

Information Bulletin No. 35

Date of Release: 8th March 2004

**The Worm Turns and Elections Where the People Will
Not Count**

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Summary

The recent split in the LTTE has opened up that organization to unprecedented scrutiny. The press is full of speculation about what Batticaloa/Amparai leader Karuna's breakaway means for the elections, for continuation of the ceasefire and for a political solution. It is certain to complicate all three. Very little has been said about what it means in the immediate or longer term for the Tamil people.

This new bulletin by the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) examines how the LTTE has used terror to redefine the political landscape and its effects on Tamil society.

The elections in Sri Lanka are fast approaching. Already a Tamil candidate and a party activist who failed to toe the LTTE line have been killed; still others have dropped out under threat of violence. Who is next? And how many others who might have contested were eliminated long before these snap polls were announced? UTHR(J) wonders how any election could be considered free and fair in such an environment.

UTHR(J) describes both clear cases of political violence aimed at silencing electoral challenges to the LTTE's claim to be the Tamil people's "sole representative," as well as details of its ongoing campaign to root out less obvious challenges to LTTE authority. The bulletin provides details of four political abductions prior to the closing of nominations, fourteen murders, including the brutal murders of families with children, and assassinations of political opponents.

Karuna's recent statements confirm what everyone already knew about the most recent killings in the East: the LTTE ordered them. The SLMM must now treat them as cease-fire violations and demand an explanation from the LTTE rather than pretend that the killings pertain to criminal activities outside their mandate.

In mid-January, at the height of a series of LTTE murders, representatives of Sri Lanka's donor nations met with LTTE leaders in Killinochchi to discuss development assistance to the north and east. This came in response to the LTTE's demand that funding be sent directly to the region, rather than through the Sri Lankan Government. UTHR(J) expresses deep alarm at the notion that the international community would even consider providing the LTTE or its proxies with direct access to development funds in such an undemocratic and violent context.

Sri Lanka's donors have encouraged the LTTE's expansion under the misguided premise that the group could be eased into a democratic process; and they have failed to take responsibility for the abuse that has occurred as a result. Statements encouraging free and fair elections are insufficient. They must be backed up by clear policies that condition any future involvement in Sri Lanka on an end to political violence and repression.

Fissures in the LTTE's monopolistic hold on power may offer opportunities as well as the threat of renewed violence. Now that the LTTE's murder campaign in the East is out in the open, it is time to renew demands for democratic safeguards, as well as the release of child conscripts who could fall victim to internecine violence. An acknowledgement in the East on these issues could have positive repercussions in the North as well.

1. The Charade Comes Apart

The current split in the LTTE illustrates how fragile the enterprise has always been -- something Tamil dissidents had long talked about. This belief was largely dismissed by others who were overwhelmed by its apparent success. The dissidents, thousands of whom paid with their life for the right to question the authority of LTTE, maintained that the LTTE's huge oppressive structure, constantly gearing for war and superimposed on a political and moral vacuum, would finally nullify all the sacrifices made. It would leave the Tamil people in a far worse plight than they had begun with.

Ironically, Karuna himself raised some of these issues in a convoluted way in his letter to Prabhakaran of 2nd March and in the subsequent leaflet. He said that the East has seen nothing but misery and economic ruin and the parents will no longer tolerate Eastern cadres

being exported to the North for menial duties where they are given no modern skills or opportunities for advancement.

The inertia of hubris, however, condemned the LTTE to this fatal course. Had Prabhakaran wanted to pursue a peace process towards a political settlement, he could have succeeded wonderfully as far back as 1987. Readers of our reports over the last three years would see clearly that at the root of the split with Karuna lies the LTTE's pursuit of preparations for war and child conscription (Karuna himself a leader in this) under the trappings of a peace process. For the people it was unbearable misery that made no sense.

The Tamil separatist struggle has led to a host of ironies. The Government certainly has far less control over the North-East than it once did, while the people who once voted for separation largely as a mark of protest against state-sponsored ethnic discrimination and persecution, are far from enchanted with that prospect today. Indeed, while the North-East has been depleted of human and economic potential, Colombo has acquired a thriving Tamil community - people driven from their homes by violent conflict and economic ruin who have established lives in the capital. Separatist dreams of a prosperous North-East have sunk in a slime of economic stagnation and political monopoly - enforced through murder, child conscription and extortion.

The drive towards separation no longer comes from the people of the North-East, but from the perversity of Southern politics and the carelessness of the International Community. At some point, the Southern polity's inability to offer a political solution for decades, tipped over into abject appeasement of the LTTE. Now the tragic reality in the North-East has vanished altogether from political exchanges in the South. From this quarter there is no message of hope, only one of dread.

The Western donor community's press release from Washington on 17th February, reflected apparent satisfaction that the LTTE had not resorted to war and reiterated the need to advance rehabilitation of the North-East. While it referred to the Tokyo declaration (which contained language on human rights and democracy), it made no direct mention of Sri Lanka's deteriorating human rights situation or the LTTE's gruesome parody of the principle of democratic choice.

Reality must be faced: a commitment to reconstruction, in effect under the LTTE, without reference to its utter disregard for human rights enshrined in that declaration, gives a clear message that donors are not serious about ensuring Sri Lanka's democratic survival.

At the height of a series of murders by the LTTE described below, representatives from many prominent donor nations conferred with LTTE leaders in Killinochchi on 19th January. TamilNet quoted a European diplomat saying that the meeting was to "maximise and reactivate the development program in the northeast." What cynical folly! A similar attitude has been expressed by UNICEF and the SLMM. The SLMM chief told the BBC Tamil Service on 22nd February that violations of the ceasefire agreement by the LTTE though taken seriously by them, do not at all affect the 'peace' process adversely. This is not only disingenuous, it is terribly dangerous.

Thus the rights of the people in the North-East, never a priority anyway in Southern politics, have become a non-issue in the election campaign. The argument is mainly between those who advocate appeasement of the LTTE to win the confidence of the donors, and those who

had always equated devolution to the North-East with giving the Tamil "menace" a foothold for conquest of the whole island. Between these two apparent extremes they make the case for separation in a manner unequalled by the separatists themselves. Meanwhile the people of the North-East have been abandoned to the Tigers' grip. Their gruesome reality goes largely unnoticed. The terror is more insidious by being veiled.

Karuna's rebellion against the LTTE poses crucial challenges running against the grain of Southern politics and the agenda of the peacemakers. For several months LTTE hegemony in the East has been widely resented. But the LTTE's quasi-legal move in the wake of the rebellion to appoint a new leadership to take control of the East, its diplomatic moves through Norway and the Sri Lankan government's publicly stated stand-off policy, suggest that the hated LTTE hegemony may be imposed on the East once again. The prospect of another bloodbath like the LTTE's massacre of TELO cadres in 1986, who were again largely Easterners, needs to be taken seriously.

Peacemakers may no longer see in Karuna a potent threat. He may be viewed as a pawn with which to make deals with the Northern LTTE leadership, the appeasement of whom is the cornerstone of the peace process. In the past the Southern polity has watched with indifference or glee whenever Tamils killed Tamils or Tamils killed Muslims. It served as a veil to hide its own stupendous crimes and, in the long run hopefully, aid the Sinhalese chauvinist agenda. Such an attitude also fatally diminished the value of Sri Lankan sovereignty, when it offered nothing to the people of the North-East. It amounted to a failure of statesmanship. This should not happen again.

