

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS AND TAMIL POLITICS (SRI LANKA) *

N. BALAKRISHNAN

The District Development Councils (DDCs) scheme introduced by the United National Party (UNP) government has generated interest that centred largely around two aspects. On the one hand, it is looked upon as an institutional device for greater administrative decentralisation with a view to promoting better district level planning and development. On the other, on account of the envisaged decentralisation and implied devolution of power—with the Members of Parliament (MPs) and elected members at the district level—the scheme is said to have some relevance and significance vis-a-vis the ‘Tamil problem’ which still remains and unresolved issue in Sri Lankan politics. The paper is mainly concerned with the second aspect and focuses attention on (i) the structural arrangements and the power-relationships between the centre and the districts (ii) the participation of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in the scheme and (iii) the major implications for Tamil politics in the context of the basic issues that have figured prominently in recent times.

Presidential Commission on the Development Councils.

Prior to the enactment of the legislation to provide for the DDCs, a Presidential Commission was appointed by the government to report on the scheme. The Commission was entrusted with the principal task of reporting on “the manner in which economic development activity in a district could be planned through the District Minister and the Development Councils”¹ It is significant to note that the TULF, in supporting the decision to set up a Presidential Commission, nominated two well-known personalities to serve as its representatives² on the Commission.

The Presidential Commission after its deliberations on the subject of Development Councils could not produce a unanimous report, perhaps because of the political implications of some of the issues involved. The Commission's report had two parts, consisting of the 'main report' and a 'dissent' submitted by one of TULF representatives³—both of whom did not sign the main report. The basic disagreement between the main report and the dissenting report stemmed largely from the role envisaged for the DDCs and the District Minister (DM). The main report, considering the constitutional position of the DM⁴ and viewing him as an agent of the Centre recommended that the DDCs be headed by the DM. Furthermore, the main report conceded only somewhat reluctantly, it appears, that "if the government considers it necessary the Development Councils may be conferred subordinate law making powers subject to Parliamentary and Ministerial direction and may be incorporated by an Act of Parliament".⁵

The dissenting report in contrast showed a different approach in regard to the role of the DDCs through the intermediary of the DM. It envisaged a DDC scheme with the Council—a democratically constituted body—headed by an elected Chairman and an Executive Committee headed by the DM. The DDCs were envisaged as agencies primarily responsible for planning the development of the district for which subordinate law-making powers—including those to raise revenue by taxation and other means—are shown to be indispensable. The case argued in the dissenting report for a district authority—democratically constituted—directing the administration and development activities with adequate devolution of power may be what the TULF hoped for from the deliberations of the Presidential Commission.

It is interesting to note that many of the provisions of the subsequent Development Councils Act, No. 30, 1980 pertaining to the organisational structure and relationships between the different entities do have a similarity to the principles and arrangements suggested in the dissenting report. However, this conformity in many respects appears to be in form only, devoid of much substance, as the actual power-relationships between the centre and the new district authorities seem to have been weighted more in favour of the agencies of the centre—the District Minister the Minister⁶, the appropriate Minister and, finally, the President.

Development Councils Act and the Structural Arrangements

The Development Councils Act of 1980 sought to (i) provide the necessary organisational structure (ii) define the powers and functions of different institutions and (iii) determine the power-relationships between the centre and the new district authorities. The DDC scheme, as designed, embodies principally three institutions, namely, (i) the District Minister, (ii) the Executive Committee and (iii) the Development Council.

According to the provisions of the Act pertaining to membership, the DDCs will include (a) the MPs in the district concerned as ex-officio members and (b) elected members whose number, as determined by the President, will be less than the number of MPs for the district.⁷ The DDCs so constituted will be headed by an elected Chairman who would have been placed first on the nomination list of the party (or independent group/s) that polled the highest number of votes at the DDC elections. The composition of the DDCs as presently determined no doubt gives a built-in-advantage to the parties—the UNP and the TULF—that already enjoy a majority position in terms of the number of MPs in the districts concerned.

The Executive Committee forms an integral part of the DDC structure. Each DDC will have an Executive Committee—headed by the DM—consisting of the elected Chairman of the Council and two other members of the Council appointed by the DM in consultation with the Chairman. The executive Committee is responsible for the formulation of the 'annual development plan', its implementation and the preparation of the annual budget.

The DM, already a functioning entity at the district level even before the DDC scheme came into operation, becomes key figure linking the centre and the districts, and deriving his authority directly from the President. The DM, being the 'President's man' will be able to exercise considerable authority and power through the Executive Committee over the affairs of the Council. On him falls the main task of harmonizing the district development policies and perspectives with those of the overall government policies and national perspectives. It is also significant to note that the DM is a 'political appointee' of the President—from the government parliamentary group—functioning in the DDC set up with the MPs and elected members at the district level.

A perusal of the structural arrangements of, and the assignment of powers, duties and functions to, the different agencies involved in the DDC structure reveals that on a number of important matters the centre and its agencies retain considerable powers of control and direction at different levels.

The district regional policies and perspectives relating to socio-economic development under the DDC scheme are to be reflected mostly in the formulation and implementation of 'the annual development plan' for each district. In the Act, which has placed much emphasis on the annual development plan, the DDCs have been assigned a wide range⁸ of subjects covering all the important areas of socio-economic development. As envisaged, it is through the annual development plan that the DDCs are expected to promote and carry out district level planning and development.

It is laid down in the DCs Act that in respect of all or any of the subjects listed in the First Schedule⁹, the Executive Committee shall consider draft development proposals from the appropriate Minister and formulate other proposals in

consultation with other appropriate Ministers and prepare an annual development plan on the basis of such proposals. Such a plan will then be submitted to the DC for its approval (Section 35 (a)). Further, the DDC after its approval of the annual development plan will then submit such plan to the Minister for his approval and upon approval "such plan shall constitute the annual development plan of the Council for that year" (Section 44). It would appear therefore that the exercise of authority by both the Minister and the appropriate Ministers in dealing with development projects and annual development plan for a district can give them considerable powers of direction and control. In addition., the Centre can also exercise authority and control through its financial allocations on which the DDCs will have to depend a great deal.

The DDCs are given powers of subordinate legislation in regard to taxation and other important matters. However, these are themselves subject to the approval of the Minister, and appropriate Minister and the sanction of Parliament (Section 25). Similarly the powers to raise money through borrowing also requires the approval of both the Minister and the Minister of Finance. Also any donations or other assistance made generally or for any specific projects will have to get the approval of the Minister (Section 19 (2) b).

