

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

7.1 The LTTE was founded on May 5th 1976 as a successor to Tamil New Tigers (TNT). The TNT was started by V. Pirabhakaran on 22nd May, 1972, soon after the promulgation of the Republican Constitution. Velupillai Prabhakaran - a Koraivarar fisherman by caste - was born on 26.11.1954 , to T.Velupillai, a Malaysian of Tamil origin, who was a district land officer in Jaffna. V. Pirabhakaran was deeply traumatised by seeing one of his uncles burnt alive during the language riots of 1958. Pirabhakaran gradually emerged as a fascist militant leader with a cult of personality in the militant movement. The bitter internal rivalries that were to mark the Tamil struggle in later years were absent then and Pirabhakaran, along with others attended training camps organised by EROS functionaries. In 1972, V. Prabhakaran sailed to India with others including Thangadurai and Kuttimani. He returned to Sri Lanka in 1974.

The first major strike of the TNT was the assassination of the Mayor of Jaffna. On July 27, 1975 Alfred Duriappah, the Tamil Mayor of Jaffna and chief organiser of the SLFP in the region, went to the Varadaraja Perumal temple at Ponnalai in Jaffna. Four young men waiting for him at the temple attacked him as soon as he got out of his car. One of them opened fire from point blank range. The mayor tried to escape but collapsed in a pool of blood. The assailants jumped into Duriappah's car and sped away.

On 05.03.1976 V. Pirabhakaran led a raid on the State run People's Bank, Puttur and escaped with half a million rupees in cash and jewelry worth Rs.2 lakhs after holding the employees at gun point.

7.1.1 Soon after this crime, V. Pirabhakaran founded the LTTE on 5th May, 1976. After the founding of the LTTE, on Aug. 16, 1977, the Police and the Tamil Youth, clashed in Jaffna. This triggered off anti- Tamil riots resulting in major loss of life and property of Tamils and the creation of a large number of refugees. Violence became frequent in the Northern Peninsula. At least one incident of violence and confrontation was reported every day.

On January, 1978, the LTTE shot dead M.Canagaratnam in Colombo. He was a TULF MP who had switched allegiance to the ruling UNP after the 1977 elections. Uma Maheswaran and V. Pirabhakaran were stated to be involved in this crime. It was the first LTTE hit outside the Tamil majority north east.

On April 7, 1978, a police party led by Inspector Bastinpillai on their way to raid an LTTE training camp was attacked and the victims killed. Uma Maheswaran took part in the killing.

On April 25, 1978 the LTTE came out into the open for the first time accepting responsibility for the murders of Mayor Duriappah, an alleged Police agent called N.Nadaraja and 9 policemen including Bastian Pillai. The claim was made in a

LTTE letter head marked "to whom it may concern" inscribed in the now famous insignia of the roaring Tiger. This claim was published in the Tamil daily Veerkesari, and with this, the LTTE's existence came to be known publicly.

7.1.2 On May 22, 1978, the LTTE was banned in Sri Lanka by the President JR Jayawardhane, who passed the "Proscription of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Other Similar Organisations Ordinance", outlawing all Tamil militant groups. In May, the police issued a list of 38 "wanted" men in which the name of V. Pirabhakaran also figured. 7.1.3 Some of the terrorist crimes after the banning, which are attributed to the LTTE are as follows :-

On 07.09.1978 the Sri Lankan Parliament introduced a new constitution. On that day, an AVRO 748 aircraft of Air Ceylon was blasted by the LTTE by means of a time bomb after it landed at Ratnamala Airport, near Colombo with 35 passengers from Jaffna. One of the two suspects, who could not be arrested, was KSS.Subramaniam, alias Baby, who is now the most loyal confidante of LTTE chief V. Pirabhakaran. After the AVRO blast, Subramaniam came to be called "Avro Baby".

On 5 th December, 1978 - LTTE committed a dacoity at Tinnevely Peoples Bank and took away Rs 16.8 Lakhs killing police officers and looting their weapons.

On December 5th, 1979 the LTTE raided the People's Bank and decamped with Rs. 12 lakhs rupees after killing two police men and wounding a third.