There may be valid legal constraints pertaining to the cease-fire in dealing with the present crisis. But that cannot be an excuse for a stand-off policy in the event of an approaching bloodbath. The case should first be made loud and clear to constrain the LTTE leadership.

The LTTE's conduct in the context of the election campaign is an outcome of their being pampered and flattered to a point where they believe they can get away with anything. [\[TOP\]](#)

2. Murders of a candidate and activist and the Karuna Crisis

At 1.30 AM on 29th February LTTE men broke into the house retired school principal and UNP candidate Sinnathamby Sunderampillai (63) of Araiampathy, Batticaloa, and shot him, injuring him in the hand. Warded at Batticaloa Hospital, he told the Press that the attackers were the LTTE and the previous time he contested as a candidate of the New Left Front, the LTTE had detained him for several weeks. The following morning, 1st March, at 5.00 AM, he was shot dead by LTTE men who entered the hospital.

The same day at 10.30 PM, LTTE men shot dead Ponniah Yoganathan (25), a party worker for the EPDP, and father of two children, near his home in Valaichenai. Commentators were quick to associate Sunderampillai's murder with LTTE political leader Tamil Chelvan's statement published in the Uthayan of 16th February upon rushing back from London after consulting LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingam. He said that 'Majoritarian' parties (those from the South) would not be permitted to contest in the North-East, which he later denied for international consumption.

The attack on Sunderampillai at his home may have been to intimidate rather than kill him. But matters became more serious when Sunderampillai named the LTTE, which is very

sensitive to legal evidence. Without such evidence the LTTE simply denies and the donors and SLMM monitors happily play along. Whether the decision to kill Sunderampillai was taken locally or ordered from the North, it was consistent with LTTE policy.

The murder of Yoganathan was probably a local decision, but may have come as one too many at a time the media was focusing on the LTTE's determination to steal the election and the US condemning its behaviour. Karuna, the LTTE's Eastern Commander, has an obsession with stamping out any sign of opposition in Valaichenai, his home area (see Sp. Rep. No 14).

The present EPDP candidate for the area is Siva, who, with Yoganathan, was in the EPRLF until a few weeks ago. At the 2001 elections Siva, a relative of the murdered TULF MP Nimalan Soundaranayagam, polled more than 4,000 votes as an EPRLF candidate. (The EPDP built itself up in Batticaloa almost entirely by taking over persons from the EPRLF, which was having financial difficulties.) This time, with the TULF in complete disarray, Siva stood to poll a larger number of votes. Killing Yoganathan was again aimed at curbing Siva's ability to campaign.

The LTTE hierarchy would have felt the pressure from the publicity attached to these two killings and there must have been exchanges exacerbating already existing tensions between Karuna and his detractors in the group. On 3rd March, at 10.00 PM (local time), the Associated Press reported the story that there was a rift between Karuna and the Northern leadership. It was our assessment (Sp. Rep. 14) that such a rift would not easily take place. Karuna was wholly dependent on support from the global LTTE network, and he cannot go his own way unless some other government or mafia backed him and he survives the secret agents placed around him.

Predictably, two hours later, just after midnight, on the 4th, TamilNet tried to refute the AP story. TamilNet said quoting Karuna that he would 'take orders directly from the leader of the LTTE in future'. It now turns out that TamilNet was for a change slow on the news and was quoting Karuna selectively from a long letter he had had addressed to Prabhakaran on 2nd March, the day after the killings. Karuna's letter stated that he had stopped the functioning of the Intelligence Wing. An indication that the murders also featured in the crisis came in a leaflet distributed by Karuna in Batticaloa on the 4th, where he conveniently attributed the killings and vehicle thefts in Batticaloa to the Intelligence Wing, an accusation not contained in his letter to the Leader two days earlier.

Karuna's main demand in the letter was that he should function autonomously. By taking orders directly from the LTTE leader, Karuna actually meant that other LTTE structures under the Leader should not function in his area except through his own appointees. This was something the Leader could not agree to. The way he kept a grip on the organization was to split functions under his appointees, positioning them so that they watched and informed on each other and he could move against an individual at short notice.

The 2nd March had been a day of crisis (a word finally used by Tamil Chelvan and quoted by TamilNet on the 4th). According to some sources Karuna was tipped off that a group in the Intelligence Wing was ordered to bring him to the Vanni and he moved first. His letter to the Leader must have reached him the same day. At 10.30 PM that night, 2nd, some elite groups of the LTTE, including the Charles Anthony Brigade, moved to surround, disarm and then confine to barracks the Jeyanthan Division from Batticaloa that was posted southeast of the military lines in Thenmaratchy, Jaffna. We will take up the political dimension of these events

below. But first, we will examine some less publicized killings by the people's 'sole representatives' to which Karuna made reference. These have assumed an elusively barbarous quality. [\[TOP\]](#)

3. The Sword of the Sole-Representatives

The reality in the North-East is typically exemplified in the murder about 14th January of a young couple and their infant child: Nathan Suthakaran (38), his wife Swarnawathy (29) and their 8-month-old child Vathanan. Their bodies were found on the 16th with their throats cut.

The family had moved into Kanagampuliyady in the Thenmaratchy Division a few months earlier after having been displaced to Puttur. Kanagampuliyady, which had an army-presence since 1996, had been declared a high security zone. The area also had constant LTTE movement.

When UTHR(J) began to investigate the murder of the family we found silence everywhere. The Government, given its own record, found it prudent not to 'provoke' the LTTE, the international community did not want to rock the boat, and there were no eyewitnesses except perhaps the killers themselves.

Yet as we have verified from a number of sources, the people in the area blamed the LTTE for the murder of the family. A deliberate indication was given by the LTTE's Thenmaratchy political commissar Sivanath, who visited the area five days later, on the evening of 19th January. He suggested that the family met its fate because it had contact with the Army.

Reading between the Lines

People have always been more willing to talk about abuses by state forces than LTTE killings. In many crimes by the Army over the years, there has been forensic evidence, eyewitnesses' testimony or an ex-detainee pointing to the source, as our reports suggest. Evidence of this kind is relatively rare in the case of crimes by the LTTE. The Tamil community is, very simply, not a safe place to talk openly of the LTTE.

But there is another kind of evidence that is usually plentiful in crimes by the LTTE. This is psychological evidence. Take the case above: By examining what has been said and NOT said about the case in the Tamil media we suddenly get a much clearer picture of the LTTE's role as the killer.

The archives of TamilNet contain detailed and photographic coverage of crimes committed by state forces, contrasting sharply with the single evasive piece of 16th January on the horrific event in Kanagampuliyady. It said: "The couple's home is in an isolated spot surrounded by a large number of Sri Lankan military positions and camps. The Police said the family may have been murdered 3 days ago. Their throats were slit."

We have verified that the TamilNet report is misleading. The nearest army presence to the home of the murdered family is a sentry point, rather than a camp, 300 yards away. The family was also not isolated - others lived nearby.

'The Virakesari' on the Murder

The piece by a writer calling himself R. Pushpaparan in the Sunday Virakesari of 1st February 2004 titled 'Continuing Mysterious Deaths in the Jaffna Peninsula' was a real giveaway. The writer, as the contents indicated, wrote under instructions from the LTTE, pushing the formula of LTTE spokesmen: "These crimes are taking place in the few areas densely populated by the armed forces, while law and order prevail in areas under LTTE control."