The section of the DCs Act dealing with 'General control' specifies further powers of control and direction in regard to the activities of the new district authorities. In the exercise of such powers the DM, the Minister (of Local Government) and the President figure prominently again. The DM is duty-bound to report to the President whenever there is a conflict between him and the Executive Committee of the Council over matters concerning "the application of the general policy of the government in the district" (Section 61 (1)). The President has the power to dissolve the Executive Committee when such 'conflicts' are found to be 'irreconcilable'. The President can also remove from office any member of the Executive Committee for 'incompetence' or 'mismanagement' (Section 62 (10)). Moreover the Minister of Local Government has the power to remove the chairman of a DDC from office or all or any of the elected members of the Council on the grounds of 'incompetence', 'mismanagement', 'persistent default in the performance of duties or 'neglect to comply with any of the provisions of the Act' (Section 63 (i)). In the event of the removal of the Chairman from office he will cease to be a member of the council. When all the elected members of the DDC are removed (under section 63(i)) the other members also cease to function and the DM will "then exercise and perform all powers and duties and functions of the Council until such time as the Minister orders an election to be held to elect new members of the Council (Section 63 (i) (a) and (b). The President also has the powers "to make orders of an administrative nature providing for any unforeseen or special circumstances or for determining or adjusting any question or matter that would arise in connection with the administration of a DDC for which no provision or effective provision has been made in the Act" (Section 94).

Most of the provisions for 'general control' may be used only in exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, they have been incorporated in the Act so that the Centre would be able to exercise its authority at various levels and in different situations, if the need arises. The key issue in any exercise aimed at decentralisation and devolution of authority is the power-relationships between the Centre and the peripheral units. The main legal provisions of the DCs Act now in operation offer no firm assurance of a power-distribution favouring the district units. This may make the DDCs ineffective instruments of regional administration and development.

DDCs and the TULF

The appointment of the Presidential Commission as well as the subsequent legislation, supported by the TULF, led to the belief that this particular exercise in decentralisation and devolution—besides being a general scheme—had "something more" to offer towards redressing Tamil political grievances. The government's view was that the TULF and the Tamils should find much that is acceptable in the scheme—though no specific and explicit policy declaration was made to this effect. The TULF for its part hoped that decentralisation and devolution could result in some measure of 'regional/district autonomy' in the DDC scheme which it felt would be to the advantage of the Tamils and 'Tamil areas'.

The TULF decision to support the DCs Bill in the Parliament and to participate in the working of the scheme was no doubt a significant event in the TULF-centred politics of recent years, indicating the emergence of a 'working arrangement' between the government and the Tamil political leadership. This decision was hailed as a "positive step in the right direction"¹⁰ by the independent national English weekly, the *Tribune*, which may well have reflected the views of the Colombo based Tamils, Tamil business interests and other 'moderate' sections of the Tamils.

After going through a politically troublesome period since the 1977 race riots, followed by the severely unsettled conditions in Jaffna resulting in a state of emergency in 1979¹¹—during which the security forces were engaged in "eliminating terrorism"—the TULF leadership seemed to be in a mood to respond to the DDC proposal. It appeared that the informal and intermittent talks between the government and the TULF representatives may have also paved the way for the TULF's decision on the DDC scheme.

The TULF decision to support the DDCs and participate in the working of the scheme has also resulted in serious internal problems for the Front for the first time since its formation. The DDC issue has split the TULF sharply on account of the differences that emerged between—what may be labelled—the 'moderate leadership' on the one hand and the 'activists' and 'radicals' on the other. It would be true to say, however, that the DDC issue only further underlined the differences which have already begun to emerge within the TULF in regard to the

political strategy pertaining to the 'Eelam demand'. With the commitment to 'Tamil Eelam',¹² for which the TULF is said to have received a mandate at the 1977 general elections, the activist and radical groups saw this as the only goal towards which the TULF should work for and they strongly opposed any moves which they considered will dilute or compromise it. Consequently, they expected the TULF leadership to adopt a very definite and uncompromising stand on the commitment towards Eelam. The leadership, however, having had to operate within the limits of mainstream parliamentary politics and considering the bitter experiences that stemmed from the racial disturbances in the recent past, opted for a more flexible and pragmatic approach. Such differences had begun to emerge even before the DDC issue. This issue, however, led to a more open confrontation between the TULF leadership and the 'dissidents'.

The ultimate decision to support the DCs Bill was taken after a much intense and even acrimonious debate within the TULF. The TULF leadership had the support of the entire parliamentary group (though one or two had strong reservations) as well as that of the moderate elements within the organisation and even managed to win over some of the party and youth activists. Nevertheless the decision caused a major rift within the Front because of the hard core of dissidents who opposed the move. This split also began to be felt among the party's constituent groups, such as the youth organisation, party loyalists, politically active expatriate Tamils and others.

The opposition to the DDCs, significantly enough, has been led by an influential and articulate section within the TULF comprising some of the prominent and long-standing members. The public campaign against the leadership on this issue was spear-headed by Suthanthiran¹³, which until recently was the TULF's 'official' political weekly in Tamil. The Suthanthiran—representing the voice of the dissident groups—actively campaigned against the DDCs and the leadership became the target of attack. All this brought into the open the sharp division of opinion that emerged within the TULF, which also resulted in the expulsion of a few prominent party loyalists. The TULF leadership had to face its biggest challenge from the dissidents since its formation six years ago.

In the public speeches and statements defending their action to support the DDCs—that appeared in the Tamil press—the TULF leaders have often stressed two important matters, namely, 'the development of the Tamil areas' and the 'safeguarding of the Tamil areas'—through the TULF controlled councils. While reiterating the TULF's long-term political commitment, the leaders argued that the DDC scheme could be accepted and worked to develop and safeguard the Tamil areas.

The dissidents on the other hand vehemently criticised the TULF leadership for their acceptance of the "ineffective Development Councils". They maintained that the TULF's participation would divert attention away from what they perceived

as the single-minded commitment and the necessary campaign and struggle to achieve the ultimate political goal—'Tamil Eelam'. The dissidents accused the TULF leadership of having deviated from the political commitment towards Eelam in accepting the DDCs. What appeared to be the crux of the matter to the dissidents and their sympathisers is that the acceptance of the DDCs will weaken the "resolve and commitment of the Tamil people" towards Eelam. Since the DDC issue, the attitudes have hardened and the TULF leadership and the dissidents became openly and irreconcilably divided.

