

By K T Rajasingham

The July 1983 holocaust opened the floodgates for Tamil youths looking to join various Tamil militant organizations. Until 1983, the Tamil militants had not received any proper training. The LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) managed to have a couple of training centers in the jungles of the Northern province. But these training centers provided very rudimentary training, such as rifle shooting, instruction about the use of revolvers and shot guns, and the manufacture and handling of explosives. Basic training in the crudest forms were offered to the Tamil youths. However, the enthusiasm shown by the leaders of the militant organizations to train the Tamil youths, as well as by the Tamil youths to be trained by a few retired policemen and army personnel, were something appreciable.

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) was initially organized by Thangathurai and Kuttimani, and both were from Valvetiturai. After their arrest on April 3, 1981, at Manalkadu, located in the East Point Pedro, Sri Sabaratnam, alias "Tall" Sri and Rasupillai, took over the leadership of the organization. TELO established close relationships with Indira Gandhi's administration and was the first group to be approached by Indian intelligence agencies for military training.

After the death of Thangathurai and Kuttimany, TELO set up camps in Nelliady, Kattaikadu, Jaffna, in the Northern province and in Trincomalee, as well as in Batticaloa.

After the Pandy Bazaar shootout incident on May 19, 1982, the LTTE was split into two organizations. Despite the split, and despite losing its two best fighters, Seelan and Sellakili, the LTTE was the best organized and disciplined militant group, from the very early days of the inception of Tamil militancy.

Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS) was founded on January 3, 1975, at Wandsworth, London, in the residence of Eliyathamby Ratnasabapathy, or Ratna in short. EROS had earlier planned to send 50 people to Lebanon to be trained by the Palestinian Liberation Organization. EROS was led by a unified command of three persons: Ratnasabapathy, Shankar Rajee and Velupillai Balakumar.

It was said that the ambassador of the Palestinian Liberation Organization to London was known to Ratna very well and EROS arranged to send its members for training through this ambassador. In the first batch, only three members, Shankar, Arular and Kanex, went for training to Beirut in March 1976. It was a very rigorous six-month training period and Arular left for Sri Lanka after three months, while Shankar and Kanex completed the training.

"The PLO was then locked in a bloody civil war in Lebanon, which it controlled like a state within a state. It did not seem to matter to the PLO that the government of Srimavo Bandaranaike was favorably inclined toward it, and that the Tamils were at war with that government. Abu Jihad, Arafat's military right-hand man, explained to a group of Sri Lankans at a Lebanese training camp that the PLO thought 'creating bubbles of anti-

imperialism everywhere or wherever possible would indirectly help their [Palestinians'] own struggle'. When Bandaranaike realized what was happening, she wrote to Arafat explaining the Tamil issue and trying to dissuade the latter from helping the Tamil ultras. But the PLO simply ignored her letter." *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* by M R Narayan Swamy, page 98.

According to Narayan Swamy, one of the earliest trainees, Shankar, said that Abu Jihad showed him the prime minister's letter. This was a serious diplomatic lapse in Abu Jihad showing a letter of that nature written to Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the PLO.

When this writer had the opportunity to meet with his PLO contacts in Tunis, Tunisia, (Rami Quadami, the officer in charge of the Economic Affairs of PLO and a son of Farouk Quadomi, the PLO's equivalent of the Foreign Affairs Minister), Rami said that the al-Fattah section of the PLO never ever gave any military training to any Tamils from Sri Lanka. It must have been George Habash's Popular Front for the Palestinians (PFLP), or any other Palestinian organization, but not the al-Fattah section, belonging to Yasser Arafat. He also said that Chairman Yasser Arafat and Srimavo Bandaranaike had a good rapport and both showed deep mutual respect and regard for each other.

In 1976, EROS converted the Kannati farm in Vavuniya into a militant training camp. Later, EROS and the LTTE reached an agreement and the LTTE also used this farm for their early military training. It is reported that Prabhakaran and Uma Maheswaran had their early training here on this farm.

The Eelam People Revolutionary Left Front (EPRLF) was the breakaway group of EROS and was inaugurated at Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, in October 1981. The founding president of EPRLF was Gunasekaran, while the secretary general was Pathmanabah, alias Ranjan or Nabah, and the commander-in-chief was Douglas Devananda.

The EPRLF subsequently established contacts with George Habas's PFLP. They gave military training to the members of EPRLF, as well as to those of the People Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). George Habash was emphatic that the Tamils should have the best of ties with New Delhi and was cautious in his opinion about what the Indian government would think about the Tamil-Palestinian connection.

PLOTE was formed in 1983. Former chairman of the LTTE, Kathirkamar Uma Maheswaran, alias Muhundan, was the founder and the general secretary of the organization. PLOTE in the beginning had a 24-member central committee. The political wing was headed by Political Secretary Ramalingham Vasudeva, alias Ramu, and the military wing was led by military secretary Somasunderam Sotheeswaran, alias Kannan.

Other than the above five main militant organizations, there were many more small groups, such as: the Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA); the Tamil Eelam Liberation Extremists (TELE); the Tamil Eelam Revolutionary Organization (TERO); the Tamil Eelam Revolutionary People's Liberation Army (TERPLA); the Red Front Tamil Eelamists (RFTE); the Tamil Eelam Liberation Guerrillas (TELG); the National

Liberation Front of Tamil Eelam (NLFTE); the Ilankai Freedom Tamil Army (IFTA); the Tamil Eelam Defense Front (TEDF); the Tamil Eelam National Army (TENA); the Tamil People's Security Organization (TPSO); the Tamil People's Security Front (TPSF); the Tamil Eelam Commando (TEC); the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF); the Tamil Eelam Eagles Front (TEEF); the Revolutionary Warriors (RW); the Guerrilla Army of Tamil Eelam (GATE); the Red Crescent Guerrillas (RCG); the Eagle Movement (EM); the Socialist Revolutionary Social Liberation (SRSL); the Tamil Eelam Blood Movement (TEBM); the Tamil People Communal Unit (TPCU); the Eelam Liberation Tigers (ELT); the Eelam Liberation Defense Front (ELDF); the Revolutionary Eelam Liberation Organization (RELO); the Tamil Eelam Security Service (TESS); the People's Liberation Party (PLP); the Tamil People Democratic Front (TPDF); the Tamil Eelam Liberation Cobras (TELC); the Three Stars (TS); and the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF).

After the 1983 riots, Indian intelligence organization, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), began to reach out to various Tamil militant groups. They contacted them to ascertain their willingness to participate in military training to be provided by India. Initially, RAW operatives selected TELO for training, because it was not committed to any political philosophy. It was willing to do anything India wanted them to do. The Indian government had its own reasons for coming forward to train the Tamil militants. Though India was never serious about Eelam, it came forward to train the Tamil youths to possibly teach a lesson to the Sri Lankan government.

Training began in September 1983, at Dehra Dun, in the hills of Uttar Pradesh, with the first batch of 350 TELO cadres. Hundreds of Tamil boys crossed the Palk straits, the narrow sea strip, to India by boats and from Madras they went by train to New Delhi and later by trucks and buses to Dehra Dun to learn the art of military science from the Indian military trainers.

Meanwhile, while making intense arrangements to train the Tamil youths from various militant organizations, India maintained an innocent facade and strongly denied that it was providing any training to the Tamil youths. At a public meeting in Bombay, on September 15, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said, "We have never interfered with the internal developments of any country in the past and we will not do so now."

RAW arranged to take groups of youths from EROS, EPRLF, and PLOTE separately, and took them to Uttar Pradesh and trained them at different locations around Dehra Dun, near the Delhi airport and at Ramakrishnapuram, in the heart of New Delhi itself. Initially, training was given to 200 cadres from EROS, 100 from EPRLF, and 70 from PLOTE.

In the meantime, the LTTE cadres were not provided with training by RAW. It was Anton Balasingham, with the help of D I G Alexander, who met with RAW officials and convinced them about the LTTE. He brought to the notice of RAW officials that, unlike other organizations, the LTTE was already engaged in armed struggle and therefore should also have a military training program.

