CHAPTER IV

TULF AND THE EELAM DEMAND (1976–83)
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INTRODUCTION

The rise and decline of the TULF is closely interlinked. When the party emerged, it was hailed as a radical party to represent Sri Lankan Tamil interests in fundamental and far-reaching ways. It contested the election on the manifesto that focussed on a single agenda to establish a separate State for the Tamils. People gave a historic mandate which brought the TULF as a major opposition in the Parliament.

The UNP on the other hand won five-sixth majority and formed the government in 1977. The government cornered the TULF by ignoring the mandate of the Tamils and branded its leaders as secessionists. It also made the demand for a separate State unconstitutional. Moreover, the government ordered all the members of Parliament to take an oath upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. This left the TULF in a political quandary.

Meanwhile, the government has enacted draconian laws to suppress the militancy that gave freehand to the security forces to take on the militant Tamil youth. This, coupled with regular communal attacks against the Tamils by the security forces and the Sinhala chauvinistic elements, pushed the Tamil youth increasingly towards violent means that brought both communities to open confrontation. Conversely, the growing separatist campaign of the TULF and the militants gradually provoked the Sinhalese resulting in the ethnic riots of July 1983.

Whereas on the one hand, the people lost trust on the TULF, and doubted its conviction and commitment towards the cause, on the other hand, the government cornered the TULF to tone down its demands. Therefore, after the elections, the TULF faced harsh criticism and resentment from the Tamil people, especially from the youth, for disowning its own manifesto. This led to the people’s support to the militants and the militant groups attracted the youth into their fold including
the Tamil Youth League (TYL), the youth wing of the TULF. The faith of the people in the party registered a decline. The leadership of the Tamil community gradually went into the hands of the radical youth. This chapter analyses the reasons behind this twin phenomenon.

MOBILISATION OF SUPPORT

With the formation of the TULF in 1976, Sri Lankan Tamil politics reached a radical stage. The party declared itself as a ‘Liberation Front’ and its policy focussed on establishing a ‘separate sovereign state’—Tamil Eelam—consisting of northern and eastern provinces. In this process, the entire Sri Lankan Tamil polity was successfully mobilised against the State. The significance of the party lay in the credibility it enjoyed, the responsibility it had been entrusted with and the immense task it had to accomplish.

The prominent leaders of the TULF like S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, G.G. Ponnambalam, A. Amirthalingam and M. Sivasithamparam belonged to the legal profession; therefore, the party leadership had a sound knowledge in constitutional and legal matters. Its leaders articulated the Tamil problems both inside and outside the Parliament, which helped the party to mobilise the Tamils. The leadership attracted many educated Tamils, which in turn helped the party to evolve into a mass organisation with an elite leadership. However, the leadership mainly came from the Vellala, a dominant caste in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Despite the caste, class and regional differences, the growth of the TULF was smooth for various reasons. First, the ethnic issue was in the forefront and its momentum was increasing since the 1950s, and no other party effectively addressed the Sri Lankan Tamil issues. Further, the anti-Tamil politics of the ‘national’ parties enhanced Tamil unity. Secondly, the Sri Lankan Tamils had their full trust on the TULF due to its policies and past record of dedication and sacrifice made by its leaders. Thirdly, the TULF promised to achieve a separate state, which emotionally mobilised the people and united them. This was manifested in the first election faced by the party in 1977. The TULF swept this election in the Tamil-dominated areas winning 18 seats, and became the main
opposition party in the Parliament. The TULF was again committed to the parliamentary process in contrast to its pledge to fight for a separate State. It tried to convince the people that they would use the Parliament as a forum to campaign in support of Eelam, especially, internationalisation of the issue.

The Tamil people did not know the internal intricacies of the Eelam resolution. For them, it was the decision of the matured, able and committed leadership of the TULF. They welcomed the resolution with enthusiasm and hope, as it would be the most durable, thus, desirable solution. In fact, many of the delegates of the conference, including some MPs, believed that TULF would lead the struggle for separate State. Many delegates and supporters believed or rather wished TULF to lead even arms struggle, if necessary. The belief stemmed from the speeches, political moves and shaping of events of Amirthalingam and the trust, he enjoyed with the militant youth. People also perceived every word of their leaders with faith. In sum, Eelam resolution set an irrevocable political agenda to the Sri Lankan Tamils. On the contrary, for the leaders, this resolution was the trump card to win the future elections comfortably and top leaders like Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam treated it as 'tactical stand to achieve some kind of autonomy', as they believed that 'if we aim for the moon, at least hits on the roof'. K. Premachandran recalled a statement of Sivasithamparam in which he had stated, 'We had the opinion that if we ask separation we may get some kind of autonomy'. Later developments proved that the Eelam demand of the TULF was rather a strong trump card to ensure victory in the forthcoming election and a tactical weapon for obtain some kind of autonomy.

