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Pirapaharan, Chapter 33

by T. Sabaratnam

(Volume 2)

Special note: Mr. J. N. Dixit and Mr. Shankar Raji died while I was writing this chapter. Both were younger than me. Both provided me with a wealth of information concerning the events about which I am currently writing. Dixit told me of the happenings in New Delhi and about his talks with Jayewardene, Athulathmudali and others. Shankar Raji attended most of the ENLF meetings at Chennai as the EROS representative or was aware of those discussions. Though they both turned against the Tamil freedom struggle later on, they were helpful during this period. I have checked the information they provided with others and included whatever I found accurate. If there are any factual slips in my account, readers are free to point them out. I will definitely print them as separate notes, giving credit to the writer.

-Sabaratnam

Frog- Marched to Thimpu (Continued)

Natpattimunai massacre

Natpattimunai is a Tamil village in Kalmunai in the Amparai district. Greenish khaki-clad policemen of the SAS-trained Special Task Force (STF) set out in jeeps in the evening of 17 May, three days after the Anuradhapura attack, to Natpattimunai and two adjacent villages. The STF cordoned off the area and arrested all youths. The policemen shot and killed some and took away others.

One man was bathing when commandos arrived. He fell at their feet and begged that he be allowed to live, as he had no connection with the militant movements. They shot him. They shot another youth in the head in front of his wife. They carried away his body shouting, "This would be the fate of every Tamil who joins the terrorists."

The commandos took about 40 youths to the cemetery on the outskirts of Natpattimunai. They ordered them to dig their own graves. The commandos shot the youths when they had finished their task and buried them in graves they had dug. (Refer to Amnesty International Report 1986 for details).



The Kalmunai Citizens Committee which conducted on-the-spot investigation provided Amnesty International with a detailed report. Amnesty International raised the matter with the Sri Lankan government, which denied arresting or shooting the youths. But the government did not explain how the youths had disappeared.

Paul Nallanayagam, President of the Kalmunai Citizens Committee, did not leave the matter to rest. He spoke to the media about the incident. The police arrested him the next day and charged him in courts with spreading false rumours. The High Court acquitted him in July 1986. The judge in his judgment commented, "the evidence that was adduced casts a serious doubt on the prosecution case that no arrests took place at Natpattimunai by the STF officials on 17 May 1985."

Three days after the Natpattimunai killing the LTTE retaliated. Its fighters exploded a landmine at Kiran in the Batticaloa district and blew up a jeep killing five STF men. STF personnel and Home Guards rounded up 37 Tamil youths from two villages, killed them and secretly disposed of their bodies.

It was during this escalating atmosphere of violence that Dixit assumed duties as Indian High Commissioner in Colombo. During my interview with him on 27 May, he expressed his concern about the increasing frequency of violent incidents and their intensification. "I pray that Mr. Bhandari's visit will be fruitful," he said and added, "This beautiful island needs to be saved from further calamity."

J.N. Dixit, 2004

That was not to be. Leaders of the Tamil groups were not that optimistic. They were



தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணச் சுவடிகள்

extremely distrustful of Jayewardene. The ENLF met to assess Bhandari's intended visit to Colombo. Pirapaharan predicted that Bhandari would be taken for a ride. He said Jayewardene would talk nicely and win over Bhandari. He forecast that Jayewardene would try to drive a wedge between India and the Tamil armed groups. "We must be watchful about it," he warned.

ENLF leaders decided that they should not permit India to take them for granted. They also decided that, for them, the interests of the Sri Lankan Tamil people were paramount. So India should not be permitted to decide for them. But TULF fell out of line. Amirthalingam issued a statement saying that India should be directly involved in working out a political solution to the Sri Lankan Tamil problem.

He also laid down three conditions. They were:

- All militant groups should be involved in the negotiations.
- The negotiations should be between India and Sri Lanka, and
- India should underwrite the settlement.

Pirapaharan was furious. He told the other ENLF leaders that they should not permit India to decide their fate. He said in Tamil, "*Emathu thalai vithiyai nangalthan theermanikka vendum*" (We must determine our fate). He accused the TULF leadership of selling out the interests of the Sri Lankan Tamil people to safeguard its leadership. The armed groups told the TULF not to talk to the Sri Lankan government on behalf of the Tamil people.

