

THE WELIKANDA MASSACRE

A REPORT BY :

SHANTHA J.R. PIERIS AND JEANNE MARECEK



A LAND AT REST ?

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR ETHNIC STUDIES

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SHANTHA J.R. PIERIS¹ AND JEANNE MARECEK²

DATE : 11TH MAY 1992.

THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To inquire into the circumstances relating to the attack on the Muslim village in Welikanda, and the measures necessary to provide emotional and material support to the survivors.
2. To inquire into the circumstances relating to the attack on the adjoining Tamil villages, and the measures necessary to provide emotional and material support to the survivors.
3. To make recommendations on how communal amity may be promoted between the affected communities in the aftermath of this tragedy.

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This report arose as a result of a study commissioned by The International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, following the massacre of several villagers of Alinghipotana, Muthugala and Karapola in the Welikanda area, in the District of Polonnaruwa, on Wednesday, 29th of April 1992.

The members of the team, (Mr. Shantha J.R. Pieris, Dr. Jeanne Marecek and Ms. Jeeva Fernando), visited the affected area and spoke to the survivors in all three villages, on the 9th and 10th of May 1992.

The co-authors of this report, Mr. Pieris and Dr. Marecek, would like to express their deep appreciation to Ms. JEEVA FERNANDO, the Information Officer of the Family Rehabilitation Centre; whose concerned presence and invaluable assistance with the interpretation greatly facilitated and made a success of the mission. We would also like to thank Ms. Fernando for reading the draft report and for her suggestions.

SYSTEM - B GENERAL MAP

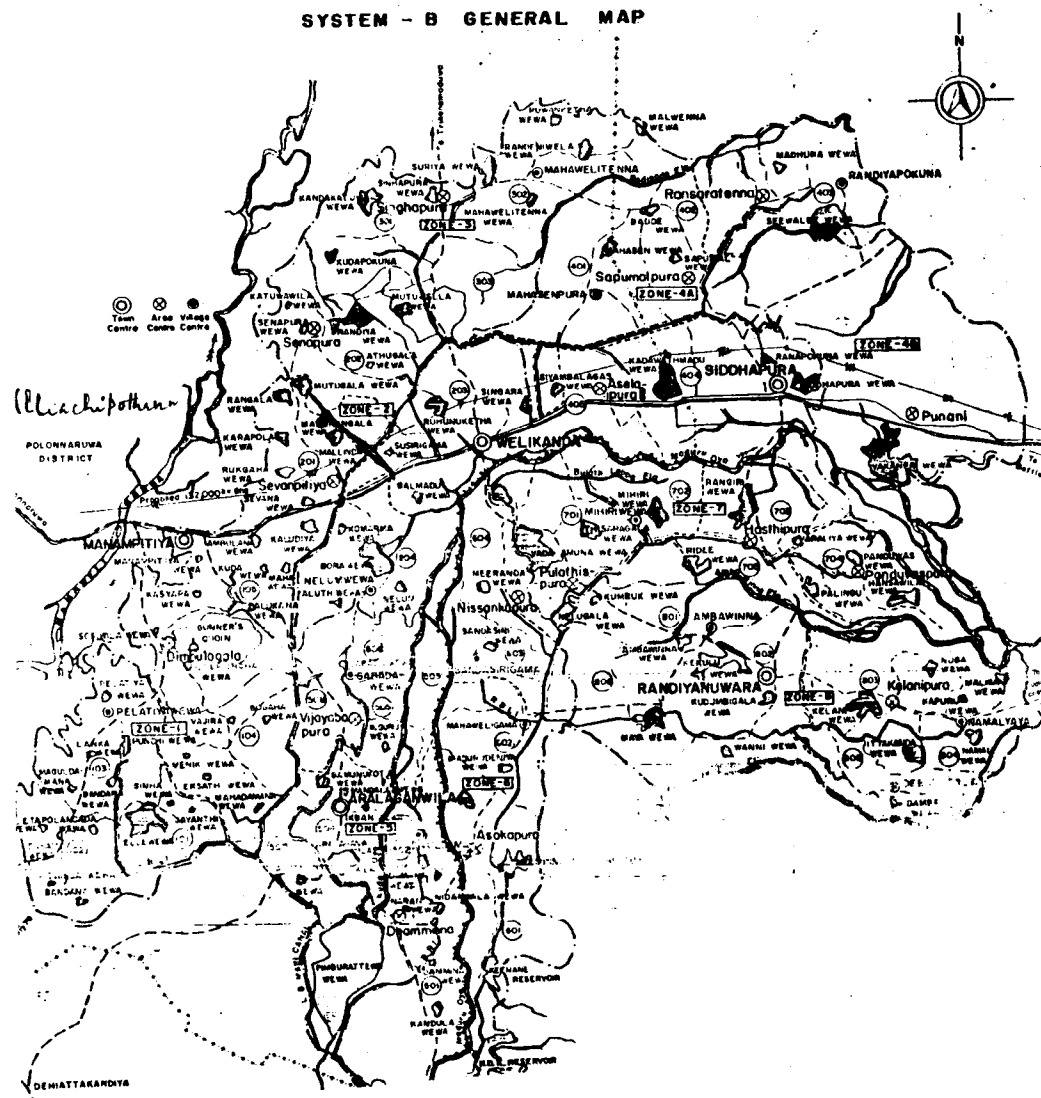


Figure 1: THE TEAM INTERVIEWING THE SURVIVORS

THE MUSLIM VILLAGE OF ALINGHIPOTANA

TIME AND DATE :

The attack began at about 12 midnight on Wednesday, the 29th of April 1992.

HUMAN CASUALTIES :

This village consisted of 148 families. The attack on the village affected 40 families directly, resulting in either deaths or injuries to members. In the attack, 56 persons died instantaneously and 28 were injured. Eight (8) of the injured died subsequently in hospitals. There were in addition 5 babies who died, who were

counted separately. This makes a total of 69 dead persons, up to the date of writing. Twenty eight (28) of the dead were school-going children.

THE INCIDENT :

This account is compiled on the basis of reports from survivors in Alinghipotana.

The attackers were 30-40 armed men whom the villagers believed were members of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and an unspecified number of Tamil villagers. The latter had been armed with sharp weapons like knives, etc. The accounts of the survivors indicated that the total number involved in the attack was quite large. The village was attacked first with mortars, shells and small arms by the LTTE who approached from three different directions. This attack had lasted only a short time, because the police and the Muslim Homeguards who had been manning the Police guard post at the entrance to the village had vacated their post without a fight and fled into the jungles. Army sources said that there had been 27 policemen and 12 Homeguards attached to this post at the time of the attack. According to security sources, they had lost one light machine gun (LMG), nine T.56 assault rifles, one revolver and a walkie talkie, all of which had been left behind in the Police guard post. A Police Sub-Inspector (SI) in charge of the guard point had been the only one who had offered some resistance. He sustained serious injuries on both his legs. The attackers remained in Alinghipotana until about 3.30 a.m. The Army reported that they received notice of the midnight attack only at 6.30 a.m. This delay is a matter that requires further inquiry.

After the initial attack to scare away the local defenders, apparently the LTTE had refrained from using heavy weapons, perhaps in order not to alert the army detachment at nearby Welikanda. However, the Muslim casualties had been high for two reasons. First, there had been the prevailing idea current in the village, that the best way of surviving any onslaught by the LTTE was to lock their doors and lie low, to avoid the inevitable cross-fire between the attackers and the defenders. In the present case the inevitable did not occur, as their defenders had fled to the jungles, leaving the LTTE the masters in the field. Therefore, this strategy on the part of the Muslims made them very vulnerable.

The LTTE, started their assault from three different directions and systematically went from house to house. The houses at the entrance to the village were among the first to be affected. In the case of some of the houses, they first broke down the doors and chased the residents into a single room, where they were killed with guns or sharp weapons. This was in particular true of the house of the Principal of the village school, Mr. Usunal. Inside the unlit house, the only survivors had been Mr. Usunal himself who had hid unobserved, above the ceiling under the roof, and a woman who crouched in an unnoticeable space in the corner of the room where the massacre took place. The rest of the women and all the children were killed. Similar tactics of the LTTE resulted in the near annihilation of several families. Among the casualties in this attack was an eight month pregnant woman. They had ripped her apart with sharp weapons at her home itself. The stink of decomposing pieces of flesh still hung like a pall in the room in which she died ten days after the attack.