Since the parliamentary elections were round the corner, once the resolution was passed, the entire leadership went all out on the Eelam campaign using all available avenues, such as party paper, statements, interviews, public meetings and protest activities. Every activity of the party was aimed at mobilisation of support

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1 Author's interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001 and Eelaventhan, Jaffna, 20 April 2003.
3 Author's interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
4 Author's interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
and strengthening Tamil unity. Their campaign was targeted to rally the youth behind them. Leaders knew that the animosity of the youth against the State was strong and they do not have trust on ‘Ahimsa’ as a suitable mode of struggle, especially, against a majoritarian State like Sri Lanka. Talking in the same language of the youth, Thurairatnam stated, ‘Except Singapore and Malaysia, all other countries emerged after confrontation of artillery and jets. We do not have that strength to match the government. Until we gain such strength, we have to continue our struggle Ahimsa way.’ (sic) 

It was a period when 42 young Tamil political prisoners were released batch by batch. The TULF decided to make full use of the release of the young political prisoners to the advantage of the mobilisation of support. Suthanthiran gave details of the returning prisoners and the details of their travel to home. The party organised a small level reception at Batticaloa for some youth, and portrayed them as martyrs. Among those, Mavai Senathirajah, Vannai Anandan and poet Kasi Anandan were the leaders of erstwhile TAYF and loyalist to the top leaders of the FP and then the TULF. The TULF organised receptions for them at all the railway stations in the Northern Province and organised massive reception at Jaffna station, in which many leaders including Chelvanayakam and Amirthalingam garlanded them at Jaffna station. They were taken on shoulders by hundreds of youth. These three youth were projected as heroes and they became the star speaker in the TULF platforms during the 1977 elections.

This hype created by the party, helped to mobilise the youth behind the party. These youth leaders on return from prison spoke on public platforms and gave a call to the fellow youth to prepare for Eelam even through armed struggle. The youth were amazed at the firmness of these youth leaders even after torture and suffering. No one doubted their faith in the cause of Eelam. Their speeches gave an impression that they would be Generals in the forefront of the armed struggle.

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5 Thurairatnam was one of the leaders of the TULF, elected to Parliament from Point Pedro constituency thrice until 1977.
6 Thurairatnam MP, Thiruchelvam memorial meeting, Valvettithurai, Suthanthiran, 9 February 1977.
7 For details of see release of 42 Tamil youth under custody and the reception for selected youth, Suthanthiran, 9–20 May 1977.
for Eelam. Mavai Senathirajah stated, ‘Tamil Eelam cannot be achieved by negotiations. If it can be achieved in the war field, we have to prepare for that.’ In the same meeting Vannai Anandan said, ‘We are not demanding separation. What we demand is our lost nation.’ He further added, ‘Temporary agreements would push our movements back, weaken the spirt of youth, it would eat-up the time therefore let us continue our struggle without distractions.’ Not to divert the struggle for Eelam, Kasi Anandan said, ‘We do not want bridges and roads, and today our need is Eelam.’ For a successful liberation movement, people have to have trust on the leaders and the leaders of the party should be beyond doubt in the commitment and dedication to the cause. Considering the past credentials of many of the TULF leaders and the degenerating present trend, Kovai Mahesan tried to bridge the increasing gap between the party and the youth. He said, ‘Our leaders sacrificed, well experienced we have to believe them, without believing them there cannot be movement but leaders have to keep them away from suspicion.’ (sic) His speech clearly shows that he sensed dubiousness of the TULF leadership. Yet he calls the people to lay trust on them because many of them including him had faith on Amirthalingam and few other senior leaders, presuming that those leaders were sincere to the cause. Warning the leaders who may think of personal ends at the cost of the mandate of the people, TYL in a statement said, ‘Our liberation movement should be sacred in which insincere and non-functional leaders should be sacked out from the organisation.’ These speeches throw the ideas of the youth leaders on their understandings of the liberation struggle. The young audience took these ideas without the understanding of the details as rules of a struggle. The propaganda of this style conquered all the TULF platforms until the victory meetings of the elections that mobilises people effectively.