7.1.4 The growing cult of violence led the Sri Lankan Government to repeal the Proscription of Liberation Tigers etc. Ordinance . The Government, in its place, enacted the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Simultaneously, the police launched a crackdown which forced militants, including Pirabhakaran, to flee to Tamil Nadu. The growth and activities of the LTTE during the eighties have been dealt with separately.

Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students or Eelam Revolutionary Organisers (EROS) is perhaps the only militant group today which works in collaboration with the LTTE. This group was formed in London in 1975 by Eliyathamby Ratnasabapathy, a Sri Lankan Tamil who was residing in Britain. The EROS became known only when its student wing-the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES) was subsequently formed in Madras. The EROS drew its cadres mainly from Batticaloa and Amparai districts in Eastern Sri Lanka. It was the first Tamil group which attempted to establish a close working relationship with the Muslims of Eastern Sri Lanka , who constitute the second largest ethnic group in the eastern province next to Tamils. In late 1975, they planned a four point agenda to win over the Muslims of the eastern province. The agenda, inter-alia, envisaged that the EROS would work with Muslims to settle

problems of the other groups with Muslims and to have plans for military action when the necessity arises;

In 1976, EROS embarked upon a programme of training by opening a militant training camp in Vavuniya, Northern Sri Lanka. Subsequently, EROS and LTTE reached an agreement and used this camp as their main base for military training. V. Prabhakaran, received his initial training at this camp. Meanwhile, the EROS leadership in London struck a relationship with Syed Hameed, the PLO Representative in U.K, who later arranged training for EROS cadres, as well as LTTE cadres, in Lebanon. In May 1976, after a visit to Beirut by an EROS representative, contact was established with the dreaded PLO leader Abu Jihad, (who was subsequently killed by the Israelis). A message was sent to Vavuniya to dispatch cadres for advanced training to Lebanon. EROS and LTTE trained together with the Palestinians in late 1976 and 1977. Around this time, signs of dissent had developed between Uma Maheswaran, the Chairman of the LTTE who was close to the TULF leadership, and V. Prabhakaran, who was an important member of the group. EROS wanted to defuse the tension and sent Uma Maheswaran for training to Lebanon in 1977. In 1980, EROS and its student wing GUES split and the EPRLF was formed.

7.3 Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) was a break-away faction of EROS. In 1979/1980, differences over the absence of the leadership in London and organisational problems such as democratic centralism arose among the EROS leaders in Sri Lanka. The EPRLF started as a leftist group with a strong Marxist element. In 1982, they formed a military wing and later indulged in several militant activities. The policies and activities of EPRLF were strongly influenced by its leader, K. Padmanabha, who had been trained in 1976 in Lebanon by the PLO and had a political as well as a military mind. Other important leaders of the EPRLF who emerged during its inception were Varadarajah Perumal (who later became the Chief Minister of North-Eastern Provinces) and Ketheeswaran .

7.3.1 EPRLF reached its peak during 1988 when Vardharaja Perumal was elected and installed as the Chief Minister of North Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. However, after the de-induction of the IPKF, this organisation was set upon by the LTTE. K. Padmanabha, the General Secretary along with several other important EPRLF functionaries were assassinated on 19th June 1990 at Madras

7.5 People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam

(PLOTE) was founded in 1980 by Karthiragamar Uma Maheswaran alias Mukundan who became its General Secretary. He was the Chairman of the LTTE from 1977-1980. he was trained in Lebanon and later in Syria. After a bitter rivalry with Velupillai Prabhakaran, Uma Maheswaran left the LTTE in 1980, and formed PLOTE.

7.5.1 PLOTE was active in cultivating international connections: it established links with Dr.George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Communist party of Tunisia, the Communist-Leninist Party of Algeria, the Turkish Organisation for Solidarity with Palestine, the African National Congress, the FMLN of El Salvador, the Sandinistas of Nicaragua and the ruling parties of Mauritius and Cuba.

7.5.2 PLOTE lost its strength and momentum gradually due to the increasing criminalisation of its cadres and despotic methods of Uma Maheswaran. In July 1989, Uma Maheswaran was shot dead in Colombo suspectedly due to intra-organisational differences.