The Tamil political leadership (of the Federal Party) in the past had agreed to some sort of 'regional autonomy' as a basis for 'interim settlement' of the Tamil question. This was at a time when the major political commitments were within the framework of federalism and the idea of a 'separate Tamil nation' or that of the 'right to self-determination' did not gain much currency as today. The regional-councils in the Bandaranaike—Chelvanayagam pact (July 1957) and the 'district councils' in the Dudley Senanayake—Chelvanayagam agreement (March 1965)—both of which were never implemented—were specifically designed to redress the grievances of the Tamils. In both these agreements the principle of 'regional autonomy' in one form or another had been given a place, which has always appealed to the Tamil political leadership. In the light of this past strategy, the TULF leadership felt justified in accepting the DDCs in the present circumstances as an 'interim arrangement'. The TULF is committed to the DDC scheme in the hope that the TULF controlled councils will be able to concentrate on the development of the Tamil areas and establish some degree of authority over their administration—though the existing pattern of power distribution between the centre and the district units in the scheme leaves a good deal to be desired. This appears to be a key area of discussion in the 'peace talks' that went on intermittently during the past eight months between the government and the TULF representatives. Having committed itself to participate in the DDC scheme, the TULF took the election to DDCs seriously and saw in them an opportunity to demonstrate its political standing in the predominantly Tamil areas.

DDCs Election and the TULF

The DDCs election held in June 1981 constituted the first nation-wide elections held after the 1977 general election on the basis of proportional representation. The country's pro-government mass media hailed the DDCs election as a "mini general election".

The procedures and regulations that governed the election of members to the DDCs were set out in the Development Councils Elections Act of 1981. The relevant sections of this Act applied to every DDC constituted under the provisions of the earlier legislation—the Development Councils Act of 1980. The electoral law and procedure for the DDCs election permitted any 'recognised political party'

and 'independent groups' to submit nominations for the election of members—under proportional representation—to the DDCs in each district. This required the submission of the list of candidates arranged in an order of priority by the recognised political parties and independent groups.

The nominations for the elections to all the DDCs in the twenty four districts were received during 20th—27th April 1981. The DDCs elections were fixed for June 4th. Though hailed as a mini general election by the pro-government press, the most significant feature about the DDCs elections—on a national scale—was that not all the recognised political parties contested the elections. Ultimately, only the ruling UNP and the regional TULF became the major contenders, with the Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP) contesting as the most important independent group. Because the main national opposition parties did not enter the polls, the UNP was returned uncontested in the DDCs of seven districts. ¹⁴ Thus polling took place on 4th June 1981 only in the other seventeen districts.

The government party contested in all the DDCs in the seventeen districts where polling took place, while the TULF contested in all the seven electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces. The UNP, which faced a challenge from the JVP in the South—though not a serious one—saw the DDCs elections as an opportunity to receive an endorsement of its own political and economic record since 1977. As far as the northern and eastern provinces are concerned, the UNP hoped that it could make political inroads so as to undermine the TULF dominance especially in the north.

The TULF too was keen to demonstrate its electoral standing and was determined to "capture power" in most the DDCs of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The TULF conducted its DDC election campaign pointedly in relation to some well-publicised issues such as the "preservation of the territory of the Tamils" and "economic development of the Tamil areas". These have already figured prominently when the TULF leadership justified its acceptance of the DDC scheme. In its election campaign the TULF leadership stressed the need for the acceptance of the new district authorities to "administer and develop the predominantly Tamil areas". For this it was argued that the TULF should gain control of most DDCs in the predominantly Tamil areas of the northern and eastern provinces. Such an outcome will also be a reaffirmation of the support for the TULF from the majority of the Tamil people.

The UNP's decision to contest all the DDCs in the northern and eastern provinces reflected its keenness to establish a political base—especially in the northern province, and that too in Jaffna—as a counterweight to the TULF. The UNP, carried out a well-publicised campaign in the northern and eastern provinces in which several government Ministers participated. Even the Prime Minister's

visit to Jaffna a few months before the the DDCs election appeared to be part of the pre-election campaign. There was no doubt that the government attached a great deal of significance to the DDC polls in the predominantly Tamil districts.

Besides the two major participants—the TULF and the UNP—in the DDC elections in the northern and eastern provinces, the Tamil Congress and three other independent groups also came into the scene. The Tamil Congress contested in all the four districts in the northern province, besides fielding candidates for the Colombo district which, of course, had not much significance. In the regional politics of the Tamils in recent times, in which the ‘Tamil nationality question, loomed large, the Tamil Congress has lost its standing among large sections of the Tamil population even before the DDC elections.

In all the electoral districts, other than Jaffna, polling took place under relatively peaceful conditions without serious incidents. In the Jaffna district, however, the election took place against a background of violence, disorder, insecurity and tension which resulted in the imposition of a state of emergency on the eve of the DDC elections.

Since the early 1970s the socio-political situation in the Jaffna region became severely and continuously disturbed both by acts of violence or ‘political terrorism by the ‘Tamil Tigers’ and intensified counter measures, reprisals and arrest by the security forces. These periodically gave rise to panic, tension and insecurity in the region. The DDC election campaign in Jaffna commenced against a background of the unsettled atmosphere that followed the famous Neerveli (Bank) robbery (25th March 1981) reported to be the work of Tamil guerrilla groups. In this daring and successful robbery two Sinhalese policemen died and this led to intensified activity by the security forces. The DDCs election campaign itself contributed to a build up of tension and violence during the month preceding the elections. It was in such a climate that the assassination of the UNP candidate—who headed the party’s list for the Jaffna DC—took place. The situation further deteriorated when three policemen on duty at a TULF meeting close to the Jaffna town were shot. One of the policemen, a Sinhalese, died immediately and the and the other, a Tamil, succumbed to the injuries later.

This incident appears to have triggered off the same night—and which continued for two nights that followed—widespread arson and destruction of public and private property in Jaffna town¹⁵ and other places by a section of the additional police force that came to Jaffna in connection with the DDC elections. A few persons also were killed during this period, believed to be by the security personnel. All this led to widespread panic, tension, disorder and lawlessness on the eve of the polls. To add to this some of the TULF MPs—including the TULF leader—were arrested by the security personnel in the early hours of the election morning—reported to have been taken into “protective custody” according to the official

version. They were, however, released soon on the orders of the President. As the law and order situation deteriorated because the normal law enforcement machinery completely broke down resulting in considerable uncertainty and disruption of normal life in the town area, the government imposed a state of emergency and curfew in the Jaffna district.

Such were the circumstances in which the DDCs election came to be held in the Jaffna district. It was subsequently reported that a special Presidential team that visited Jaffna the week prior to the elections, had reported that conditions were not favourable to hold the elections. Notwithstanding this, the government decided to go ahead with the elections and two leading Cabinet Ministers were sent to Jaffna to 'oversee' the conduct of the elections.