Earlier, there were many versions of how arrangements were made for RAW to give military training to the cadres of the LTTE. But in her book, *Will to Freedom*, Adele Balasingham gives below the authoritative version:

"Once Delhi agreed to provide military training to the LTTE, it was necessary for Mr Pirabakaran to return to India to practically implement the program. Pirabakaran was maintaining a training camp in Vanni at that time. Bala sent a message informing him of RAW's willingness to offer military training to LTTE cadres and requesting him to come to India. Pirabakaran dispatched two of his lieutenants, Raghu and Mahathaya, to meet Bala in Chennai and to find out details about India's offer. Mahathaya and Raghu met Bala and myself in a hostel in Madurai. Bala explained to them in detail about the Indian training program. Yet they were opposed to Pirabakaran returning to India, where he was wanted at that time.

"They were highly skeptical and considered the offer of training as a ruse to lure him back to India for his arrest. Bala wrote to Pirabakaran reassuring him that, in the political climate of the day, he couldn't imagine a scenario, where the LTTE leader would be taken into custody. Raghu and Mahathaya returned to Jaffna carrying the correspondence with them. Mr Pirabakaran trusted Bala's judgment and preparations were made to spirit him back to India to contact with RAW. All this, of course were supposed to be top secret and much cloak and dagger activity went on. After Mr Pirabakaran's arrival in India, a meeting with top RAW officials was set up in Pondicherry, the Tamil Nadu's neighboring state. So in the middle of the night, Bala, myself and a couple of bodyguards piled into a car and drove the long distance to Pondicherry for the secret meeting with the LTTE leaders and the big guns in the RAW. At a specified time, the crucial meeting took place between Mr Pirabakaran, Bala, and RAW officials. Bala's and Thamby's [Prabakaran] smiling faces on their return to our rooms indicated that the meeting was a success. The LTTE was poised to embark on the Indian military training program." - pages 73-74

It was further reported that Prabakaran was angry over the training facilities promised to groups like TELO. He was also upset that RAW was activating dormant Tamil militant groups. When RAW officials met Prabakaran at the secret meeting place at Pondicherry, with the view to appease him, they brought along a gift for Prabakaran, a 7.62 mm German Lugar pistol.

Military training was given in the use of automatic and semi-automatic weapons, self-loading rifles, 84mm rocket launchers, heavy weapons, and in laying mines, map readings, guerrilla warfare, mountaineering, demolitions, and anti-tank warfare. Each training program lasted three to four months and rarely up to six months. Training was also given separately to officers and soldiers. Select members were given special training in diving and under-sea sabotage. A limited number of Tamils were hand-picked for intelligence gatherings.

After the training, RAW arranged arms deliveries to various groups, since it was the early part of 1984 and India continued to deny as strongly as possible that it was involved in any training and arming of the Tamil militants in India, or in any form of cross-border

terrorism.

In 1983, the Tamil militant groups began to open up offices in Tamil Nadu, India, mainly in Chennai and Madurai. Tamil militant camps cropped up in Madras, Chengalpattu, Tiruchi, Pudukottai, South Arcot, Salem, Thanjavur, Ramanathapuram, Madurai, and Coimbatore. The Indian government kept the secret of the training program of the Tamil militant cadres so well, that even A Amirthalingham, the leader of TULF, was not informed of the training. Incidentally, he came to know only in April 1984.

Earlier in 1968, with the view to assist India in the projection of its power, Indira Gandhi had established India's first foreign intelligence agency, RAW, which was supposed to be the equivalent of America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). This agency came directly under the control and supervision of the prime minister. This new intelligence agency played a leading and active role in covert activities in East Pakistan, which subsequently led to the formation of Bangladesh.

When Indira Gandhi was defeated in the 1977 parliamentary elections, RAW also became controversial and Moraji Desai, the new prime minister, downgraded it. Once Indira Gandhi came back to power in 1980, the agency and its activities began to flourish again.

During the 1983 riots, it was brought to the notice of India that the Sri Lankan government was seeking military assistance from some foreign countries. This was one unique factor that made India react to the affairs of Sri Lanka. According to the "Indira Doctrine":

1. India has no intention of intervening in the internal conflicts of a South Asian country and it strongly opposes intervention by any other.
2. India will not tolerate external intervention in a conflict situation in any South Asian country, if that intervention has any implicit or explicit anti-Indian implication. No South Asian government must therefore ask for military assistance with an anti-Indian bias from any country.
3. If a South Asian country genuinely needs external help to deal with a serious internal conflict situation, or with an intolerable threat to a government legitimately established, it should ask help from a number of neighboring countries including India. The exclusion of India from such a contingency will be considered to be an anti-Indian move on the part of the government concerned.

Though these were not declared or proclaimed doctrines of Indira Gandhi, they were considered India's naturally adopted foreign policy toward neighboring countries in South Asia. This was a message to the countries in the region, as well as outside of the region, that India's interests should be reciprocated and respected.

Meanwhile, on September 27, 1983, a group of Tamil militants raided the Batticalao

security prison, overwhelmed the guards and tied them up. It was a bloodless, great jail break in the history of Sri Lanka and everyone was thrilled and excited as the events unfolded.

It later became known that the jail break was masterminded by PLOTE and assisted by Thambapillai Maheswaran, better known as "Panagoda" Maheswaran and David, both of whom were too prisoners. David arranged the map depicting the layout of the prison, which was smuggled out to those involved in the break-out. They grabbed two jail guards, Anton and Gnapiagasam, when they came out with tea for the prisoners at 7:45 pm. They locked up the eight guards and the jailor, opened the prison gates, and told all the prisoners to run away.

More than 200 prisoners, including 41 Tamil militants who survived the twin Welikade massacre of July 25 and 27 and who were transferred from Welikade to Batticaloa on July 27, escaped from the prison. In the great prison escape, many Sinhalese prisoners - most of them hardcore criminals - also escaped.

Outside the prison, people waited with vehicles to whisk away the militant escapees to freedom. Among the escapees were Dr S A David, secretary of the Gandhiyam Movement, Rev B Jeyakularajah, Jeytilakarajah, Tampapillai Maheswaran, Rev Sinnarasa, M Nithyanandan, Vamadeva, and Varatharajap Perumal. But, Father Singarayar declined to join them. His argument was that he would be presumed guilty if he escaped. Similarly, a gravely-ill Kovai Mahesan chose to stay behind along with Dr S A Tharmalingham, and eventually all three were freed and taken to Jaffna in early November 1983.

When the police arrived to the prison, they found it virtually empty, except for those who refused to move out of the prison on principle. Sri Lankan security forces launched a massive manhunt operation to trace the fugitives, who eventually made it to India.

In the confusion during the Batticaloa jail break, Nirmala Nithyaandan was inadvertently left behind in her cell. Nine months later, the LTTE succeeded in gaining access to her cell and getting her out of prison. Though the security forces immediately launched an intense sea and air search, Nirmala Nithyanandan managed to reach Chennai safely after spending two torturous years in custody.

About Nirmala Nithyananthan, Adele Balasingham in her *The Will to Freedom*, writes as follows:

"Nirmala Nithyananthan was projected as a literary figure and feminist, illegally imprisoned for her political views and violation of her human rights and in danger of being subjected to inhumane treatment. An international campaign for her freedom was launched. Nirmala's continued imprisonment was a source of grave concern, particularly during the anti-Tamil riots of 1983 when Sinhala inmates and prison guards massacred Tamil political prisoners. Housed in the women's wing of the prison, she was lucky to escape the torment of the women prisoners and was eventually transferred to Batticaloa

jail, along with the surviving Tamil detainees. The LTTE cadres in Batticaloa district planned a raid to free the remaining Tamil political prisoners. When I heard that she had been freed from the Batticaloa prison in the middle of 1984, by one of our cadre during a daring escape operation, I was thrilled and her boldness added to my respect for her. I received the news from Mr Pirabakaran that she would be coming to Chennai to work with the organization, with great expectancy. I looked forward to work with an English-speaking colleague with whom I could discuss many issues.