A second reason for the heavy casualty rate was the strategem used by the LTTE to draw out the Muslims into the open. The attacking party had divided into two groups. In the first wave had been some Tamil people, who had shouted in Tamil to the Muslims still inside the houses, to come out and join them, their brother Muslims, in running to places of safety as the LTTE was coming up from the other direction. Some of the frightened children fell for this trick : they ran out of their homes into the forest of knives picketing for them. Those who tried to evade the arms of the Tamil civilians were cut down by the LTTE who had fanned out behind to prevent escape. Thus, among the 40 families directly affected by the violence, the majority of the survivors were those who had made good their escape into the jungles.

IDENTITY OF THE ATTACKERS :

Some of the survivors claimed that their attackers wore camouflage-type clothes, black shorts or trousers and t-shirts. The LTTE were identified as among the attackers by their rolls of ammunition strapped around their bodies. One of the assailants, it was reported, carried a sophisticated-looking weapon, probably a hand-held cannon. A few also wore handkerchiefs around their temples like bandanas. None of these individuals were known by name to the survivors.¹



Figure 2 TALES OF DESTRUCTION: "When the Roof Caved in"
-Alinghipotana

In regard to the identity of the other attackers, the villagers of Alinghipotana, Muthugala and Karapola had lived together in the Mahaweli irrigation area for a period of six years; some had known each other for much longer than that. Nonetheless, the villagers reported that it was too dark for any of their attackers to be identified by face. Some survivors, however, claimed to recognise some of the attackers by their voices and names as they called out to one another. These individuals were from the neighbouring villages of Muthugala and Karapola. In addition, one survivor reported that on the previous day, a labourer from Karapola had

asked him for a loan of Rs.100/, which he had given. That very same man came that night to his house, armed with a knife, and called to him by name to come out. The survivor had managed to escape into the jungle, but his wife and two sons had been injured.

After the attack the attackers had left the place, shouting slogans to celebrate their "victory". Among the slogans shouted had been words like "Karuna Valka", "Nisanthan Valka", and "Balu Valka". Karuna, Nisanthan, and Balu it is reported, are LTTE leaders in the Eastern Province.

DAMAGE TO PROPERTY :

The first wave of attackers consisted of LTTE members and Tamil men. After the houses had been broken open and the residents killed by this party of attackers, a second group, which included women and children, looted the property. The presence of the women and children had been ascertained from their voices and names. For the most part the looting showed a system. The kind of property stolen was selective: money, jewellery, clothing, small electronic goods and perhaps glass ware from the side cabinets. No furniture was taken, but many household items were destroyed (television sets, pots and pans etc). Theft of animals was rare. In fact the Muslim village survived with a large stock of cattle. The motorcycle of the principal was left untouched in one of the rooms. The boutique in the village was burnt, with the clothes that were in it. It was the same story with the returnee from the Middle East, whose suitcase was torched. Could the modus operandi of the looters have been adopted to escape detection?

The exact identity of the attackers remains problematic. The fact that women and children took part seems to be established. If that is so, they could not have come from very far. It is significant that none of the property was recovered or even discovered. We do not know whether the area was searched by police or military personnel. Does this exonerate these villagers from having participated in the attack or is the property hidden away some where else? The degree of acquaintance (or even overlap) between the local Tamil people and members of the LTTE should be investigated further. The method of the attack itself points to the fact that the LTTE were assisted by people who knew the layout of the village. In addition, at least in the case of the principal, his house was known to the attackers.



Figure 3 "THIS WAS ONCE MY BOUTIQUE"
-Alinghipotana

THE SELECTIVITY OF THE ATTACK :

For some reason, only one portion of the village was attacked. That is, all the houses beginning from the junction to the entrance to the village were systematically attacked, in all a total of 48 houses. The LTTE had begun their attack from the place where an approach road joined the main road that ran through the middle of the village. However there were as many or more houses that had been

built beyond the junction from where the attack began. This raises a query as to why the other houses were not attacked. Could it be that none of the attackers knew that there were other houses beyond the junction at which the attack began? In fact, the village mosque escaped unscathed because it was beyond the junction.

This possibility would support the claim made by the villagers of Karapola and Muthugala that they were not involved in the attack. Their version is that some people who had earlier lived in their villages were involved. These individuals had been displaced and their land had been given to the Muslim villagers by the Mahaweli Authority. These displaced Tamil villagers, 27 families in all, had been given alternative land in the Eastern Province by the Mahaweli Authority. It was suggested that the LTTE may have attacked the Muslims with the help of these disgruntled ex-villagers.

Another possibility is that it was a deliberate plan of the LTTE to attack only 1/3rd of the families and annihilate them, in order to send an unmistakable message to the rest of the population to leave the area. This would account for the puzzling fact that only a few houses were burnt. Many are intact but empty. One gets the impression that these are houses awaiting new tenants.

BACKGROUND TO THE ATTACK :

According to the Muslim villagers, they had received no notice by the LTTE to quit. However one of the survivors said that the village had been attacked once earlier by the LTTE in August 1990. In addition, there seems to have been a simmering dispute between the Muslim villagers and the Tamil villagers of Karapola and Muthugala in relation to land. In 1978, a cyclone hit the East coast of Sri Lanka. As a result two ancestral villages, Karapola and Alinghipotana, which were Tamil and Muslim villages respectively, had been inundated. These two villages were situated about 5 miles up the Mahaweli River, the ancestral village of Alinghipotana being 2 and 1/2 miles from its present site. Because their houses were destroyed in the old villages, Alinghipotana and Karapola villagers were moved to the present site. The two new villages retained the names of their old villages.

The present Muslim village of Alinghipotana is situated on land that originally belonged to the ancestral village of Muthugala. The Tamil

villagers of Muthugala were given alternative land in 1985, on their present site. In the process of resettlement, 27 Tamil families of the village of Muthugala did not get land in this area, but they were resettled in the Eastern Province. In addition, they had been promised compensation for the land they had lost. However no compensation has been paid upto date. In 1986, the Mahaweli Authority gave the Muslim villagers of Alinghipotana permission to build their homes. Two years later they were given land for cultivation. In all, they received two and a half acres for the cultivation of paddy and 1/2 acre to put up a house. 106 families received land and the balance (42) worked as hired labourers. About the same time, the Mahaweli Authority resettled the Tamil villagers of Karapola on their present site. The land distribution among the Karapola villagers is not available. All three villages are in very close proximity to one other. The communities have similar life styles. Their livelihood consists of farming, fishing and animal husbandry.

THE AFTERMATH :

The attack ended at 3.30 a.m. on Wednesday 29th April. At about 5.30 a.m. the Muslim Homeguards had returned to the village from their hiding places in the jungle. It was day-break, and the other Muslim villagers at Alinghipotana who lived beyond the junction also came on the scene at this time.

Between 7 and 7.30 a.m., the Army arrived on the scene. At 10.00 a.m. a three-member medical team arrived in the village from the Polonnaruwa Hospital to conduct post-mortems on the dead people. They returned a verdict of homicide on all the dead. The Army had brought equipment to dig a mass grave and by 6 p.m. the same day, Wednesday, the dead were buried in a mass grave on the grounds of the mosque. Among the dead was the village Ulemma (Priest). The Government had provided dry rations for that day. Each family was also paid Rs.2,000 for each member who died as burial expenses by the Government.

PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS :

As of our visit (9 May), only 28 families remained in the village of Alinghipotana. A later report (14 May) stated only 15 families remained. More than eighty (80) families have left for other parts

of Polonnaruwa District, where there are Muslim communities. None of the residents in the village want to remain here.