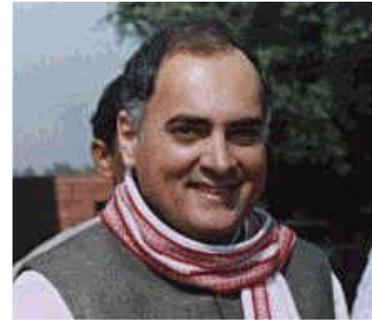
Bhandari's visit.

Bhandari flew to Colombo on 28 May by a special airforce plane. He brought with him India's draft proposals for ceasefire and talks. It was formulated by Foreign Affairs officials on the basis of the talks Saxena had had with Jayewardene and Athulathmudali.

Bhandari discussed four matters - ceasefire, composition of the Tamil delegations for talks, the basis for a political solution and the date of talks. Jayewardene and Athulathmudali took a hard line in the first three matters. Athulathmudali even played with words. He argued against the use of the word ceasefire. He said ceasefire connoted that armed groups are holding territory. He suggested the use of the phrase 'cessation of hostilities.' Bhandari rejected it.

Jayewardene blamed India for the escalation of armed attacks in the north and east. He said violence would abate if India prevented the passage of men and weapons from Tamil Nadu. He insisted that prevention of transport of men and weapons across the Palk Straits should be part of the ceasefire agreement. Bhandari yielded on that point. Jayewardene argued that maintenance of law and order is a government function and the government should be permitted to reopen the police stations closed due to the attacks by armed groups. Bhandari agreed to incorporate that also in the ceasefire proposal.

Jayewardene objected to the Indian proposal that five armed groups - LTTE, EPRLF, TELO, EROS and PLOTE - and the TULF would form the Tamil side. He said the government had taken a firm decision not to talk to the terrorist groups. He argued that talking to the armed groups would provide legitimacy to them. Bhandari told him that talking to alienated citizens to find out an acceptable political solution went beyond the technicalities of law and legitimacy. He gave the examples of Rajiv Gandhi's talks with Punjabi and Assamese militants. Jayewardene agreed to negotiate with the Tamil armed groups and the TULF. Rajiv Gandhi and Bhandari considered that as the most significant achievement of Indian diplomacy.



Jayewardene visited New Delhi on 1 June on the invitation of Rajiv Gandhi to have talks with him. Rajiv told Jayewardene on that day his experiences with the discussions he had had with Punjabi and Assamese militants. He thanked Jayewardene for taking the bold decision to talk to Tamil armed groups. Jayewardene told Rajiv that the Sinhala people were angry with the Tamil armed groups, especially after their Anuradhapura attack. Jayewardene said he stood the risk of earning their hatred if he talked to the armed groups and said India should do something to help reduce his risk. He said India should agree to help Sri Lanka on two important matters. Such help would reduce the distrust the Sinhala people had about India. The Sinhala people believe that India is favouring the Tamils, he added.

The two requests he made were:

- India should stop supporting Tamil militants.
- India should not endorse the Tamil demand for a separate state.

Rajiv Gandhi readily agreed to do both. Jayewardene had achieved his objective for the visit.

Then Jayewardene suggested that India and Sri Lanka undertake joint patrolling of the Palk Straits to prevent Tamil armed groups sending men and weapons from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka. Rajiv Gandhi promised to look into it.

On the second day of the visit, 2 June, Rajiv Gandhi took Jayewardene with him to Bangladesh which had been devastated by a cyclone. Both leaders discussed the contours of a political solution to the Sri Lankan Tamil problem during the flight

to Decca and back. During these discussions, Rajiv Gandhi persuaded Jayewardene to accept provinces instead of districts as the unit of devolution. Jayewardene also told Rajiv that he was prepared to meet and talk to the leaders of the Tamil armed groups.

Jayewardene returned to Colombo on 3 June. A six-paragraph joint communiqué was issued before Jayewardene's departure. The two vital paragraphs in it were,

Both sides agreed that immediate steps should be taken to defuse the situation and create a proper climate for progress towards a political settlement which would be acceptable to all concerned within the framework of the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.

The two sides further agreed that all forms of violence should abate and finally cease. Every effort will be made for the speedy restoration of normalcy in the northern and eastern provinces. This will be conducive for the early return of Sri Lankan citizens in India to Sri Lanka.

After the sendoff at the Delhi airport, Rajiv Gandhi briefed the media about the agreement reached. He said they had decided that only a reduction in the violence would create the climate for "progress for a political settlement." In order to achieve that, India would clamp down on the Tamil Nadu-based armed groups and stop any flow of men and weapons to Sri Lanka across the Palk Straits and Colombo would reciprocate, once the de-escalation was seen to succeed, by stricter control over military operations.