8 Mavai Senathirajah after being released from the custody, TYL Colombo branch meeting on 15 February, Suthanthiran, 20 February 1977.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
12 Youth leaders in the TYL meeting, Jaffna, Suthanthiran, 27 March 1977.
Legal Battle as Mobilisation Strategy

One of the successful legal battles with the State, popularly known as ‘Trial-at-bar case’ earned goodwill for the party and its leaders from cross-section of the Tamil people. While the Vaddukoddai convention was in progress and the Eelam resolution was passed, government enacted a law under Emergency Regulations, preventing such resolutions and propagating such resolutions in any form. Such offence would penalise up to twenty years of imprisonment and confiscation of properties.\textsuperscript{13} Party decided to disobey the law and issue the copies of resolution in thousands to the public and to all the government offices, like Disobedience Movement. Considering the emergency in function and the seriousness of the law, party decided not to involve the youth but involve only the party leaders (except Amirthalingam all others involved were MPs) to distribute the copies of resolution to avoid the arrest of the youth and civilians.\textsuperscript{14} All the TULF MPs took up different areas and issued the resolution. Four leaders, including Amirthalingam, were arrested and charged under the Emergency Regulations.\textsuperscript{15} The arrest led to the famous ‘trial-at-bar case’ and created politico-legal confrontation with the State.

Amirthalingam challenged the constitutional and legal validity of the court to enquire his case. Sixty-seven TULF advocates appeared to defend the case under the leadership of Chelvanayakam.\textsuperscript{16} After a quarter century, Chelvanayakam and G.G. Ponnambalam had joined hands for a politico-legal battle against the State. Ponnambalam argued, ‘As the Constitution had no legal continuity with the past, and as the claims that it is an autochthonous Constitution were also not valid, the Constitution is illegal and the courts set up under it are not valid.’\textsuperscript{17} The three-judges bench, which was pushed into a tight-spot to give the judgement, stated:

\textsuperscript{13} See A. Amirthalingam, Parliament speech, 3 August 1978, in \textit{Poraduvom} (let us struggle), Published by K.P. Ratnam MP and Administrative Secretary, TULF, 18 August 1978, pp.11–12.
\textsuperscript{14} TULF decided not to involve youth in this programme, as it would lead to long term imprisonment of many youth.
\textsuperscript{15} Amirthalingam, Parliament speech, n. 13, pp. 11–12.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
It will be apparent here that what we are being invalid to decide is purely a political question. A political question cannot be converted into legal question by asking a Judge to express his opinion about it. We would adhere to that salutary guiding principle which the highest judicial tribunals have time and again laid down that the courts should not concern themselves with policy but with the law.\textsuperscript{18}

The judgement indicated imminent constitutional crisis. Government appealed to the Supreme Court, but while the hearing was in progress, the government withdrew the case.\textsuperscript{19} Probably government might have felt that it would be difficult for them to establish the validity of the Constitution and in such eventuality, it would amount to illegality of the government itself. Tamils were jubilant, and perceived the victory of the case as a first step towards their goal of Eelam. The case increased the reputation of the TULF; G.G. Ponnambalam and M. Thiruchelvam, who played a key role in the case, regained the trust of the people.

The campaign was also involved in enlightening the legal and moral authority of the Tamils to have a separate State and build the conviction on the economic feasibility to sustain as a separate State. Writings of \textit{Suthanthiran} contributed effectively in mobilising Tamil people for the Eelam cause. The daily carried articles citing various independence movements and the heroic deeds of fighters in those movements.\textsuperscript{20} Most of the writings were effective, and thought-provoking contributed by Tamil academics and experienced bureaucratic men.\textsuperscript{21} The campaign, gave strong impression that the TULF was preparing for a struggle and cemented the hope that Eelam would be an achievable reality. In essence, the campaign aroused the people, especially the youth, for a 'do or die' struggle.