The conduct of the DDC elections in Jaffna amidst chaos and tension revealed a disorderly and unsatisfactory state of affairs. It came to be known later that on the evening before the elections, the appointment of several Senior Presiding Officers were revoked and in their place new persons—most of them inexperienced and transported from outside the district in the last minute—were appointed. There were also several irregularities and malpractices during and after polling. It was reported that polling did not commence in time in many centres and polling closed earlier than scheduled in some others. There were also instances where the Presiding Officers—who were probably ignorant of the procedure—did not submit certified statements about the votes cast, after counting them in the respective centres. And the ballot boxes in respect of such centres were not received at the Kachcheri in time and some were not received at all—which still remain unaccounted for. Because of the disorderly situation and the numerous problems encountered, the election results of the Jaffna district were not released until about a week after polling day.¹⁶

The most notable general feature about the out come of the DDCs election has been markedly low turn-out¹⁷ especially in the electoral districts outside the northern and eastern provinces. In all the seventeen districts of the island where polling took place, there were altogether 4,931,887 registered voters; of this the total number that polled came to 2,710,102 representing 54.5%. This is a low figure for any nation-wide election and certainly a striking contrast to last general election (1977) when the percentage poll for the whole country was 87. Apart from the 'lower status'¹⁸ that would have been accorded to the DDCs election by the voters, these elections did not generate much interest and enthusiasm especially when the national opposition parties withdrew from the polls and called for a boycott of the elections.

Although voter participation has generally been low at the DDCs election, this appears to be very largely a phenomenon that characterised the districts outside the northern and eastern provinces. In the ten electoral districts outside the

northern and eastern provinces the number that voted out of the total registered voters in percentage terms came to only 50%. The boycott campaign by the opposition parties could have contributed to this strikingly very low percentage poll. In contrast, the electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces recorded considerably higher voter participation—71% for the northern province and 75% for the eastern province. However, it is worth noting that these are themselves lower percentages compared to the last general election when the northern and eastern provinces recorded in aggregate terms 82% and 88% respectively.

The voter-participation in the northern and eastern province also revealed marked differences between some districts at the DDCs election. In particular, the Jaffna district had the lowest voting percentage—69%—for the whole of the northern and eastern provinces. The highly disturbed conditions that prevailed in Jaffna on the eve of the DDC election would have contributed to a lower polling rate. In the other districts of this region, the voting percentages varied from 73% (Mullaitivu) and 85% (Mannar). While the polling percentages in all the electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces at the DDCs election have been lower than what they were at the last general election, the difference in some districts—Jaffna, Amparai and Trincomalee—became very marked. It is likely that in the Amparai and Trincomalee districts the opposition boycott campaign may have had some effect because of the SLFP votes.

In the electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces the contest was really between the TULF and the UNP and the outcome had significant implications in regard to the TULF—centred Tamil politics. In the electoral districts of this region, the TULF altogether polled 468,560 votes, which represented 62% of the total votes polled and 45% of the total registered voters. In contrast the UNP received a total of 225,741 votes which constituted 30% of the total poll and 22% of the total number of registered voters.

The performance of the TULF (as well as the UNP) at the DDCs election has differed a good deal in the various electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces, which also reflected the varied ethnic composition¹⁹ of the electoral districts concerned. The Jaffna district which has a very substantial Sri Lankan Tamil population assumed special importance in the TULF—centered politics and the DDCs election.

On account of the violence and destruction unleashed by the security forces a few days before polling, anti-government feeling ran high among the voters in Jaffna. This made the prospects for the UNP—which looked somewhat better earlier—bleak as far as the Jaffna district was concerned.

At the Jaffna district DC election the TULF received in all 263,360 votes which constituted 57% of the total registered vote (463,414) and 82% of the total votes polled (320,337)—see Table 1. This undoubtedly gave an overwhelming victory for the TULF which gained all the ten seats in the Jaffna DDC. It may

Table 1. DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS ELECTIONS (NORTHERN AND EASTERN PROVINCES), JUNE 1981.

Districts	(1) Total No. Voters	(2) Total Votes Polled	(3) 2/1 (%)	(4) TULF Votes	(5) 4/1 4/2 (%)	(6) UNP Votes	(7) 6/1 6/2 (%)	(8) Tamil Congress Votes	(9) 8/1 8/2 (%)	(10) No. of Seats Won TULF-UNP
1. Jaffna	463,414	320,337	69.1	263,369	56.8 82.2	23,302	5.0 7.2	21,682	4.6 6.7	10 —
2. Mullaitivu	31,802	23,094	72.1	13,815	43.4 59.9	8,451	26.5 36.6	650	—	02 02
3. Vavuniya	38,011	29,819	79.1	18,048	47.4 60.5	10,976	26.2 36.8	268	—	02 02
4. Mannar	38,680	32,852	84.9	16,459	42.5 50.1	14,713	30.2 43.5	1,511	—	02 02
(2+3+4)	(108,493)	(85,765)	(79.1)	(48,322)	(44.5) (56.2)	(34,140)	(31.5) (39.8)	(2,429)	—	—
5. Batticaloa	157,765	126,756	80.3	74,302	47.0 58.6	34,664	21.9 27.3	—	—	02 01
6. Trincomalee	119,872	88,734	74.1	44,692	37.3 50.3	42,388	35.3 47.6	—	—	01 01
7. Amparai	185,286	132,777	71.6	37,875	20.4 28.5	91,247	49.2 68.7	—	—	01 03
(5+6+7)	(462,923)	(348,267)	(74.8)	(156,869)	(34.3) (45.1)	(168,299)	(35.0) (48.3)	—	—	—
Total (1-7)	1,034,830	754,369	72.8	468,560	45.2 62.1	225,741	21.8 29.9	—	—	20 11

Source: Commissioner of Elections, published in the Sun, 20 June 1981.

Note: Independent Groups polled 7646 votes and 16,698 votes in Jaffna and Batticaloa districts respectively.

be worth recalling that at the last general election the TULF obtained more or less the same percentage of the registered vote (58%) as at the DDC election—securing 72% of the poll—with a much higher voter participation of 81% compared to the 69% at the June DDC election.

The UNP polled 23,202 votes at the Jaffna DDC election—slightly higher than what the Tamil Congress received—which represented 5% of the total registered vote and 7% of the total poll. For a Tamil party which has had a long association in Tamil politics, the Tamil Congress did very badly at the DDC election. It received in all 24,111 votes in the northern province. Of this, 21,682 votes were received in the Jaffna district, constituting 4.6% of the registered vote and 6.7% of the total votes polled. The Tamil Congress also polled 12,386 votes in the Colombo district, which formed just 3% of the total votes cast. The two independent groups in the Jaffna district together polled only 7646 votes which constituted a mere 2% of the total votes polled.

