chip. The planning for this had gone on for more than 3 months. There was a concerted attempt to place Jaffna on the footing of total mobilisation. Main roads were blocked to expedite the movement of reinforcements and casualties. Schools were closed to receive the injured. People were called upon to volunteer material and blood. When it became clear that the operation was in a stalemate, people were woken up with loud speaker cries in the night, "Awake, O Tamil people. Do you sleep while your young warriors are dying?" Then grew the fear that having secured Elephant Pass, the army would march into Jaffna.

According to observers, there was a widespread mood among the people that it would be worthwhile to go forward and resist the army with bare hands. These were the same people who a year ago were skeptical and angry with the LTTE for having started the war. It is therefore necessary to look behind the news and understand the new dangers and their consequences. [\[Top\]](#)

5.1.2 The South: The mood of July 1983:

The desire of a large number of Tamils to flee Jaffna together with the fact that a large number of those who joined the exodus are living around Colombo, all the way between Negombo and Panadura, was a major victory for the government, which to some extent diminished the stigma of July 1983. The LTTE found itself imposing an embarrassing pass system. The JOC bomb explosion and the prospect of an army defeat at Elephant Pass, brought back old fears among Tamils. A large number of Tamils were taken in for questioning by the police in Colombo from their homes and from check points, and were abused in harshly communal terms. A young political refugee from the LTTE retorted angrily after his release, "Only Prabhakaran is right for these people!" A remark from a trishaw driver was typical of the mood among the sections that went on the rampage in July 1983: "When we watch the news, we get angry and want to teach a lesson. But the 'Boss' has not ordered us to do anything."

If the Elephant Pass had fallen as it nearly did, and strained nerves in the South had snapped, the disaster of a repetition of July 1983 could easily have compounded a defeat in the North. Then the unity of the country for all practical purposes would have been severed, and to talk of soldiers giving their lives to preserve unity would have been an insult. This is why we have argued that there must be a free open discussion of the blunders of the past, including those of this government, to exorcise once and for all missing the legacy of Sinhalese chauvinism. If not and the cause of a united Sri Lanka is lost. [\[Top\]](#)

5.1.3 The use of bombing and shelling:

We welcomed the halt called to aerial bombing in March as an enlightened step. But there has since been shelling from time to time and aerial bombing has some times been resorted to. On 14th May Daniel Sutharshan Samuel (15), a grandson of Leslie Samuel, who taught many members of the Colombo elite at Royal and St. Thomas', was killed at his home when the

army shelled Vaddukoddai from Pally. Also killed was the two year old son of a teacher at Jaffna College. The army had shelled Vaddukoddai and Chavakachcheri, apparently in order to disrupt the LTTE's plans for holding public meetings. During the Elephant Pass campaign shells fired from Elephant Pass killed up to 6 persons in Chavakachcheri, including Ranjit Kumar, Assistant Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Jaffna, who was to go to Britain shortly on study leave. His body was found severed at his home by his students, with his liver some distance away. His sisters had also recently lost their father. In all fewer than 15 civilians were reported killed by bombing and shelling in the Jaffna and Killinochchi areas, during the Elephant Pass campaign.

We have dwelt repeatedly on the political consequences, apart from the human tragedy, of such actions, and have condemned both the use of, and the philosophy behind them. If in the event of a lack of political initiative, the situation continues to deteriorate, bringing the spectre of total war ever nearer, the army would find good military reasons for the use of widespread bombing and shelling on the grounds of disrupting the LTTE's attempts to mobilise the civilian population. Then total war would become a reality.

It must also be mentioned that the Airforce showed commendable restraint during the Elephant Pass operation where civilians were concerned. On two occasions there was random shelling in the Karaveddy and Chavakachcheri areas. But when people of the area concerned made complaints to the government through the Government Agent and the ICRC in Jaffna, the ejection of missiles was largely stopped. This suggests that the political establishment retained some initiative and wanted at least to minimise the use of missiles. It is thus important to take steps to guard against a situation where nerves snap and there is a plunge into total war, where political initiative is cast aside regardless of the resulting discredit.

