

# "Early militancy" from "Tigers of Lanka"

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This is the 1st part of "Early militancy" from "Tigers of Lanka", written by M.R.Nayaran Swamy. This chapter has the history of Sivakumaran and others.

## Early Militancy ( Part 1 )

It is VIRTUALLY impossible to set a date for the genesis of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka.

Tamils began weaving dreams of an independent homeland much more militancy erupted, albeit in an embryonic form, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

After 1956 riots, a group of tamils organised and opened fire at the Sri Lankan army in Batticaloa. Two Sinhalese were killed when 11 Tamils, having between them seven rifles, fired at a convoy of Sinhalese civilians and govt officials one night at a village near Kalmunai.

There was another attack on army soldiers in Jaffna after Colombo stifled the Federal Party "satyagraha" in 1961, but no one was killed.

The failure of the 1961 "satyagraha" set several of its leading lights thinking. Mahatma Gandhi, they argued, succeeded in India with his concept of non-violence and non-cooperation because he was leading a majority against a minority, however powerful; whereas in Sri Lanka, the Tamils were a minority seeking rights from a majority. And the majority was not willing to give concessions.

Some of 20 men associated with the Federal Party thought Gandhism had no place in such a scenario. They decided after the prolonged deliberations to form an underground group to fight for a separate state. Most of them were civil servants and had been influenced by Leon Uris Exodus. At a meeting in Colombo, they christened their group Pulip Padai ( Army of Tigers).

On August 12, 1961, the Pulip Padai members converged at the historic Koneswaran Temple in the eastern port town of Trincomalee and, standing in its holy precincts facing the sea took a solemn oath to fight for a Tamil homeland.

Pulip Padai immediately got into the act, putting out leaflets and pamphlets printed clandestinely, advocating militancy. A student wing called the Manavar Manram ( students council) was set up in 1963. Two Federal Party leaders the Pulip Padai strongly backed were Amirthalingam and V.Navaratnam ( Chavakachcheri MP).

The 1965 decision of the Federal Party to support the UNP govt broke up the Pulip Padai and it eventually withered away. But many of its activists remained strongly committed to the concept of an independent nation.

Two of them were A.Rajaratnam and K.Sivagnanasundaram. Rajaratnam died in 1975 in Madras of asthma.( Rajaratnam was awarded a gold medal posthumously by Prabhakaran at a Jaffna public meeting after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. Indian investigators believe that Dhanu, the woman who acted as the human bomb to kill Gandhi was rajaratnam's daughter). Sivagnanasundaram became the staunch supporter of the LTTE. He was killed in Jaffna in 1988 by the EPRLF.

In 1969, Thangathurai and Kuttimani and a few friends gathered in Jaffna to form an informal group that the former wanted to name the Tamil Liberation Organisation (TLO).

A college Prof's house at Point Pedro, in Jaffna, was a regular meeting point for the group. It included among others Periya (big) Sothi, Chinna (small) Sothi, Chetti, Kannadi ( a radio mechanic), Sri Sabaratnam (TELO leader) and V.Prabhakaran (LTTE supremo). One man who drifted by but broke away to chart an independent course was PONNUDORAI SIVAKUMARAN, who was to become one of the first martyrs to the Tamil cause.

In April, 1971, Thangathurai, known as mama ( uncle) and some 15 others were making explosives at the Thondamanar high school when a bomb went off, seriously injuring Chinna Sothi. The next year, a similar blast occurred, causing burn injuries to Thangathurai, Chinna Sothi, Prabhakaran and V.Nadesuthasan.

Earlier, in 1970, Ponnudorai Satyaseelan founded the Tamil Manavar Peravai ( Tamil Students League), which was joined by Sivakumaran. Bandaranaike had in the meanwhile begun to take a hard line towards Tamils, cutting off foreign exchange for Tamil students going to India for higher studies, banning the import of Tamil films, books and Magazines from Tamil Nadu, and proscribing the small Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party in Jaffna.

Sivakumaran attempted to assassinate Sri Lankan deputy minister for Cultural Affairs Somaweera Chandrasiri in Sept 1970 and Alfred Duraiyapah, the Jaffna Mayor, in Feb 1971.

The formation of TUF in 1972 led to the Tamil Elaingyar Peravia (TYL, Tamil Youth League) in January 1973. It was founded by some 40 youths, many of whom subsequently were in the forefront militant movement. The TYL drew support from Thangathurai, the TLO leader.