One institution that could have given the semblance of normality, the school, remains closed. This school conducts classes from Grade 1 to Grade 8. The teachers, who came from outside the village, left the village and have not returned. All the teachers are Muslims other than the two Nursery teachers who are Tamils from nearby Muthugala. Also, with the Ulemma dead, the Mosque has not functioned. The whole community remains paralysed. The men folk too have abandoned their fields as they are too frightened to go to cultivate them. There is an air of listlessness that hangs over the village. Many people expressed a sense of being surrounded by Tamil villages, and hence "hemmed in" by their "enemies". To go to the jungle, the paddy fields or the main road, it was necessary to expose oneself to one's "enemy". The remaining villagers strongly wish that the Government would relocate them.

Both the children and the adults show signs of the trauma they have undergone. They cannot eat properly. In the case of the children, fear is manifested in other forms like nightmares, crying and shouting in their sleep. Children and adults sleep only fitfully. Children show undue fear (for example, of loud noises) and some cling to their mothers excessively. Children and adults also show psychosomatic symptoms, for example, frequently complaining of fever and headache.

THE TAMIL VILLAGE OF MUTHUGALA

TIME AND DATE :

The retaliatory attack against the village of Muthugala began about 6 a.m. on Wednesday, 29th April 1992. The retaliation ended at about 10 a.m. when the Army arrived at Muthugala and fired shots to chase away the attackers.

HUMAN CASUALTIES

In the village of Muthugala 49 people (24 males and 25 females) were killed instantaneously. Seventeen (17) were taken to hospital, of whom one (1) subsequently died.

THE INCIDENT :

The accounts given by residents of Muthugala can be summarized as follows.

Muthugala has about 125 families, which is approximately 650 people. Many in this village which is very close to Alinghipotana, said that they heard the sound of the attack against the Muslim village at about midnight on the 29th April. A few of the residents said that at 1 a.m. the firing in the Muslim village ceased, to be replaced by the sound of crying and shouting by men, women and children.

Muthugala was first attacked by Muslim Homeguards and Muslim policemen both from Alinghipotana. The attackers were identified as Homeguards by the survivors, in some cases even by name. It was daylight by the time this attack took place and hence identification was relatively easy. The Homeguards had been armed with guns, knives and axes.

At about 6 a.m. the Muslim Homeguards had started their attack on the Tamil village. On hearing the sound of gun shots, some of the Tamil families had moved into their relations' homes, thinking that there is safety in numbers. At the same time, some of the menfolk had escaped into the jungles and thereby managed to save their lives. There was one instance where the villagers had submerged themselves in the irrigation tank and escaped.

The Muslim Homeguards had shot first of all any man they could discover in the homes. Where none could be found, they shot the women and children. The choice of victims however had been erratic. There was one incident where the homeguards had killed all five residents they had found inside the home, four women and one small boy.

Immediately after the initial attack, the survivors had fled into the jungle for safety. Some of the women who were fleeing were confronted by the attackers who relieved them of their jewellery but had not physically harmed them. There had been certain instances when the homeguards had returned a second time to the same

home. Fortunately they did not find the survivors. In some cases a few agricultural implements like mammoties had been damaged. In others pushbicycles, cattle, clothes, jewellery, mammoties and other farm implements, and even seed paddy had been taken. Also the one car in the village was burnt. One of the features of the counter attack on the Tamil village was the intentional damage to the economic wherewithal of the villagers.

In one incident where six men were killed and dumped into an irrigation canal, the Sinhala Homeguards at Madurangala and the policemen from Karapola had been involved. Another gruesome killing had been the wiping out of the Dharmalingam family. In this family a total of 8 people were killed. Then the roof of the house had been set alight by pouring petrol on it. When the roof caved in the inside of the house had caught fire. However, it was discovered that the bodies had only been partially burnt. As the bodies could not be moved, the villagers had cremated the Dharmalingam family where they lay.

Much later, the Mahaweli Authority officials had come into the jungles in a vehicle with one of the survivors and called the people who had taken refuge in there to come out. When the villager identified himself, the other villagers in hiding recognising his voice, had come out. This was about 11 a.m. At about 3.30 p.m. on the 29th April the dead bodies had been transported to the Welikanda Hospital. On Thursday 1st May 1992 the dead of Muthugala and Karapola were buried in two mass graves at Muthugala.

PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS :

People in Muthugala have moved into the school compound, and were living there like refugees at the time of our visit. They said they have nothing beyond a few pots and pans and the clothing on their bodies. People will not move back to their homes for fear of future attacks. Many people were palpably shaken by the devastation, and both men and women became tearful when recounting the tragedy.

As in the Muslim village, the schools in the two Tamil villages of Muthugala and Karapola remain closed. The villagers say that they are too frightened to send their children to school. Also the school uniforms and books of the children have been burnt.



Figure 4: *DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY*
-Muthugala

According to the people in Muthugala, no one has left the village because they are not permitted to leave. The Member of Parliament and other officials, as well as the police, will not allow them to go.

STATEMENTS OF THE SURVIVORS² :

1. WITNESS : **Uthaya Kumari.**

The person who was killed was my husband. At about 12 midnight on the 29th of April, we heard the sound of shooting from the direction of the Muslim village of Alinghipotana. The attack on our

village began at about 7 a.m. the same day. Two policemen from the village of Alinghipotana came and shot at my husband. There was only my husband, my three year old child and myself in the home at the time. The attackers didn't try to harm me. After the shooting, I realised that my husband was dead and I ran into the jungle with my child and with the other villagers. At about 11 a.m. officials from the Mahaweli Authority came into the jungles and asked us to come out. We then came out. At about 3.30 p.m. a lorry belonging to the Mahaweli Authority came and took all the dead bodies in the village to the hospital. On Friday, 30th April, the Welikanda Police came and took a statement from me in regard to the killing of my husband. I told them that the Muslim policemen from Alinghipotana were responsible for the killing of my husband. I was paid Rs.2,000 as funeral expenses to bury my husband.

2. WITNESS : **Kandiah Thanganachchi.**

My son, Kandiah Kova Krishna was killed. He was married. The dead man's wife is in the Middle East. My son leaves behind 6 children. The eldest is a girl of 10 years and the youngest, also a girl, is 2 years. I was at home when the incident happened. At about 6 a.m. on Wednesday, 29th April, 2 men came to our house. One was wearing a T-shirt and was dressed in civilian clothes while the other wore a Police uniform. They asked us whether we were Sinhalese or Tamils. When we said we were Tamils, they shot and killed my son. They didn't harm me or my grandchildren. After that we fled to the jungle with the other villagers. We came back to the village only on Thursday, 30th April at about 1 p.m. We did not take any solid food while we were in the jungle. I collected water from the irrigation canal in a shopping bag and gave it to the children to drink. We came back to the village only after the Mahaweli Authority officials notified us that it was safe to come back. The Government paid us Rs. 2,000 as funeral expenses.

3. WITNESS : **Elayasingham Sathyavani.**

My mother, Arunaseelan Pushparani was injured and my younger sister was killed. On the day of the incident, there were altogether 10 of us at home, 3 males and the rest females. At about 6 a.m. on Wednesday 29th April, we heard gunshots in our village. The men, including my father, ran into the jungle. It was about 7.30 a.m. when one of the Muslim Homeguards from Alinghipotana, by the

name of Macan, came into our garden. He was wearing a red shirt and green trousers. We were all in the garden at this time. Macan shot my mother and the bullet went through her leg. He then left. My younger sister and I ran into our house and brought a sarong, which we tied around my mother's leg.

After this, Macan came around to our house a second time. It might have been about 8 a.m. My elder sister, her daughter, my 3 younger sisters and I, ran into our house and locked the door. Macan came up to the house and shot through the front door. A bullet came into the house and went through my 15 year old sister. She died immediately. On hearing my sister's death pangs, Macan went away. We then took the body and placed her with my mother in an outside room which had no door. Then the rest of us who were uninjured, went into the house and placed a crowbar against the door. After that all of us climbed onto the ceiling under the roof.