7.6 Several other minor militant groups had mushroomed in Sri Lanka by then; however, their roles and existence is not significant during the period in question. Role of militant groups notably the Tamil Eelam Army (TEA) is more significant during the mid-eighties and has been dealt with separately.

Growth of Tamil Chauvinism in India

9 A perceived common ethnic origin was not the only bond which cemented the ties between the Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils. A stronger bond was the constant urge of chauvinistic Tamil elements in both the countries for self determination. The demand for a separate Dravidian country was constantly propagated by the chauvinistic Tamil elements of both the countries who propounded and advocated theories based on pseudo-historical interpretations justifying a separate geographical identity for all Tamils. These jingoistic outpourings had a deep impact on the psyche of vulnerable Tamil youth. The fostering of this "Tamil psyche" led to the emergence of racially conscious socio-political chauvinist forces in India as well as Sri Lanka.

9.1 In India the Dravidian movement, in its recent form, can be said to have manifested itself with the ascendancy of a Tamil leader "Periyar" Ramaswamy Nayakar on the scene and the founding of Dravida Kazhagam (DK) in Tamil Nadu in 1944. The DK was a "Tamil only" party which opposed imposition of Aryan Brahminical rule on Tamils and propagation of Hindi. DK initially advocated formation of a separate Dravidian country which was contemplated to comprise the entire erstwhile Madras Presidency. In 1949, the DK split and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) was founded by CN Annadurai. After the formation of Andhra Pradesh as a state, the DK temporarily abandoned the concept of Dravida Desam in its originally contemplated form and confined itself to removal of

(a) - Hindi as the Official language of India, and (b) - Brahmins as the dominant social class in Tamil Nadu.

9.1.1 Elaborating on the objectives of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Shri M. Karunanidhi, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and leader of the DMK, deposed before the Commission on 17th January, 1997. He stated :-

"The DMK party was formed not in 1957 but in 1949. When the DMK Party departed from the DK party headed by Periyar, it was only a social organisation. Later also, it continued to be that. Only in 1956, after the Tiruchi Conference, it was decided to participate in the elections and serve the people politically. "

"The DK party and DMK both originally demanded Dravida Nadu, a separate State independent of the Indian Union. But in the year 1962, this demand was given up officially by the DMK party....."

9.2 The secessionist proclivities of Tamil chauvinists, however, did not abate. It was due to this emerging trend that, in 1963, the constitution of India had to be amended by its sixteenth Amendment which made it mandatory for those running for public office to take an oath for upholding the sovereignty and integrity of India. Since then, the efforts of regional separatist elements became covert.

9.3 After the 16th amendment of the Constitution of India, C.N. Annadurai; the Dravida leader alongwith his followers, notably M.Karunanidhi and M.G.Ramachandran, continued to propagate Tamil aspirations within the constitutional framework of India. During the elections of 1967 and 1971, in Tamil Nadu, the DMK was elected defeating the Congress. The DMK re-asserted the precedence of Tamil sentiments over the other issues faced by the state. CN Annadurai became the Chief Minister of the State after elections; however, after he died in 1969, Shri M. Karunanidhi took over as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. During the period the DMK government was in power, the Central Government perceived their activities as prejudicial to the Indian Constitution and, in 1976, the DMK government was dismissed by the Centre for "violation of the constitution and breakdown of the administration."

9.4 The All India Anna DMK (AIADMK) which was a splinter group of the DMK formed by M.G. Ramachandran in 1972 came to power in 1977, was dismissed in 1980, but won the General elections of 1981 and returned to power uninterruptedly till the end of 1987 - the year when M.G. Ramachandran died. This party balanced Tamil interests in harmony with the policies of the Central Government and continuously maintained good relations with the Central Government.

9.5 Whereas the two parties - the DMK and AIADMK - which, between them, held power in the state for the period 1969 - 1987, continued to base their manifestoes on Tamil aspirations and fight for the regional demands within the constitutional framework of India, certain chauvinistic parties of the state notably the Dravida Kazhagam (DK) slowly transformed themselves into hard-liners.