Satyaseelan's arrest in Feb 1973 set off the second round of mass arrests in Jaffna and virtually crippled the TYL as well as the older Tamil Students League.

Several young men languished in prison until 1977, although some gained amnesty on the eve of the Kankesanthurai by-election in 1975.

By then two developments had occurred in the Indian subcontinent which had a bearing on the Tamils. One was the JVP insurrection which was stamped out. The second was the India Pakistan war which led to the birth of Bangladesh. Both events took place in 1971. The JVP was NEVER popular among Tamils, although it did have marginal support in Jaffna.

In 1973, the Sri Lankan navy seized a boat belonging to Kuttimani filled with dynamite. Kuttimani fled to India, but was arrested and deported from Tamil Nadu to face a SriLankan prison sentence. Tamil Nadu was then governed by M.Karunanithi's DMK party.

Jaffna witnessed its first case of death by cyanide poisoning the next year. Sivakumaran had been lying low for a while, but took an active interest in the 1974 International Tamil Conference in Jaffna. He had been influenced by his parents' pro-Federal Party views. He studied at Urumpirai Hindu College- which was to several recruits to the Eealm campaign- up to the advanced level, majoring in Chemistry. He is the ONLY one among the Tamils of that era who is remembered fondly even today by everyone.

He was a very sensitive person. He believed that despite the need for militancy, the Federal Party was important and often compared Chelvanayagam with Mahatma Gandhi and the boys with Subash Chandra Bose. He was a restless character. He would discuss all night, emphasising the need for an amred struggle.

Since breaking off from Thangathurai, Sivakumaran had set up his group, which came to be known as the Sivakumaran's group. The 1972 & 1973 mass arrests had slowed down his pace. His contemporaries say he was a SHATTERED man after the Tamil Conference fiasco. He had worked for its success, and it pained him that nine people died for no fault of theirs. Since then he had passionately advocated vengeance-against Duraiyapah, the Mayor, and a Sinhalese police officer he held responsible for the deaths.

On June 5, 1974, Sivakumaran was trapped by the police while attempting a bank robbery in Jaffna's Kopai town. He was 17 yrs of age and knowing about police torture if he were caught, heused to carry a cyanide pill. On that day he SWALLOWED it without so much as an afterthought and died almost instantly. Thus was born SriLanka's cyanide culture.

Hundreds thronged Sivakumaran's funeral. All shops in Jaffna downed their shutters in mourning and hundreds of pamphlets were distributed in the town and its outskirts, eulogising the martyr as Eelam's Bhagat Singh. At the funeral, several TYL members slashed their fingers and with the blood that dripped placed dots on their foreheads, pledging collectively to continue the fight for an independent state. Tamils later put up a bronze statue outside Jaffna in the memory of the young man-it showed a defiant youth, his clinched fist outstretched and dangling a broken chain.

( I'll try to post the excerpts of the rest of this chapter later this week).

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## Early Militancy (Part 2)

In 1974, Jaffna was engulfed in protests when Bandaranaiye visited the town to open a university campus. The Mayor, Duraiyapah did his best to bring crowds to her meeting. The visit was preceded by several acts of violence which the police blamed on the newly-formed Tamil New Tigers (TNT) of Prabhakaran. Bombs were thrown at a police jeep in Kankesanthurai, a port town. Another bomb went off at the residence of a communist leader who was to be the premier's interpreter and some more incidents.

The first successful robbery blamed on Tamil militants took place in 1974 when 91,000/= was taken away from the Multipurpose Cooperative Society of Tellipallai. Tamil sources said Chetti and one of his cousins were among the responsible for the robbery, while one published account attributed the raid to Prabhakaran. Around the same time Chetti slipped to Tamil Nadu and teamed up with a crowd Valvettithurai that was camping in Salem.

By the start of 1975, general strikes and other forms of protests were the order of the day in Jaffna. Time and again police cracked down on suspected militants whose number was slowly on the upswing.

In Jan 1975, several TYL members released from Colombo prisons on the eve of the Kankesanthurai by-election returned to Jaffna to heroes' welcome. Dozens of youths campaigned for the ageing Chelvanayagam, who was contesting the polls, not because they agreed with his politics of moderation but wanted him to win to prove that Tamils no longer desired a federation with Sri Lanka.