The government has consistently condemned all acts of the LTTE resulting in civilian deaths as terrorist acts. The attack on the JOC, a military target, which also resulted in many civilians dying, was indeed termed such. In this instance again the government was guilty of double standards. For it had condoned and justified aerial and artillery attacks on supposedly LTTE targets which resulted overwhelmingly in civilian deaths. [\[Top\]](#)

5.1.4 Disappearances and Massacres:

The fact that these continue to occur because of the activities of the security forces has enabled the LTTE to mobilise the population towards total war while justifying such repression as would have seemed an Orwellian fantasy ten years ago. About March, when aerial bombing was stopped, there was a tendency among the people to feel that the Sri Lankan forces had learnt from the past. This was also spurred by reports of disappearances in the East and of bodies in sacks floating in the Batticaloa lagoon. These reports were highlighted in the LTTE controlled media. With the news of the Kokkadichoalmai massacre in June, the tide decisively turned. This was an important part of the background to the mood of the people during the Elephant Pass siege. [\[Top\]](#)

5.1.5 The war against historical memory:

Every oppressive political tendency needs to erase historical memory and substitute its own mytho-history. Everything that is a big lie must shrink and shrivel before even a tiny beam of the light of truth. The LTTE understood this well. The extent of repression to which it could allow itself to go depended much on the visible threat posed to the Tamil people as a whole.

During the period of good relations with the government, in early 1990, its oppressive methods were running into trouble. Even after the war had begun, its new wave of repression coincided with news of large scale massacres and disappearances in the East, and began about early September 1990.

Regardless of their current passivity and resignation, it set about arresting those with remote past militant connections - particularly those small but politically articulate groups - the others having fled or having already faced death or imprisonment. Those in Jaffna from these groups, which had long been defunct, had quietly become inactive without ever challenging the LTTE. The LTTE's moves against these persons appeared to be mere paranoia at that time. But the situation has become clearer now. These persons were living monuments to historical memory, an intolerable link with the past, with past ideals of the militant movement and a time when there were many groups fighting the oppression of the Sri Lankan state.

The war against historical memory has now been organised on a systematic and thorough footing. The most recent purge of May-June was aimed at the Theepori (Sparks) group. This group had split from the PLOTE in early 1985 protesting against its internal repression, and the most remarkable thing they did was to document their experiences inside the PLOTE in a book with the title 'A new kind of world'. They remained totally passive and their book was and continues to be widely circulated by the LTTE. Three of its members recently detained were students of the University of Jaffna. [See 5.2 for report].

Within the University of Jaffna itself the 1st and 2nd years are isolated from 3rd and 4th years and are handled differently. They are addressed, admonished and warned in separate meetings. The 3rd and 4th years are a link with the history of the university when it was a different place, when discussion was open and the university took positions against oppression, irrespective of whether it came from the LTTE or the IPKF.

In schools again, the teachers are watched by students taken out, trained and brought back. The LTTE frequently addressed meetings at schools. In addition to the public display of weapons and uniforms, young teenagers are fed with a history which is totally sanitised. There is thus very clear evidence of an attempt to mould a generation without links with the past. As we have seen, several academics and members of the elite have been co-opted in this exercise. Young teenagers are thus pushed into dying for leaders and members of the elite, who as far as they and perhaps their families are concerned, have no intention of dying. [\[Top\]](#)

5.1.6 Breaking the colts:

With all the allures of falsehood and deceit, children are children. That such large numbers are mobilised into a fighting force seems remarkable to many. Many of them remain in the movement with grave doubts and die with them. We shall take one aspect in breaking them, presented on the basis of testimony given by teenagers who succeeded in leaving the movement.

After a couple of days inside, the initial allure had gone, life inside was oppressive and many of them wanted to leave. One of the children told the man in charge that he wanted to go home. Immediately, everyone was called together and he who wanted to go home was given a sound public thrashing. The others who also wanted to go then kept quiet. Their parents who succeeded in tracing them came to the camp and asked for their children. Each

child was faced with his parents and asked if he wished to go home. The answer was consistently 'no'.

