

Government and therefore thought to start fresh fighting before the Government forces could build up its strength.

- The Sri Lankan Government initially gave a recognition to the LTTE but, at a later stage made the preparation to negotiate with other Tamil groups (EPRLF) and by that antagonized the LTTE. It then demanded from the LTTE the surrender of arms as a precondition for further steps in political resolution of the conflict.
- The Government made no proper attempt to devolve the powers to the Northeast regions, but seems to have campaigned the opinion for a possible military confrontation.
- In absence of a proper political process for a settlement, the military conflict again commenced.

Both parties must be blamed for this present situation. Ever since the fight started, the Government seems to enjoy a good support from the opposition parties (including the SLFP and the Left) and the LTTE is being isolated and blamed for starting the fight.

The events which developed in the south with the commencement of the military conflict clearly indicates status of ethnic relations and the anti-Tamil tension in the area. The state control media and the other media - praising the LTTE for some time - returned to the old fashion of racially inflammatory style of reporting. The Government and the Associated News

## Nothing for the Tamils?

The crisis in Sri Lanka - with intense fighting breaking out between Sri Lankan state security forces and the militant separatist 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' (LTTE), in most parts of the North-Eastern province in June - seemed to be a clear pointer of things to come.

The casualty figures seem to be around 2,000 combatants from both sides either dead or wounded, together with an unspecified number of civilians caught in the cross fire. There are an estimated 100,000 refugees fleeing the North-Eastern region, with around 10,000 from Trincomalee town alone.

Following the execution of a large number of around 800 prisoners by the 'Tigers', the Sri Lankan security forces have followed suit - with the Deputy Minister of Defence Ranjan Wijeratne claiming that the security forces have killed over 600 militants belonging to the LTTE.

The Sri Lankan authorities have also reported that the 'Tigers' have been using chemical weapons, in the form of mortar rounds fired upon the 'Kiran Kulam' Sri Lanka Army (SLA) camp in the Eastern province and elsewhere. And in turn, the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) has been using helicopter gunships and light aircraft

Papers Ltd. has started to call donations to the national defence fund, publishing stories of small children, who can hardly understand what is going on, donating their collection of money to the fund to defend the nation, displaying banners all over the south saluting the security forces for the courage to defend the nation (against the Tamils of course) etc. These happenings which were started around the mid 1980's were not to be seen when the security forces were fighting with the Sinhalese-JVP in the South. The reason for this might have been the fear of the guns of the JVP or because the JVP is a Sinhalese force.

These propagandas deny the presence of moderate Tamil opinion in the country against the LTTE and by that suspecting the entire Tamil community of colluding with the 'Tigers'. In fact there occurred a number of incidents of assault on Tamil people in the South but in an isolated manner - so far.

Will there be a solution? Can the Government eliminate the LTTE by purely military means. The rational political observers feel that the Government has the key to the solution. The Government must first of all declare its genuineness in devolving the powers to the Tamils - not by words but by practical means of formulating necessary structures etc. and eliminate the political climate in which groups like the LTTE can survive and grow. The condition must be created for the restoration of democratic rights of the Tamil people before dealing with military means. Any further delay will only aggravate the crisis and will further create confusion.

to strafe and bomb 'Tiger' held positions, while the artillery of the SLA has also been used similarly. This has caused untold hardships to the civilian population trapped in the cross fire.

While this ... "all out war by government security forces in the North-East" (according to Minister Ranjan Wijeratne, on record in Parliament) is going on, the 'Tigers' have carried out a bloody act of political fratricide by brutally murdering 15 leading members of another leading Tamil militant organisation, the 'Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front' (EPRLF), in the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu in India, Madras.

Among the 15 dead are: the Secretary General or leader of the EPRLF - K. Pathmanaba, the Finance Minister of the North-Eastern Provincial Council and EPRLF Polit Bureau Member for the Eastern Province - Periyathambi Kirubakaran, EPRLF Member of Parliament for Jaffna and former representative in London - G. Yogashangari, two women cadres, and three Indian supporters from Tamil Nadu.

When looking back at the evolution of the Tamil militant struggle against the authoritarian Sinhala-Buddhist dominated Sri Lankan state, K. Pathmanaba in particular, as well as others from the EPRLF have



played a historic role in being among the first from the Tamil militant movement to extend solidarity and friendship to the progressive elements in the South of Sri Lanka - from among the majority Sinhalese ethnic community - in as early as December 1982!