Two underground groups were active in 1975. The Thangathurai group, benefit of Kuttimani, and the TNT, which in informed circles came to be known as the Prabhakaran's group. Both enjoyed the tacit blessings of Amirthalingam.

In Jan 1975, a group of Sri Lankan Tamils residing in London formed the Eelam Revolutionary Organisers, which took the acronym EROS. Although it failed to take roots in Sri Lankan Tamil areas for a long time, it played a key role in shaping the growth of militancy.

The Duraiyapph assassination was the FIRST political murder in Sri Lanka's northeast. Chelvanayagam's election victory had queered the pitch for the Eelam campaign. Although the sickly Tamil leader was a Gandhian by faith, neither afford to criticise the murder. The number of militants in Jaffna then could not have been more than 50.

The popular perception among the ordinary Tamils was that the "boys", as the young guerrillas were called with adoration, were acting under the orders, if not the control, of the TUF and that they could and would be caged if need be.

On March 5, 1976 Prabhakaran led a raid on the state run People's Bank at Puttur and escaped with a half a million rupees in cash and jewellery worth of 200,000 rupees after holding the employees at gun point. It was the first successful bank robbery in Jaffna.

Prabhakaran founded the LTTE on May 5, 1976. Barely 10 days later, the TUF held its first convention at Pannkam, Amirthalingam's birth place.

On May 14, 1976, exactly four years after the TUF's formation, the main star of the TUF convention was Amirthalingam, although Chelvanayagam was presiding over the meeting. Since Chelvanayagam's victory, leaders of the erstwhile Federal Party and its traditional rival, The Tamil Congress, had come closer. On that day, they jointly announced the formation of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which described the Sri Lankan Tamils as " a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese".

This convention resolved that the restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self-determination inherent in every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in this country.

And it was with this resolution that the TULF went to the electorate in the July 1977 elections, now overdue by two years.

>From the Tamil standpoint, the 1977 polls were momentous in 3 ways. 1. For the 1st time, one of Sri Lanka's main parties admitted publicly that there existed a Tamil problem. 2. For the 1st time, a Tamil party was propelled as the main opposition in the Sri Lankan parliament. 3. The sweeping outcome in the northeast polls catapulted Tamil militancy. The UNP, now galvanized by Jayawardene came into power accepting the position that there are numerous problems confronting the Tamil-speaking people.

The TULF, led by Amirthalingam ( Chelvanayagam had died in April 1977) asked the Tamils " to proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude that we alone shall rule over our land our forefathers ruled. Sinhalese imperialism shall quit our Homeland".

The TULF was recognised the opposition party in parliament and Amirthalingam became the opposition leader in the house, a post which carried the status of a cabinet minister. The TULF secretary-general was a much sought after man, and although his sympathies to the militants were an open secret, he made occasional noises about Gandhian concepts.

"We are attached to a program of non-violent agitation, but I envisage a stage sooner or later when we are going to have to fight it out," he said after the elections.

## Early Militancy ( Part 3 )

Early on the morning of August 15, 1977, three unarmed constables stopped 3 boys riding bicycles at Puttur, Jaffna. Without warning, one of the boys took out a revolver and fired, injuring one of the policemen in the thigh. The cyclists escaped. The next day, police shot for persons and wounded 21 others in a bloody shootout in Jaffna after the policemen were obstructed from seizing arms carried by some youths.

JR, angry at what he thought was the audacity of the "boys", ordered the army into Jaffna, where the old market was almost totally gutted in a fire the Tamils blamed on the security forces. The 1977 anti-Tamil riots had begun.

Sinhalese mobs began attacking tamils outside the northeast. For the first time, a large number of Hindu temples came under attack during the two weeks of arson and rioting, which left more than 300 people dead and many more wounded. Thousands of Tamils left their homes and fled to the northeast for safety. They included an estimated 40,000 Indian Tamils, many of whom became destitute overnight even though they were opposed to the Eelam campaign. Many of them went to Vavuniya in the North, where several voluntary groups helped them to begin a new life.

Many were sent to Jaffna by 3 ships, as in 1958.

In parliament, JR accused Amir of promoting secessionism and thundered amidst applause from his MP's: " If you want to fight, let there be a fight. If it is peace, let there be a peace. It is not what I am saying. The people of Sri Lanka say that".