Rajiv Gandhi said, "India is determined not to allow its territory to be used as a channel for arms to Tamil guerrillas who are fighting for a separate state in Sri Lanka," and "The Tamils of Sri Lanka should not expect to have a separate state. They cannot also expect to have federalism. All they can hope to have is an arrangement similar to that available in India."

Rajiv Gandhi, on his return to his office from the media briefing, telephoned M. G. Ramachandran and told him that his talks with President Jayewardene was useful and he was hopeful that a political solution to the island's crisis would be found soon.

Tamil Nadu Education Minister V.R. Nedunchezhiyan informed the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly about Rajiv Gandhi's telephone conversation with MGR and announced that Rajiv Gandhi's talks had generated hopes of a political settlement to the Tamil problem. He also announced that Rajiv Gandhi would take steps to end the conflict on his return from his foreign trip. Rajiv Gandhi visited the US and then the Soviet Union during the first half of June, where he discussed the Sri Lankan crisis with US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov. He returned to India on 18 June, the day the ceasefire came into effect in Sri Lanka.

Jayewardene, on his return from Delhi on 3 June, told the media at the Katunayake Airport that India had begun to accept the realities on the ground. He said he was willing to grant the Tamils an autonomous arrangement similar to what was prevailing in India and the first devolution units would be the district councils.

Amirthalingam, who was in Chennai, reacted to the joint statement and Jayewardene's Katunayake statement. He welcomed the joint statement. He said in a statement, "We welcome the joint statement that immediate steps should be taken to create a proper climate for progress towards a political settlement which should be acceptable to all concerned. We hope that India will play a more positive role towards the achievement of a solution acceptable to all." But he expressed his disappointment with Jayewardene's Katunayake statement that District Councils would be the basic units of devolution.

Lalith Athulathmudali welcomed the Delhi agreement as 'positive' and the 'change of attitude' in New Delhi.

The Trap

Militant leaders were dismayed. They saw the agreement as a victory for the Sri Lanka government.

Balasingham told the media, "For us to announce a ceasefire, we insist on the Sri Lanka Government fulfilling a few conditions. They should send the army from the northern and eastern provinces back to the barracks; they should remove the restrictions on free movement in certain areas; they should withdraw the concept of the Prohibited Zone and they should stop indiscriminate arrests."

Balasingham said the Sri Lanka government should lay on the table a package for a political solution and it should have the consensus of opposition parties and the Buddhist clergy.

Balasingham said the ENLF leaders felt the Sri Lankan Government is only seeking to buy time. Said he, "The Sinhalese people are themselves disillusioned with the Jayewardene government for its failure to protect Sinhalese lives. That is why Jayewardene is so desperate to get a ceasefire agreement so that he can consolidate his position and strengthen the Sri Lankan army. The whole thing is a trap."

SLFP leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike's statement confirmed the assessment of the leaders of the Tamil liberation movements. She charged Jayewardene with failure to protect the sacred city of Anuradhapura and the Sinhalese people in Trincomalee. She said the SLFP welcomed the efforts to reach a political solution but "will give no blank cheque."

Jayewardene, instead of forging a Sinhala consensus, antagonized the SLFP further by not only depriving Bandaranaike of her civic rights, but also expelling her from parliament. He drove her into the hands of the extremist Buddhist clergy. Then he told India and the world that he was unable to go further than the District Councils because of the opposition of

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the SLFP and the Buddhist clergy.

Tamils then and now interpret this as a game played by whichever Sinhala leadership is in power and they say this game has continued since the 'fifties. That is why the ENLF made Sinhala consensus a condition for political talks. Pirapaharan, an adept in making use of the 'ruses' of the Sinhala leadership to further the Tamil freedom struggle, told Indian officials that talks with Jayewardene without Sinhala consensus would be fruitless.

Balasingham's media comment was made following the meeting of the ENLF leaders. They met on 4 June to consider the New Delhi agreement. Pirapaharan told the meeting that Jayewardene had laid a trap and both Bhandari and Rajiv Gandhi had fallen into it. "The old man is determined to destroy the Tamil freedom struggle. He thinks that he can do it by driving a wedge between India and us. We should not permit it."

The militant leaders considered their counter-strategy. They decided to await information and persuasion from Indian intelligence officials and politicians. The leaders of the four groups decided to take a collective decision about the ceasefire and to stick to it.