Sometime later, Abbas and Nilam, two Muslim Homeguards from Alingipotana came to our house. They had a look at my mother and younger sister lying in a pool of blood in the front room and said "In a place with so many people, what a pity that only two had been killed". Then they went away. Mother then asked for some water, but I said that the homeguards were all around the place and that it was not safe for us to come down. We stayed hidden till the Army came to the village at about 10 a.m. and fired shots to scare away the homeguards. Then I climbed down and gave some water to my mother and covered up the dead body of my sister.

Then those of us who were uninjured left for the Senapura Unit of the Mahaweli Scheme, to the village of Leevuchenai. This is a Muslim village which has about 20 Tamil families. The Muslim Homeguards at Leevuchenai said, "What are you doing here?" and added, "Go back to your village." When the Army arrived on the scene they told the Homeguards not to do anything to us. Then the Homeguards and the rest of the villagers gave us food.

On the 29th evening we heard that my mother and sister had been taken away by the Mahaweli Authority. Later the Mahaweli Authority's Block Manager (BM) came and said that mother had been taken to the Polonnaruwa Hospital. My father went there to see her. Later she was transferred to Colombo. My sister was buried in the village of Muthugala with the other people who were

killed, on Friday, 1st May 1992.

4. WITNESS : **Mary Nona.**

They killed my husband Pakiaraja. I have a Sinhalese name because my father, Kurukulasooriya Madhia Fernando, is Sinhalese and my mother Tamil. On Wednesday, 29th April, we heard gun shots from the direction of Alinghipotana early in the morning. Then at about 6 a.m. I heard gun shots in our village. My husband and I together with our 4 children, then decided to run away from the house in the direction of the paddy fields. In the fields, we came across Sinhalese Homeguards from Madurangala. There were about 8 of them in uniform, some with guns. They grabbed my husband and started beating him with poles and knives till he bled. After that they took my husband and placed him in a van saying, "We are going to take him to the Police". Then they beat me up and chased me away.

On Thursday, 30th April my dead husband's body was found in the Mahaweli irrigation canal near the Karapola school. There were 5 other bodies of men, 4 from Muthugala and 1 from Karapola found with my husband. When I heard the news, I went there at about 10 a.m. At 3 p.m. the same day, the Mahaweli Authority brought a lorry and took the bodies away.

5. WITNESS : **Mudiyanse Nallamma** (age 39).

The dead person is my husband Peiris Wijayasinghe. He was a Sinhalese. He had worked as a labourer in Muthugala, and in neighbouring Sinhala and Tamil villages as well. We reside at Madurangala which is a Sinhalese village. On the 29th of April at about 8 a.m., the Sinhala Homeguards in our village came into our house. They asked my husband whether he knew Pakiaraja of Muthugala. Pakiaraja is related to me. With Pakiraja, they had in custody 1 woman and 4 other men. The woman who was also from Muthugala, was later released. My husband then said, "I know all these people, they are innocent and it is out of fear that they had hidden in the paddy fields".

The Sinhala Homeguards then beat my husband with their rifle butts and with their hands. Soon afterwards the Karapola police came on the scene and they beat all the six men, including my

husband, and ordered all of them to get into a white van. They said they were taking them to the Karapola Police station. When I inquired later from the Sinhala Homeguards of Madurangala, they said that my husband was being kept at the Karapola Police station. After my husband was taken, I stayed on at Madurangala because the police did not allow us to leave the village. On the 3rd of May, I came to Muthugala where I have some relatives. When I arrived at the village of Muthugala, the villagers told me that my dead husband had been found in the Mahaweli irrigation canal with 5 other bodies. They had already buried my husband by that time : on the 1st of May. I have 7 children. The eldest is a girl of 20 years and the youngest is a boy of 8 years. My eldest daughter is married. I cannot rely on my relatives for support and I am concerned because we have no funds and no food remaining.

COMMENT : There are many indications of the depths of Mrs. N's psychic distress. She is deeply saddened by the loss of her husband. She reports memory loss (that is, things keep slipping her mind); in addition, she describes problems of concentration and attention. She often feels tremulous. She has been unable to eat.

6. WITNESS : Subramaniam Rani.

The dead person, Sunderalingam, is my elder sister's husband. We were hiding in the paddy fields when the homeguards took my brother-in-law away. He was killed and his body was among the 6 that were discovered in the Mahaweli irrigation canal on the 30th of April. My elder sister is in the Batticaloa Hospital for an illness unconnected with the present incident. I am now looking after the children.

7. WITNESS : B. Krishna Kumar.

The person killed was my father. At about 6 a.m. a Muslim Homeguard from Alinghipotana came to our shop cum home, situated in the village of Muthugala. He was in civilian clothes and armed with a gun. He called out to my father to open the shop and when my father came out to do so, he shot and killed him. At that time only my father and I were at home. My father was about 60 years old and he died immediately. I hid. The Homeguard set fire to the thatched roof of the house and went away. I dragged my

father's dead body into the kitchen which was about 10 yards away from the shop. I then placed a moist gunny bag over my father's body to prevent it from being burnt up. Afterwards I left for Nivitchiwela, which is a Tamil village. It was about 8 a.m. when I left for that village. I have 3 elder sisters who are married and settled in other villages. My mother is dead and I am 23 years of age.

8. WITNESS : Rosaline.

The Muslim Homeguards from Alinghipotana, killed my husband, Sivanesaraja, who was the village Postman at Muthugala. At about 7 a.m. on Wednesday 29th April my husband, dressed in his uniform came out to the doorstep of our house. Just then a Muslim Homeguard came up and shot my husband. He died instantly. We left the door slightly ajar to give the impression that there was no one in the house and hid behind the door. I have 5 children, who are now fatherless. The eldest is 15 years old and the youngest is 1 year and six months. At the time of the incident, there were about 10-15 neighbours (both men and women) in our house. They had taken refuge there, on hearing the midnight shooting at Alinghipotana; thinking that it was the safest place in the village. My husband as the village postman, was an important person in our village.

After the killing of my husband, we waited for about half an hour and then decided to run into the jungle. At about 12 noon the same day, Wednesday, the Welikanda Police came to our village and took the villagers who were found there to Karapola. We were told by the Police that the dead bodies would be taken to the Welikanda Hospital. On Thursday, 30th April, my husband's dead body was returned to us and we buried him at 4 p.m. the same day.

9. WITNESS : Sinnarasiah Indrani.

My mother, Ahambaran Sivapathi and my younger brother, Sinnarasiah Thangesvaran were the two members of my family who were killed. My younger brother was only 3 years old at the time of his death. We are residents of Muthugala. At about 6 p.m. on Tuesday, 28th April, my father went out to the paddy fields to keep vigil over our crops and chase the wild animals away. At about 6 a.m. on Wednesday, 29th April, we heard our neighbours being

fired on. My mother then put all 6 of us children into the house and faced the attackers with my little brother in her arms. They shot and killed both my mother and my brother. I am 16 years old and the eldest is my sister who is 17 years old.

We then decided to leave for the village of Leevuchenai. On the way we met our father in the paddy fields and told him that mother and younger brother were dead. He then took us to Leevuchenai and put us in the kovil there. We have no relatives in that village. On the 30th of April all the people who had fled Muthugala (about 60 families or 360 people) were brought to Karapola. In all about 2,000 people (500 families) were housed at Karapola. My father went to Muthugala on the 1st of May to bury my mother and younger brother. There were in all 50 people who were buried in two common graves. The Mahaweli Authority officials provided the coffins. Rs. 2,000 was paid to us as burial expenses, but even from this Rs. 850 was deducted for the coffins. The Army and the Mahaweli officials told the people not to open the coffins. We were not told the reason for this.

10. WITNESS : Sivagamy Pullai.

They killed my daughter Pulendrarani and my son's son, Mangayakaran. We are residents of Muthugala. We heard the firing from the direction of the Muslim village about 12 midnight. The firing stopped at about 1 a.m. Thereafter we heard the noise of men, women and children crying and shouting there. At daybreak, I went with my son's family and my daughter's family to Kandasamy's house to take refuge there. Soon afterwards, about 6 a.m., 4 Muslim Homeguards from Alinghipotana broke down the door. Then they fired through the front door, and three members of Kandasamy's family died immediately and I was injured. Then they came inside the house and shot my daughter and grandson. In addition, my son and daughter-in-law were both injured. They are now warded in the Colombo General Hospital. I escaped by hiding under the divan.