The support of the Muslim was strained with the FP's participation since 1965 for a number of reasons. Some reasons vindicate the FP/TULF leaders for their insensitiveness to Muslim sentiments and aspirations. Since Federal Party adopted cooperation and compromise approach with the government, the Muslim

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Author witnessed many such speeches in public meetings in 1970s. Also see articles, editorials and columns in \textit{Suthanthiran} from 1970s to early 1980s and many publications of the TULF.
leadership felt that they could benefit more by adopting this approach directly with the government than dealing through the FP. In the national government electorate, Chelvanayakam, aiming to mobilise the Muslims in support of the Eelam cause, stated, ‘Our proposed Tamil Eelam would protect all without caste, religious and regional discriminations. While the rights of each religion would be protected, the State would be secular. Hence, Muslims can live in Tamil Eelam without interference or fear.'

**Negotiations with the SLFP Government**

The Tamil SLFP functionaries, who were in the corridors of power, were concerned about the increasing trend of separatism and militancy that virtually denied the space for non-Eelam politics. They realised the need to take concrete steps to arrest the trend at its bud. Accordingly, prior to the dissolution of the Parliament in 1977, Srimavo Bandaranaike called a meeting, to identifying the areas of Tamils’ grievances. There were two rounds of meeting held in this regard. In the first meeting, Felix R. Dias Bandaranaike said, ‘The government would not entertain the idea of a separate State, but was willing to consider the genuine grievances of the minority communities in the country.’ Chelvanayakam responded, ‘The TULF would not compromise on the issue of a separate State, but willing to accept as an interim arrangement to find redress to the grievances of the Tamils and Muslims.’

Tamil youth insisted that their leaders do not attend the second meeting, as they would not believe that the approach of the SLFP was genuine. TULF ignored the warning of the youth and participated in the meeting, in which they put forward decentralisation of administration, use of the Tamil language, university

22 Masoor Moulana, through personal correspondences September 2004.
24 Tamil and Muslim Members of Parliament were invited to the meeting. That was held in Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), Eelanadu, 22 February 1977.
26 Ibid.
admissions, unemployment problems faced by the plantation Tamils, and the
problems faced by Tamil public servants to accommodate in the agenda to find
solution. Unlike her usual hardened position, Srimavo Bandaranaike seemed
accommodative and said that the government was committed to the policy of
decentralisation. She also indicated her readiness to enshrine the reasonable use of
the Tamil language law and the related regulations in the Constitution. She also
said that the government was ready to modify the standardisation scheme and
expressed her desire to solve the problems of the Tamils.

Despite assurances given by Srimavo Bandaranaike, Tamil youth dubbed her
positive approach as an election ploy. The youth urged the leaders not to
compromise the resolution for separate State.

The TULF was not happy about the massive pressure exerted by the youth.
However, to tame the youth, Chelvanayakam for the last time, before his death
said, 'An irrevocable decision with regard to the future of the Tamil Nation in this
country had been taken at the first convention of the TULF.'

He added:

My advice to the Sinhalese leaders is to allow us to go our way... Let us
avoid bitterness and agree to part peacefully. This will pave the way for
greater cooperation between the two nations on a footing of equality. The
Tamils are not with any other alternatives. Bitterness is growing in the
minds of the younger generations. Without allowing it to grow any
further, which may lead to inevitable confrontation leading to foreign
intervention, therefore a method of peacefully working out this
entanglement is necessary. We are confident that the truth will ultimately
triumph and we will win in the war of endurance.

Despite Chelvanayakam's hard stand, SLFP functionaries were willing to continue
the dialogue to reach the best possible agreement. Based on this, there were secret
dialogues going on between them and some of the TULF leaders at different
levels. Thillai Nadesan stated, 'I had meeting with the Tamil organisers of the

27 Second meeting held on 16 March 1977, see for details, K.T. Rajasingham, n. 25.
28 Rajasingham, n. 25.
29 S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, First TULF Convention held at Hindu College, Trincomalee
on 26 March 1977.
30 Ibid.
SLFP… they discussed matters, how best they can provide. They also discussed about militancy and how far they are effective and how far it can be stopped…. In my understanding, they realised that they have to make serious concessions in order to curtail the militancy in Tamil politics. They were seriously considering such things. 31

Appreciating the constant efforts of the SLFP through intermediaries and the positive approach of Srimavo Bandaranaike, Chelvanayakam seemed willing to keep the options open. He assigned Kathiravelupillai 32 to secretly negotiate with the SLFP on behalf of the TULF to avoid the outcry of the youth and other party leaders. 33 Apart from previous commitments, one of the important issues that the SLFP accepted was to ‘withdraw the Government sponsored colonisations in Tamil areas after 1954’. 34