Bhandari and other Indian officials were anxious to crown Rajiv Gandhi, who would be back in Delhi on 18 June after his successful US and Soviet Union visits, with a ceasefire in Sri Lanka. And Bhandari wanted to strengthen his position with the ceasefire achievement.

Chandrasekaran, the RAW officer dealing with the Tamil armed groups, commenced the effort to get the militant leaders to fall in line with the Indian plan. The meeting took place on 5 June in Chennai. Pirapaharan, Sri Sabaratnam, Balakumar and Pathmanabha and a few others participated. Chandrasekaran briefed them about India's plan.

Pirapaharan, who had emerged the leader of the group, told Chandrasekaran, a ceasefire at that time would be disadvantageous to the armed groups. They had escalated their offensive with the intention of pushing the army into its camps. They were almost at the point of achieving their objective. The army commander and Jayewardene knew it. Pirapaharan then quoted what northern commander Hamilton Wanasinghe told a foreign correspondent a week earlier.

Wanasinghe 2002

Wanasinghe had said, "The terrorists are more confident than ever before. Some of these groups have got together and when they come for attacks are using larger number of men. They have mined all roads. Every inch of the road must be checked before the troops can move. It is a great strain."

Pirapaharan said that they would be able to achieve their objective soon. If that were done, the Sri Lanka government would be in a weak position. Jayewardene was trying to avoid such a situation through a ceasefire, he argued.

Pirapaharan said a ceasefire would provide time and space for the army to reorganize, rearm and revitalize their fighting capability. He added, a ceasefire would also demoralize the Tamil fighters. "They are on the top now. If they were told not to fight at a moment when they are successful, they will feel frustrated," Pirapaharan argued.



Chandrasekaran, usually sympathetic and supportive of the Tamil viewpoint, was not in a mood to listen, comments Balasingham in his *War and Peace* (Page 73). And while giving his reasons for India's insistence on a ceasefire, Chandrasekaran revealed India's motive behind hurrying the Tamil militants into a ceasefire. These are Balasingham's words,

He said enough damage had been inflicted on the Sri Lanka forces and further devastation might destabilize the state, and India would not favour such a situation.

The Indian foreign policy objective had always been to weaken Jayewardene and make him listen to India and not to destabilize the state. Destabilizing the Sri Lankan state, Indian policy planners argued, would open the floodgate for foreign forces, inimical to Indian interests, to creep into Sri Lanka.

Chandrasekaran, who revealed the limitations India would impose on the Tamil freedom struggle, tried to soothe the frayed feelings of the Tamil militant leaders, pointing out that Rajiv Gandhi and Bhandari had expended a great deal of diplomatic energy to compel Jayewardene to talk to militant leaders. Thus, they had made Jayewardene accept Tamil militant leaders as the representatives of the Tamil people. He said that India had won legitimacy for them.

Chandrasekaran pleaded with the ENLF leaders to agree to the ceasefire and gave the pledge that India would not let down the guerrilla groups if Jayewardene failed to honour his undertaking.

ENLF leaders agreed to consider India's proposal for a ceasefire and talks,

The Indian Foreign Ministry did not stop with that. It told MGR to use his influence. MGR sent his trusted industry minister, Panrutti Ramachandran, who in 1983 accompanied Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the UN to raise the July riots in the General Assembly, to talk to ENLF leaders. He advised them to 'give peace a chance.'

Then, Rajiv Gandhi sent P. Chithamparam, Minister of State for Internal Security, to persuade the militant leaders to agree to the Indian plan. RAW arranged the meeting in Chennai and invited the leaders of the ENLF for a meeting. The following

தமிழ்த் தேசிய ஆவணச் சுவடிகள்

attended: LTTE - Pirapaharan and Balasingham. TELO - Sri Sabaratnam and Mathi. EPRLF- Pathmanabha, Ramesh, Varatharaja Perumal and EROS- Balakumar, Sankar Raji and Muhilan.

Chithamparam told the militant leaders that Rajiv Gandhi was keen on finding a solution to the Tamil problem. Tamils could depend on Rajiv Gandhi to look after the interests of the Tamil people. He had persuaded Jayewardene to talk to the militant leaders. Thus, Rajiv Gandhi had won for the militant leaders recognition and respectability. They must now prepare themselves to talk to the Sri Lankan government. For talks to begin, fighting must cease. India had proposed a ceasefire. India wanted the militant groups to abide by it.