Those of us who were not injured then made our way to Leevuchenai. Kandasamy stayed back with the dead and injured. The Welikanda Police came to the village about 11 a.m. and took the dead to the Welikanda Hospital and the injured to the Polonnaruwa Hospital. Some of the injured were later transported

to the Colombo Hospital. None of us have seen any of the injured yet. The Block Manager (BM) of the Mahaweli Authority had gone to see the injured on Friday, (8th May). We are now housed in the Muthugala school, which was closed for the Sinhala/Tamil New Year holidays. School was supposed to have started on the 4th of May, but it is now a refugee camp for the Muthugala villagers.

11. WITNESS : K. Thavamany.

4 people in my family were killed : my mother, K. Nonnapullai (65 years), elder sister, K. Kannagi (45 years), elder sister's daughter, Mageswari (30 years) and Mageswari's son, Kuru (10 years). I am a resident of Muthugala.

At about midnight we heard gunshots from the direction of the Muslim village. My children and I, then went and stayed in my elder sister's house. At about 7 a.m., we heard firing in our own village coming closer to where we were. We recognised the Muslim Homeguards of Alinghipotana as the assailants. These people had come to the village in a tractor. Then I took my children and fled into the jungle. My elder sister couldn't leave my mother alone, so she decided to stay behind. All 4 in the home were killed. My elder sister's home was looted and property was stolen. When I returned, I found that my own home had been burnt down and my property burnt/missing.

It was about 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 29th April when the police and the Army called us to come out of the jungle, and to take our clothes and property and go to Karapola. I lost everything, so I had nothing to take with me. The Welikanda Police came to our village and took charge of the dead bodies. On the 1st of May, we buried our dead at Muthugala.

12. WITNESS : K. Karunawathie.

I had 3 sons and 1 daughter. However, my 12 year old son, Thavischandra and my 4 year old daughter, Suganthi, were killed. My husband and one of my sons were injured in the attack. We are residents of Muthugala. At about 6 a.m. we heard gunshots coming near our house. We then ran to Kandasamy's house. A little later six Muslim Homeguards from Alinghipotana arrived and started firing at the house. Some were armed with axes and knives and

THE TAMIL VILLAGE OF KARAPOLA

TIME AND DATE :

The attack against Karapola started at about 7 a.m. on Wednesday, 29th April 1992. It ended at about 9 a.m. the same day.

HUMAN CASUALTIES :

In the village of Karapola the number killed was 38. The dead at Karapola had come from 27 families : 17 males (12-65 years), 15 women, and 6 children. There were also 59 people taken to hospital. There was one family in which 4 children were orphaned after both parents were killed in the attack. Among the injured, there are some families where the mother is dead and the father is in hospital.

THE INCIDENT :

The villagers of Karapola, which is about a mile away from Alinghipotana, said that they had heard the midnight firing from the direction of the Muslim village. However, they had not taken any notice of it, because gunshot sounds were quite common in this area. People shoot at wild animals to scare them away, or it might have been an accidental firing by the Muslim Homeguards. However, in the case of the Muslim village some accounts suggested that the firing completely ceased only after 1 a.m. This was a rather long period of time not to realize that an attack had been launched. If the villagers were awakened by the sound of shooting which had woken them up, it is almost certain that the police Post at Karapola would have heard the protracted firing also.

At about 6.30 a.m. the Army arrived in the village of Karapola. When the people had seen the army drive up in 5 vehicles, they had fled helter skelter. The Army Officer, who appeared to be of high rank, had then inquired of the local Justice of the Peace (J.P.), T.K. Kalikutti, "Where are the people? Why are the villagers running away?". the J.P. had then replied that the villagers run away on seeing the army as a matter of habit. The Army Officer had then told the J.P., "Didn't you know that the Muslim village of Alanghipotana had been attacked?". The J.P., said that was the first intimation he received about the attack on the Muslim village. The

Army then drove away.

Twenty minutes later, at about 7 a.m., the Tamil village of Karapola was attacked by the Muslim Homeguards of Alinghipotana. It was also reported that Muslim children had taken part in the looting of the Tamil villages. The first wave was all men (about 50). They split up into small groups and did the killing. Then the Sinhalese and Muslim villagers followed and did the looting.

The attackers broke into 3 groups and attacked people on the road and inside houses. In all, 55 houses were set on fire. The number of houses set on fire is remarkable. It was almost as if the attackers especially wanted to destroy the economic wealth of the villagers. Neither the J.P.'s house nor his family were hurt, but his boutique was burnt to the ground. Among the buildings that were burnt was the old Kovil with the statues of the deities still in it. The villagers had been waiting for an auspicious time to move the deities to the new Kovil constructed next to the old one. The new Kovil was not attacked. The fact that the old Kovil, which was currently the place of worship (and hence sanctified), was destroyed while the new one standing alongside it was left untouched, suggests that someone among the attackers knew the village very well.

When the attack began, 2 of the Karapola villagers, Kailalipillai Thiagarajah and Pakkiam Vaniasingham, whose houses were the closest to the main road, had gone to the Karapola Police Post to report the attack. The Karapola policemen's response had been to blindfold them and beat them and tie them up inside the Mahaweli quarters, which is situated behind the Police post. Then the two men had been locked up and left in there. Subsequently they had managed to free themselves and had escaped through a window at about 9.30 a.m.

When the Muslim Homeguards started their attack, the Karapola Police had done nothing to intervene. Infact in one incident, the Karapola Police had gone to the home of Pakkiam Vaniasingham (who had made the first complaint about the attack), taken 6 males they had found there, kept them in the sun and beaten them up. PV's house is the house nearest to the entrance to the village and the closest to the Karapola Police Post. Several people had taken refuge there.

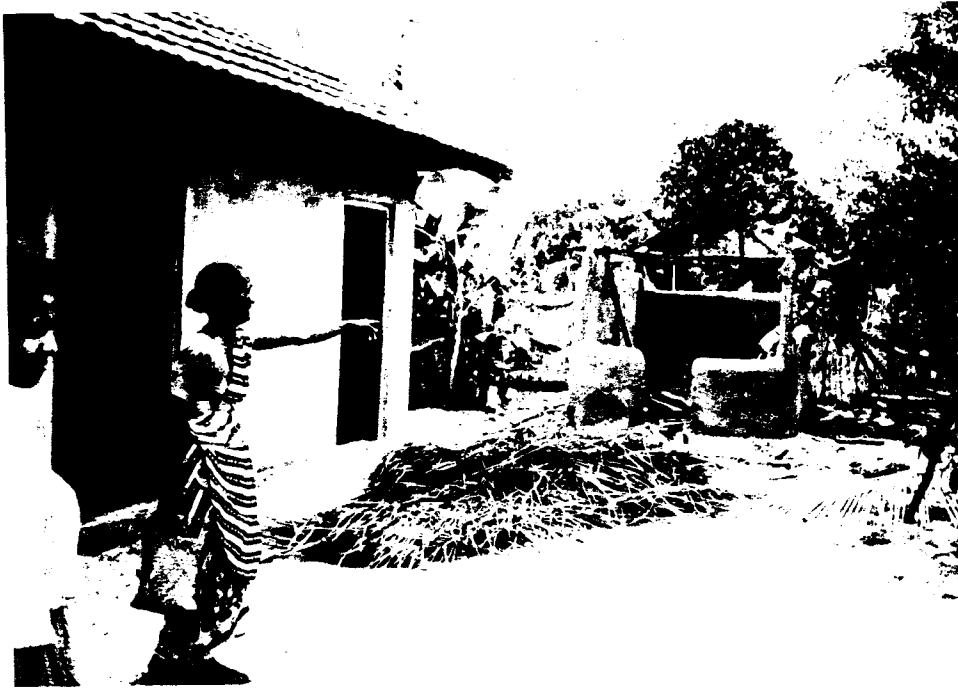


Figure 5: A WOMAN POINTING TO WHAT WAS ONCE
HER HOME. -Karapola

Many villagers had sought refuge in the jungle and had remained there till the Mahaweli Authority officials called them to come out from there. When the Welikanda and Polonnaruwa Police came to the village of Karapola, it was about 10 a.m. The Welikanda Police had brought an ambulance with them. They had been alerted by the Mahaweli Authority and the Karapola Police. The dead were taken away by the Welikanda Police on the 29th and brought back on the 30th of April. Some additional bodies were discovered on the 30th. They were difficult to identify as they were partially decomposed. It had been sunny when the attack had taken place and later it had

rained. Also the bodies had been cut up and therefore worms were already found in them.