Pushpaparan's piece two weeks after the event was clearly an attempt to refute widespread talk that the LTTE was responsible for killing the family with the infant. In contrast to the local LTTE commissar's hint that Suthakaran was a traitor for maintaining contact with the Army, Pushpaparan projected him as a man who was well regarded locally. He also veered away from the TamilNet claim that the family lived in an isolated area, saying that they lived along the Manthuvil-Puttur Road where there was regular movement and other dwellings nearby. The writer indicatively expressed surprise that the murder remained concealed for two days. He helpfully pointed to the killers being expert and on a deliberate mission: a cut on the neck of each victim and another on the head - what locals call a 'clean job'.

The writer then came to the main point of his piece. He said that the dead mother Swarnawathy's underskirt had been lifted above a leg and went on to suggest rape as the motive for the subsequent murder. Pushpaparan then flays the Sri Lankan Police for not making progress in their investigation and failing to make arrests. He commends the Tiger Police for their efficacy in combating crime in their area and assures us that the LTTE is investigating the spate of mysterious killings in Jaffna that are being used to tarnish their name. He warns the Sri Lankan Police that they would face dire consequences if by continuing to be ineffective they force the people to take the law into their own hands!

Readers may recall that the LTTE also promised to investigate the 'mysterious' attacks on the Hartley College Principal in September 2002 (Sp. Rep. 15) and the murder in April 2003 of Maclan Atputharajah (Bulletin 32). The families are still waiting.

No evidence of rape: Pushpaparan's suggestion of rape by the Army was clearly an afterthought, which did not feature in earlier reports, the magistrate's inquest or the inquest in Jaffna Hospital. This time, in contrast to the Tigers' normal practice of flooding the world with pictures of crimes by the Army, there was constant evasion. No pictures appeared in the Tamil media. When the bodies of the victims were brought to hospital, the Tigers were there and forcefully dissuaded reporters from taking photographs. The photographs that were relayed on the Internet had been taken secretly, despite the Tigers.

Other evasions and facts given by Pushpaparan give us the true picture. The neighbours almost certainly knew about the murder and who had done it. The LTTE knew what the people knew and this was the context of the area leader's words. Indeed, the LTTE is far more intimately present in these areas than the alien Army. The belief among the people was determined not by this incident alone, but by a series of murders that pointed to the LTTE.

A series of murders:

Three or four days earlier, on 10th January, a 25 year old youth later identified as Suntharalingam Vinothan was brought by van to a lonely paddy field in Madduvil, very close to Kanagampuliyady, shot in the back of his head and dumped. His services had been secured to transport 12 computers to Jaffna from Colombo. The Hartley College web site suggests that

the deceased was an engineering graduate from South Bank University, London, who returned to this country recently. From records of vehicles entering and leaving the Jaffna peninsula, the Police have deduced that the vehicle in which Vinothan brought the computers to Jaffna had left Jaffna for the LTTE controlled Vanni with a false number plate shortly afterwards.

Although what exactly was behind the murder is not known, the public had little doubt that it was the LTTE. Since no proper motive has been attributed to the murder of Suthaharan and his family, it raises the question whether one of them had seen too much in the murder of Vinothan. A peculiarity of the Ceasefire is that the LTTE is sensitive to legal evidence of its crimes.

People in Thenmaratchy were quick to link the murders of the four persons. They were also reminded of the murder of Maclan Atputharajah from that area on 23rd April 2003. Atputharajah was a popular figure from that area tipped to contest elections on an EPRLF (V) ticket. Section 2.4 of our Bulletin No 32 of 2nd May 2003 gave strong evidence that left little doubt about the LTTE being the killers. [\[TOP\]](#)

4. Law enforcement by the LTTE

To be clear about their purpose, we will examine Pushpaparan's claim that the LTTE is investigating these crimes independently to protect its good name and that the LTTE police is very effective in bringing criminals to justice in their area. On the contrary, , we find that most victims in the LTTE's area simply disappear, whether victims of murder or child conscripts.

Girl Beheaded

A gruesome exception was the young seamstress Miss Princy Ratnasingam (19) who lived in 234 Hudson Street, Vattakachchi and a native of Urumpirai in Jaffna. Her severed head, identity card and hand bag were found close to Surveyor Shop in Kanthan Kulam (Tank) in Killinochi near the LTTE's administrative capital. An excruciating stink caused the people to search for the balance of her remains, which were found in shrubs near the tank. The incident was reported in the Eelanadu of 27th December 2003 and, since then, shrouded in silence. It is believed that the LTTE suspected her of links with Tamil opposition groups and, by their action, conveyed a strong message locally while keeping the option of denial at a distance.

The Murder of the Co-op Manager in Vaharai

Vannamani Sabaratnam (57) was the general manager of the Cooperative Society in the LTTE-controlled area of Vaharai north of Batticaloa. A father of 5 children, 3 boys and 2 girls, he had long standing problems with the LTTE. Having taken over the distribution of government supplies and rations, the LTTE often substituted inferior rice priced higher. The people complained to Sabaratnam and Sabaratnam complained to the LTTE. On 19th December 2003, he was arrested by Kalaivannan of LTTE-intelligence and taken to their main base in Tharavai.

The LTTE demanded a large sum of money from him, running into several lakhs of rupees, according to sources close to him. Sabaratnam said that he did not have the money. He was then asked to aid the LTTE to help them in various rackets to transfer relief and resources from the people to LTTE coffers. These include buying rice for distribution from mills

nominated by the LTTE and giving them a cut on rations for refugees. Upon his refusal, the LTTE demanded a son from him. When he again refused, he was beaten and killed as his wife Saroja later discovered.

The Rape and Murder in Eravur

Miss. Nishanthini Shanthalingam (17) of the Eravur Tamil Division went to worship at the Kali temple in the evening of 19th December 2003 and failed to return home. Three days later, on the 22nd, her body was discovered in a well close to the border with the Muslim Division. Tensions rose amid speculation that the deed was done by Muslims. However the speculation was put to rest when Nishanthini's parents made energetic inquiries and identified one of the culprits as the Tamil youth Yogarajah Antony (22). According to local sources there were other accomplices to the crime, which is said to have included gang rape.

Antony had been in the LTTE for 4 years, and then, from home, worked under the direction of Brindha Master, the local LTTE intelligence chief. The Police then moved to arrest Antony. On hearing about it, the LTTE themselves took Antony to their area and blocked the arrest, giving the impression that they would punish him themselves. This episode and the near occurrence of a Muslim-Tamil clash leaves many questions unanswered.

The cases above give us a good idea of how the LTTE and their Police enforce the law and point to the limitations of the Sri Lankan Police.

The Sri Lankan Police in the North-East: "Thou shalt not provoke"

The Sri Lankan Police are far from being the world's best law enforcement agency. Political interference in the Police is routine in the South. In the North-East, the peace process has left them further demoralized without a shred of dignity. After much protest in the South the Police arrested Subaraj (Sathyan) in June 2003 for murdering Navasooriyan of Army Intelligence. The LTTE then abducted two policemen. In a deal brokered in part by the SLMM, Sathyan was granted bail in return for the release of the two policemen (see Special Report 17). Sathyan has about 10 known murders to his credit. Since then the police have almost routinely covered up for the LTTE.