In due course a few were given drugs that made them feel violent. They were given the freedom to let loose by torturing prisoners.... and so it went.

Another revealing instance is that of a young girl from Karaveddy who joined the LTTE. Her father had been a toddy tapper who had died when he fell from a palmyrah tree. Her mother was desperate. During the Jaffna Fort operation last year, the mother received a letter smuggled out of a camp by a labourer. The letter from her daughter said that she was in the Nelliady girls' camp and desperately wanted to go home. She added that four girls from the camp had been taken to Jaffna Fort and had not come back, making her very much afraid.

The mother went to the camp with a friend to plead her case. The leader of the camp repeatedly denied the girl's presence. In desperation, the mother produced her daughter's letter. The leader read the letter, called out the girl, and in her mother's presence slapped her and kicked her with her boot. She then sent the mother away telling her that her daughter will never be released.

Those who normally succeed in getting their children out are members of the elite. It is a reflection of Tamil politics today that a force which cynically treats those at the bottom of the social ladder in this manner is projected as a revolutionary force. Some western academics even appear to credit it as standing for caste liberation. [\[Top\]](#)

5.1.7 Mobilising the civilian population:

One aspect of mobilisation of civilians is propaganda and a genuine fear of the Sri Lankan army. Those whose children get killed in the LTTE's cause are at first angry. Subsequently their child is praised as a martyr and the parents are made to feel that they had done an invaluable service in sacrificing a child.

In many areas economic life is at a stand-still because of a situation created jointly by the LTTE and the government for different reasons. In some areas people have had little choice, but to sell their labour to the LTTE in return for daily wages. In the Vanni region much damage to economic life has resulted from the 'guerrilla operations' of the Sri Lankan army - Advance, Loot, and Return to Base. Here, a special propaganda appeal is being made by the LTTE to the people by promoting their legendary hero, Pandara Vanniyan, as the forerunner and prototype of Prabakaran.

In some areas, government rations to displaced persons have been used as a means of securing forced labour. Here the Grama Sevaka has to complete two sets of forms, one for the government and the other for the LTTE. The LTTE has to certify a day's labour by a member of the family before the week's ration's could be released.

The two sovereigns of gold tax per family in Jaffna is now being vigorously pursued. In some cases people had been imprisoned until the money was found. In one school near Thinnevely, about May, ten girls were picked up after school, several of them daughters of out-of-work farmers. They were released after the sovereigns were paid - often after borrowing from several friends and relatives. [\[Top\]](#)

5.1.8 In conclusion:

The LTTE, it could be said, has tried nearly every means in the handbook of repression short of physical conscription. Its uneasy edifice cannot hold together or derive whatever legitimacy, without the fear of, and oppression coming from the politics of the Sri Lankan state. The people of course resent both and would like to protest. But every little space has been smothered by intertwined events. Every turn of the LTTE's screw of repression received its licence from, and is traceable to repressive actions and massacres by the state. The invisible spiral of events has thus been moving towards total war. As we have shown in this and the previous volumes, total war and not peace is the logical culmination of the LTTE'S politics and its only hope of survival. Yogi had said on May Day of 1987, that civilians dying is a small matter. A small fraction of its population then, he said, was enough to people the new world of Tamil Eelam.

It is left to those who mean well to understand this politics as not just abominable, but also fragile, thriving merely on the weakness, wickedness and stupidity of others. Total war is an unmitigable tragedy that must be averted. [\[Top\]](#)

5.2 Crackdown in the University of Jaffna:

Dominic (Nobert) was a leading member of the 'Theepori' (Sparks) group described in the last section. Following the repression that began in September last year, Dominic fled Jaffna in October. He returned to Jaffna in May in order to make arrangements for the safety of some members who were associated with them and were stuck in Jaffna. The news that he was staying in a house in Kokkuvil was leaked to the LTTE by an informer in the neighbourhood. He was soon picked up by the LTTE. This was quickly followed by the arrests of another 3 members of this group from the university.