The Mahaweli Authority had brought a lorry to take the villagers to the Karapola school. Some of the villagers returned to their homes 2-3 days later. The Muthugala villagers were also kept in the same school with them. At about lunch time on the 1st of May the villagers were told to go back to their homes. This was when they were having their midday meal and the children were not even allowed to finish their meal. The villagers were extremely reluctant to return because of the threat of continued violence. When the villagers came back, they found their homes looted and all the cattle, (about 40 animals) missing. They are quite sure that the animals are with the Muslims of Alinghipotana. The villagers said that they now have only the cattle which are roaming in other areas. At the time of our visit, however, they had not attempted to collect them.

The Karapola villagers had sent a fair number of the women and children to the Eastern Province soon after the incident. In all, members of about 40-42 families have left the village though their men folk remain. Some had gone to stay with relatives, while others had hoped to gain entry to refugee camps. Most villagers said that they had heard from their wives and children and that they were safe. In some cases however, the men remaining in Karapola did not know whether their families had reached their destinations safely, or where exactly they might be. There was a marked reluctance to divulge exact locations of their families. On the 7th or 8th of May, the Army and police asked the villagers to desist from sending their womenfolk and children away. They promised to provide the necessary security. For the moment the exodus of people seems to have stopped. The men said that they felt obliged to stay back to ward off any suspicion that they were in any way involved in the attack on the Muslim village.

PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS :

There is a garrison mentality among these villagers at Karapola. They feel hemmed-in by neighbouring Muslim and Sinhalese communities. There are closer settlements of mixed populations but they are not feared as such. Yet the fear of the Muslims and the police, is palpable among the villagers. The Karapola villagers'

assessment of their danger from Alinghipotana residents may be overestimated. However, the collaboration of the local police does indeed make them vulnerable. Not only can they not count on the police to keep civil order, or even protect them from onslaught, but the police (in the perception of the villagers), seem ready to use the excuse of an attack to vent their own rage on the villagers. The past acts of the police has given credibility to this perception.

As of our visit, no one had returned to work in their fields, and no effort had been made to reconstruct their houses. People cluster aimlessly in small groups during the daytime. Some families did not inhabit their own homes at night out of fear of another attack.

CONTINUING HARRASSMENT :

Several instances of harassment subsequent to the attacks were recounted :

01. As news of the retaliation spread the following day, all the Tamil and Muslim shops in the town of Polonnaruwa and environs had put up their shutters. The students (mostly males) of the Muslim Central College in Polonnaruwa had come out and demonstrated. Their slogans had been anti-Tamil. At about 10.30 a.m., the school had been closed and the students had been asked to go home. There were slogans shouted against Tamils from buses and inflammatory phrases like "We must kill these Tamils" had been heard in the town. The Tamil employees of the Polonnaruwa Hospital, on the advice of their Sinhala colleagues, had decided to stay in until passions had cooled.

02. On the 4th of May 1992 Navaratnam Kungithamby's son and son-in-law, Elayathamby Mohanadas and K. Nimalaswaran, had been accosted by two Muslim youth with a knife, who had handed the Tamils to the Mahawewa Police. This took place around 10 a.m. near the old town at Sevenapitiya. Both Muslim youth (one of whom is named Mubarak) are from the village of Alinghipotana. The two Tamil youth had gone to a shop about 4 km from their village. They had returned by bus and were at the bus stop about 2 km away when they had been forced to accompany the Muslim youth.

On inquiries being made, the Mahawewa Police claimed that the 2 were being held by the Welikanda Police. The Welikanda Police said

that they were not with them but with the Polonnaruwa Police. The Polonnaruwa Police said that the two had been handed back to the Welikanda Police. As of this time of writing, the young men have not been located.

03. The OIC of Welikanda, Mr. Piyasena, told Mr. Kungithamby that the boys were not with him. The OIC also told Kungithamby not to come alone. On one of his numerous visits to the Police in search of his son, Kungithamby had been waylaid and beaten by Kazima Lebbe and 3 others, all Muslims from Alinghipotana, who had then handed him over to the Karapola Police. The Karapola Police had detained him at the post, where the Welikanda OIC had discovered him and released him.

04. After the attack on the Muslim village, two Tamil women (sisters) who taught at the nursery in Alinghipotana were arrested by the police on information given by the Muslims that they were involved in the attack on their village. This was denied by their mother. At the time of our visit, the two sisters had not been released.

05. Some of the injured from the village of Karapola had been transferred to Kandy, Matale and Colombo Hospitals. One of the injured survivors said that she was physically mistreated by the Sinhala nurses in Kandy General Hospital after they discovered that she was from the Tamil village. She had also been told that if she wanted a bed, she should have brought a bed sheet with her. She was required to occupy the floor. They had also pressurised her to get herself discharged. She wanted to find out from us how she could be admitted to the Batticaloa Hospital for needed treatment. We directed her to contact the ICRC.

OBSERVATIONS :

ALINGHIPOTANA :

01. The postman for Alinghipotana was a Tamil man from Muthugala. According to one source, the allegation was that he had identified the Muslim people with valuables in their homes from his regular visits to their houses. The Principal of the school in Alinghipotana, had apparently identified the postman as one of the



Figure 6: *THIS WOMAN'S HUSBAND DIED THE PREVIOUS DAY OF HIS INJURIES IN HOSPITAL.*

attackers because his name was called out during the attack on his house. The veracity of this story could not be checked out. It should be noted that, in the attack against Muthugala, the postman had been killed at the door of his house, but the remaining family members were left unharmed. This might indicate that he was a specific target for retaliation on account of his supposed role in the Alinghipotana attack.

02. At 10.00 a.m. the Polonnaruwa Hospital Postmortem team had gone to Alinghipotana with a Police escort. The 3 doctors had later told some of their colleagues that the mood in the tragedy-struck

village had been vengeful. This seems to support the testimony of the Tamil villagers that some of the Muslim villagers had taken part in the attack on their villages.

03. WAS THE LTTE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACK ? :

Since our visit, controversy has erupted as to whether the LTTE was involved in the attack against Alinghipotana. The LTTE itself has issued a denial in this connection.³ Nevertheless the evidence strongly suggests that the LTTE was involved. The reasons why the villagers have taken up this position are enumerated below :

- (a). The weaponry used in the attack which included mortars, shells and small arms, seems to suggest that either the LTTE was involved or some other para-military group. It leaves aside the possibility that only Tamil villagers were involved in the attack.
- (b). During the attack, the survivors claimed to identify their attackers as from the LTTE from their camouflage-type clothes, by the way rolls of ammunition were strapped around their bodies, and the identification of at least one sophisticated-looking weapon, probably a hand-held cannon.
- (c). After the attack the attackers had shouted slogans to celebrate their "victory". Among the slogans shouted had been the names of three LTTE leaders in the Eastern Province.
- (d). Recently, some Tamil newspapers have suggested that perhaps some other group that is opposed to the LTTE may have attacked Alinghipotana in order to cast aspersions on the LTTE.⁴ This is not a very credible suggestion as it fails to explain some of the reasons why this particular village was targetted, nor the dynamics of the personal relationships in the area. The more credible suggestion that it was the LTTE and no other, has a greater persuasive and explanatory power.