In Bulletin No.33, we dealt with the LTTE's murder of several Muslims near Kinniya including the brutal slaying of 3 Muslim farmers in Naduootru on 29th November 2003. As in the Kanagampuliyady murders, the instrument used was the now ubiquitous sword. Senior police officials went to ridiculous lengths to shield the LTTE.

In Special report No 17 we gave the case of Sathyan and Mathan of the LTTE who by broad daylight attacked and killed Navaneethan, a labourer and former member of the EPRLF in Batticaloa Town. No arrest was made. The situation of the people is so pathetic that the LTTE and its agents can blissfully have it both ways. Now they are accusing the Sri Lankan Police of not making any progress in the utterly gruesome Kanagampuliyady murders. How could they? The North-East has been virtually handed over to the LTTE, courtesy of the Sri Lankan Government, Norway and our 'International Community.' How can we talk about monitoring elections? What elections? [\[TOP\]](#)

5. The LTTE's Independent Elections Commission at Work

In his piece in the Daily Mirror of 11th February, the editor of the TamilNet sounded very piqued that people spoke of the Tamil National Alliance as a creature of the LTTE. This, to him, was belittling the civil society organizations and the Tamil Media, in where he was a key figure, which stitched the quarrelsome parties together. They shepherded this bunch, described by him as more inclined 'to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds'. A few days later he was forced to swallow his words - once more demonstrating that it is unwise for those who run with the LTTE to be burdened with a heavy ego.

At a press conference in Killinochi on 17th February given at the close of a meeting to finalise the TNA's list of candidates LTTE spokesman Tamil Chelvan made it abundantly clear that the TNA was not merely their creature, but was the LTTE itself. TamilNet promptly reporting on that meeting quoted Tamil Chelvan: "We unanimously decided today that the Tamil people should vote only for the policies of the TNA. This is the wish of our leader and leadership. The Tamils should unite under one leadership and one policy for this election". Mr.Sampanthan, the key functionary of the TNA present was completely overshadowed. Tamil Chelvan was indeed the de facto president of the TNA.

While Tamil Chelvan was the mouthpiece, neither TamilNet nor the Virakesari revealed the key (and most menacing) presence at the actual deliberations. This was the LTTE's intelligence chief and principal killer Pottu Amman. Pottu's experience in election work included the 'garlanding' of Rajiv Gandhi while he was campaigning for the Indian elections in 1991 - that assassination had major repercussions on the region's political history. His presence and his role in selecting candidates would have given the other puppets present the haunting message that once you caught the Tiger by the tail, you are stuck to it for life.

The company present at the TNA meeting had already decided 'unanimously' what and whom the Tamils should vote for. The TNA policy mentioned by Tamil Chelvan was the demand for the Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) proposed by the LTTE. The ISGA envisaged an independent elections commission for the North-East. This commission was being pre-empted with Pottu Amman as effective elections commissioner and general secretary of the TNA, even before the people had voted for it. That vote too is a forgone conclusion. Pottu Amman is leaving no stone unturned to ensure that.

We outline the main strategies used by the LTTE to hijack democracy.

1. Use of terror to redesign the political landscape

How the calculated use of terror affects the society at its core is very subtle and hard to pin down, although its wounds are very deep and septic. Its effects on the parliamentary political landscape, though just the thin end of the wedge are easier to discern. The political landscape in the North-East was devastated by the LTTE's 'cleansing' of thousands of opponents over the years. Once individuals in politics realise that trying to maintain any semblance of independence from the LTTE can be fatal, it can bring about a variety of reactions. Among them:

- The more honourable sort simply moved out of politics
- Many with an established vote base tried to make deals with the LTTE to stay in politics. In time they became complete pawns, as with several of the leading TULF members. To be

charitable, one might describe it as the kind of religious conversion that comes under conditions of extreme fear.

· Several former opponents of the LTTE whose prospects in regular parliamentary politics were very dim and risky grabbed at an offer from the LTTE. All had had close colleagues murdered by them. But they found that aligning themselves with the LTTE was an easy road to parliamentary fame. The path was made even easier by having the LTTE's terror on their side against their former friends and colleagues. Among these were groups such as TELO and EPRLF (Suresh Wing) or the ACTC, a non-entity in parliamentary politics, which went under the LTTE's umbrella and obtained two parliamentary seats in Jaffna. It was all deceptively easy.

Terror gave the LTTE many options to break up political parties and ultimately swallow them. In 1999 Suresh Premachandran the general secretary of the EPRLF (who had the party's funds) made a deal with the LTTE and summoned a central committee meeting in an LTTE dominated area, where only his cronies could safely attend. The party split as a result, and his opponents were financially ruined.

Pro-LTTE members of the TULF led by Sampanthan, Pararajasingam and Mavai Senathirajah tried to repeat the trick last year in an effort to oust the President Mr. Anandasangaree, having failed in two earlier attempts. Anandasangaree moved quickly to get a court injunction and stop them. Having asserted his independence from the LTTE in recent times, he is fielding an independent list in Jaffna at great risk.

The disparate elements that came under the LTTE were moulded into the Tamil National Alliance just ahead of elections in 2001. But their path was not paved with gold despite the regular penance of compulsory pilgrimages to HQ in Killinochchi and taking oaths of fidelity and performing obeisance before Prabhakaran in person or photographic proxy.

For the 2004 elections, under Pottu Amman's guidance, neophytes wavering in their enthusiasm were dropped from lists of candidates for the TNA, which are now dominated by persons tested for their subservience to the LTTE.

According to sources close to the LTTE, TELO remnants and the Suresh Faction have been directly brought under Pottu Amman to function as new intelligence outfits. Houses have been bought in Jaffna for these outfits and monies for them are disbursed by Pottu Amman himself. According to these sources Suresh Premachandran had several meetings with Pottu Amman in connection with the formation of these outfits. It is thought that such outfits would be more effective in gathering information on dissidents and remnants of left-leaning circles close to the EPRLF.

Effect on choice of candidates before the People

Political parties that could challenge the LTTE have been decimated. TULF, the largest party has been all but destroyed and only Anandasangaree's court injunction prevented the TNA from appropriating its rising sun symbol. Original TULF members are mere shadows in current TNA lists; only two in Jaffna and one in Batticaloa have managed to survive. Owing to the ubiquitous presence of the LTTE killer machine, some opposition groups decided not to stand for election at all.

A leader of an opposition group despaired, "What is the meaning in our putting forward a list of candidates for election, when we don't have money even to pay for their funerals, leave alone care for their widows and children?"

Had there been some little opening for the expression of the people's will, Anandasangaree (leading independently the section of the TULF commanding a clear majority in the central committee and the TULF support base) would have shamed the LTTE's claim to represent the Tamil people. The Batticaloa District has a solid TULF base, and among the TULF supporters there is widespread disenchantment with the LTTE hijacking the TULF and suffocating it within the TNA. Anandasangaree had planned to field a list of candidates in Batticaloa, but had to drop the idea when the candidates decided that they could not risk their life.

After the TNA submitted its nominations in the Jaffna Kacheri, Political Commissar Illamparathy summoned the candidates to a meeting. Ilamparathy flatteringly addressed them as MPs - a prospect too good to be true. Ilamparathy put any apprehensions to rest by guaranteeing their election, adding that they know how to ensure it. He then delivered the bitter pill. Once they are elected they must speak for Tamil Eelam.