The arrests of these students took place about two days after the arrest of Nobert. On 22nd May Sellathurai Srinivasan (2nd year Geography Special) of Potpathy Road, Kokkuvil, and Nagalingam Govindarajan (3rd year Commerce), of Varani, were arrested.

Srinivasan was from a family of 7 boys and 2 girls. Two brothers had been in the PLOTE and later among the Theepori dissidents in 1985. Nobert is said to have hidden in Srinivasan's sisters house at the time of his arrest.

Another student Thirukethees (1st year Arts) was arrested at the university a few days later, by LTTE cadre accompanied by MMK students, the MMK being a one time cultural organisation and now effectively the policing arm of the LTTE within the university. Thirukethees had wanted to see the Vice Chancellor. He was told, in response, "There is no need. If he knows the LTTE took you, he will understand". This was later represented by the LTTE as Thirukethes running into the university to hide.

A few days later Editor Ravi, an LTTE functionary addressed the junior students in isolation. The students had been demanding to see their detained colleagues. Editor gave the charges against those detained. Srinivasan, besides his associations, is accused of planning to help in running a dissident paper for the Theepori. The charge against Govindarajan was more ironic. He is said to have in 1985 hidden a Theepori dissident hunted by the PLOTE!

Thiruketees had the vague charge of supplying information. Editor then went into a harangue calling those detained not just traitors to the LTTE, but also to the student body. Having worked himself upto a climax, Editor asked the students what punishment should be given to the detainees. A silence followed. A lone voice then suggested meekly "Pardon them", turning what should have been a gory climax into an anti-climax.

Editor went into a rage. "That word is not in our dictionary", he said. He then warned them not to be funny because they are university students, adding that they have a large number of detainees and do not care whether someone is from the university or not. The students were also told that the LTTE was not concerned with 3rd and 4th years as they were going out, but that the others had better look sharp. An MMK student duly rose and gave Editor the vote of thanks, expressing the students' gratitude for his profound discourse. We have already observed that this is part of the effort to break with tradition, obliterate history and mould a new generation within narrow mental confines.

About a month later, the LTTE radio announced that a student union meeting would take place at Kailasapathy Auditorium the following morning, 24th June.

The students were surprised to find a senior academic and former senior student counsellor going up the stage to address them. In addressing the students, he told them, "There are still weeds left in the university. They will not be tolerated. These weeds must be plucked up and cast away..." The students were shell-shocked, and afraid. The former senior student counsellor went on to call the detainees traitors, despite earlier having said that inquiries had not been concluded. He also listed Muslims among the traitors.

Following the meeting, the students found that all exits from the university had been shut. The students were herded out through the main entrance, were handed prepared slogans, and were importuned to participate in a demonstration protesting the arrest of a student Jayaseelan in Batticaloa by the army and the massacres in the East. To bar escape, the demonstration was escorted on its flanks by the MMK. After the demonstration had commenced there was suddenly a change of slogan. The cry, "Release all students detained", was heard coming from the middle section. The `police' rushed to the centre of the commotion and an argument ensued, mainly with 1st years.

The senior academic addressing a student meeting not called by the union, and in such intimidating terms, is something totally unprecedented in the history of the University of Jaffna. Such persons would at other times remark that should the army come into Jaffna, they would all become `born again Sri Lankans'. Nor do they act under compulsion. There are humble school heads who have refused to receive the LTTE's leading personage Anton Balasingham during his routine `Pied Piper' missions to schools. The LTTE knows the limits to which it can push individuals. Sycophancy has long been a respectable academic tradition in this country. By comparison the decency and courage of a number of ordinary, vulnerable, students in an atmosphere of terror, is remarkable.