"Mr Pirabakaran was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of Nirmala joining the LTTE and a contradiction in feminist perception was clearly evident. For him, Nirmala's conception and projection of women liberation did not tally with his view or vision of Tamil women's liberation. In Mr Pirabakaran's ideological perspective, Nirmala's idea of a women's liberation represented more stereotyped conception of Western women's liberation than an emancipation which the masses of Tamil women could identify with and embrace as their own. Delegating the task of building the women's wing of the LTTE to Nirmala was not in Mr Pirabakaran's scheme of things. Mr Pirabakaran proved to be correct in his view of Nirmala as unsuitable for any role in the women's wing. Not only he, but also the girls who were with us, had difficulty in relating to and comprehending Nirmala's 'radicalism'. She was worlds apart from the village girls who had come to join the struggle and fight for their homeland and had no real idea of women's liberation, nor necessarily aspired for it. Indeed, Mr Pirabakaran was far more effective in tapping into the sentiments and thinking of the young Tamil women and winning their support and he persisted with his commitment to building a women's section and has subsequently assumed the role of leader and mentor of the wing. Not even Nirmal's gallant history or opposition to the state forces could dislodge alienation or inspire any confidence in women's emancipation. Nirmala revealed herself as a vehement critic of the organization but was totally incapable of offering any realistic, viable alternative which would mobilize the people to confront the mounting scale of oppression they were being subjected to. The young women's dislike of Nirmala, and many other issues that became controversial, ultimately resulted in her divorce from the organization. But while Nirmala's relationship with the LTTE was essentially underproductive, the role played by her husband Mr Nithyanandan [affectionately called Nithy] was creative and productive. As the editor of the organization's official newspaper "Viduthalai Puligal" [Liberation Tigers] he wrote several articles representing the LTTE's position and introducing other national liberation struggles to our cadres and readers. While the paper has survived since 1984 as the official organ of the LTTE, Mr Nithyanandan has not. He departed from the organization along with his wife at the end of 1984." - Pages 86-87

Meanwhile, the government passed the seventh amendment to the Constitution on September 23, 1983, to create a new administrative district for Kilinochchi and thereby increase the number of administrative districts to 25. Ranatunge Premadasa, speaking on the amendment to the Constitution, said that the government had not chosen to create a new district to please the TULF or anybody else. The creation of the new districts in Mullaithievu, Gampaha, and Kilinochchi were all in the Moragoda Commission's recommendation. The second reading of the Bill to amend the Constitution was passed with 119 voting in favor and none against.

It must be remembered that, since the TULF refused to take oath under the sixth amendment to the Constitution, they did not attend the parliament sessions. Meanwhile, a majority of the members of parliament, including M Sivasithamparam, the president, and A Amirthalingham, the secretary general of the TULF, sought refuge in India. Subsequently, October 20, 1983, was the last day of the three-month period for the TULF to take an oath under the sixth amendment to the Constitution, but they failed to do so. As a result, their seats in parliament became vacant and they lost their membership and representation in the National State Assembly of Sri Lanka.

On November 3, 1983, Anura Bandaranaike, the first-time SLFP member of parliament, became the leader of the opposition. Anura Priadarshi Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, born on February 15, 1949, was the youngest of the three children of the late S W R D and Srimavo Bandaranaike. His father was prime minister from 1956-59 and his mother from 1960-65 and again from 1970-77. His higher education years were spent at the University of London from 1970-73. He was elected in the July 1977 general election, as the second member of parliament from the three-member Nuwera-Eliya constituency.

Since the TULF's elected representatives voluntarily vacated their parliamentary membership, there was no one left to represent the Tamils of the North and Eastern provinces in parliament. As a substitute to the representation of the members of parliament, the people in big towns or in each electorates formed themselves into "citizen committees". The members of these citizen committees were mainly people of standing in their respective areas and were independent of the militant groups. They filled the gap left behind by the self-exiled TULF members of parliament in representing the people of the area.

This writer was also the secretary to the citizen committee at Chunnakam, while T Manickavasakar, the retired director of education in the Northern province, was the president. Citizen committees mainly represented the people by making representations to the army, as well as to the government, to find redress for innocent citizens affected by army atrocities and police excesses. These committees also visited youths who were detained either in the police stations or in the army camps and such regular visits served as deterrents against torture by the security forces, at least to some extent. Additionally, these citizen committees began to be considered the watchdog organizations for the rights of the people in the area.

The citizen committees began to earn considerable credibility in the eyes of the government, people of the area in general, and in the foreign institutions that encouraged humanitarian activities. They also began to concentrate on resettling the displaced persons within their areas and also took an active interest on the welfare of refugees who fled Sri Lanka. But gradually, these committees began to earn the wrath of the Tamil militants and the militants began to relegate them to less active roles.

Earlier, Indira Gandhi, following the ethnic violence of July 1983, responded to the Sri Lankan government's request by sending the ship "Bharat Seema" to transport Tamils



affected by the indiscriminate violence inflicted on them to the north and east regions of India. After the completion of the mission, when the "Bharat Seema" left on August 30, 1983 to Tuticorin, it took nearly 340 Tamil refugees to India.

After the arrival of the first batch of refugees, there was a constant flow of Tamil refugees to India. The refugees mainly flowed into India through the regular ferry service that was plying between Rameswaram in India and Talaimannar, in northern Sri Lanka three times a week. This flow of refugees, according to available records, started on August 1983 and continued until the ferry service was temporarily closed for the monsoon season in October 1983, but it again started on January 1984 and continued to operate until the last week of October 1984. Those who crossed over to India by the ferry had passports, as well as entry visas, issued by the Indian High Commission in Colombo and were in compliance with all normal entry procedures.

The Shipping Corporation of India then expressed its inability to run the ferry service between Rameswaram and Talaimannar, as the Sri Lankan government had declared the coastline between Mannar and Mullaithievu a surveillance zone and demarcated the five-mile stretch of land between these two places as a "no man's land". Subsequently, the Indian Shipping Corporation consigned the "TSS Ramanujam", the ferry that plied between Talaimannar and Rameswaram, to the scrap-yard, bringing a permanent end to the ferry service.

No official reason was given for the abrupt shutting down of the ferry service by India, but it was reported that the Sri Lankan government was proceeding with plans for repatriating 84,000 Tamils. They were granted Indian citizenship and opted to leave for India under the provisions of the Srima-Sashtri Agreement and the subsequent legislation that came into force. But India showed reluctance in accepting these people until arrangements were made for the return of nearly 125,000 refugees who were already in India by that time.

Once the normal ferry services were stopped, refugees began to cross the choppy sea by country craft. Up to the end of March 1985, nearly 500 boats called at the port of Rameswaram and in the beginning, boats bringing the refugees were detained by the port authorities. They were subsequently released in order to carry out their humanitarian services.

The presence of a large number of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India resulted in the Sri Lankan government receiving adverse comments and opinions in several international forums. Therefore, the Sri Lankan government began to adopt measures to discourage Tamils from fleeing to India. The Sri Lankan Navy began to intercept boat people crossing to India on the high seas. They arrested fleeing refugees, and also shot and killed refugees while on the sea. On March 3, 1985, nearly 13 Sri Lankan refugees were shot and killed on the high seas by the Sri Lankan Navy. On that same day, 140 were arrested and another 247 prevented from leaving the island.

Furthermore, the fishermen in the island of Rameswaram have been forced to suspend

their fishing operations in the face of repeated mid-sea attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy. From December 10, 1984, to July 1986, it was estimated that nearly 20 Indian fishermen were shot and killed by the Sri Lankan Navy. Thus, the Sri Lankan government brought the war against the Tamils to the shores of India.