Throughout the bitter years of politico-military conflict following the July 1983 state sponsored pogrom against the minority Tamil ethnic community in the Southern areas, the EPRLF under the charismatic leadership of Pathmanaba, came to be known as the only militant Tamil organisation not to have committed atrocities in the form of killing Sinhalese civilians living in the border areas of the North-Eastern Province and elsewhere.

The LTTE on the other hand has one of the worst records in this respect. To quote, ..."In the north-east, the 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' continued their armed opposition to the Tamil groups allied with the Indian forces. The LTTE were generally believed responsible for hundreds of murders, including the killing of prisoners and civilians" (Amnesty International, 1990:1 - AI Index ASA 37/03/90).

It is one of the ironic twists in the Sri Lankan embroilment, that the state and the LTTE made an opportunistic alliance in the middle of 1989 - in order to supposedly force the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) out, as its presence was unpopular in both the Sinhalese and Tamil areas.

The hidden agendas for this 'marriage of convenience' were - on the part of the Sri Lankan state under the new President Ranasinghe Premadasa - to subvert the process of devolving power and resources to the North-Eastern Provincial Council (set up under amendments made to the constitution under the Indo Sri Lanka Peace Accord of July 1987 - where the EPRLF and some other Tamil organisations had surrendered weapons and had entered the 'democratic' process, contested elections and were holding office) by supplying arms and ammunition to the LTTE.

On the part of the LTTE - to become the single most 'powerful' militant group through the liquidation of the other organisations and to set up a one party state of Tamil Eelam. This fratricidal policy was carried out with a vengeance since the early 1980s - for example when the 'Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation' (TELO) was attacked and its leader Sri Sabaratnam was killed in early 1986, and scores of EPRLF cadres killed in December 1986, October 1987, with numerous cadres and politbureau members of the 'People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam' (PLOTE) also being killed in 1987, not to mention the large number of militants from other more smaller groups!

It must also be noted - that the LTTE have attempted to turn a military defeat at the hands of the IPKF into a victory. They have misled their cadres into the illusion that the IPKF withdrawal in May 1990 (following

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Janadhipathi Mawatha

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20. June, 1990

Your Excellency,  
over the last few days we have witnessed with increasing alarm the failure of successive ceasefire agreements between the Sri Lankan Government and the 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' (LTTE). We believe continued hostilities are unlikely to bring any resolution to the conflict, and are concerned that the victims of violence will continue to be the civilian population.

As a non-governmental organisation with a broad range of interest and concern in Sri Lanka, we earnestly appeal to you to:

- implement and encourage respect for an immediate ceasefire;
- return to the process of negotiation;
- invite the United Nations Secretary General to facilitate the resolution of the difficulties which have led to the present impasse.

We are anxious that all efforts should be explored to find a just and durable solution to the present crisis, and urge you to put an end to the conflict through pursuit of a negotiated settlement.

Yours Faithfully,  
Walter Keller

which over 600 cadres and sympathisers from other organisations including the EPRLF have been allegedly murdered by the LTTE!), was a military victory over the 5th largest army in the world. In fact it was due to political changes of the regimes in New Delhi and Colombo, which brought about this withdrawal.

The lack of political comprehension on the part of the 'Tigers' has brought about this present round of 'all-out warfare', much to the detriment of the peace and wellbeing of the civilian population.

What the 'Tigers' have achieved through this senseless slaughter is not only to have weakened the overall Tamil liberation struggle for greater devolution of power and resources within the existing Sri Lankan polity or separatism, qualitatively, but to have destroyed the present chances for a negotiated peace agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil people.

It must be stated that in the current round of blood-letting against their erstwhile 'allies' the Sri Lankan state, the 'Tigers' appear to be losing ground, especially in the Eastern Province. If the 'Tigers' lose further battles in this bitter war of attrition, they stand to lose all what the Tamil Liberation Movement as a whole fought for at considerable cost, both in human and material terms, for the last 15 years or so. In this context, the LTTE have not done the long suffering Tamil people in Sri Lanka any favours. They have only succeeded in strengthening the hand of the traditional 'enemy', the Sri Lankan state and the Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist forces behind it. In such an eventuality, the minority Tamil ethnic community will be forced to accept anything (which could be virtually nothing!) the state offers, due to their having to bargain from a position of weakness, brought about by the short-sighted militaristic policies of the LTTE.