Amir told parliament 5 days later: " We tried our best to live in a united Sri Lanka like brothers but failed..... We are still prepared. We are trying to explore a peaceful solution."

The riots provoked indignation in Tamil Nadu, which until then had remained largely indifferent to the plight of the island Tamils. The Tamil Nadu assembly expressed "rude shock" over the violence, in which some Indians had also been hit.

The DMK, which only 4 yrs ago had handed over Kuttimani to the Sri Lankan authorities, organised a general strike and a mammoth procession that wound its way through the city to the office of the Deputy High Commissioner of Sri Lanka.

But in 1977, NO SINHALESE living in Jaffna came under attack from Tamils. Until Tamil militancy took deep roots in Jaffna, almost 10% of its population was Sinhalese, who were bakers, traders, civil servants and business -men.

The 1977 anti-Tamil riots were different from earlier Sinhalese onslaughts. Previously Tamils had rarely hit back in an organised way. But now the Tamil society had its "boys" who were more than willing to take revenge.

On August 31, 4 young men came in a blue Morris car robbed the People's Bank in Manipay and walked away with 26,000 rupees.

Around that time unidentified decamped with 8 rifles and revolvers from a customs office in Jaffna. Also several cases of theft of chemicals from schools were reported in the peninsula.

In Sept, Thangathurai presided over a meeting at a temple in Thondamanaru and decided to formally set up a militant group called the Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA) and a political affiliate known as the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO). According to a participant they would function on the lines of the Irish Republican Army and its political wing, the Sinn Fein.

By now, The most active militant groups in Jaffna were the one led by Thangathurai and the LTTE.

In 1977, a soft spoken land surveyor, Kadirgamapillai Nallainathan, better known as Uma Maheswaran, joined the LTTE. He was made the chairman of the central committee. Prabhakaran, younger to Uma by some 10 yrs, continued to be the group's military commander but remained largely in the background.

The English speaking and suave Uma was referred to in the Ltte as Mukundan. In January 1978, Uma and Prabha made their way to Colombo, where the former had headed the TULF's city unit. In fact, few knew that he had quietly joined the LTTE.

On the eve of the 27th, the two shot M.Canagaratnam, a Tamil MP who had won on a TULF ticket but switched allegiance to the UNP. He was shot and wounded in the chest, neck and ribs. But died a few months later. Canagaratnam's botched murder blew up Uma's cover and he gave up the open life he was leading. The police, embarrassed that Tamil militants could strike in Colombo, launched a vicious crackdown under the supervision of Inspector T.I.Bastiampillai of the CID.

After rounding up several suspects in Jaffna, police issued "wanted" posters for 4 men. Uma, Chellapah Nagarajah, Thanam ( who had been once driver to Chelvanayagam) and Kannadi. Little did the police know that one of the four was already dead. Chetti murdered Kannadi in old blood at Poonagiri after breaking the prison in the province of Anuradhapura.in 1973.

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## Early Militancy ( Part 4 )

In March, Thangathurai, who the previous year had escaped a police trap after an attempted bank robbery, decided to kill a suspected police informer called Thadi (beard) Thangarajah. He and Jegan went to Thadi's house at Kokuvil and shot the man.

On April 7, Bastiampillai, the Tamil CID officer ,two of his colleagues and their Sinhalese driver reached a desolate spot at Murunkan, in the northwest district of Mannar, only to stumble upon a group of Tamil youths. It was a secret training camp of the Tigers, but it was never found out if Bastiampillai staggered there by accident or was tipped off. Among those present at the camp were Uma and Nagarajah, both were well known to the police. Fortunately for them, they were on a makeshift platform on a tree and remained there, frozen by Bastiampillai's unexpected arrival. The others on the ground, in shorts and lungis were not known to the CID officer.

Bastiampillai wanted to know the identity of the men, who replied nonchalantly that they were farm employees. One of the Tigers, in a bid to distract attention, said loudly in tamil: Give some water to these gentlemen.

The ruse succeeded. It was just the way a labourer would treat visitors, particularly men in uniform. Bastiampillai fell for the trick. He kept his Sub-Machine Gun (SMG) by a well and bent down for the water that was offered.