The Sri Lankan government did not agree with the announcement of figures estimating that 125,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees were already in India. "It was estimated that some 35,000 Tamil refugees crossed to Tamil Nadu in the immediate aftermath of the riots. Their numbers increased, in time, to double this amount at least. The Indian government claimed that there were 125,000 refugees from Sri Lanka by the early part of 1984. J R and his advisers believed that these numbers had been exaggerated by the Indian officials for their own political ends. For the advocates of military intervention, the refugee problem was yet another parallel to the situation in East Pakistan, which had paved the way for Indian intervention and resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, although the two situations were quite substantially different." *J R Jayewardene of Sri Lanka: A Political Biography - Volume Two: From 1956 to His Retirement (1989)* by K M de Silva and Howard Wriggins, page 570.

When G Parthasarathy visited Colombo on August 15, 1983, he called on S Thondaman at his ministry and discussed issues relating to the ethnic crisis in the country. After their discussion, Parthasarathy invited Thondaman to visit New Delhi. Accordingly, Thondaman went to India, met Indira Gandhi, and Narasimha Rao, the Minister of External Affairs. In Tamil Nadu, he met M G Ramachandran, the Chief Minister, and M Karunanithi, the leader of the D M K.

Thondaman also met the TULF leaders Amirthalingham, Sivasithamparam, and Sampanthan and had a series of discussions with them. Amirthalingham requested Thondaman to look after the interest of the Tamils in parliament. He also met Uma Maheswaran, the militant leader of the PLOTE, which created a controversy back home.

After a 10-day sojourn in India, Thondaman returned to Colombo on October 22 and met J R Jayewardene, the Sri Lankan president, the next day and briefed him about his Indian visit. That evening, he held a press conference and told the press, "The people of Tamil Nadu feel intensely about the Tamil problem. The feeling in India is that the successive Sri Lankan governments that came to power after independence have been intent on oppressing the Tamils and destroying them. Now the issue of the Tamils is not alone the concern of the Tamils and India, but the concern of the international community."

In answer to a question, he said, "The people of Tamil Nadu say that the Sri Lankan government closed its eyes when violence was being unleashed against the Tamils by a section of the Sinhalese communal forces." He said that people told him, "Sri Lankan Sinhalese observe *sill* [chanting] in the night and kill in the next morning." In fact, the riots erupted on the day following the holy Poya day. He also said that he had now become the sole representative of the Tamils.

He said that his meeting with Uma Maheswaran was a successful one and that the

militant leader had agreed to accept an alternative to Eelam. But many Sinhalese politicians were not satisfied with the meeting Thondaman had with Uma Maheswaran. On November 11, the Gampaha member of parliament S D Bandaranaike raised this matter in parliament at the adjournment time. Quoting a statement made by Thondaman in India earlier, and he charged that the Tamil minister's characterization was a one-sided picture of the ethnic problem.

"In reply, Thondaman said he had thought S D Bandaranaike was a friend of the Tamils. When the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact was negotiated, the UNP leader Jayewardene led a protest march to Kandy, and it was S D Bandaranaike who stopped it and was acclaimed a Sinhalese hero. He stopped the march by using thuggery - and thus became the father of the doctrine of thuggery, violence and stone-throwing. The doctrine had now been developed and perfected in Sri Lanka, he said.

"SLFP MP Lakshman Jayakody and S D Bandaranaike wanted to know who had perfected the doctrine of thuggery?"

"Jayakody: "He must say who these people are. It can even mean us. The SLFP had nothing to do with the violence.

"S D Bandaranaike: "Are they separatists?"

"At this time an argument ensued and both Thondaman and Bandaranaike were shouting at each other. After the commotion subsided, Dinesh Gunawardene remarked that during the shouting he had heard Thondaman say that they were the same people who had briefed S D Bandaranaike to ask questions.

"S D Bandaranaike: "You must name these people. Otherwise resign. You have become president of the TULF now. You have been planted in the cabinet by the Tamil Nadu separatists.

"Deputy Speaker Norman Waidyaratne stated that "it was up to the minister to divulge the names or not. The House could not compel him.

"S D Bandaranaike: "What about the pack of lies you told to Indira Gandhi?"

"Thondaman: "The member for Gampaha should withdraw the word 'lies'.

"S D Bandaranaike: I withdraw the word 'lies'.

"Thondaman: "You have claimed that it was Sinhalese people who are discriminated against. If that is true, who should be blamed? Do you mean to say successive Sinhalese governments discriminated against the Sinhalese? If so, you should be ashamed of yourself for you too were part of the government." *Out of Bondage: The Thondaman Story* by T Sabaratnam, pages 137-138.

On November 7, 1983, J R Jayewardene invited G Parthasarathy to Colombo to resume discussions. He held a series of talks with President Jayewardene, Gamini Dissanayake, and Lalith Athulathmudali. The government offered to strengthen the District Development Council law. Parthasarathy told the Sri Lankan government ministers that it would not satisfy the aspirations of the Tamils, as their demand was for a separate state.

Parthasarathy continued with his negotiation and the government agreed to accept the merger of two or more District Development Councils within the province, provided that the council members voted for such a merger and the people voted in favor of the merger in the respective council areas in a referendum. The government urged the Tamils to reciprocate by disavowing separation and recognizing that the Trincomalee harbor should be subject to the control of the central government.

In the meantime, Indira Gandhi invited Amirthalingham to prepare herself for talks with Jayewardene, who was supposed to visit for the Commonwealth Conference to be held in New Delhi. Parthasarathy also met the TULF leaders on November 17 and 18. The TULF leaders reiterated that they were not prepared to give in on two demands: the merger of the North and Eastern Councils into one and a separate police force for the two provinces.

On November 21, J R Jayewardene flew to New Delhi along with his brother H W Jayewardene to attend the Commonwealth heads of government meeting. This trip was described as a fence-mending trip for Jayewardene to meet with Indira Gandhi, who hosted the Commonwealth Conference. Thondaman also went to New Delhi, at the invitation of Parthasarathy.

Jayewardene met Indira Gandhi before the conference. She told the Sri Lankan president that India supported the democratically-elected government of Sri Lanka and was completely against the division of the country. She urged him to find a political solution to the problems confronting the Tamils within the country's united framework. She also told him of India's concern - the influx of the Tamil refugees and the strong feelings of the people of Tamil Nadu. Jayewardene in turn spoke of the problem he faced and the fears of the Sinhalese people that Tamils would dominate the country.

On November 24, Jayewardene delivered a speech at the political committee meeting of the Commonwealth Conference. He said, "If I have the strength to live, I will not let my people be subject to anybody. Fifteen million people will die if an atom bomb is exploded in Sri Lanka; fifteen million people can die if they are invaded by someone else and decide never to give in." In his address, President Jayewardene recalled the meeting he had with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru and showered praises on them both. He said that he was a follower of Mahatma's non-violence and Nehru's non-alignment.

Thondaman met Indira the next day. He referred to President Jayewardene's speech and told Indira Gandhi, "President Jayewardene praised your father very much. I hope you are pleased."

Indira Gandhi said with a spark of anger in her words, "That old man [referring to

Jayewardene] was not praising my father, he was telling the world that I am not living up to my father."

Also his reference about the invasion in his speech was attributed to a rumor that India intended to invade Sri Lanka. Indira Gandhi at a later stage made contemptuous references to Jayewardene, when she met Tamil expatriates in New York. She told them that she would have ordered the invasion of Sri Lanka, but had reservations because of the defenseless nature of the Tamils of Indian origin, who live among the Sinhalese in the Hill country region in Sri Lanka.

The Commonwealth Conference concluded on November 29, but Jayewardene stayed back in New Delhi. Jayewardene and Indira Gandhi had a long discussion. The discussion was in regard to the famous Annexure C. The document which came to be known as Annexure C was mainly Parthasarathy's distillation of the TULF's demands. Indira Gandhi and Jayewardene failed to agree on one point. Indira Gandhi backed the TULF's demand for the merger of the North and Eastern provinces into a single unit, whereas President Jayewardene opposed it. Jayewardene argued that Muslims and the Sinhalese formed the majority in the Eastern province and he was worried about their future in a merged Northeast province.

Indira Gandhi met the TULF leaders, Amirthalingham and Sivasithamparam together with Thondaman, to consider the outcome of the discussion she had with Jayewardene. Amirthalingham accepted the solution, but insisted that he could not face the Tamil people if he failed to get the merger of the two provinces.