The TULF performance in the other electoral districts of the northern and eastern provinces would have been influenced by the more varied ethnic character of the electorates and the far greater challenge offered by its rival, the UNP, because the latter had an already established base in many of these districts. The more mixed ethnic composition of the electoral districts can have significant implications for the performance of the TULF whose appeal is confined to Tamil and to a lesser extent, Tamil speaking voters. The UNP on the other hand has been able to appeal to non-Tamil voters, Tamil speaking non-Tamil voters and Tamil voters. In the three electoral districts of Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar taken as a whole, the extent of voter participation at the DDCs election was 78%—though for the individual districts it varied between 73% and 85%. In the three districts taken together the TULF received 45% (48,322) of the total number of registered voters (108,493) and 56% of the total votes polled (85,765). Of the three districts, the TULF did very well in the Vavuniya and Mullaitivu districts. In the Vavuniya district the total votes that the TULF received constituted 47% of the total registered votes and 60% of the total votes cast. In the Mullaitivu district the corresponding percentages came to 43% and 60%. In the Mannar district with a considerably higher voter participation (85%) the TULF received 43% of the total registered vote and 50% of the total poll. In regard to the TULF's share in total poll the percentage recorded for the Mannar district is the lowest in the electoral districts of the northern province. The TULF won two seats in each of these three electoral districts and the Chairmanships of the DDCs also went to the TULF as the party that polled the highest number of votes.

The fact that the TULF had to contend with a greater UNP presence, politically, in the northern province outside the Jaffna district is demonstrated by the UNP's performance in the Mannar district and to a lesser extent in the Vavuniya and Mullaitivu districts. In all these three districts taken together the UNP has received 32% of the registered vote and 40% of the total votes polled. The UNP did better

in the Mannar district probably because of a significant muslim vote. It received 30% of the total registered vote and 44% of the total poll. In the Mullaitivu district the UNP votes represented 27% of the registered vote and 37% of the total votes cast and the respective percentages are almost the same for the Vavuniya district. The UNP secured two seats in each of the three districts—equal number as the TULF. It is important to note that of the UNP candidates elected to the DDCs in the three districts five are Tamils and one is a muslim (Mannar).

In the electoral districts of the eastern province, out of the total number of registered voters amounting to 462,923 the total number that polled came to 348,257 i.e. 75%. Of the three districts taken individually only Batticaloa recorded a voting percentage of 80% while Trincomalee and Amparai districts recorded 74% and 72% respectively. Although all the three districts recorded lower voter participation in the 1981 DDC elections compared to the 1977 general election, the difference as already noted, appeared to be most marked in regard to Trincomalee and Amparai districts only.

The TULF's position in the DDCs election in the districts of the eastern province as a whole showed that it received a total of 156,869 votes representing 34% of the total number of registered voters (462,923) and 45% of the total votes polled (348,267). Compared to this, the UNP's position is marginally better as it secured 35% of the registered vote and 48% of the total votes cast—largely because of the outcome in the Amparai district. The TULF did very well in the Batticaloa district—receiving 47% of the registered vote and 59% of the total poll compared to 22% and 27% respectively for the UNP. In the Trincomalee district which has a more 'mixed' ethnic composition the TULF obtained 37% of the registered vote and 50% of the total poll, while the UNP's position came almost closer to that of the TULF with 35% of the registered vote and 48% of the total poll. In the Amparai district, where Tamils constitute only 22% of the population, the UNP, as expected did very well and it received 49% of the total registered vote and 69% of the total votes cast. The TULF received 20% of the registered voters and 28% of the total votes polled.

It is interesting to observe that soon after the DDCs election results for the eastern province were released, the UNP leader and President commenting on the party's performance, pointedly made a reference to the effect that the SLFP had supported the 'separatists' in the Trincomalee district and other districts of the eastern province.²⁰ This statement would seem to make sense in view of the fact that the TULF's share of the registered vote and total poll in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee districts increased at the DDC elections—which had a lower turnout—compared to the position at the last general election.²¹ During the DDC election campaign in the eastern province there appeared to have been some understanding that the SLFP would support anti-government forces, and therefore, the TULF, after SLFP's withdrawal from the DDC polls. It was also reported that during the DDC election campaign in the eastern province, prominent SLFP supporter

campaign for the TULF candidates. Thus it is likely that "some votes which went to a party other than the UNP in 1977 were switched to the TULF in 1981"²² This could have happened to some extent despite the boycott campaign.

The TULF won two seats in the Batticaloa DC and its chairmanship, while the UNP won one seat. In the Trincomalee district, the TULF won one seat as well as the chairmanship of the DC and the UNP also gained one seat. In the Amparai DC the UNP took three seats and the chairmanship and one seat went to the TULF.

Although the TULF won more seats in the Batticaloa district and captured the chairmanship in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee DCs the UNP has a majority in them, because it has more MPs in both districts. This can have significant implications for the functioning of the DDCs when the chairman belongs to a rival political party from that of the MPs and other elected members who can jointly constitute a majority. Thus taking into account the total membership of the DDCs in the northern and eastern provinces including the MPs, the TULF has a majority and therefore will have 'effective control' only in the districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Mannar. In the Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Amparai districts, the UNP will have a majority and therefore effective control, even though the TULF elected members hold the chairmanships in the Batticaloa and Trincomalee DDCs

In the districts of Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Mannar the TULF and the UNP have equal representation in terms of elected members. But since the MPs belong to the TULF the latter has a majority in these DDCs. In the Jaffna district all the MPs and elected members of the DDC belong to the TULF. For this and other reasons, the Jaffna DDC may become the focal point of TULF activity.