When Amirthalingam came to know this, he got annoyed and along with Eelaventhan and Kovai Mahesan, pressurised Chelvanayakam to release a statement stating, ‘I did not assign anyone to talk with SLFP for alliance’. 35 The entire episode of these talks shows that the Eelam resolution and the related speeches were mere rhetoric to keep the youth under the purview of the party and to pressurise the government to obtain some kind of autonomy. It also shows, that though logically convinced of Eelam, Chelvanayakam did not believe in the feasibility of achieving it. Another important point to be noted is the insecure feeling of Amirthalingam who panicked as he was kept in dark. He doubted that Chelvanayakam would promote Kathiravetpillai. Moreover, he was scared of the implications on the electoral prospects of his party if youth came to know of the

31 Author’s interview with Thillai Nadesan, London. 20 August 2000.
32 Kathiravelupillai is advocate by profession and one of the senior leaders of the FP/TULF. He was the theoretician of the TULF. He was elected Member of Parliament from Kopay electorate from 1960 onwards till his demise in 1981.
33 Author’s interview with Gnanasekaravel, Secretary to Kathiravelupillai, Jaffna, 30 April 2003. Gnanasekaravel served with him till the death of Kathiravetpillai. He was the one typing these letters while Kathiravetpillai dictated.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
secret mission. He also sensed that the SLFP would lose the impending election and hence it was meaningless to have dialogue with a losing party. In essence, the party and its leaders became hostage to their own resolution.

Kathiravetpillai was shocked with Chelvanayakam's statement; he felt insulted. In his letter to Chelvanayakam, he said: 'You stabbed me in the back' and offered his willingness to resign. ‘While reading this letter, Chelvanayakam fell down from his chair and was unconscious forever.' Later, under the leadership of Amirthalingam, Kathiravelupillai was slandered publicly as traitor. He never enjoyed good terms with Amirthalingam. He opted to resign from the party on a few occasions, but had to continue due to the persuasion of his party colleagues and supporters.

**Tamil Eelam as an Election Plank**

After the trial-at-bar case, Thiruchelvam, Ponnambalam and Chelvanayakam passed away one after the other in a few month's interval. Chelvanayakam died on 5 April 1977. His funeral was attended by the largest ever crowd for any leader in the Island. Leaders of all the parties in Sri Lanka and many leaders of the Dravida Munnetra Kazagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagam (AIADMK) attended the funeral. This demonstrated the sympathy and support of Tamil Nadu.

Subsequently, Amirthalingam took over the leadership of the TULF at a crucial juncture while the election was ahead. He sensed that the UNP had bright chance of winning the election. Therefore, he felt, to have an understanding with the UNP would be beneficial for the TULF. There was a meeting held between the

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36 Ibid.
37 Author's interview with Gnanasekaravel, Secretary to Kathiravetpillai, Jaffna, 30 April 2003. The reason for his fall from chair might be due to his illness, but it happened while he was reading the letter.
38 Suthanthiran, 16 December 1981.
high power delegations of the UNP and the TULF\textsuperscript{39} in which the TULF identified the issues to be settled: (i) the use of the Tamil language; (ii) ending Sinhalese colonisation in Tamil areas, employment; (iii) abolition of linguistically-biased standardisation, and (iv) citizenship for the plantation Tamils. However, these details were kept secret from public, especially, the youth. Amirthalingam’s approach appeared exact replica of that of Chelvanayakam’s meeting with Sirimavo Bandaranaike, a few months ago. This approach of Amirthalingam might have clearly exposed the tactical nature of the Eelam Resolution to Jayewardene and the weakness of the TULF.

Probably recognising the goodwill shown by the TULF, the UNP in its election manifesto included a special section, ‘Problems of Tamil-Speaking People’. According to this:

\textit{The United National Party accepts the position that there are numerous problems confronting the Tamil-speaking people. The lack of solution to their problems had made the Tamil-speaking people to support even a movement for the creation of a separate state. In the interest of the national integration and unity, so necessary for the economic development of the whole country, the party feels such problems should be solved without loss of time. The party when its comes to power will take all possible steps to remedy their grievances in such fields as education, colonisation, use of Tamil language, employment in the public and semi-public corporations. We will summon an all-party conference as stated earlier and implement its decision.}\textsuperscript{40}

The manifesto also sought a mandate to adopt and operate a new Republican Constitution. That would include the decision of an all-party conference, which will be summoned to consider the problems of the non-Sinhala speaking people.