Thondaman held a press conference when he returned to Colombo. He announced that the gap between the government and the Tamil position has been narrowed to a single issue - the merger. He said, "This is not a big enough deal to allow our country's future to go into jeopardy. Let us rise above sectarian considerations to solve this issue once and for all."

Thondaman continued to stress that the TULF leadership must accept the regional council's proposal as the first step. Even if they failed to come to an agreement, negotiation would continue and Parthasarathy would come again. The TULF argued that the North and East were recognized as Tamil-speaking regions and that the use of the Tamil language for administrative purposes and in the courts should be treated as separate single units.

Thondaman suggested, "Although it may not be ideal at present, I feel that the TULF should accept the solution to the vexed ethnic problem." Thondaman then said that the TULF suffered from two main defects: the lack of negotiating skills and the absence of a single person with the capacity and authority to decide on behalf of all the others. Thondaman said that the TULF leaders were "almost all very good lawyers, but the same cannot be said of their negotiating capacity".

The formula that was accepted by the TULF took the shape of Annexure C. This was a

two-page document that was prepared by G Parthasarathy. It contained the consensus that had emerged during the five-month-long discussions Parthasarathy had had with J R Jayewardene, his ministers, Thondaman, and with the TULF leaders. The document comprised 14 paragraphs and it was agreed that the Sri Lankan government should place the proposal before the all-party conference that was supposed to convene for its discussion and adoption.

The formula contained in Annexure C provided for the formation of a regional council for the Northern province and another for the Eastern province. The councils would be established by the merger of the district development councils in each of those two provinces. The regional council would be elected and the leader of the party commanding the majority would be appointed as the chief minister for the region by the president. The chief minister was empowered to nominate his regional ministry. While the president and parliament would have overall responsibility for all subjects not transferred to the region, the regional council would enjoy legislative and executive powers in all subjects allocated to it.

The allocated subjects included the maintenance of internal law and order, the administration of justice, social and economic development, cultural matters and land policy. The regional councils received taxing authority, regional public and police services, and high courts. There would be a national policy for land settlement and laws covering the use of Tamil.

According to the statement made by the president on December 1, 1983, the following proposals that emerged as a result of the discussions in Colombo and New Delhi conducted by G Parthasarathy are considered Annexure C:

1. The district development councils (DDCs) in a province are permitted to combine into one or more regional councils, if they so agree, by the decision of the councils and approved by a referendum in that district.
2. In the case of the district councils in the Northern and Eastern provinces respectively, their union within each province is to be accepted since they are not functioning due to the resignation of a majority of members.
3. Each region will have a regional council if it is so decided. The convention will be established that the leader of the party that commands a majority in the regional council will be formally appointed by the president as the chief minister of the region.
4. The president and parliament will continue to have overall responsibility over all subjects not transferred to the regions and generally for all other matters relating to the maintenance of the sovereignty, integrity, unity, security, progress, and development of the republic as a whole.
5. The legislative power of the region will be vested in the regional councils, which would be empowered to enact laws and exercise executive powers on specified subjects

including the maintenance of internal law and order in the region, the administration of justice, social and economic development, cultural matters, and land policy. The list of subjects to be allocated to the regions will be worked out in detail.

6. The regional councils will also have the power to levy taxes or fees and to mobilize resources through loans, the proceeds of which will be credited to a consolidated fund set up for that particular region to which will also be credited grants, allocations or subventions made by the republic. Financial resources will be apportioned to the regions on the recommendation of a representative finance commission appointed from time to time.

7. Provisions will be made for setting up high courts in each region. The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka will exercise appellate and constitutional jurisdiction.

8. Each region will have a regional service consisting of: (a) Officers and other public servants of the region, and; (b) Such other officers and public servants who may be seconded to the region. Each region will have a regional public service commission for recruitment and for exercising disciplinary powers relating to the members of the regional service.

9. The armed forces of Sri Lanka will adequately reflect the national ethnic position. In the Northern and Eastern regions, the police forces for internal security will also reflect the ethnic composition of these regions.

10. A Port Authority under the central government will be set up for administering Trincomalee port and harbor. The area that will come under the administration of the Port Authority, as well as the powers to be assigned to it, will be further discussed.

11. A national policy on land settlement and the basis on which the government will undertake land colonization will have to be worked out. All settlement schemes should be based on ethnic proportions so as not to alter the demographic balance subject to agreement being reached on major projects.

12. The Constitution and other laws dealing with the official Sinhalese language and the national language of Tamil will be accepted and implemented as well as similar laws dealing with the national flag and the anthem.

13. The conference should appoint a committee to work out constitutional and legal changes that may be necessary in order to implement these decisions. The government would provide a secretariat and the necessary legal offices.

14. The consensus of opinion in the All Party Conference will itself be considered by the United National Party Executive Committee and presumably by the executive bodies of the other parties as well before being placed before parliament for legislative action.

J R Jayewardene, after returning from India on December 1, 1983, began to concentrate

on arrangements for the All Party Conference. He invited the leaders of political parties such as the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Communist Party, Mahajana Eksath Perumuna, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress, the Democratic Workers Congress, and the Ceylon Workers Congress and met one-on-one with them. He also invited Buddhist organizations and tried to ascertain from them whether they agreed to his inviting the TULF to the All Party Conference, and a format they could agree on as a solution to the ethnic problem.

The political parties, including the SLFP, convinced Jayewardene that the TULF had to be invited. Subsequently, the president invited all the recognized political parties for a meeting on December 21. The meeting was about the All Party Conference and the parties were requested to decide on the venue for the subsequent meeting, the parties to be invited, and any other matter that would have to be resolved and adopted. After 90 minutes of discussion, they decided to invite the TULF and to hold the next meeting on January 10, 1984, in Colombo.

The government handed over a formal invitation to the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, Chatwal on December 28. The commissioner in turn flew to Madras and handed over the invitations and connected documents to Amirthalingham. The Indian High Commissioner also held a brief meeting with M Sivasithamparam and Amirthalingham prior to his departure for New Delhi.

The documents which were delivered to Amirthalingham along with the invitations were: (1) Annexure A, containing five published documents, and; (2) Annexure B, which contained a 14-point peace plan for consideration by the conference. Accordingly, the Annexure B was as follows:

1. That the demand for a separate state be abandoned.
2. That mergers of the DDCs within a province be made possible if that is the desire of the councils and is endorsed by the people of the district at a referendum. This principle would be applicable to the whole country.
3. There will be areas where regional councils are set up to establish the convention that the leader of the party commanding the majority of the council will be formally appointed as chief minister of the region by the president. The chief minister will work with an executive committee set up by him (the chief minister).
4. The president and parliament will continue to have overall responsibility for all subjects not transferred to the maintenance of the sovereignty, integrity, unity, security, progress, and development of the republic as a whole.
5. The councils will have power to levy taxes and to raise loans as well as to receive grants and allocation from the central government.
6. The administration of the port of Trincomalee will remain a central government



function.

7. A high court will function in each region while the Supreme Court will exercise separate and constitutional jurisdiction.
8. The list of subjects to be allocated to the regional councils will be worked out in detail. The councils will be empowered to exercise executive power in the fields allocated to them.
9. Those serving in a region or seconded to it will constitute a regional service of public officials.
10. A regional Public Service Commission will be set up for recruitment and disciplinary matters.
11. The Public Service of Sri Lanka and the armed services will reflect the country's ethnic composition. Within the region the police service that will be responsible for internal security will reflect the ethnic composition of the region.
12. A national policy on land settlement will be worked out.
13. The constitutional provisions and the other laws on the official language (Sinhalese) and the national language (Sinhalese and Tamil) will be accepted and implemented. This will also apply to the laws dealing with the national flag and the national anthem.
14. There will be united opposition to the use of violence and terrorism to attain political objectives.

The Presidential Secretariat issued a statement stating that Annexure B with the 14 points would be the basis for a discussion to find a solution to the ethnic conflict on the island. But the TULF was disturbed about Annexure B. On December 30, Amirthalingham told Parthasarathy that President Jayewardene had gone back on his word by placing as the first item in the annexure the subject connected with the abandonment of the demand for Eelam.