Post — DDCs Election Phase

The TULF victory at the Jaffna DDC election was overshadowed by the public concern and reaction over the 'June disturbances'. The violence, destruction and extensive damage caused by a section of the government security forces which came to be also described as 'state terrorism'²³ — became the number one issue and received wide publicity outside the country as well. Reflecting the mood of the public, the TULF leadership adopted a strong stand against the government amounting to what appeared to be one of direct political confrontation. The tragic events of May/June became the subject of a lengthy statement and protest in Parliament by the TULF leadership when the first opportunity came after the DDCs election. As a protest move against the government, the TULF announced its decision to boycott parliamentary sittings until adequate measures are taken by the government in relation to the "five demands" placed before it. The demands presented were as follows. (1) the removal of the police force responsible for causing the troubles, and arrangements to have 75% Tamil Muslim police force as well as officers in charge of police stations and senior police officers in Tamil

speaking areas, (ii) the establishment of Home Guards in each district under the DDCs to act in conjunction with the police to safeguard lives and property, (iii) the withdrawal of the army personnel responsible for the killing and looting. (iv) permitting an international body like the Amnesty International or International Commission of Jurists to inquire into the events from May 31-June 8 and violations of human rights in Jaffna and (v) the identification and punishment of the miscreants responsible for, and compensation for the victims of, the June disturbances.

The government was willing to consider some of these demands and others in parts. But it refused to consider the demand relating to an International Commission of inquiry. The government agreed instead to the appointment of a local Commission of inquiry to deal with events only from May 31st to June 2nd, thus excluding the events covered by the emergency and relating to the conduct of the DDC election—the plausible reason being that any inquiry into the incidents after June 2nd may have proved most embarrassing to the government. Some of the demands placed by the TULF formed the basis of the later negotiations that took place between the government and the TULF representatives.

Meanwhile the situation in the country started deteriorating as it moved towards another outburst of racial violence directed against the Tamils in August. This was preceded by a politically significant event—and formed a prelude to the August (1981) communal violence—namely, the vote of no confidence on the TULF leader as the Leader of the Opposition. Though this motion was introduced in Parliament on the initiative of the government back-benchers it could not have proceeded without the concurrence of the high-command; and the 'sinhala chauvinist wing' in the UNP appears to have played an active role. The debate in Parliament was confined to the government parliamentary group, as no opposition members participated. The debate—without precedent—was a display, on the part of some of the government parliamentarians-of virulent anti-Tamil sentiments directed against the TULF leader. The anti-Tamil sentiments expressed by some of the government back-benchers in their 'indictment' of the leader of the opposition and the publicity it received may have played its part in increasing racial animosity. The racial violence that erupted in August (1981) directed against the Tamils—including the Indian Tamils—led to several deaths, widespread arson and looting in many parts of the country. It appeared that organised gangs with alleged involvement of some government party men have been behind the instigation of racial violence in certain parts of the country.

With the 'June disturbances' in Jaffna, followed by the race riots in the country in August—second since the present government came to power—the government's image in regard to law and order and stability suffered considerably. The Indian press gave wide publicity to the August communal violence partly because a large number of Indian Tamils became victims—and this probably sparked

off the anti-government demonstrations in Tamil Nadu. The government's normal law enforcement machinery became ineffective and a state of emergency had to be declared to bring the racial troubles under control.

It was in the wake of the 1981 communal violence that the government initiated moves towards negotiations with the TULF and the latter responded. Since then, these high-level 'peace talks' have gone on intermittently between both sides. The negotiations appear to have covered a number of important matters—some of which centred around the "five demands" earlier put forward by the TULF—including those relating to the "effective implementation" of the DDCs. The DDCs have already been found ineffective in many respects, most of which attributed to "inadequate powers" and "inadequate funds". The TULF sought to remedy this through its negotiations with the government. The government-TULF dialogue that has taken place during past ten months or so resulted in some improvement in the political relationship between the two sides. With this, the TULF ended its earlier boycott of the parliamentary proceedings. The TULF also, it appeared had kept a distance from the other national opposition parties during this phase of ' rapprochement' with the government. While this 'accord' is described as "the most significant step forward in government—TULF relations since the UNP took office", it is also noted—not without justification—that this may be no more than "a temporary trace".²⁴

There is no assurance that the government—TULF accord will last long since it may be subject to stresses and strains that could develop possibly out of the volatile—and even potentially explosive-political situation likely to be experienced in the north, especially Jaffna. The socio-political climate in the Jaffna region will be determined largely by the policies and actions of the politically active organisations and groups—including the 'Tamil underground—and how the government (and its security forces) will react to such developing situations.

The TULF, no doubt, is the dominant political entity with still a secure electoral base particularly in the north. Yet it cannot be said that it now enjoys the same level of popularity and support—the DDCs election performance notwithstanding—as it did some years back. Any observer of the current political scene in the Jaffna region will not fail to notice that there has been some disenchantment with, and even a growing opposition to, the TULF. What is most significant to note is that this growing resentment with the TULF policy—of negotiations with the government for 'concessions'—has emanated from some of its own constituent groups, especially youths, who had been hitherto loyal to the TULF leadership. To that extent, there would have been some erosion of the TULF support base in the north during the past year or so.

The Tamil radical youths and other activists who are committed Eelamists—and who had earlier operated under the TULF political umbrella—now feel that they had been let down by the TULF leadership on the Eelam issue. The growing

dissatisfaction with the TULF can be seen especially in the political campaign and activities now centred around the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF), which is a breakaway group from the TULF after the latter decided to accept the DDCs.

The new Front now appears to be a major rallying point for the dissident groups disillusioned with the TULF. The TELF—headed by prominent persons who had been in both the Federal Party and, its successor, the TULF—is now trying to project itself as an alternative—‘Liberation Front’—to the TULF engaging itself in campaign and agitation in support of Tamil Eelam. ²⁶ The TELF as it is presently organised—though is yet to find a sound and dynamic leadership—appears to derive its strength due to the support from the dissident youth and student groups, which are either strongly critical of, or are vehemently apposed to, the TULF. Thus the TELF, in alliance with the other dissident groups, had made things, politically, very difficult for the TULF and its leadership could not just ignore it and had to take a serious note of this developing situation. In May this year, the TELF together with some of the other dissident youth and student groups organised a partially successful one day hartal in the Jaffna town as a protest against the participation of the TULF MPs in the ceremonial opening of the new Parliament at Sri Jayawardenapura. About this, it has been remarked, significantly enough, that “this is the first time that a hartal against the TULF has been observed in Jaffna”. ²⁶ This gave a fair indication of the dissatisfaction with the TULF. Both the TULF and the TELF are now engaged in mutual recrimination in public and, it appears that polarisation of forces is almost complete. ²⁷ This tendency it is important to note, has now also spread to the ranks of the politically active expatriate Tamil Eelamists, who for the past decade or so had helped considerably to ‘internationalise’ the Sri Lankan Tamil problem. There is now amongst them, an influential section—with a very strong pro-separatist stand—which is extremely critical of the present TULF leadership and identifies itself openly with the TELF and other dissident groups in the north.