Facilitating interference in the election

The state is not an innocent by-stander. To guarantee the result of the election, the UNP government went a long way in giving the LTTE control over the government machinery including the elections office and the Postal Department through which polling cards are distributed. What's more, among the list of TNA candidates for Jaffna is Gajendran, leader of the 'International Students' Organisation' who played a leading role in preventing the opening of the Jaffna Public Library . At the 2001 elections, he was at the lead of mobilising the students of the University of Jaffna in a massive polling cards fraud. About 20 000 polling cards of absentee, deceased, and displaced residents were collected and cast for selected TNA candidates. This time at least Gajendran will not do the donkey's work for someone else to walk away with the prize.

Nevertheless the LTTE is not taking chances. The oppressor must live with the fear that the worm will turn. Who imagined that a section of the TULF would be driven to defy the LTTE? Besides, killing is addictive. The LTTE is condemned to see real threats to their hegemony in the dim shadows of dissent rather than to look within. [\[TOP\]](#)

6. The Unending trail of murder and terror

We began this bulletin with by examining the massacre of the family at Kanagampuliyady, with other murders both obvious and mysterious, depending on how deep one wishes to go, and the deception and media deceit surrounding such events. These indicate the atmosphere in which elections are being held. The LTTE's long and short term preparations described above hold out the promise of more violence, deception and deceit to come.

Incredibly, in addition to an independent elections commission, the LTTE's ISGA proposals envisage an independent human rights commission. This commission is now having its trial run in the statements issued by 'civil society organisations', which have a curious resemblance to the line aired by TamilNet.

Criminal Violence by the LTTE

While violence by the LTTE used to be largely political, we have noticed a significant rise in the number of reported incidents that appear to be purely criminal. Some of the current victims are believed to be persons who worked with the LTTE in rackets such as smuggling stolen vehicles into the Vanni and now being investigated by the Police.

4th January 2004: 10.00 AM: Vavuniya: Balasubramaniam Ajanthan (25) shot dead by the LTTE in Pattakadu near his home. A native of Allaveddy, Jaffna, the victim had resided in Vavuniya for 6 months and was then returning from the temple. The food that had been ceremonially sanctified was scattered on the street.

4th January: 8.00PM: Vavuniya: Jeyam (27), auto driver and father of two children was shot dead in Pandarikulam. The victim who hailed from Batticaloa was a police constable under interdiction.

13th January: Vallai: Jaffna: Sundaramoorthy Sooriyamoorthy (52) was found strangled to death in the Vallai Moor, an isolated open space that has to be crossed by wayfarers between Jaffna and Vadamaratchy. A native of Theeruvil, Valvettithurai, the victim owned a grocery shop in Valvettithurai from where the LTTE leader hails.

According to local sources, Sooriyamoorthy had shown opposition to the frequent stoppages and closures demanded by the LTTE. It is notable that this murder took place about the same time as the Kanagampuliyady and Manthuvil murders recorded earlier.

17th January: Vavuniya: The body of the youth Dilip was found hanging in Vaarikkuttiyar after he was beaten to death. Dilip was a member of the EPDP. Dilip's father Sridhar had been in the EPRLF. According to local sources, an entire family had been killed by the LTTE during the late 1980s on suspicion of having harboured Sridhar, who too was later killed.

17th January: Colombo: Daniel Sathasivam, the owner of a communication centre near Dehiwala Junction was shot dead on the premises by members of a pistol group.

A change of pattern: An interlude of child conscription

The sudden upsurge of murder, which peaked in mid-January tapered off into reports of a new round of child conscription. Specific instances appeared on web sites largely based on complaints made to the Police or the Army by family members. We give some instances of these reports:

28th January: Nagalingam Nagarasa (15) of Kalmadu, Vavuniya, was abducted by the LTTE

8th February: Kalyanakumar Sritharan (14) of Building 10, of Poonthottam Refugee Camp, Vavuniya, was abducted by LTTE men who came in a trishaw. The boy escaped a few days later and surrendered to the Police.

12th February: Edwin Vijayakumar (12) of Kanniya, Trincomalee, was abducted by an LTTE group led by the area leader who came on motorcycles.

16th February: The Army website reported the abduction of two children aged 13 and 14 on their way back from school in Alankerni, Kinniya. The Army appears to have spoken to the parents, but said that they had not complained formally.

Once these reports started coming out, the LTTE obliged the UNICEF and earned a few good points by releasing a couple of dozen children (a tiny fraction of those caught no doubt) to the UNICEF-TRO (LTTE) run transit centres, which were becoming an embarrassment to the UNICEF after they were opened in early October 2003 (See Sp. Rep 17 and Bulletin 33).

[\[TOP\]](#)

7. A Return to the Elections

The LTTE and election related violence:

The LTTE began abducting real or suspected members and supporters of opposition groups in the East as nominations were under way. The following were abducted:

15th February: Varnakulasuriyam (45) of Vipulananda Street, Valaichenai

16th February: Somasundaram Suguneswaran (30) of Temple Street, Veeramunai, was a member of the EPRLF, and owing to financial difficulties joined the EPDP three months earlier and was posted in Vavuniya. Abducted by the LTTE while on a visit to 14th Colony, Mandur.

18th February: Shanmugarajah Vijayakanthan (17) of Murungan Temple Street, Kottayankerni, Valaichenai

20th February: Sinnathamby Nagendran (28), Amarasingam Street, Araiampathy, EPDP supporter and former member of TELO.

24th February: Two LTTE men went to the home of Valli Sundaram (61) in Manipay and asked a relative whether he was Mahendran Sundaram on Mr. Anandasangary's independent list. They went away after warning Sundaram's wife Nageswary (55) and daughter Sumithra, who came out on hearing the commotion, to tell Sundaram to be careful. Sundaram was in fact a local councillor associated with the EPRLF and no name on Anandasangary's list bears any resemblance to Mahendran or Sundaram. But an EPRLF member is contesting on the EPDP list. Sundaram later told the SLMM who came in response to a complaint that he was afraid to stay at home since the men on the motor cycle regularly hovered around.

26th February: A van hired by the EPDP for election work was completely gutted near Mannar Hospital Junction before dawn. A sword had been left behind at the spot by the arsonists.

28th February: The LTTE visited a close relative of Thurairajah Bhaskaran in Mnaipay, and demanded his Colombo address. Bhaskaran, editor of the Thinamurasu, is on the EPDP's electoral list for Jaffna.

28th February: Members of the LTTE's Auxiliary Force went to the home of Vellupillai Sinnathurai, in Killiveddy, about 6.00 PM and demanded that they search the house for one of their members who escaped. Sinnathurai's wife Baby Nona and sister Manjuladevi who lived

there with his 3 female children, 8 years and below, objected. The two women were then severely assaulted by the LTTE. Sinnathurai, being the Trincomalee area leader of the EPRLF is forced to live in town and is not a candidate this time, but the party line is to support alternatives to the LTTE.

Election-campaigning LTTE-style

The incidents above illustrate the carefully calculated nature of the campaign being directed by the LTTE hierarchy. Although the TNA candidates are very much part of this violence, they would feign complete innocence despite TNA's Sampanthan telling the Press soon after nominations that they are fighting the LTTE's battle. One would as time goes lose count of the number of times the TNA candidates bowed, paid obeisance and swore oaths before Prabhakaran's photograph.