For instance :

- (e). Residents of Alinghipotana said that some boys from the Tamil villages of Karapola and Muthugala had joined the LTTE. When the LTTE required food or information, these had been supplied by these two villages. Apparently, this had been a well-known fact, but, prior to this clash, the Muslims had kept the information to themselves.
- (f). According to one source one of the reasons for the attack on Alinghipotana was that the LTTE had lost two key members recently in Batticaloa. The LTTE believed that the Muslims had given information about these men to the Army and thus, then had retaliated against the village. This explanation also throws light on the Army's behaviour during the crisis (see below).
- (g). One Tamil man in Muthugala admitted confidentially that the LTTE was behind the attack on the Muslim village. He also said that some other Tamils were involved as well. These individuals were people formerly from the area who had gone to the Eastern Province. This theory, if sound, might explain the strange fact that the attack stopped at the junction, almost as if the attackers didn't know there were more houses beyond that point. An alternative explanation is that the LTTE wanted to destroy a substantial number completely in order to send a signal to the rest to leave. Either way, the LTTE seems to have succeeded in "persuading" the Muslims to leave the area.
- (h). It is a fact that both the Muslim and the Tamil villagers have accepted the view that the LTTE was behind the attack on Alinghipotana. The LTTE's presence in the area, though unseen, is undisputable. Quite apart from their personal losses and material deprivations, the Muslims of Alinghipotana express a continuing fear of further retaliatory attacks by the LTTE and hence the exodus from this village to other areas of Polonnaruwa where the LTTE's writ does not extend. This is in spite of the greater protection given by the Army at the moment.
- (i). The perception among the Muslims that they do not belong here can be in part traced to their feelings of insecurity. At least one of the survivors had referred to the earlier attack

by the LTTE in August 1990. The fact that the present village of Alinghipotana (as well as the Tamil village of Karapola), is occupying part of the traditional land of the ancestral village of Muthugala is also a matter to be taken into account. There have been other incidents in the past when the LTTE had adopted this modus operandi against people whom they believed were trespassing on traditional Tamil land.

All these facts cumulatively, suggest that the LTTE and no other para-military group, was responsible for the attack on Alinghipotana.

04. The late arrival of the Army and the Police is troubling. In the case of the attack on the Muslim village, perhaps the Police who were barely a mile away, were too frightened to venture out in the dark to take the message to the army post 8 miles away. Nonetheless sounds carry a long way at night and it is surprising that the army was unaware of the attack until 6 a.m. This is a matter that should be probed.

05. The presence of women and children among the looters requires an explanation. The survivors were quite certain that they heard women's voices and feminine Tamil names being called out. One suggestion is that there may have been a female cadre of the LTTE. In regard to the children, the ages could not have been ascertained. However the protracted civil war in the country has reduced considerably the age of conscription or enrollment into the LTTE. LTTE members who are children of 12 or 13 years are not unusual. It is also possible that the women and children came from local villages. But, with the exception of two young Tamil women who had been teachers in Alinghipotana (see above), none of the women and children who took part in the attack were identified by their victims. In any case, what seems to be certain is that women and children did take part in the looting of this village.

KARAPOLA AND MUTHUGALA :

01. In the case of the attacks on the Tamil villages of Karapola and Muthugala, the Police had given the appearance of not being bothered in the least. In fact, there were some reports of active and passive collaboration with the attackers. The Sevanapitiya Police

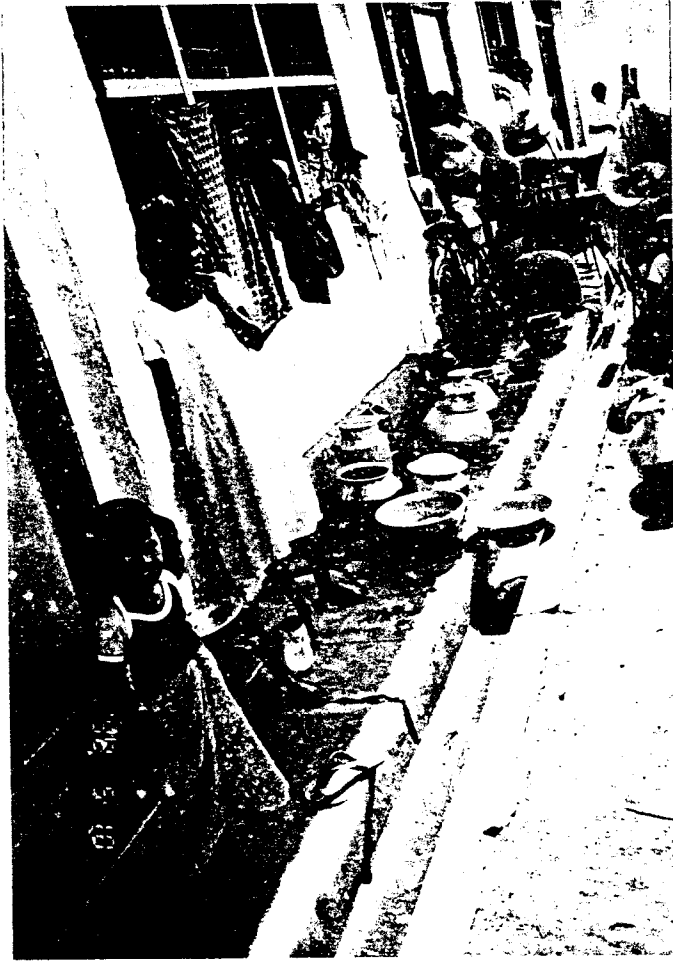


Figure 7: A SCENE AT THE REFUGEE CAMP.
-Mutugala

station was informed by Tamil men from the villages about the attack, but had taken no action. The same was true for the Karapola Police post. Still worse, the Karapola policemen had beaten up the villagers who had come to ask for assistance, and locked them up. The lack of action by the policemen who were in an immediate position to provide assistance to the villagers, makes

them equally culpable with the attackers who did the actual killing. One of the consequences of this dereliction of duty, on the part of the Police, is that the Tamil villagers have now lost all faith and trust in the local police.

02. According to the villagers, the deaths of six persons found in the irrigation canal could be directly attributed to the Karapola policemen, all of whom were Sinhalese.

The involvement of the police who were Sinhalese, in the attack on the Tamil villages is of serious concern. We assume that the Sinhalese police didn't come to the aid of the Tamils, because they dislike or are prejudiced against Tamils. Failure to aid others is a classic expression of inter-group prejudice.

The response of both police and homeguards leaves much to be desired. Homeguards are given only one month of training, and many are very young. The police too seem poorly trained, not well disciplined, and inadequately supervised. Many policemen too seem very young. The issue of training and discipline of personnel entrusted with public safety and security is an important one in the context of devolution of power. Power (and lethal weapons) in irresponsible hands is a recipe for disaster.

03. The Army's actions throughout this incident are questionable. If Army personnel believed that the Tamil villagers were leaking information about their whereabouts to the LTTE, this may explain why the Army did not come to the rescue of the Tamil villagers. When the postmortem team arrived at Alinghipotana, the Army had been present. At 2 p.m. the doctors had finished the post mortems and had to pass the Tamil villages of Muthugala and Karapola. The police who accompanied the doctors had then asked the doctors to do the postmortems at the two Tamil villages as well. Thus the doctors were probably the first outsiders to learn that a retaliation had taken place. The doctors had refused to perform the post mortems as they had been frightened. The Doctors had been told by the Police that they should not reveal to any one what they had seen.

Later the Army brought the dead from the two villages of Muthugala and Karapola to the Hospital. It was reported that the dead bodies from the two Tamil villages had burns, cuts and bullet wounds. It

was also reported that some of the bodies had been mutilated; when the attackers had cut off ears and noses to get at the ear rings and nose rings of their victims. The burns probably occurred when houses were set on fire by the attackers.

The emerging evidence suggests that if the Army had acted at the beginning of the attack, the destruction could have been greatly diminished. In Karapola in particular, the Army was in the vicinity even before the attack commenced. Moreover, it is hard to see how the Army could have gone back to base without first going to Alinghipotana, in which case they would have had to pass Muthugala. The Army's failure to take action for 3 and a half hours (until 10 a.m.) created conditions under which the retaliation could take place.