With the Eelam cry and ‘Tamil insurgency’ spotlight has also shifted to the arena outside the mainstream politics in the north. It is in this context that the actions and role of the ‘Tamil separatist guerrillas’—named the ‘Tamil Liberation Tigers’—assume considerably significance. The Tamil Liberation Tigers, officially labelled as ‘terrorists’, had been operating for the past seven years or so and they are now a proscribed organisation under the government anti-terrorist laws. Since this organisation functions as a clandestine group no reliable information is available about it. The Tamil Liberation Tigers appear to be a small, tough and dedicated group of Eelamists—some of them are reported to have had training abroad—committed to a guerrilla-type armed resistance, with north as their base and Tamil Nadu as a hide-out base. According to available information, the Liberation Tigers had been responsible for the killing of policemen, police intelligence personnel, suspected police informants, political opponents, and several bank

robberies. Such politically motivated acts of violence and the strong counter measures by the government security forces had made the situation periodically very unstable in Jaffna and political stability in the region has become a thing of the past.

No accurate information is available about the kind of relationship that would have existed in the past between the guerrillas and the TULF. It was generally believed that there had been some links between the TULF politicians or at least some of them, and the Liberation Tigers. Some in government circles even believed that the 'Tigers' formed a 'secret arm' of the TULF.

Many of the militants who may now be in the 'Tiger movement' would have been associated with TULF politics in the past. Having operated under the TULF umbrella—as members of its grass roots organisations—the most dedicated of the militants would have constituted the nucleus of the underground resistant group/s that came to be formed. Several of those who now form part of the Liberation Tigers would have been, at one time or another, involved with the earlier mass political campaigns organised by the TULF and therefore would have developed closer links with the TULF politicians and such associations would have continued over the years. However, whatever links that existed, it would seem that the Liberation Tigers had operated mostly on their own without having been directly under the influence of the TULF politicians. At the same time, one cannot rule out the possibility that those TULF politicians who were in close touch with the grass roots level organisations would have had some knowledge—including perhaps the identity of the leaders—of the Liberation Tigers. For some time the TULF had turned a blind eye to the acts of 'political violence' for which the Liberation Tigers were held to be responsible. But the TULF leadership could not for long adopt such an ambivalent attitude. It changed its policy and more recently had begun to openly condemn and completely dissociate itself from the acts of violence committed by the Liberation Tigers. This undoubtedly was an important turning point in TULF politics. It signified a decision to sever whatever association that would have existed between the TULF politicians and the Tamil underground or sections within it and to dispel the cloud of suspicion that hung over the TULF on this question.

The present government had been engaged in the task of "eliminating terrorism" in the north, especially Jaffna, since 1979. But this led to only a limited success initially. The Liberation Tigers, being a small group—the hardcore probably numbering not more than two hundred—had their safe hide-outs in South India where they sought refuge whenever situation in the north became difficult due to the intensified activities of the security personnel. It cannot be claimed that the Liberation Tigers have substantial support from the Tamil public in general—other than among youths and other radical elements. Nevertheless, the general public has shown much sympathy and even some admiration for them partly as a reaction to the presence and behaviour of the security forces. Sympathy for the

guerrillas, fear of reprisals from them and some admiration for them had all made the general public the silent—in more than one sense—spectators of the periodic and violent confrontations between the guerrillas and the government security forces. During the past year or so, however, the Liberation Tigers appear to have suffered some setbacks. The government security forces were able to make a significant break-through in their operations against the Tamil insurgents. Several-Tamil youths, allegedly involved in terrorist activities in the north have been arrested and kept under incommunicado detention—with allegations of torture as well—under the draconian provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Also for the first time, the Tamil underground groups have shown signs of internecine conflict between rival factions.²⁸ This has brought to light what appears to be the emergence of serious internal crisis within the ranks of the Liberation Tigers.

Apart from the TULF, the TELF, other dissident youth and student groups and the Liberation Tigers are entities that now matter very much in the Tamil (Eelam) politics²⁹ of the north. Although the TULF is still the most dominant force in terms of mainstream politics and electoral strength the other groups have become increasingly important in terms of the impact they could have through their policies and actions on the socio-political scene in the region. The TELF and the other dissident youth and student groups now carry on their campaign and agitation not only in regard to the Eelam demand but also against the TULF leadership. They also express support to the Liberation Tigers and possibly there are links between the latter and some of the dissident youth and student groups. The TULF leadership has openly expressed its disagreement with, and condemnation of, political violence as a method used by the Liberation Tigers. It has also found it necessary to defend its present policy (of negotiations with the government) which is under attack from the dissident groups—most of whom were its loyal supporters not long ago. It is against such a politically complex and volatile background that one has to see the implications of the government—TULF dialogue. For the TULF this signified an attempt to reach a 'political understanding' with the government—on the basis of some important issues of immediate relevance³⁰—without as the TULF saw it, compromising on basic and long-term goals. Of the issues that figured in the government—TULF negotiations, the TULF no doubt attached greatest importance to those that dealt with the reform of the DDCs. It appears that the major reform anticipated in the DDC structure is concerned with the delegation of Ministerial powers—on the subjects that came within the purview of the DDCs—to the Executive Committees of the DDCs via the District Ministers. How adequate and meaningful this proposed reform could be still remains to be seen. Whether this will ensure that measure of decentralisation, devolution of authority and 'district autonomy' that the TULF was keen to get through the DDCs can be a matter for conjecture. Whatever reforms that are contemplated at this stage in regard to the DDCs, very little will be made effective before the elections—either a Presidential election or parliamentary election generally expected to take place by the end of this year or early next year.

Neither the DDCs nor the Government—TULF ‘reconciliation’ had contributed to any significant improvement in the political climate in the north. On the contrary the political atmosphere remains highly charged, due to the dissensions and disagreements—and the sharpening antagonism—between the TULF and the dissident groups, the arrests and detention of many youths and the sporadic confrontations between the ‘Tigers’ and the security forces. Given this prevailing climate it is likely that the government—TULF dialogue and the understanding reached thus far may run into serious difficulties—as there are already signs of this—in the context of the harsh political realities in the region.

* Revised and enlarge version of an earlier seminar paper on the Development Council submitted the Social Scientists Association, Colombo.