Chellakili ( who led the attack in 83 in Jaffna that killed 13 soldiers which triggered the 83 riots), a Prabhakaran's confidant who was present there, moved like a lightning. In one swoop, he pounded on the SMG and hit Bastiampillai on his head and simultaneously opened fire, killing him and a sergeant before they could realise what was happening. A Tamil inspector Perampalam, however put up a fight, but crashed down the well where he was shot. The driver started running, but was chased and moved down.

When it was all over, Uma and Nagarajah came down from the tree. The tigers quickly shifted to another hideout. Bastiampillai's Peugeot 404 was taken away.

The killings sent shock waves in Sri Lanka. Bastiampillai was considered an authority on the Tamil rebel groups and was in-charge of the CID's TULF desk.

In face the murder came to be known only after a wood cutter informed the police about some decaying bodies. These were identified after Perambalam's was hauled up from the well and his ID card was recovered. The Tamils had committed their first murder with a SMG.

On April 25, the LTTE came out in open for the FIRST time. accepting responsibility for the murders of Mayor Duraiyapah, an alleged police agent N.Nadarajah and nine policemen including Bastiampillai.

The claim was made in a LTTE letterhead marked " To whom it may concern", inscribed with the now famous insignia of the roaring Tiger. The claim, posted in Colombo newspapers and published 3 days later by the Tamil-language Veerakesari made a special mention of Bastiampillai killing an carried a crudely worded warning: " No other groups, Organisations, or Individuals claim this death ( these deaths). Seriuos action will be taken against those who claim the above other than Tigers in Ceylon or Abroad."

The last sentence read: " We are not responsible for past robberies of any kind"

At this time the Sri Lankan govt could not ignore the threat of the Tamil militant groups anymore.

As if to prove that, the Thangathurai group now struck. On May 6, a group of 4 or 5 men went to the residence of Inspector K.Pathmanathan, officer in charge of the District Crime Detective Bureau of Jaffna police. He was not at home but his chilfren telephoned the parents at a friend's place which they were visiting. When he returned, the waiting men fired without warning from revolvers from point blank range.

Alarmed by the killings, the govt enacted a ligation, called the Proscription of LTTE and other organisations, to give sweeping powers to the security forces.

Amirthalingam claimed that the Tiger statement was a fake. But he was wrong. The letter was genuine and had been typed by a young divorcee called Urmila Devi on the TULF leader's official typewriter in the parliment house without his knowledge.

In May, Kuttimani (who had been released in 1977) and Jegan gunned down a retired police inspector at the Valvettithurai junction.

In June Kuttimani shot and killed another police officer who had allegedly tortured a woman suspect following in a bank robbery.

By April, the militants have accumulated about 5 million rupees by robbing banks and cooperative stores.

IGP Stanley Senanayake said: " Members of this (Tigers) movement are not common criminals. They are educated, sophisticated youth, a factor which makes them all the more dangerous.

On Sept 7, when parliament introduced a new constitution, an AVRO 748 of Air Ceylon was blasted by a time bomb after it landed at Ratmalana airport, on the outskirts of Colombo, with 35 passengers from Jaffna. The device was apparently timed to go off when the AVRO would be in the air for Male, but a catering delay had put off the takeoff. The culprits were 2 passengers, and one of them was S.Subramaniam alias Baby, who would emerge as one of the most loyal confidants of Prabhakaran. After the AVRO blast Subramaniam came to be called "Avro Baby".

Uma was in hiding, immediately rang up London and asked LTTE supporters there to claim responsibility.

The LTTE capped off 1978 with another bank robbery. On Dec 5, six gunmen stormed the Thirunelveli People's bank branch gunned down two policemen and robbed the bank of 1.18 million rupees.

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## Early militancy ( Part 5 )

In 1979, after the Thangathurai group shot dead 3 more policemen in Jaffna, JR replaced the Proscription of LTTE act with a more draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), clamped a state of emergency throughout Jaffna peninsula and sent more troops to the region. He also hand-picked Brigadier T.I.Weeratunge, chief of the army, to stamp out " the menace of terrorism in all its forms from the island" by Dec 31.

The crackdown, for the first time, seriously disrupted the militant network. The mutilated bodies of six youths picked up from their homes on July 14 were found under a bridge.

Because of this disruption, Thangathurai, Kuttimani and Prabhakaran fled to Tamil Nadu.