He informed Parthasarathy that the TULF's stand on this matter was very clear. The TULF had said time and again that, they would be able to give up their demand for a separate state for Eelam only in case a viable alternative acceptable to the TULF was offered. He also pointed out that item number two in the annexure, which mentions a referendum, was also objectionable.

Parthasarathy immediately invited the TULF leaders to come over to New Delhi for further discussions on the matter. On the same day, Amirthalingham and Sivasithamparam went to New Delhi and met Parthasarathy, External Affairs Minister Narasimha Rao, and the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. After the meeting, Indira Gandhi telephoned J R Jayewardene and told him of the genuine concerns of the Tamils

and the TULF. She suggested that Parthasarathy visit Colombo for a trouble-shooting engagement. After a discussion with his cabinet of ministers, Jayewardene telephoned Indira Gandhi back, saying that his government favored Parthasarathy's visit to Colombo.

Parthasarathy consequently arrived in Colombo on January 3, met the president in the evening, and conveyed objections raised by the TULF. He explained to the president that if the Tamils were to give up their demand for a separate state, the government would have to come forward to set up a conducive climate for the safety and security of the Tamil people in the country. He further suggested that such a situation guaranteeing the safety and security of the Tamils could only be guaranteed by creating an autonomous administration through combining the North and Eastern provinces into a single administrative unit. He also said that the government has to ensure the safety and security of the Tamils who live outside those two provinces in the country.

Jayewardene subsequently agreed with Parthasarathy and an agreement on these subjects was arrived at and circulated as Annexure C - which also came to be known as the Parthasarathy-Jayewardene Proposal. Subsequently, Jayewardene was hesitant to own the proposal as he had not entered his signature. As a result, he even declined to place the proposal for consideration in the forthcoming All Parties Conference. Therefore, Thondaman placed it as his document.

Meanwhile, on January 3, Amirthalingham, Sivasithamparam, Sampanthan and Thangathurai arrived in Colombo to participate in the All Party Conference. They met Parthasarathy and he advised the TULF leaders to participate in the conference scheduled to be held on January 10 and raise the issues they wanted to raise in the conference for discussion and resolution.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party met and decided to seek clarification from Jayewardene regarding the amended Annexure C. The SLFP felt that the president and the UNP were trying to trick them. They were of the opinion that Jayewardene, by disowning a proposal he worked out with Parthasarathy, was so deceptive that he was not only trying to trick Parthasarathy, but also the entire country.

Subsequently, the SLFP and the MEP boycotted the All Party Conference held at the Bandaranaike International Memorial Conference Hall (BIMCH) on January 10. The president in his address stressed three objectives of the conference: "First, ensuring the sovereignty and independence of the country; second, the continuation of the unitary state and its integrity; and third, working jointly to eliminate all forms of violence."

On March 20 at the APC meeting, Jayewardene announced that a consensus had been reached on the need for devolution and proposed two committees to be formed, one on devolution and the other on grievances. The committee on devolution was to be headed by R Premadasa and its responsibility was to work out in detail the structures, powers, and functions of the unit of devolution, while the committee on grievances was headed by KW Devanayakam and its responsibility was to consider steps that needed to be implemented in the spheres of education, employment, and language.

The plenary session of the APC was adjourned until May 9 despite displeasure from the TULF. When Amirthalingham objected to Jayewardene's announcement stating that the TULF was not aware of the arrival of any consensus, Jayewardene's reply was crisp and blunt. He said he had made a decision and that, "My decision is the consensus."

In the meantime, India took serious note of the developments in Sri Lanka. India had reason to believe that Sri Lanka was trying to seek military assistance from foreign countries other than India. Sri Lanka, in a way, gradually began to launch an anti-Indian campaign, accusing India of playing "big brother" and ridiculing India's claim of regional power.

Several decisions made by the Sri Lankan government caused great concern and apprehension to the Indian government. They were: the economic use of nearly 99 unused oil tanks in Trincomalee, and; the expansion of existing broadcasting facilities of the Voice of America.

Trincomalee harbor in the Eastern province is considered a natural harbor and had all the natural facilities to accommodate any large warships and other fleets. This harbor proved to be of immense strategic importance to Great Britain during World War II. The Royal Navy of Great Britain remained and utilized this harbor until 1956. Its strategic location in the Indian Ocean attracted many countries, especially the United States. In 1987, the Sri Lankan government removed a ban on foreign warships calling at the harbor. This enabled the US to send several warships there under several pretexts. By providing such facilities to the Americans, Sri Lanka received several large consignments of arms, ammunition, and other war-related equipment that was supplied through Pakistan, China, Israel, and Singapore.

In the 1920s, Great Britain constructed a huge oil storage facility in Trincomalee. The facility had around 101 oil tanks with a storage facility of well over 10,000 tons. Ceylon Petroleum owns these storage tanks in China Bay, Trincomalee, which they purchased from the British Admiralty in 1963. The Sri Lankan Petroleum Corporation used only 10 of these tanks for the storage of its refined products. Also, it leased four tanks to the Prima Flour milling complex for the storage of water. The rest of the tanks lay idle. All of the tanks were located on 676 acres of land owned by the Petroleum Corporation.

Meanwhile, in 1980, an offer was received by the Greater Colombo Economic zone from the HARCO Group Inc, in Florida, for the construction of an oil refinery complex at China Bay, Trincomalee. The project was to establish an oil refinery with the processing capacity of 200,000 barrels of crude oil per day. The Indian government expressed fears about this project. Lalith Athulathmudali explained to India that Sri Lanka was interested in developing Trincomalee on a commercial basis and not on the basis of its strategic location.

Subsequently, on April 8, 1982, a tender notice appeared in the Daily News that read, "Invitation to offer terms to rehabilitate, develop, market and operate an oil storage

complex at China Bay, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka." The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation called for tenders on or before May 3, 1982 and one of the clauses in the tender notices was that, "Oil owned by any military establishment cannot be stored in this tank farm".

On August 2, 1982, in answer to a question in the Rajya Sabha, the Indian Minister of Petroleum, Chemicals and Fertilizers informed the House that a team of four officers from the Indian Oil Corporation visited Colombo between May 3-7, 1982, and that the Indian Oil Corporation had submitted its offer to the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation and that no decision had yet been taken.

Subsequently, on February 23, 1984, the Sri Lankan government leased the Trincomalee Tank Development Project to an international consortium consisting of three firms: Oroleum (Pvt) Ltd, Oil Tanking, and Tradinfant based in Singapore, West Germany, and Switzerland, respectively. These companies, it seems, were floated in 1982 specifically to obtain this lease. Oroleum (PVT) Ltd was set up by people in the Coastal Corporation in Singapore, an affiliate of the Coastal Corporation in Bermuda that was refused the Trincomalee contract in 1981.

The tenders for this contract were submitted by several countries, including India, which offered a more profitable proposal. On April 24, 1985, responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha on the status of the global tender, the Minister of State for External Affairs replied that the Indian Oil Corporation had also submitted a tender, and that its tender was fairly competitive, but unfortunately, the contract was allotted to three firms from Singapore for reasons unknown. Oroleum (Pvt) Ltd submitted its tender after the deadline, but won the contract. The contract allowed the company to supply petroleum to foreign warships without the permission of the Sri Lankan government.

Another matter of contention for India was the Voice of America's relay station. In 1951, the United States of America and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) signed an agreement permitting the US to install shortwave transmitters to be used by the Voice of America (VOA). The agreement had been renewed several times over the years. On August 9, 1983, a revised agreement was signed that was intended to improve the strength of the broadcasting facilities. This agreement raised many questions and many problems, both domestically and externally. The main features of the 1983 Agreement were:

- The United States Information Agency will construct and operate a receiving and transmitting Voice of America Radio Relay Station;
- The transmitting station will consist of six shortwave transmitters, of which two shall have the capability to transmit up to 250 kilowatts and four shall have the capability to transmit up to 500 kilowatts;
- There will also be associated, receiving, and communication facilities;
- The US government shall not, to the best of its ability, allow the broadcast of any program detrimental to the national interests of Sri Lanka;
- Representatives of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation will have access to the station, and;

- The Sri Lankan government will lease or help to acquire 1,000 acres of land for these expanded facilities and the agreement will continue in force for a period of 20 years, renewable in blocks of 10-year extension periods.