Generally, Tamil youth were disinterested in the election as they lost trust on Parliament that was dominated by Sinhalese. They were expecting Amirthalingam

\textsuperscript{39} The meeting was held in Thondaman’s house in Colombo. The UNP delegation, led by Jayewardene, consisted of MD Banda and Esmond Wickremasinghe, met the TULF team led by Amirthalingham, which included M. Sivasithamparam and S. Kathiravetpillai. See for details, Rajasingham, n. 25.

\textsuperscript{40} UNP election manifesto of 1977, in Rajasingham, n. 25.
not to aim Parliament but ‘to formulate a plan of action and launch the struggle for winning the sovereignty and freedom of the Tamil Nation without undue delay’.\textsuperscript{41} Amirthalingam, known for his oratory skills, stated, ‘Parliament is not necessary for us. We contest because our enemies should not get into it.’\textsuperscript{42} Justifying his candidacy, he stated, ‘They [other leaders of the party] try to field me saying that there are no candidates for TULF. If any youth comes forward to contest in my constituency, I will get out of the way. Parliament seat is very much disturbing my party work.’\textsuperscript{43} Such statements given at various platforms made the people to have firm belief on the sincerity and dedication of the TULF leaders, especially on Amirthalingam. He enjoyed wide support of the Tamils even while he was out of Parliament during 1970–77 engaged in nurturing Tamil unity. It was the period when the militancy was emerging. For many militants, Amirthalingam spoke their language than many other TULF leaders. It was due to the trust that he would lead the movement, he was given a populist title, \textit{Thalapathy} (‘General’).

It was a situation where the political wisdom of Tamils was high; the Eelam issue was gaining momentum. Hence, they expected the leaders to be dedicated and capable to lead the movement. Many open letters appeared in the newspapers especially, in \textit{Suthanthiran}, emphasising the need for sacrifice. Witnessing the magnitude of trust people laid on the TULF leadership and their firm belief in Eelam as a reality, a letter advised:

\begin{quote}
The TULF candidate selection committee should be responsible... should ensure the character of the candidate that whether he is ready to die in Eelam struggle. Because, at the time of establishing Tamil Eelam, MPs should be in the forefront to lead the struggle.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{41} See Vaddukoddai resolution of the TULF Conference 1976.
\textsuperscript{42} A. Amrthalingam, in a public meeting held on 18 March 1977 at Kanthar Madam, Jaffna. See \textit{Eelanadu} (Tamil) published from Jaffna, 20 March 1977.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} G. Sebestiapillai, Trincomalee, an open letter to TULF, \textit{Suthanthiran}, 13 February 1977.
\end{footnotesize}
Contrarily, the TULF selection procedure was far from such considerations; it rather tried to satisfy the old faces. Many of them, people felt, were unqualified to lead during crisis. Criteria for the introduction of few new faces was loyalty to Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam rather than consideration of merit.\(^\text{45}\) Hence, many leaders and elites who were denied ticket displayed their dissent in an extremely indisciplined manner and demonstrated their self-interest instead of the party interests or its policies. Protests against seat allocation manifested in various forms ranging from threatening to form a new party to burning of effigy of Amirthalingam.\(^\text{46}\)

This feature of the party disappointed the proactive section of Tamils, especially the youth. This attitude of the leaders raised doubts in the minds of the youth about the ability of the party leadership to lead such an immense task. They strongly criticised the power-thirsty leaders and warned them to dedicate to the goal of Eelam and not for Parliament seats or positions.\(^\text{47}\) Despite this disappointing trend in the party, people supported the TULF, as they had no alternative to lay their trust on.

The TULF came out with a simple but popular manifesto that called the people:

The Tamil Nation must take the decision to establish its sovereignty in its homeland on the basis of its right to self-determination. The only way to announce this decision to the Sinhalese government and to the world is to vote for the Tamil United Liberation Front.\(^\text{48}\)

\(^{45}\) Among fresh candidates, except Kasi Anandan, rest were unknown to the people. With the 1983 anti-Tamil violence, except two MPs all others escaped abroad. Some were in India and some were in other countries. Among those in India, only Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam were working fulltime for the Party. Sampanthan and Yogeswaran worked at times with leaders. Rest of them slipped and were to their personal family life.