We had observed that the Theepori group had existed passively, at best as a literary circle. While telling the public that they were traitors, the LTTE circulated copies of their `A new kind of world', found where Dominic was staying. More ironically, the same book describing the repressive atmosphere within the PLOTE, is now being serialised in an LTTE journal published in Canada. Those authors now in LTTE hands, may be undergoing much of what they had described in their own book, as a prophetic warning about the direction of the

militancy in general.

We observe that the backdrop to the singular event in the university on 24th June was the situation in the East, culminating in the Kokkadichcholai massacre. At present the students are mostly cynical, are waiting to get out, and will only raise issues in a cursory manner that is not sustained. With the socially conscientious students suppressed and without the ability to organise around issues, it is the frivolous element that gains publicity, and this in turn is used by the Tigers to isolate the university. The situation contrasts sharply with times when there was a great deal of free discussion. In May 1977, the university Science Students Union even sent a team to investigate the plight of hill-country Tamil workers from Delta North Estate, Pusselewa, who had been subjected to a grievous communally motivated attack, and a balanced, mature report was published and distributed. The student body then was conscious of playing a role in nation-building, embracing the wider Tamil speaking community. Today all that has been dashed to pieces. The handful of students at present who are seen to have character and have personally refused to compromise with untruth are closely watched by the MMK. The students detained had previously received several visits from the MMK.

During the recent Elephant Pass campaign, the LTTE's propaganda chief, Yogi, observed angrily in a public speech, that young persons in their early teens were dying on the battle field, while those in their twenties were donating blood. He said that it should have been the other way round. Why this reversal of roles over the last five years before when it was those of a mature age who died fighting, is a question that Yogi dare not ask. [\[Top\]](#)

5.3 Martyred at Silavathurai

Senthooran (Castro) of Kali Kovilady, Jaffna, was among the brightest students at Jaffna Central College, having scored 8 distinctions at his O.L's. Both his parents were in Germany. Shortly after the outbreak of war in June 1990, he went to Colombo with the intention of joining his parents. He was refused his visa as the German embassy found an apparent hitch in his papers. His father sent a message asking him to get back to Jaffna and follow his A.L's. He went back to staying with his aunt in Jaffna and was unhappy, thus losing interest in studies. This is when he decided to join the LTTE.

Having joined, he told friends whom he met, "I would like to leave. But a gun is ever before me." In March this year he went as group leader in one of the many units sent to attack the army camp at Silavathurai in the Mannar sector. He was asked to advance against the camp. According to accounts coming from survivors, he protested that it would be suicidal to advance by daylight towards a camp sited in open land. He was reprimanded and ordered to proceed. He was an early victim of the army's shelling.

Senthooran's death did not at first receive official publicity. His friends were the first to print and circulate condolence notices privately. It was then that the LTTE appeared to take notice.

His picture then went up on posters and in speeches he was commemorated a worthy martyr for a cause close to his heart, and an example to others. So rests another in the arms of eternity - a small atom of a big lie. [\[Top\]](#)

5.4 Jaffna Fort : The Propaganda and the Message:

Thileepan gave the Dutch Fort in Jaffna momentous significance just before commencing his fast to death in 1987. He called it a symbol of oppression of the Tamil Nation. Thus early in the war, the LTTE banked much on capturing the Fort. The Sri Lankan army withdrew from the Fort in September last year. The LTTE then commenced the demolition of this archaeological treasure turned symbol of oppression. About the first to go after the LTTE takeover was the large church, one of the finest pieces of Dutch architecture in this country, handed over by the government to the Jaffna Christian Union in the 60s. The walls of the fort are now in the process of demolition.

The 'Muththamil Vila' organised by the LTTE during the middle of the year to commemorate Tamil culture was one of those occasions when streams of visitors were allowed into what remains of the Fort.

One of those things that survives intact is the Fort prison, not lacking in inmates. Additional housing for prisoners took the form of several tin huts with slits about a foot above the ground, and circular holes with tubes above the slits, for prisoners to pass urine. Persons inside were trying to attract the attention of the visitors, who had accidentally strayed from the visitors' area. An LTTE man came rushing and shooed them away. He then banged the tin hut to stop the prisoners from calling out. Each hut was estimated to contain up to 20 persons.