Given the reality where parties and party workers opposed to the LTTE are being beaten, intimidated and abducted to prevent them conducting any kind of campaign, even in the government-controlled area, the LTTE demanded polling booths to be set up in areas under its control. It has warned of serious consequences if its demand was not granted. We reliably understand that the Norwegian government too pushed for it, without any guarantee that it would not amount to a clean heist.

Leave alone the fact that those having differences with the LTTE must expect the worst in going to these areas; the SLMM's monitoring mandate does not cover LTTE-controlled areas. Peacemakers today are so bankrupt that they have no ideas except to repeat 'Don't provoke the LTTE'. Apart from the absence of any open opposition campaign in the LTTE-controlled area, the news is so controlled that people living there are commonly not aware of any symbol other than TNA's house.

The people in LTTE-controlled areas should be given the right to vote under conditions where the exercise of the vote is meaningful. That requires placing some preconditions before the LTTE. Many so-called Sinhalese intellectuals turn a blind eye to the context and speak of this right to vote as though the Tamils were barbarians who only understand and deserve Tiger-democracy. By advocating for the Tamils something that would raise their indignation if inflicted on the Sinhalese, they make no secret of their contempt for the Tamil people.

Ironically, the TNA manifesto calls for a closing down sale of the community lock, stock, and barrel by voting for the LTTE as its sole representatives. The LTTE is pre-empting it with the help of the international community. [\[TOP\]](#)

8. Elections and the International Community

It requires no massacre. It takes only a few selected killings for the LTTE to determine the fate of the elections by scaring off candidates and their supporters. The international community is going to monitor these elections and make important pronouncements. It is also their obligation to reflect on their own role. It is not hard to see that they have contributed much to the growing turbulence in Sri Lanka.

Despite the many faults of the Kumaratunge government, its attempt to bring about a constitutional resolution to the basic conflict had significant merit, and should have been supported. But although this was the longstanding Tamil aspiration, the LTTE did not want it

and the UNP of Ranil Wickremasinghe saw some narrow political advantage in undermining such a resolution. As the 1999 presidential election drew near, the peace lobbies backed by the West and the UNP presidential aspirant advocated the same line - appeasement of the LTTE. This was clearly reflected in the document where the National Alliance for Peace addressed questions to the candidates pointing to recognition of the LTTE as sole representatives along the road to peace. This was also candidate Wickremasinghe's line. The fate of the Tamil people in such an arrangement was not considered.

These same peace lobbies doubled up as civil society organisations leading election-monitoring groups, wielding considerable influence in guiding foreign monitors. A number of them showed their distinct UNP bias and their unconcealed contempt for Tamils who opposed the LTTE. Such powerful links helped the UNP to deceitfully undermine President Kumaratunge's efforts at a constitutional settlement and get away with it.

Out of all these manoeuvrings came the misnamed "peace process" of early 2002. Backed by the West, it was executed in the double-tongued, secretive spirit in which deals had been struck with the LTTE. The Norwegians should have known better. They should have recognised the obvious risks in disregarding constitutional propriety and sidelining the President (who despite her party's numerical disadvantage in parliament maintained decisive executive power). They disregarded the democratically minded Tamils, but even more dangerous, they ignored the rising humiliation and unease felt by the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority. Moreover, by trying to build peace through strengthening a force that suppresses its people in the name of national self-determination, the Norwegians have helped to catalyse fragmentation by actors playing the regional card in a similar fashion as Karuna has done.

And here we are today. The North-East is being rendered a desert where people are thirsting for the bare essentials of a moral human existence. The South is restive. The skewed peace process following in the wake of aggressive globalization has left the Sinhalese Buddhists, the majority of whom were essentially open to a genuine federal solution, feeling robbed of something that is fundamentally to do with their existence. When demagogues speak mischievously of a Western-Christian conspiracy to secure votes, they are on fertile ground. The nation is paying a heavy price.

Through all this Ranil Wickremasinghe, who is being promoted by the Western media as the champion of peace, has played the 'slippery' politician, as several foreign correspondents have known him over the years. He came to a secret understanding with the LTTE, ditched President Kumaratunge's proposed constitution at the 11th hour, and flirted with Sinhalese extremists who opposed the constitution as giving too much to the Tamils. His peace process was stalled, ironically because the LTTE did not want to discuss a federal solution that was never part of any of their deals. Wickremasinghe had no options left except a covert surrender of the North-East. Finally, the people of the North-East are left very much on their own.

PA/JVP alliance

The steps towards the President's call for snap elections were propelled by the new alliance between the PA and the JVP. The increasing popular support for the PA, for the JVP and for a push towards the alliance reflects a critical mishandling of the peace process by the UNP (UNF), the international community and the peace NGOs. All of them, deliberately or by default, failed to advance a broader peace process that would involve all political parties.

There was limited discussion in the public sphere about the kind of political solution the people envisioned. Rather than appeal to the people's sense of fair play, the peace deal and the LTTE's conditions for an ISGA were presented as *fait accompli* decided by the power brokers of this world.

Sinhalese chauvinism in the South has been on the ascendant in reaction to perceived humiliation and the LTTE's unchecked breaches of the cease-fire. The combined force of these developments, the mood in the South, and the clumsy manner in which the PA and the President were sidelined, led to the President seizing several key ministries, and in turn, the Norwegians withdrawing from their facilitatory role and the Prime Minister causing unwanted panic by questioning the validity of the cease-fire agreement. The stalemate precipitated elections after the PA hurriedly sewed up an alliance with the obscurantist JVP, which left the alliance's solution to the ethnic conflict in a welter of confusion.

Faced with a hostile international community suspicious of the alliance's attitude to globalization and the JVP's readiness to make populist use of an outmoded chauvinism and its influence over labour unions in power games, a prospective PA-led government after April 2nd may be haunted by the decisions it made in the last few months. On the other hand, as often happens to obscurantist forces, the JVP may once more demonstrate its capacity to somersault. The contrast between its implacable verbal hostility to India in the latter 1980s and its very deferential attitude to India today has largely gone unnoticed. [\[TOP\]](#)

9. The Failure of Tamil Parliamentary Politics

The Tigers' hopes of a clean sweep at the elections have been threatened by the unexpected defiance of the TULF leader Anandasangaree in putting up an independent list. In going step-by-step using his office as party president, he played his cards with notable acumen exposing his detractors as spineless tools of the LTTE. The LTTE's terror succeeded in confining the threat to Jaffna. Most of the candidates on his list are living exposed in their homes in Jaffna without protection. Among them is Chellan Kandaiyan, former mayor of Jaffna, who defied the LTTE that prevented him from opening the rehabilitated Jaffna Public Library. Significantly, T. Subarthiran of the EPRLF who was constantly at Kandaiyan's side strengthening him, was assassinated by the LTTE last June (our Special Rep. No 16 and statement on Subthiran).