04. This incident at Welikanda reveals that in this particular instance, the lack of adequate intelligence-gathering and systematic analysis on the part of the security forces, is perhaps also a reflection of their failure to win the hearts and minds of all the local ethnic groups. For instance, the Army had no inkling of the possibility of an attack on Alinghipotana until the attack actually happened. Perhaps a greater rapport with the villagers of Karapola and Muthugala may have prevented the success of an attack on the Muslim village. The reliance on only one source of information, the Muslims, may lead to the perception of a policy of divide and rule : to pit one community against the other and hope that information will be forthcoming. If for no other reason than the existence of homogenous mono-ethnic villages in this area, this is a fatal policy. The fact that leaders in positions of authority in both the local communities as well as state agencies, failed to give leadership in promoting ethnic amity before this incident, is a matter for regret.

PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS :

The respective attacks left many villagers in all 3 villages destitute - dwellings were destroyed, possessions looted or destroyed, and in some cases, breadwinners killed.

Whatever the truth of the suppositions advanced by both groups to explain the attacks, what is abundantly clear is that the killing of men, women and children, destruction of property, and looting must be stopped. No civilized society can condone the killing of

innocents in this manner. The solutions sought by both the Tamil Liberators and the Muslim Guardians violate fundamental inalienable human rights - the right to life, limb and livelihood.

That apart, the attitudes of the survivors/victims is saddening. Neither group of survivors expressed regret for what had happened to the other community. Immersed in their own grief, the survivors couldn't see beyond their own situation. It was also disheartening that no one among the many to whom we spoke expressed any repudiation of violence as a means of solving human conflict. Nor did any member of either community see any possible means of reconciliation, or express any desire for such a process to take place. All hopes and desires for the future centred on two themes - increased security (that is, more firearms and/or security personnel) and relocation by the government to an area populated by members of their own ethnic group. The lack of remorse and or empathy towards fellow humans in suffering suggests that the possibility for peace or reconciliation in this area is bleak. The breakdown of trust is near total and the solution advocated by both communities - to pull up their roots and relocate - would carry the germ of bitterness and hatred to other areas and to other generations.

In a certain sense, the tragedy of Welikanda mirrors the larger reality of the Sri Lankan polity. At the root of relationship problems lie unresolved conflicts. The failure to come to terms with who we are (our common identity) has led to the breakdown of communication and distortions in how we perceive the other.

SECURITY OF VILLAGE COMMUNITIES AND STRENGTHENING INTER-COMMUNAL AMITY

Lack of confidence in the local police by the Tamil villagers was noticeable. It is a fact that the Tamil villages are defenceless. They also have no Tamil Homeguards. These villagers with their strong sense of family and community, have a desire to identify with their guardians. This incident revealed that in the case of Karapola and Muthugala, inter-racial understanding between the villagers and

their guardians was poor. The ethnic make-up of the security forces (especially of the civil defence forces) needs to be changed to reflect neighbourhood ethnic compositions. This will mean that homogenous ethnic villages should be policed by civil defence forces from their own ethnic community. In the case of mixed villages, it is suggested that the ethnic composition in the village should be reflected in the civil defence force of the village.

However in our opinion, long-term security with the force of arms is a poor solution. The Muslim Homeguards of Alinghipotana fled to the jungles to save their own lives and left their women and children to be killed by the LTTE. When they came back, they themselves went on the offensive and used weapons given for defence to kill other women and children in Muthugala and Karapola. These facts reveal that merely arming more people in the name of providing security will not be a solution. Long-term ethnic amity will require political will on the part of the recognised leaders of the respective ethnic communities to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people. The grievances of the Tamil people should be met and redressed without jeopardising the legitimate interests of all the other communities.

Another thing that struck us is that in Welikanda, the Mahaweli Authority placed different communities in close proximity, sometimes literally as neighbours. To us this seems like a step in the right direction. One should not allow incidents such as these to influence settlement policy. Otherwise it might lead to total ethnic segregation in the development of the Mahaweli scheme.

The experience of the Tamil survivors of Muthugala who had relatives in the predominantly Muslim village of Senapura, suggests that mixed villages can be one possible way to achieve long-term ethnic amity. It may be that proximity leads to sharing of limited resources, with its attendant spirit of give and take. In the case of some of these mixed villages, it was observed that inter-marriages had also taken place. This in turn is a better matrix for building interpersonal trust and empathy. These are tentative observations no doubt. However, they are well worth further study and scrutiny.

It was observed that one of the immediate responses of the affected villagers, both Muslims and Tamils, had been to seek refuge with other people of their own ethnic community. This in our opinion is

a crisis solution to a crisis. The crisis is the lack of security no doubt. Nevertheless, we do not think that long-term ethnic amity can be fostered by total ethnic segregation. However our observations are based only on the incident at Welikanda and are tentative.

At the present moment there is no possibility for the Tamil and Muslim villagers to co-exist at the three villages of Muthugala, Karapola and Alinghipotana. The possibilities for the long term also appear bleak. The one similarity that all three villages shared, which is glaring in its simplicity, is the fact that they were all homogenous mono-ethnic villages. Racial stereotyping and prejudice flowers in such soil, especially in the context of a protracted civil war where nationalistic jingoism is rampant. It is for this reason that we would recommend that wherever possible, future settlements should be heterogenous. This however will need to be done on a case by case basis. In some areas the animosities may be too strong for the different ethnic groups to live together at such close proximity. Moreover, building-up trust in one's fellow human beings is a life-long process. There are no easy solutions to complex questions. This makes it doubly necessary for a durable political settlement to the civil war.

1.The issue of whether the LTTE was involved in the attack on Alinghipotana, is examined at greater length in the Observations section.

2.Different methods were adopted to garner the facts in respect of the attacks on the Tamil and Muslim villages. At the first village, Alinghipotana, the team asked a series of pre-agreed questions to ascertain exactly what had happened. Further, the villagers themselves were encouraged to narrate their own experiences. Due to constraints of time and manpower it was not possible to re-produce individual case studies. This resulted in the Alinghipotana study being a distillation of facts elicited from questions asked as well as spontaneous narration of personal experiences.

The Karapola study was based on the same methodology as the one at Alinghipotana. This was largely dictated by the necessity of cross-checking the veracity of the differing versions of the incident and the need to synthesise in order to provide a coherent whole.

The Muthugala case studies were not dictated by the same priorities as the other studies on the other two villages. Hence the divergence in treatment of similar, harrowing experiences.

3.The British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) news report of 3rd May quoted Mr. Lawrence Thilakar of the LTTE's International Secretariat which is based in Paris, France. In this interview Mr. Thilakar said that the LTTE claimed responsibility for the attack on the guard post at Alinghipotana, but denied that they were involved in the massacre.

The "Daily News", published in Colombo, made reference to the BBC broadcast in their report of 6th May. It stated that one of the LTTE cadres named Yogarajah had died during the attack on the Muslim village. It also stated that the LTTE attackers had claimed to the Tiger hierarchy that they had killed 11 security men in the attack and captured their weapons.

The "Daily News" quoting unspecified sources said that the number of weapons captured by the LTTE was accurate. However it stated that no member of the security forces had been killed.

4.The "Murasoli" and the "Eelanatham" are both published in Jaffna. In one of their issues during the first week of May, they carried the statement by the LTTE that they were responsible for the attack on the guard post but not for the massacre, which they claimed was the work of the "Black Cats".

The "Daily News" of 7th May quoted the Secretary to the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP). The secretary stated that, " the LTTE radio on April 29 "covertly claimed" responsibility for the Welikanda murders. The broadcast said that the Tigers had captured the weapons of the security forces in the area. This had been prominently published in the Jaffna papers. The EPDP said that both the Voice of Tigers and the Jaffna papers publicised that Nadarajah Puvanendran of Valaichenai, bearing the rank of "Second Lieutenant" who also bore the alias of Thevarajah Yogarajah had died in this operation. "

The EPDP dismissed the claim of the LTTE that the massacre was the work of some other para military group.