These parties, over the course of time, encouraged militancy amongst local youth and later, during the mid-eighties supported militant activities in the state.

10 In the wake of 1980s, the situation prevailing in Sri Lanka was delicate. Tamil militancy had gained ground in Sri Lanka. Some prominent Tamil militant leaders, notably, V. Pirabhakaran of the LTTE had started frequently visiting Tamil Nadu and staying there for considerable length of time. These militant groups had begun establishing bases in Tamil Nadu. The Sri Lankan Government's repeated crackdown on the Tamil militants and the frequent anti-Tamil riots had led to large number of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees fleeing the island to the proximate Eastern coast of Tamil Nadu.

10.1 On the Indian front, there was an upsurge in sympathy for the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils, especially after the ethnic riots of 1981. The climate created by Tamil chauvinist groups in the state of Tamil Nadu had become conducive for Sri Lankan Tamil militants to infiltrate and carry out their activities from India. The subsequent growth of Tamil Chauvinist groups in Tamil Nadu many of which became active collaborators of the Sri Lankan Tamil terrorists owes its impetus to the developments of this period.

10.2 The problem of the Stateless Tamil plantation labourers of Indian origin was dragging on. The process of settlement of this issue was slow and painful. This had added to the popular perception in Tamil Nadu that the Sri Lankan Government, under the influence of the Sinhala majority, was utterly insensitive to the plight of the Tamil ethnic minorities of the island.

10.3 Opening up of the strategic Trincomalee Harbour located in Eastern Sri Lanka by the Sri Lankan Government to outside powers and visible signs of converting it into a Naval base had serious security implications for India. Added to this were the attempts being made by the Sri Lankan Government to allot land near the Trincomalee harbour to foreign Oil Companies for oil exploration in the available oil farms. There were also moves at this time to give broadcasting facilities to foreign companies at Trincomalee by allowing them to set up their transmitters and communication equipment. These factors, which continued to be of matters of serious concern to the Political executive of India as well as the Foreign Policy framers, had to be taken into account in the days to come. The decisions taken by the Indian Government particularly Shri Rajiv Gandhi, become relevant while tracing the sequence of events; these have been separately discussed.

10.4 This background deals only with the origins of the circumstances which led to an alarming growth of Sri Lankan Tamil militancy in India ultimately culminating in the assassination of one of the most popular political leaders of this country.

10.5 The parameters under consideration here have been confined to the first part of the first term of reference of this Commission alone i.e. the sequence of events leading to the assassination; The Commission while inquiring into the remaining parts of the terms of reference, namely, the second part of the first term i.e. all facts and circumstances relating to the assassination, and the second part, i.e. the conspiracy, will examine the role of individual(s) and / or forces , if any, which goes beyond the role of Sri Lankan Tamil militants.

Phase I (1981-1986)

This was the period when the public opinion in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, was, during the initial stages, strongly in favour of the Sri Lankan Tamil ethnic minority due to a series of anti Tamil riots in Sri Lanka particularly the riot of 1981 during which the famous Jaffna Public Library was burnt down allegedly with the connivance of Sri Lankan security forces. India's direct involvement in assisting Sri Lanka to sort out a political solution to the ethnic violence began in July-August 1983 when another extremely violent anti - Tamil riot broke out in Sri Lanka. This violence aroused great concern in India particularly in Tamil Nadu where close linguistic, cultural and familial ties with the Sri Lankan Tamils had existed for generations. The problem spilled over to India when thousands of Sri Lankan refugees fleeing the oppression in Sri Lanka arrived in Tamil Nadu fuelling strong public opinion in their favour. This, alongwith several other policy and strategic reasons, led India to take a diplomatic initiative. The then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi sent the then Foreign Minister Shri P.V.Narasimha Rao to visit Sri Lanka in July 1983. Following Rao's visit, President Jayawardhene's brother Dr. H.W. Jaywardene during the discussions with Mrs. Gandhi indicated that the Sri Lankan Government was willing to consider proposals which would give the Tamil minority their due share in the affairs of the country within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. The Indian Prime Minister offered India's good offices to facilitate political solution which was accepted by the Sri Lankan Government. Meanwhile, the militant groups amongst the refugees organised themselves on Indian soil and, fully exploiting the favourable and strong public sympathy, started entrenching themselves in Tamil Nadu. There were allegations of these militants getting trained in "camps" in India and getting arms and ammunitions. Their presence in India was marked by several violent acts including bitter internecine warfare which manifested itself for the first time in India when in Madras, in May 1982, there was a shootout between the LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran and PLOTE chief Uma Maheswaran alias Mukundan. In a particularly gruesome incident, there was a bomb blast at the Meenambakkam Airport at Madras in which at least 30 persons died while many were injured. A Sri Lankan Tamil extremist group, Tamil Eelam Army was found responsible for this offence. In November, 1986, there was indiscriminate firing by a group of Sri Lankan Tamil militants at Choolaimedu, on the outskirts of Madras resulting in casualties and injuries to innocent bystanders. This was the beginning of the `Gun- and-bomb' culture in the otherwise traditionally peaceful State of Tamil Nadu. Several efforts made by India to bring about peace between