What was disappointing was the failure of the other Tamil opposition groups to answer the urgent need of the hour, drop their outmoded acronyms whose relevance ended in 1986, and come together as a democratic alternative. This happened largely because of grand delusions of the EPDP leadership, still giving priority to the commerce of parliamentary politics. These parties coming together as a clear democratic alternative would have given the people some hope. The public would however be bemused by any call from the EPDP for clean elections. By playing Little Jack Horner at this juncture, the EPDP leader has done a great disservice to democratically minded members of all opposition groups, including his own, who are all now facing the full brunt of Pottu Amman's legions.

The TNA candidates have shown themselves to be below contempt by fighting the elections largely on the strength of the Tigers' determination to exterminate their opponents. LTTE political leader Tamil Chelvan told journalists recently that once elected, the job of the TNA MPs will be to secure for the Tigers the position of sole representatives. However, their methods illuminate what they really think of their acceptance among the people.

The events on the ground portend very clearly that the elections in the North-East would be so foul, murderous and one sided to even remotely reflect the people's choice. [\[TOP\]](#)

10. What the Monitors can do

At present it looks as though the LTTE would get through most of its killing before foreign monitors are even on the ground. The best they can do now is to arrive early and start interacting with the candidates and their supporters.

More importantly they should learn from their past mistakes and understand that the attack on democracy and the effective rigging of elections has been going on methodically for a long time. Further, foreign monitors are under no political compulsion to give legitimacy to the Tigers' attempt to use 'democracy' to climb into the seat of power and kick the ladder as Hitler did. It is important that the legitimacy they seek as 'sole representatives' should be denied.

However shamefully sensational the election violence by the major parties in the South, it should not detract from the fact that the violence in the North-East is qualitatively of a different order. A number of gangsters and criminals will be entering Parliament in the South. Several of them infamously demonstrated their prowess in July 1983. But they were far from ending democracy, free expression or the prospect of reform.

In comparison to all these gangsters from the South put together, even the more urbane and even 'non-violent' TNA candidates are a far greater menace to society. Apart from the insidious violence of their election, they stand for the ending of all democracy and the sanctioning of institutionalised murder, child conscription and plunder of those with little in life besides their children. Nevertheless Karuna's move must have left them with a feeling of now adding fire-walking to the penances they perform before the Leader. [\[TOP\]](#)

11. Karuna's Move

A number of issues that were suppressed during a time of war have reemerged in the East under the cease-fire. The LTTE's conduct has exacerbated older feelings of being exploited by a Jaffna-based elite. It is not the far graver issue of mass child conscription that was brazenly inflicted on Batticaloa by Karuna himself in 2001 that touched off this resentment. The elites, whether in Jaffna or Batticaloa, have shown themselves largely inured to such matters, which afflicted mainly the poor, the utterly helpless and the widows from two decades of war and despoliation. The issue was rather the division of spoils from aid and aid agencies among the elites. The new elite is not in Jaffna or Batticaloa, but in the Vanni - the top ranks of the LTTE and their hangers on - and the crop of government agencies and NGOs, mainly based in Colombo, that channel or service this aid. It seemed a good recipe to consolidate the peace process sans democracy.

To give one example related by well-placed citizens in Batticaloa, an NGO formulated a project where Karuna as well as some leading citizens were on the board. As part of the project several scores of vehicles were obtained for development work in Batticaloa. All the vehicles, these persons said, ended up in the Vanni. These persons were sitting with Karuna and writing projects while Karuna's other child conscription enterprises did not touch them as much as the vehicles going to the Vanni.

A leaflet put out by Karuna on 4th March set out his faction's grievances against the Vanni leadership. Among them are: Exclusion of the Batticaloa-Amparai District from development work in spite of the region's highly disproportionate contribution to the LTTE's war effort (4,550 killed in mainly Northern battles); Northern leaders who head all 30 departments living in luxury while 600 Eastern cadres posted far from home man bunker lines and provide security for them; Northern leadership demanding the dispatch of thousands of more Eastern cadres to the North in order to prepare for war; Intelligence Unit cadres under Pottu Amman unleashing murder and plunder in the East.

Most of these grievances struck a responsive chord among people in Batticaloa-Amparai. Residents contacted by us said that things were strangely calm initially, with no open displays, but people are agitated within. And with good reason. Prabhakaran's killer machine is around and nearly all Eastern commanders obeyed the Leader's orders to move to the Vanni, including Kausalyan (political leader), Keerthi (intelligence), Ram (military) and Senathy (town area leader). Karuna's deputy Ramesh went subsequently, while Karuna went into hiding in the interior reflecting his apprehensions.

By 6th March, however, there were public demonstrations in Batticaloa-Amparai, which, even when not openly critical of Prabhakaran, were broadly supportive of the issues raised by Karuna and urged the Leader to settle matters peacefully. The elite too in turn had crisis meetings and moved to approach the Leader for an amicable settlement. For the first time there was open discussion of many issues.

Meanwhile in an interview with the BBC Tamil Service on 7th March, Karuna stated that as a condition for a settlement, Prabhakaran should remove his intelligence chief Pottu Amman, financial chief Thamilenthir and police chief P. Nadesan. A democratic reform group could hardly have pitched a more apt demand.

What tipped the scales?

Karuna emerged as the hero of the Northern military offensive that pushed back the Sri Lankan Army from large chunks of territory in the North between November 1999 and May 2000, culminating in the conquest of Elephant Pass and the near fall of Jaffna. He was a trusted commander of Prabhakaran who was posted back to Batticaloa in December 2000 to undertake the rebuilding of the LTTE's depleted ranks. To this end Karuna launched forced, especially child, conscription from August 2001 (our Bulletins 26 - 28), making it compulsory for each family to give a child 'voluntarily'. Karuna's leaflet above says sheepishly, "Parents from the district had voluntarily given their sons and daughters to the LTTE to safeguard their district. And it was to respect the assurances given to the parents and to use the cadres for development work in the district that the order to send the troops [to the North] was not carried out."

Karuna was also pampered by Prabhakaran and did more than his share for the ruin of the East. He was ambitious to consolidate his grip on his own area, Valaichenai - Kiran and on the eve of his return to Batticaloa, Nimalan Soundaranayagam, newly elected MP from that area, was assassinated on his orders (see below). At the next elections a year later, on Karuna's instructions his uncle and UNP organizer Kumaraguru was placed by then political leader Karikalan in the TULF list for Batticaloa. Kumaraguru polled very badly. Karuna's brother and area leader Reggie was given a virtual monopoly of the seafood trade in the Vaharai - Kalkuda area. Karuna's hand was also evident in the violent repression of the large

Muslim population in the area (our Sp. Reps. 14 - 17). Thus Karuna's blaming Pottu Amman for all the murder and pillage needs to be taken with a pinch of salt.

Where then did the problem arise? Karuna's prestige and Prabhakaran's heavy dependence on his conscripts to carry out his Eelam agenda had made Karuna, a relatively junior man, into a major force in the organization. His own ambitions too needed to be watched in an organization where the main cement is fear. Prabhakaran enforces this by what one may term informal decentralisation. Thus among intelligence cadres posted in the area for example, many may be in practice Karuna's men. But there would be others, who known or unknown to Karuna would have been Pottu Amman or Prabhakaran loyalists.