\(^{47}\) There were posters all over Jaffna, calling Kasi Anandan. It reads, ‘Do not fight for seat: fight for the cause’. It was because his speeches were against his senior and fellow party candidates which could cause division in the party.

\(^{48}\) *Election Manifesto*, TULF, 1977 (translated from Tamil original).
Taking the Eelam issue to another stage, the manifesto also pledged:

The Tamil speaking representatives, who get elected through these votes, while being members of the National State Assembly of Ceylon, will also form themselves into the National Assembly of Tamil Eelam, which will *draft a Constitution for the State of Tamil Eelam*, and to establish the independence of the Tamil Eelam by bringing that Constitution into operation, *either by peaceful means, or by direct action, or struggle*.49

Hence, TULF manifesto gained importance among all sections of the Tamil people. Reiterating the pledge, Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam stated, ‘We do not want to get cheated anymore by signing pacts and agreements [with Sinhalese government]... we will continue to journey towards our unwavering decision of Tamil Eelam policy.’50 Suthanthiran, using its skilful writings to arouse the emotions of the Tamils, citing Mujibur Rehman’s victory as prelude to the emergence of Bangladesh,51 called the Tamils to vote cent per cent to the TULF as the election was a referendum to the Eelam. Amirthalingam, in the election campaign meetings, went to the extent of saying, ‘Next Pongal (farmers’ festival celebrated during mid-January) would be celebrated in Tamil Eelam.’52 The confidence that the leaders reflected in the entire election campaign gave an impression as if the mandate was given, and Eelam would be a reality.

However, the TSK, which reflected its strong suspicion on the intention of the formation of the TULF, and the sincerity of what they referred as ‘rusted leaders’, in bringing the Eelam struggle forward. Sri Kantha cautioned:

> Mere going to Parliament is not the way to freedom. It needs qualified leaders to the Tamils to get freedom. Arousing the emotion of the youth and raising some catching slogans to win election is not the path for

49 Ibid. (Emphasis mine).
51 For example, see editorial and article, *Suthanthiran* 30 January 1977.
52 Author witnessed many election campaign meetings in Jaffna in 1977.
freedom. We have to ask ourselves whether we are under a leadership capable of leading a movement to achieve Tamil Eelam.\textsuperscript{53}

Such warning voices were submerged by the election propaganda hype created by the TULF. The Tamil intellectuals too got away with the romanticisation of the wave of Eelam slogan, thus, failing to question the working programme of the TULF to fight for Eelam. Considering the importance of the Eelam manifesto, and the only option to believe the TULF leadership, candidates put forward by the TULF were considered as true to the Tamils. Those who opposed them were treated as miscreants, traitors, and weaklings who betrayed the cause of the Tamils.

**Mandate to Establish Eelam**

Tamils gave unwavering mandate to the TULF in the 1977 Parliamentary elections. It won 18 seats. The TULF made a complete sweep in the Northern Province with a huge margin and the Eastern Province a too presented impressive victory. Forty-eight contestants fighting against the TULF, lost their deposits. It has lost two seats, one, by mere 505 votes and the other, by 2902 votes. While UNP swept the polls in the Sinhalese dominated constituencies, with eighteen seats, TULF gained the status of the main opposition party in the Parliament. The SLFP won only eight seats and the left parties did not win any seat. (See Table 4.1)

Table 4.1: Parliamentary Elections 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>TULF</th>
<th>Votes Obtained</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<th>Main Contestant Party</th>
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<td>Won</td>
<td>V. Navaratnam</td>
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<td>K. Thurairatnam</td>
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<td>Won</td>
<td>N. Nadarajah</td>
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<td>T. Thirunavukarasu</td>
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<td>Won</td>
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<td>V. Dhamalingam</td>
<td>27550</td>
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<td>26648</td>
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<td>22443</td>
<td>Lost</td>
<td>Badi-ud-din Mahmud</td>
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<td>Lost</td>
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<td>NC</td>
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<td>Won</td>
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<td>M.H.M. Naina Marikar</td>
<td>UNP</td>
<td>17583</td>
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Note: NC: Not Contested, NA: Not Applicable Batticaloa and Pottuvil are two member constituencies.
Computing the mandate for goal of Eelam, total votes polled in 22 constituencies of the Northern and Eastern Provinces were 6, 86,637, out of which the TULF secured 3, 94,238 i.e., 57 per cent of total votes polled. Other pro-Eelam votes: TSK and independents obtained 33,021. Total votes for Eelam demand were 4, 27,259. This is 62 per cent of the total votes polled in the Tamil provinces.\(^{54}\)