An LTTE boy casually explained later that the prisoners were LTTE cadre who wanted to leave the organisation and had given notice. Their punishment was to spend a year on one meal a day demolishing the Fort stone by stone. They are allowed visitors once a month. After a year, they could leave. A prisoner told a visitor, "This thing is so torturous that it would have been easier to join the Black Tiger suicide unit". If this is the condition of prisoners who are LTTE members, the conditions under which other prisoners live are left to conjecture.

It looks as though the treasured parts of the Fort would go. But the prison quarters may remain. Is that the symbolism of liberation? [\[Top\]](#)

5.5 The Vanni

The two reports given here are from the Vanni where there are several check points and frequent forays by the army. Little news comes out on what happens to civilians. [\[Top\]](#)

5.5.1 Disappeared in Vavuniya: 1st February 1991

Nallathamby Sivanathan (30) father of two, and Paramasamy Uthayasooryam (28) were standing in the queue at the Vavuniya army check point. Both were traders from Kayts transporting goods from Colombo to Jaffna. They had much money in bank drafts and in cash. They were directed to the PLOTE Office by the army to get a permit. Subsequently several witnesses saw them being taken by the army. Since then they are missing. Their relatives made inquiries at all the army camps in the area and were told that since they are not with the army they must be with the PLOTE. The ICRC was also informed.

Representations were made to Tharmalingam Sitharthan in Colombo, leader of the DPLF, the political wing of the PLOTE. On one occasion while a relative was speaking to Sitharthan by telephone a friend of the relative's was in the PLOTE office. With Sitharthan was a key

military leader of the PLOTE, who appeared to be very angry with traders. While Sitharthan was answering questions on the telephone very politely, the military leader was telling him angrily, "Tell them they have to pay five lakhs of rupees to see a person, and 25 lakhs for their release. These lorry fellows must be taught a lesson. When we ask them to bring jeans and shirts from Colombo, they ignore us. But they give the LTTE what they ask.

Nothing else so far been heard of the prisoners. Though they were taken by the army, people generally blamed the PLOTE. It shows that these Tamil groups are working with (for?) the army under conditions where they cannot do anything for the people, and in turn increasingly become angry and alienated. [\[Top\]](#)

5.5.2 Uyilankulam (April 1991)

On receiving news that the army was advancing S.Peter went with his tractor and trailer to fetch his uncle S.Pushparajah, together with some of his valuables. Looting by the army was known to be routine. While returning the army fired from a distance killing Peter. The trailer then overturned. Soldiers then came nearby and shot Pushparajah at point blank range.

THE HUMAN COST -GLIMPSES

In the vicinity of Batticaloa the list of disappeared persons reached about 2500 in July. This list does not include those confirmed dead. The number of dead in the Eastern Province is conservatively put at 7000 excluding Trincomalee.

A Hindu social service organisation, said in July that there were over 400 widows from the war among those now staying in the Akkaraipattu Tamil AGA's divisions in the Amparai district.

The Muslim area of Kattankudy has about 200 widows from the violence, since 1987. The Mosque massacre last year left 90 women widowed.

The number of persons killed fighting for the LTTE at Elephant pass during July is put by the LTTE at 500 and at varying higher figures by other local sources. A large number of the casualties are young women and children sent in waves of suicidal charges. The children among the injured are the most traumatised, such as the child in Jaffna hospital with his legs blown off, complaining of an ache in a finger. Several of the children admitted being forced into charges.

The propaganda manipulation of the Elephant Pass campaign gave rise to a collective euphoria which even took hold of balanced persons in Jaffna to their surprise. Even children down to the age of 10 were carried off by the surge to join the LTTE in large numbers. With the failure to remove the camp at Elephant Pass, deflation came very fast and there was much private criticism of the LTTE. But for the children who joined, it was too late!