the Sri Lankan Government and the Sri Lankan Tamil moderates and militants failed. Some such noteworthy efforts in this direction were made during the Thimpu Talks in Bhutan held in 1985 and SAARC Conference at Bangalore, held in November 1986. By the end of 1986, due to the criminal activities of the Sri Lankan Tamil militants on the Indian soil, the sympathy for them in the minds of the general public had considerably gone down

LTTE:- 6 camps were reported being conducted by the LTTE in the districts of Anna (1 camp), Thanjavur West (1 camp), Thanjavur East (1 camp), Salem (1 camp), Madurai (1 camp) and Ramnad (1 camp) of Tamil Nadu. The total strength of trainees in these camps was reported to be 495 cadres including 90 female Tigers. The camp at Sirumalai (Anna district) was the only camp where all the 90 female Tigers were getting training along with 40 male Tigers. The largest LTTE camp was located at Kumbarapatti in Salem district. The training comprised Arms Training, swimming, boat driving and physical training. The camps were equipped with transport facilities such as Jeeps, Vans, motor cycles etc.

TELO:- Five camps organised by Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) were reported to be running in the districts of Ramnad (3 camps) and Salem (2 camps). There were totally 233 male cadres undergoing this training which comprised Physical Training, Arms training, swimming and boat driving.

EROS:- Eelam Revolutionary Organisers (EROS) were reported to be conducting two camps in the districts of Ramnad and Pasumpon Muthuramalingam districts. There were 8 male trainees in these camps which were imparting Physical Training and Arms Training.

EPRLF: The Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) was reported to be conducting 7 training camps in the districts of Thanjavur West (3 camps), South Arcot (2 camps), Trichy (1 camp) and Ramnad (1 camp) with a total strength of 73 male trainees who were being trained in Guerilla warfare, Physical Training and Arms training. These camps reportedly possessed sophisticated weapons such as Light Machine -guns as well as transport vehicles.

PLOT:- The Peoples Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam (PLOT) was conducting training in 18 camps located in the districts of Thanjavur West (11 camps), Pudukottai (4 camps), Tirunelveli East (2 camps) and Thanjavur East (1 camp). Totally 2236 cadres in addition to 94 female cadres were getting trained in these camps. The camps possessed transport facilities, boats and some weapons. Predominantly, the training comprised guerrilla warfare and also Physical Training, Swimming and Boat Driving.

Other assorted organisations were also conducting their camps in Tamil Nadu such as Tamil Eelam Army (TEA) - 2 camps, 31 trainees; TELA -Kanthan group (3 camps, 117 trainees); TELA-Rajan group (1 camp, 10 trainees); TENA (1

camp, 25 trainees); RELO (1 camp, 13 trainees; NLFT (1 camp, 2 trainees); ECRP (1 camp, 4 trainees) and TMPP (1 camp, 6 trainees).

As per the enclosure, the total number of trainees of various Sri Lankan Tamil militant organisations in their training camps being conducted in Tamil Nadu was 3179 males and 184 females, totally 3363 cadres.