This transmitter center that was to be installed in Sri Lanka was the only one of its kind outside the United States' territory and it was expected to be powerful enough to jam any other broadcast in the region with links to communication satellites. According to the agreement signed on December 10, 1983, the Sri Lankan government on January 15, 1985, handed over nearly 800 acres of land in the village of Thodduwa and 200 acres of land in the village of Iranwila in Nattandiya, located on the Western coast of the island. Further, it was reported that VOA could broadcast low-frequency messages to US nuclear submarines that lie in the canyons beneath the North Indian Ocean without these submarines having to go to the surface to receive these messages.

The agreement on the Voice of America facilities raised concerns in opposition quarters, in Sri Lanka, in India, and elsewhere. On March 28, 1985, in response to questions in the Indian parliament about whether the VOA transmitters would pose a threat to India's defense communication systems, Minister of State for External Affairs Kurshad Alam Khan said that the relay station was "reportedly the most powerful outside the US and its range is likely to cover the whole of the Indian subcontinent and the neighboring countries". The Soviet Union also reacted strongly to the installation of the powerful VOA transmitters in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, the United States had been showing keen interest in the developments in Sri Lanka and a number of high officials from America visited Colombo in the next two-and-a-half years. US Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger visited Sri Lanka on October 1, 1983, probably in response to a request by the Sri Lankan government for military assistance immediately after the July 1983 violence. Though it was reported that Weinberger was simply stopping over for tea, there was no doubt that military subjects were on the agenda for discussion.

Following Casper Weinberger's visit, Lieutenant-General Vernon A Walters, the Special Envoy of the American President Ronald Regan, visited Sri Lanka twice, the first time in the latter part of October and again in December 1983. He had the reputation of carrying out sensitive missions for America in other countries, and his visits were always shrouded in great secrecy. Therefore, by the mere fact that he visited a country, his visits always generated great attention. Walters' first visit did little more than develop clearer understanding by giving the Sri Lankan president the narrow limits within which he would have to operate with India.

"Neither Walters nor J R had any aides with them when they met for their discussions. Walters recalled that he advised the president to continue with his negotiations with the Tamil separatist groups and with India, and also expressed his fears that India might well take stronger measures, a hint of a possible military intervention, if the Sri Lankan situation deteriorated further, by which he appeared to mean further outbreaks of ethnic violence." *J R Jayewardene of Sri Lanka: A Political Biography - Volume Two: From*

*1956 to His Retirement (1989)* by KM de Silva and Howard Wriggins, page 581.

Walters' visit to Sri Lanka duly aroused the ire and anxiety of India, which suspected an anti-Indian conspiracy was in the offing. Also, Walters did not visit India after his visit to Sri Lanka, which further offended the Indians. Subsequently, the Indian Embassy in Washington was informed by the State Department that the visit was "not designed for the purpose of doing anything behind the back of India".

Walters visited Sri Lanka for a second time from December 9-11, 1983. During that visit, he delivered to President Jayewardene a message from Ronald Regan stressing the need for a political solution to the ethnic conflict. This time, after his visit to Sri Lanka, Walters also visited New Delhi. It was said that the Sri Lankan problem received sufficient interest on the American side for the US administration to have sent Walters to Sri Lanka twice. The visit was seen in Sri Lanka as a great morale booster and also aroused India's suspicion.

It was reported that Walters urged the Indian government to be more sensitive to the difficulties of its Sri Lankan counterpart. Walters' visit and other influential US officials and legislators' visits to Colombo appeared to have strengthened the Indian suspicions about an unscripted behind-the-scenes role in Sri Lanka. These suspicions became stronger after J R Jayewardene's official visit to Washington in June 1984 at the beginning of Ronald Regan's re-election campaign.

About Walters' visit, J N Dixit, who was Indian high commissioner in Sri Lanka during the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement period and later secretary to the ministry of external affairs, wrote in his book, *Assignment Colombo*, as follows:

"The visits of US General Vernon Walters to Colombo came in October 1983 and then again in 1984. [It has to be December 1983] Walters was a senior figure in the US strategic and intelligence establishment. Walters had followed the first visit to Colombo [it is his second visit to Colombo] with a visit to India also. General Walters was perceived by the Indian establishment as a confirmed Cold War warrior. He was known to be the subterranean architect of many of the anti-Indian aspects of US policies on matters of India's national unity.

"Walters gave detailed information to Mr Jayewardene about India providing training and other logistical facilities to Sri Lankan Tamil separatists in India. He also agreed to act as an intermediary between Sri Lanka and Israel to ensure Israeli arm supplies and intelligence support to the island nation. The quid pro quo suggested by Walters was that Sri Lanka strategic intelligence gathering facilities against India in the proposed Voice of America broadcasting station be established in that country. Walters also agreed to facilitate the employment of British mercenaries and Pakistani military officers to support and assist Sri Lankan security forces. India had confirmed information about the discussions Walters had on Sri Lanka, both in Colombo and in Washington. This certainly did not improve Mrs Gandhi's mood or attitudes on the Sri Lankan situation." - page 20.

On January 12, 1984, a six-man delegation led by Joseph Adabbo, chairman of the Defense Appropriation Committee of the US House of Representatives, visited Sri Lanka. After discussions with the government, he announced that he would recommend US\$3.5 million be released to Sri Lanka immediately for defense purposes. Adabbo also said that the US would consider Sri Lankan requests for "a military type surface ship" and modern training facilities for the Sri Lankan Navy. Richard Murphy, the US assistant secretary of state for the Near East and Far East, also visited Sri Lanka on October 26, 1984.

The Sri Lankan government also hired Keeny Meeny Services, a Channel Island-based British mercenary company, to train the Sri Lankan Special Task Force, an elite commando unit under the command of Ravi Jayewardene, the son of the president of Sri Lanka. Also, the former British Special Air Services personnel provided by the company trained police commandos in counterinsurgency methods. British mercenaries from Keeny Meeny Services and British pilots were in Sri Lanka training the dreaded Special Task Force, which was responsible for the killings and involuntary disappearances of thousands of Tamil civilians in the Eastern province.

The British pilots were seen flying helicopter gunship and air planes to bombard and attack innocent Tamil civilians in the Northern province, especially on the Jaffna Peninsula. These British mercenaries were paid a monthly salary of around 2,500 British pounds per person and other fringe benefits in order to actively participate in killing and maiming innocent Tamil civilians. It was understood that former British Special Air Services personnel did not operate in foreign countries without the tacit approval of the British government. The British government under the stewardship of Margaret Thatcher provided logistical support to the Sri Lankan army in its efforts to suppress the Tamils.

Sri Lankan Minister for National Security Lalith Athulathmudali admitted at a press conference held in Colombo on August 11, 1984, that the Israel Internal Security Agency Shin Beth was involved in the training of the Sri Lankan armed forces. Many officers belonging to Israel were involved in the training of the Sri Lankan soldiers in Colombo.

It was learned that in October 1983, Jayewardene decided to seek assistance from Israel and authorized his son Ravi Jayewardene to take on the task. In August 1983, the secretary to the cabinet, G V P Samarasinghe, secretly visited Israel. After subsequent meetings, an agreement was signed by which Israel would loan Sri Lanka a few Shin Beth intelligence officers and Colombo would permit the opening of an Israeli Interests Section in the American Embassy. It was said that Walters played a major role in the drafting of the agreement Sri Lanka signed with Israel in May 1984. In May 1984, J R Jayewardene told the cabinet of the agreement with Israel. The two Muslim ministers in the cabinet, M H Mohamed and A C S Hameed, opposed it while Athulathmudali, Ananda Tissa de Alwis, and Gamini Dissanayake supported it.