We recorded for example in Sp.Rep.14 that Pottu Amman spent some time in Batticaloa from late April 2002 supervising arrangements for conscription, intelligence gathering, targeting of opponents and planting spies, assassins and suicide operatives in Colombo. Whatever the tensions between them, Karuna worked closely with him. The Batticaloa TNA list was finalised at Karuna's office, but Northern leaders too would have had their say in it. These parallel and joint operations by persons with diverse loyalties are necessary for Prabhakaran's ultimate control, but are pregnant with tensions that could blow out of proportion when there are serious differences. Those in the North-East come across situations where they are questioned by LTTE intelligence operatives, but later find that the local intelligence men knew nothing and are annoyed about it.

Murder operations often involve a multiplicity of actors and are designed to hide the source. On 8th November 2000, Nimalan Soundaranayagam answered a call to meet local military commander Nagesh, a man under Karuna, in the Kiran area. It being a rainy day, Nagesh persuaded Nimalan to wear a helmet and jacket given by him. On the way back he was shot dead by gunmen who were outsiders. The people identified the local LTTE man who acted as pointer, and Karuna as the one who gave the order. But the killers from outside were very likely from Pottu Amman's Intelligence Wing.

Karuna's statements indicate that the main difference with Prabhakaran arose over his reluctance to send additional cadres to the North. Even indirectly Karuna would have constantly faced pressures from parents demanding to see their children and he had conscripted so many. Finally when the two elections-related murders took place on 1st March, the Vanni leadership would have come under pressure with the media citing Tamil Chelvan's statement banning Southern parties from contesting. Karuna's name would have come up in the internal blame game - an additional point in the charge sheet summoning him to HQ. Except for the timing the murders were not an issue for Prabhakaran or Karuna.

The scales were tipped. Believing that the Intelligence Wing had orders to bring him in, Karuna sent away all officers from the North. From the experience of Mahattaya and Karikalan he knew that if he went North, he would not come back for a long time if at all he did. The politician in him emerged. In a populist vein he contacted the press. And he blamed all the murders on Pottu Amman and listed the grievances of the Batticaloa-Amparai people, which as his letter to Prabhakaran of 2nd March indicates, he had never raised before. The letter says: "Because of the reverence in which we hold you, we have borne our hurt in silence. But now the problems have become very grave..." He demanded total autonomy with no Northerners holding office in his domain - something suicidal for Prabhakaran to accede to. [\[TOP\]](#)

12. The Crack and its significance for Human Rights

Whether or not Karuna survives, a wide crack has appeared in the LTTE's façade. The disarming of Eastern cadres in the North has placed the organization on the same road, which led to its bloodying Tamil - Muslim relations. The crack may also provide opportunities. Karuna may be reaching out to his former adversaries for his survival - the Muslims for example. It is time to move on demanding democratic safeguards for all other sections in the East and the release of child conscripts. It would have positive repercussions in the North.

The opportunity provided by this break would be wasted if there were no decisive movement towards a political settlement. At the root of the problem is the history of violence directed by the State and the failure to reach a political settlement. If the apparent weakening of the LTTE is seen as an occasion to play with the question of a political settlement, history is bound to repeat itself. Provoking reprisal violence against Tamil civilians is the most ready means by which the LTTE has asserted its status as the only hope of the Tamils.

There are many reasons why the Sri Lankan and other governments will tread warily with regard to Karuna's appeals for help. The two year cease-fire has been well-used by the LTTE to enhance its potential for terror in the South. But other organizations should have more flexibility. [\[TOP\]](#)

13. A Dangerous and Tenuous Triumph

At one level the Tigers have outsmarted everyone. Foreign envoys who were confident of taming the LTTE and 'engaged' with it, are now practically doing its bidding. Its crimes are accepted in the name of preserving peace. It earns tens of millions of dollars monthly from protection rackets among expatriate Tamils and extorts unbearably huge sums from people in the North-East. Yet its laughable claim that the North-East suffers from poverty and lack of development solely because of government neglect, is readily pandered to. To longtime observers, the LTTE's power looked limitless. The LTTE has set a blazing precedent for other forces to twist the foibles of the world order to their advantage. This was the LTTE's hour of triumph.

But it is nervous. It is fearful - and with good reason. Time and advancing years will not be kind to its leaders, who are long past the age of being pin-up figures. Cracks are beginning to appear. We see increasingly among crimes committed by LTTE cadres those of a personal and petty criminal nature. The break that came with Karuna's rebellion illustrates the danger constantly present in the politics of hubris.

The LTTE's leader-centred politics in the absence of human values or basic moral inhibitions left fear as the only basis for cohesion. Its ideological intolerance and readiness to kill on the slightest pretext did not allow people to be normal human beings who are permitted to make mistakes, learn from them and correct themselves. It has left everyone a hypocrite and everyone a traitor.

Karuna is a living example. He was an archetypal hero, the group's most publicised military champion. Yet the human substance was weak. He also proved himself the archetypal "traitor." (to use the LTTE's own menacing words). In everyone in this society, the arch-hero and the arch-traitor cohabit the same human frame. All know it - from the TNA candidates to the editor of TamilNet.

Persons from the generation of the LTTE leaders who challenged them are tired or dead. The leaders have however failed to steal the community's history. A rising generation will hold them to account for their crimes.

Prabhakaran has atrophied within the closed world he fashioned for himself. Far more to blame are the professors, priests and professionals who have provided the sophistication and urbane veneer to what would otherwise have been yet another movement built on a leader with a millennial ideology, known best for the kind of brutality witnessed at Kanagampuliyady

The Worms Turn

In the Tamil polity that seemed stone dead, we are suddenly witnessing some apparently suicidal or desperate acts of courage that have become a major headache for the LTTE. At one end we have Anadasangaree and a number of fellow candidates placing their lives on the line, openly defying the LTTE. The same holds for younger candidates from other groups who refused to be cowed by the LTTE.

It raises some interesting questions. Norway gave transmitters to the LTTE as though they were having problems in making themselves heard and needed help to disseminate their ideas of peace. Will the Norwegians now do something for those ready to challenge them? Will they take the initiative to at least allow a few campaign meetings in the Vanni to be held in security, at least to let the people know what the parties stand for and their election symbols?

Might is Right has been the basis on which the Norwegian-brokered MoU was framed. Repeated appeals by others that it needed revision because it in effect gave open sanction for the LTTE to consolidate its terror in the government-controlled areas went unheard. Those who had to flee their homes into abject misery owing to the LTTE's violence, or to protect their children from its abduction gangs, were simply ignored.

There have never been any real openings for those who deserted from the LTTE. They were an embarrassment. Hardly anyone wanted to know they existed. Money was where one wanted to pander to the LTTE as part of globally sponsored appeasement. Its victims who were badly in need of help were not a force to reckon with from the donors' and Norway's point of view. Now Karuna, whatever the future holds for him, has breached the dam. One way or the other it has created an opening for many more worms to turn. The so far imaginary "Third Force" might finally put on flesh. A demand for revision of the MoU has reemerged. Will now at least giving human rights its due place in dealing with such questions replace the folly of blind appeasement of brute force?

The advice Tamil Chelvan received from LTTE ideologue Balasingam in London, after which he said that Southern parties would not be allowed to contest, heralded the murder of political opponents. It in turn triggered the LTTE's present crisis. From London Balasingam has repeatedly talked about 'garlanding' opponents (as they did Rajiv Gandhi!). Will the British government finally stop playing games with him, and, in the name of democracy at least, show some concern for the 'snakes' (priority opponents) and 'rattle-snakes' (non-priority opponents) he talks about?