Then Chithamparam uttered the threat. Said he, 'If you are willing to abide by the ceasefire, you can stay in India, If not, you will have to leave.'

The militant leaders were shocked. Pirapaharan looked at Balasingham. Balasingham told Chithamparam, "We will have to consult each other. We will convey our collective decision after the consultation."

"Let that decision be a good one,' said Chithamparam and left.

The militant leaders met immediately. Pathmanabha practically exploded a time bomb with the announcement, "We have decided to abide by the ceasefire." Pirapaharan and Sri Sabaratnam were taken aback.

Balasingham reminded Pathmanabha about the collective decision taken at the previous meeting. "You agreed to abide by the collective decision, but now you are saying something else." Sankar Raji answered for Pathmanabha. He said, "We have also taken a similar decision. "They are telling us to pack our bags and go home. What are we to do after going there?" he said. He wove into the second sentence an expressive filthy word...

Balasingham took objection and that led to a serious wrangle between the two. During that altercation Balasingham made reference to RAW. That resulted in a nasty exchange.

Pirapaharan intervened. "Annai! Please stop it," he told Balasingham. Then he said, "I apologize on Annai's behalf. We are here not to quarrel. If the Front decides to accept the ceasefire, I will accept that decision. Even if we decide to accept the ceasefire, we must not agree to do it immediately. If we do so, no one will respect us. Even a child refuses to eat till the mother coerces it to eat. We will resist for some time and ultimately agree to abide by the ceasefire."

Then Pirapaharan gave his reasoning for his recommendation to accept the ceasefire. They were:

1. Refusal to accept the ceasefire would be costly for the Tamil freedom struggle. It would lose India's sympathy and support. If that happened, Jayewardene would be the winner. We cannot allow that to happen.
2. The Tamil freedom struggle would lose the support of the international community.
3. Armed groups would get the image that they are lovers of terror. After that the international community would not be consider them freedom fighters.
4. Jayewardene's attempt to portray himself as a peace lover would be accepted.

Pirapaharan gave yet another reason for the acceptance of the ceasefire. He said that they had now a chance to demolish the thinking among leaders and the masses that the role of the 'boys' was to fight and talks should be conducted by the TULF. "Let's make use of this opportunity to erase this thought from the minds of the people," he said.

Dixit and Thondaman told me during this period that the armed groups should do the fighting and allow the seasoned lawyers of the TULF to do the talking. Dixit told me, "The boys do not have the knowledge and skill to comprehend the intricacies of the constitutional language."

Pirapaharan said their strategy should be to use the peace trap Jayewardene had set them to trap him. He said they should lay down a set of conditions for the acceptance of the ceasefire. And he added that those conditions should be so crafted to turn Jayewardene's trap on himself. "We will first stipulate the condition that during the ceasefire the army should not come out of the camps. Whether they agree to it or not, we must encircle every camp with our boys during the ceasefire. When the ceasefire ends, the army should not be allowed to get out of their camps. Other leaders also accepted Pirapaharan's strategy.

I saw that strategy at work when I visited Jaffna in May 1985. I went to Jaffna Fort and to the Navatkuli camps. Kittu was in charge of the operation. I saw the fighters from the four militant groups keeping vigil around those camps. "If they try to come out, we will blow them up," the boys told me. I saw helicopters supplying food and provisions to those camps. I was told that the situation was similar in other camps in the Jaffna peninsula.

The leaders then discussed the conditions they should set for a ceasefire. They decided on six: the army should withdraw to their camps; restrictions on the movement of vehicles should be lifted; Emergency and Curfew Laws should be withdrawn; sea surveillance and prohibited zones should be lifted, state-aided colonization should be suspended and all Tamil detainees should be released.

The leaders decided to inform the Indian government that, if all these conditions were accepted, they would observe the ceasefire for 12 weeks. And the Sri Lankan Government should during that 12 weeks place its proposals for a political solution before the militants for their consideration. They decided that, if the government's proposals failed to satisfy

them, they would not take part in the talks. They would then refuse to extend the ceasefire and return to their struggle.

The ENLF leaders conveyed their decision to the Indian Foreign Affairs Ministry. It got Chandrasekaran to telephone Balasingham and inform him of its displeasure. But the news had leaked to the press which gave it wide publicity.

Meanwhile, Bhandari flew to Colombo to finalize India's proposals for a ceasefire and talks and for dates for the ceasefire and talks.