Tamil militancy died down almost totally in 1980, but picked up again from early next year. Police repression was not the only cause for the fall in militant sponsored violence. There were growing differences within the militant ranks, particularly by the LTTE which resulted in its split and the subsequent formation of PLOT by Uma.

JR, meanwhile had offered a modicum of autonomy to the TULF in the form of District Development Councils (DDC).

Towards the end of 1980, PLOT gunmen shot an UNP leader, R.Balasundaram, at Kiilinochi, south of Jaffna, where Uma was to concentrate his activities for a few years.

In Jan 1981, 2 civilians were killed during a robbery at a pawn shop at Kurumpasitty, near the Palaly army camp, by the TELO.

On March 16, two gunmen, one of them believed to be Kuttimani shot Chetti from close range when he was returning home from a shop at Kalviyankadu in Jaffna. Chetti, identified the next day by the Colombo press as a key police informant, died instantly.

On March 25, the TELO pulled off a sensational robbery. A People's bank van was returning to Jaffna with the day's collection when it was ambushed on a lonely stretch of road at Neervely, 12 miles from Point Pedro. Kuttimani who led the operation gave rapid fire orders in Sinhala when the van came to a halt. The loot was put by a bank official at a staggering 7.8 million rupees.

On April 5, he, Thangathurai and Thevan were arrested at Mannalkadal, near Point Pedro, while trying to escape in a boat to India. Sri Sabaratnam had dropped them in a car, but left before they prepared to sail away. Kuttimani had some gold on him, tried to shoot himself but was overpowered. It was the end of journey both for Kuttimani and Thangathurai, two of the original pillars of Tamil militancy.

They were brutally beaten to death in Colombo's Wellikade jail during the July 1983 anti-Tamil riots.

The renewed violence disturbed the government, but it went ahead with the elections to form DDCs on June 4.

Jaffna became tense, fearing more violence before the balloting. Indeed, on May 31, a gunman apparently from PIOT fired at a TULF public meeting near in Jaffna town, killing two policemen and wounding more.

Policemen in Jaffna went on a rampage, attacking, looting and burning houses, shops and institutions. There were many selected targets but Jaffna suffered an irreparable loss when SECURITY FORCES set fire to the splendid Jaffna public library, destroying more than 90,000 books, including many rare Tamil manuscripts.

The violence also spread to the eastern province. Indian Tamils in the tea estates were targeted as usual, and an estimated 15,000 of them fled to Vavuniya as refugees. Their leader Thondaman could not save them.

Gamini Dissanayake who was in Jaffna at that time later told in the parliament that the police was to blame for the Jaffna violence. " I am sorry", he said meekly. " I think we are all responsible".

The DDC elections, however, went through, and the TULF won predictably from all six districts in the Tamil areas.

In July 1981, Sadasivam Sivasunmugamurthy, who was Uma's deputy, led a daring raid on a police station at Anakottai, killing 2 policemen and escaping with atleast 10 weapons.

Also in Oct, the PLOT raided the People's bank at Kiilinochi and plundered a whopping 40 million rupees in cash and jewellery, taking advantage of police engagements with the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Sri Lanka.

At this time "boys" were beginning to defy even the TULF. The TULF, in particular Amir was in a world of its own but was satisfying neither Colombo nor the militants. The same TULF which had promised Eelam was seeking money from Colombo for the toothless DDCs and hoping to modify Tamils with that.

In March 1982, Amir declared that his party believed in peaceful methods and condemned attacks on the police and army in Jaffna, angering many of his own colleagues.

On April 29, 1982, Jaffna observed its first anti-TULF hartal, or general shutdown, to protest the party's participation in the ceremonial opening of a new parliament building at Kotte, on Colombo's borders.

But the TULF boss seemed unfazed. Addressing a May Day rally in Jaffna, he claimed that 90 % of Tamils were with the TULF.

Jaffna was clearly confused. It was only 5 years since the TULF had taken a mandate to achieve Eelam, which was no where in sight. The "boys" were fighting, but the goal seemed neither easy nor near. And the infighting among the Tamil leadership was demoralising. Tamils were pondering on this and a lot more when unexpected news came from neighboring Tamil Nadu. Two men well known to Amirthalingam as well as to the Sri Lankan authorities were involved in a gunfight. News papers identified them as Uma Maheswaran and Velupillai Prabhakaran.

**THE END**