The Israeli Interests Section was opened in the American Embassy on May 24, 1984, and David Matani, the assistant director of the Asian division of Israel's Foreign Ministry who arrived in Sri Lanka in April 1984, took charge of the Interests Section. Later, on

October 21, 1984, a senior Israeli diplomat, Agrail Karni, arrived to take charge of the Interests Section. There were reports that even prior to the opening of the Interests Section, Israelis were in Sri Lanka and were involved in the training of the Sri Lankan soldiers. This was confirmed by David Matani before his departure. He said that the Sri Lankan government was in contact with Israel much before the July 1983 violence.

Pakistan, during the time of General Zia Ul-Haq's tenure of office as president, trained more than 8,000 Sri Lankan troops in counterinsurgency tactics and other basic training. Those trained by the Pakistani armed services wore special black-colored uniforms and these soldiers were responsible for the indiscriminate killings of several thousands of Tamil civilians.

On March 23, 1984, J R Jayewardene set up the Ministry of National Security and named Lalith Athulathmudali its minister, as well as deputy minister of defense. The Oxford-educated lawyer-turned-politician had earlier held the Ministry of Shipping and Trade portfolio. The new ministry included Ravi Jayewardene, the son of the president, as national security adviser and General Sepala Attygalle as the secretary to the ministry of defense. He was instructed by Jayewardene, the president, to transform the Sri Lankan Army, which was meant earlier only for ceremonial and other limited roles, into a real fighting force.

When Athulathmudali took charge of the army in 1984, the number of regulars was around 15,000 and volunteers numbered around another 5,000. He began to launch a concerted recruitment drive whereby unemployed village Sinhalese youths, hoodwinked by the government's propaganda drive, began to get themselves enlisted in the Sri Lankan army, becoming cannon fodder in the war. These young youths who joined the army with high hopes and dreams became prey to the false and mischievous policies and programs adopted by the Sinhalese political leaders.

On the day he took charge, Athulathmudali visited Jaffna for a conference with the army and police officials in the district. Meanwhile, the LTTE raided the Point Pedro Police Station, killing a police sergeant and two police constables. Two days later, a gunman shot and killed a policemen and a member of the air force in two separate incidents in Jaffna. In an attempt to avenge the killing of the air force person, on March 28, 1984, air force personnel arrived in a jeep and a truck in Chunnakam, located six miles away from Jaffna city on the way to Kankesanthurai, and went to the Chunnakam police station. They had discussions with the officer-in-charge of the police station, Police Inspector S Rajalingham. After Rajalingham's tacit approval, it is said, they came out of the police station and started shooting civilians in the Chunnakam market square.

Chunnakam's weekly market was the biggest and largest vegetable market in the Northern province. Products of the Jaffna farmers, such as red onions, green and dried chilies, tomatoes, bananas, grapes, and other farm products were brought to this market and auctioned. Later they were transported to the markets in Colombo and in other parts of the country. Market days were Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and on those days, farmers from the entire Jaffna district would sell their farm products and buyers from the



Jaffna peninsula, as well as from far away places like Galle, Matara, and Hambantota in the South, also came to this market.

On such a market day, air force personnel, without any provocation, began to spray bullets onto the crowd. This writer, also from Chunnakam, was in the market and a living witness to the atrocities of the air force personnel on that particular day. In the end, a total of nine innocent civilians died due to gunshot injuries. Nearly 50 civilians were wounded and the market-keeper Subramaniam, popularly called Maniam, died of a heart attack inside the market compound.

Gradually, the situation on the Jaffna peninsula began to grow tense and the Tamil militants who were now armed with weapons given by the RAW of India began to retaliate against each and every revengeful act of the Sri Lankan security forces. The Sri Lankan army, police, and other security forces in the country became more and more communal. They began to perceive the Tamil militancy as a challenge to Sinhalese supremacy in the country, and began to react to the attacks of Tamil militants by inflicting collective punishment on innocent Tamil civilians. The unprofessional behavior of the armed forces and the police was hailed by the political leadership of the country. The government leaders gave their blessing to the undisciplined soldiers and the police to take revenge on unprotected Tamil civilians.

A whirlpool of violence and counterviolence became the order of the day in the Jaffna peninsula. The Sri Lankan army with the advice, direction, and supervision of the Israeli intelligence agents staged numerous attacks against the Tamils, while the Tamil militants, on the advice, guidance and logistical support of the Indian RAW agents, countered the attacks launched by the Sri Lankan security forces. On April 10, 1984, the LTTE detonated a car near a church in Karaiyoor, Jaffna, when an army convoy passed by. The army truck was thrown 20 meters away into a drain and the dazed soldiers emerged firing at all moving objects. In the meantime, the attackers had quietly disappeared, but the government insisted that there was a running battle between the soldiers and the Tamil militants.

The Sri Lankan army subsequently shot and killed five civilians and several civilians sustained injuries. Subsequently, on the afternoon of April 10, the Jaffna peninsula came under a curfew. Soldiers went on a rampage in the city, destroying several cars, buses, and buildings in the city. An historic Catholic church in Karaiyoor was severely damaged by security forces.

This led to violent reactions, with hundreds of civilians taking to the street to protest the damage to the Catholic Church. Meanwhile, a Tamil mob attacked the Buddhist temple located in the Ariyakulam junction in Jaffna. For revenge, they completely destroyed the Buddhist *vihare* beyond repair. They attacked the Sinhalese school located behind the Jaffna Railway Station, but there were no casualties since the school was closed for holidays. Several Sinhalese-owned shops were also set on fire. This was the first time Tamil militants took revenge on Sinhalese interests on the Jaffna peninsula.

Meanwhile, on May 10, 1984, a group of 11 armed members of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Front (EPRLF) barged into the beachside house of American couple Stanley Bryson and Mary Elizabeth Allen, who were working on a US-funded water project in Point Pedro. The two were alleged to be CIA agents and their kidnapping was said to be executed with military precision. They were bound, gagged, blindfolded, and forced into a car, which was later found deserted near the Kankesanthurai beach to give the impression they were being taken to India. On the following day, the People's Liberation Army, the armed wing of the EPRLF, issued a note to the government agent in Jaffna, demanding the release of 20 political prisoners and 50 million rupees worth in gold that would have to be delivered to the Tamil Nadu government by 12 noon on May 14. The note warned that failure to comply would lead to the couple's execution.

The Indian government was embarrassed over the incident. Abduction took place on the eve of the visit to India of George Bush, the US vice president. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister disclaimed responsibility for the kidnapping and Mohandas, the Tamil Nadu's director general of police, summoned the EPRLF leaders and demanded the immediate release of the Allens. The RAW threatened to do away with the training program for the EPRLF cadres if the Americans were not freed. Pathmanabah, the secretary general of the EPRLF, was arrested and taken into custody by the Q branch of the Tamil Nadu police. M G Ramachandran, the chief minister, fumed over the incident and said, "I am afraid that the stage may be reached when the militants will lose the sympathy and support of the people of Tamil Nadu."

Indira Gandhi appealed to the EPRLF to release the Americans immediately. Her message demanding the release of the Allen couple on humanitarian grounds was broadcast over the Tamil service of the All India Radio's Madras station every 30 minutes for about nine hours. In the meantime, Intelligence Bureau officials (IB) handed a typed note from Indira Gandhi to Pathmanabah, which read, "Release the Allen Couple. I will provide all help to you."

On the evening of the 14th, the Allen couple surfaced before the Bishop of Jaffna. They were brought there by some EPRLF members and handed over to the Bishop. The couple before their departure to United States said, "The abductors said they were not terrorists but freedom fighters. If they were terrorists, they would have killed us." Those were the parting words of the Allens.

Athulathmudali, when commenting about the kidnapping and release of the Allens, thundered, "Terrorist elements were residing in Tamil Nadu. If there was any doubt earlier, there should be none by now."

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Premadasa accused India of arming, training, and harboring Tamil militants and of attempting to divide the island republic.