During these talks, Jayewardene asked for clarification on the following matters:

- Ceasefire: Jayewardene wanted an assurance that militant groups would agree to the ceasefire. Bhandari gave the assurance without consulting the armed groups.
- Talks: Jayewardene wanted an assurance that the militant groups would take part in the talks. He told Bhandari that it was useless to talk to the TULF. Bhandari gave that assurance without consulting them.

When Bhandari returned to Delhi, he sent the militant groups and the TULF copies of India's proposals for a ceasefire and talks. It was marked 'Top Secret.'

This is the text of the Indian proposal:

India's Proposals for Ceasefire and Talks

Action to be taken by Sri Lanka Government

Action to be taken by Militants

Phase 1: Starts on June 18 For three weeks

1. Government will lift restrictive legislation on Stop using Prohibited Zone as staging area the use of roads and vehicles and for carrying men and material

2. New Settlements will be suspended

3. Security forces will carry out cordon and searches and operations in the presence of local officials and magistrates.

4. Lift Surveillance Zone and stop infusion of further resources to Armed Services and Police Establishments

Stop attacks on civilians - both Sinhales and Tamils - in the North, East and elsewhere

Cease attacks in the North, East and elsewhere on government offices, economic targets and private property. Stop induction of men and material in the affected areas from outside Sri Lanka.

Phase 11: Three Weeks

1. Security Forces will suspend curfews

Cease attacks directed against convoys of raids and suspend attacks on security forces including police establishments, mining of roads, rail tracks and bridges. Stop carrying of arms

Phase 111: Two Weeks

1. Observe ceasefire

2. Police stations which had been closed down will be reopened. The law and order function will be carried out by the police

3. Amnesty will be declared and those in custody against whom charges have not been filed will be released. (Those who have been charged will be released after the conclusion of successful discussions.)

Phase 1V

Secret talks on substantive issues for reaching a political settlement to take place between the emissaries of the Government and the representatives of the Tamil political leadership and Tamil militant group. The venue of these talks could be a third country acceptable to both sides. Every effort should be made to maintain the secrecy of these talks and, in any case, of the course of the discussions. The search for the solid foundation for a political solution must be completed within a period of three months from the date of declaration of the ceasefire and the amnesty. Depending on the results of these secret talks, open and direct dialogue between the Government and the representatives of the Tamils can commence as soon as the necessary groundwork is considered to have been laid.

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Pirapaharan was livid when the contents of the proposals were explained to him. He told Balasingham India is trying to safeguard its national interest by sacrificing the interests of the Sri Lankan Tamils. He pointed out that with half a sentence in Section 4 of Phase 1 India would achieve its purpose. The relevant half sentence reads: "... stop infusion of further resources to Armed Services and Police establishment." That would bar Jayewardene obtaining the services of foreign mercenaries and getting arms from foreign countries. To obtain that undertaking India was prepared to sacrifice all the gains the Tamil armed struggle had made. Tamil liberation organizations would not only be compelled to give up the struggle they were waging, but also would have to allow the government to re-open the police stations they had closed.

Pirapaharan was also not happy that the TULF had been referred to as the Tamil political leadership and the liberation organizations that created the need for talks was referred to as militant groups.

Pirapaharan's objections were much deeper on two issues. The Indian proposals failed to safeguard Tamil civilians from the attacks of the armed services and the police. The proposals also left room for Jayewardene to drag on the talks by adopting a hard line and suggested that India should ask Sri Lanka to submit a concrete framework of proposals for a political settlement.

While Pirapaharan was expressing his displeasure about India's proposals and talking about conditions, Athulathmudali sprang a surprise. He announced that Sri Lanka had ordered its troops to cease fire from the morning of 18 June.

Athulathmudali's unilateral declaration of ceasefire was a skillful maneuver to defeat the ENLF's attempt to impose conditions. He told the reporters who attended the media conference at the Defence ministry, off the record, that he would have to negotiate about the conditions for a ceasefire only if it was a joint declaration.

"Now let them go to hell with their conditions," he said.

Athulathmudali beat Pirapaharan in his own game. He forced Pirapaharan and other militant leaders to accept the ceasefire without conditions. According to my knowledge, this was the only occasion Athulathmudali beat Pirapaharan. Even during the Vadamarachci operation - Operation Liberation - Pirapaharan withdrew his fighting machine almost intact to Vanni and answered with his first bombing at Nelliady Central College, which shook Athulathmudali and Jayewardene.

The ENLF leaders met in the morning of 18 June to consider the ceasefire.

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Chapter 34 From Ceasefire to Talks

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