REFERENCE :

1. Report of the *Presidential Commission on Development Councils*, Sessional Paper, 1980, p.3.
2. Prof. A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam were the two TULF nominees who served on the Commission. Both have been closely associated with the TULF and served as its most trusted representatives on the Commission. They have also played a key role in paving the way for the subsequent TULF government dialogue that took place during the past ten months or so.
3. Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam submitted his own proposals which formed a separate part of the report finally submitted to the President.
4. The present government replaced the District Political Authorities, introduced by the previous government, with the District Minister system with formal powers and constitutional status.
5. *Presidential Commission Report*, p. 108.
6. In relation to the DDCs ‘the Minister’ refers to Minister of Local Government.
7. Exception to this would be a district or districts where the number of MPs is less than three; in which case the President specifies the number of elected members which together with the number of MPs will not exceed five.
8. The First Schedule of the Act listed the following subjects: Agrarian Services; Agriculture; Animal Husbandary; Co-operative Development; Cultural Affairs; Education; Employment; Fisheries; Food; Health Services; Housing; Irrigation Works (excluding those of an inter district character); Land use and Land settlement; Rural Development; Small and Medium Scale Industries.
9. The DDCs are permitted to formulate development schemes in respect of subjects not included in the First Schedule with the approval of the appropriate Minister and the concurrence of the Minister.

10. *Tribune*, August 7, 1980, Colombo.
11. For a review of the important events connected with this, See *Emergency* 79, published by the Movement for Inter-racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE), May 1980.
12. The TULF's formal commitment to Tamil Eelam came with the adoption of the political resolution at its first national convention held on 14.5.1976, which resolved that "the restoration and reconstitution of the free, sovereign, secular socialist state of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self-determination inherent to every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in the Country".
13. For a long time, the Tamil weekly *Suthanthiran*, started by the late leader S. J. V. Chelvanayagam, had been the authentic voice of the Federal Party and then its successor, the TULF—until very recently. It now represents mostly the views of the dissidents and is very critical of the present TULF leadership. To counter the political propaganda carried out by *Suthanthiran*, the TULF started its own weekly named *Uthayasuriyan*. Its printing press was destroyed along with the TULF headquarters during the 'June disturbances in Jaffna. A new weekly, *Senkathir* has now been started by the TULF.
14. The UNP was returned uncontested in the following electoral districts; Nuwara Eliya; Matara; Moneragala; Kegalle; Kandy; Kurunegala; and Ratnapura.
15. Among the premises burnt and/or destroyed within the Jaffna town, the most prominent were: the Jaffna Public Library (with several irreplaceable volumes) The TULF headquarters; printing press and buildings of *Elanadu*, the only regional Tamil daily in Jaffna; the residence of the Jaffna M.P.; and the old Market in the heart of the town.
16. The legality of Jaffna DC election has been challenged in the courts on the grounds of irregularities and malpractices in the conduct of the election. The case is still pending.
17. For a review of the DDCs election results and the UNP's performance at the national level, see S.W.R.de A. Samarasinghe and C. R. de Silva: "The Development Council Election of 1981: Its Political and Electoral implications" Seminar Paper, Ceylon Studies Seminar, Marga Institute, and Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, July 1981; and W. A. Wisawarnapala and Dias Hewagama: "Electoral Politics in Sri Lanka—A Study of the Development Councils Elections", *The Indian Journal of Political Studies*, July 1981.

Apart from the low turn out, there were also unusually large amount of 'spoilt votes' at the DDCs elections in the electoral districts outside the northern and eastern provinces. Rejected votes as percentage of total polled in all districts outside the northern and eastern provinces came to 8%; the corresponding percentage for the electoral districts in the northern and eastern province was 1.5%. On this see Wisawarnapala and Dias Hewagama op.cit.

18. It is likely that the DDC election may have been seen by the electorate as something more than a mere local government election, but may not have been treated as being on par with a general parliamentary election. The non-participation of the national opposition parties would have also been a significant factor in the poor response in many electoral districts. For these and other reasons, the comparison of the voting pattern in the 1981 DDCs election and the 1977 general election has its limitations.
19. In all the districts of the northern and eastern provinces, other than Amparai while the Sri Lankan Tamils constitute the largest ethnic group their proportion in total district population has varied—ranging from the highest in Jaffna (95%) to the lowest in Trincomalee (35%).
Tamil speaking moors formed one-fourth of the district population in Mannar and Batticaloa and much more in Trincomalee (32%) and Amparai (45%). The Sinhalese population becomes numerically significant only in the three districts of Vavuniya (17%), Trincomalee (29%) and Amparai (30%).
20. The President is reported to have said this: 'Let the rank and file of the SLFP and the rest of the country know that Eelam has received support from the present SLFP leadership, particularly in Trincomalee and the rest of the Eastern province'. *Ceylon Daily News*, June 13 1981.
21. The SLFP received nearly one-fourth of the total poll in the Trincomalee district and slightly more than that in the Batticaloa district at the last general election.
22. S. W. R. de A. A. Samarasinghe and C. R. de Silva, op., cit.
23. See *What Happened in Jaffna: Days of Terror*, A MIRJE publication, July 1981, Colombo.
24. *Lanka Guardian*, November 15, 1981.
25. TELF spokesman have declared that they are not interested in parliamentary politics, but are committed to conduct campaign and agitation outside this arena through peaceful and non-violent means.
26. *Saturday Review*, May 1, 1982, Jaffna.
27. In the TULF—TELF confrontation, the position of Mr. S.C. Chandraharsan a prominent TULF personality, son of the late leader S. J. V. Chelvanayagam and legal secretary of the TULF, remains controversial. He is a hardliner in the TULF and has been known to have disagreed with the leadership on a number of issues; he lends support to the TELF and other dissidents and also speaks up for the Tamil youths in detention.
28. The internal feuding is reported to be between two groups identified as 'Uma Maheswaran group' and 'Prabhakaran group'.
29. The Tamil congress in the north still has a place in Tamil politics though its position on the Eelam issue is not very clear. Mention also may be made of the Tamil Self Rule Party—a splinter group from the earlier Federal Party,—which is totally committed to separation. But its influence is very marginal.

There are leftist (Marxist) groups, affiliated to the national parties, operating in the north belonging to both the 'traditional left' and 'new left'. The new left seems to have more following now in the north partly because of its more appealing stand on the Tamil nationality question. It appears that some of the dissident youth and student activists in the north also have a Marxist orientation. Consequently, it is possible that they would have established links with radical Marxist parties or groups in the country outside the north.

30. It has been alleged that the TULF — in its negotiations with the government—had agreed to a moratorium on Eelam. But this has been denied by the leadership.

It was stated by the TULF leader that the negotiations had the following objectives: (i) to solve the immediate problems of the Tamils and protect them from recurring racial violence, (ii) to get the support of all the political parties in the country to put on end to the recurrence of racial violence and (iii) to take action for the effective implementation of the DDC Act to enable the fruitful functioning of the elected councils, *Saturday Review*, April 3, 1982, Jaffna.