Muslim candidates did not succeed, as the Muslim politics of that period was one that fought between the UNP and the SLFP. Ashraff wanted to change this phenomenon. He succeeded later in his mission by forming the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) in 1980. Since TULF projected the election as referendum, this huge mandate undoubtedly turned the eyes of the world towards Sri Lankan Tamil issues too. Newspapers of many countries began to cover the Sri Lankan Tamil issue and published articles on the conflict. The mandate strengthened and encouraged the Eelamist everywhere in the world as the demand gained legitimacy. Since the elections, the Eelam issue rapidly gained the attention of the international community. People and the many Tamil nationalist organisations in and out of the country saw the TULF as leading and guiding force to the struggle.

Amirthalingam pledged in his victory speech, ‘Whichever government comes to power in the South, we will march forward to achieve the goal of Eelam without moving even an inch from our aim to establish Tamil Eelam.\(^{55}\) Almost all candidates of the TULF took the same pledge.\(^{56}\) Knowing the risk involved in the victory of the UNP with five-sixths majority led by known anti-minority leader Jayewardene, Amirthalingam said, ‘While we act to establish Tamil Eelam, we may get arrested, our party may get banned... we will establish the independent Tamil state even by sacrificing our lives.\(^{57}\) Expressing confidence, in another meeting, he told, ‘It is not too far to form our Assembly, draft our separate...'}

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\(^{54}\) See for details, Suthanthiran, 31 July 1977.


\(^{56}\) See for details Suthanthiran 27 July 1977.

\(^{57}\) Amirthalingam in a reception meeting on 30 July 1977, at Valvettithurai, Jaffna, see Suthanthiran, 7 August 1977.
Constitution and establish the Government of Tamil Eelam. Showing a radical face against the party stand of Ahimsa he stated:

Let us see whether the Sinhala government honours the verdict of the Tamils and give way for peaceful parting of Tamil nation like the division of Singapore and Malaysia. If the peaceful efforts fail, we would not hesitate to take help [arms and training] from any quarters to bloodily achieve our independent Tamil Eelam.

Amirthalingam went to the extreme to fuel the young minds that were already simmering against Sinhalese rule over them. In a meeting at Kankesanthurai after the election victory, while some youth told Amirthalingam in the tone of giving ultimatum to the TULF said, ‘we will give you five months, you have to call the Tamil Eelam National Assembly and draft the Tamil Eelam Constitution. In response, Amirthalingam told them:

I also give you five months, before that you mobilise and prepare five thousand youth who should be ready to join any kind of struggle at our call. We will consult with the youth, plan and forward towards the liberation.

Summing up the post-election scenario News Week reported:

The UNP’s triumph was marred, however, by the strong showing of the TULF... in the new Assembly TULF will become the official opposition—the first time that Sri Lanka’s Parliament has ever been divided along ethnic lines. And the TULF’s goal is nothing less than the creation of a separate Tamil state. In the past, Jayewardene has not been sympathetic to Tamil aspirations for greater autonomy... but he proposed a conference to discuss ‘the grievances of the Tamil people.’

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58 Amirthalingam in a reception meeting at Kadduvan, Jaffna, see Suthanthiran, 7 August 1977.
59 Amirthalingam in a public meeting in Colombo, 5 August 1977, Suthanthiran, 10 August 1977.
61 Ibid.
62 Newsweek, 1 August 1977.
PARLIAMENT AS A PROPAGANDA FORUM FOR EELAM

Sri Lankan Parliament dominated by Sinhalese and the Sinhala polity is dominated by majoritarian mindset. Considering the leadership of Jayewardene with five-sixths majority, the Tamil members were tiny in number and powerless. They were unable to stop any Bill or actions against the Tamils or pass any law in the interest of the Tamils. Further, mobilising international support would be part of the programme of any movement for separation. Moreover, without a movement, mobilising support is meaningless. Belief in Parliament itself would weaken the separatist propaganda. Hence, the concept of using Parliament as forum for campaign does not carry enough weight.

As soon as the election results were declared, in an informal decision regarding assuming of the post of the opposition leader, Kathiravelupillai, MP from Kopay, said, 'We should not miss this golden opportunity.' Amirthalingam was bit worried about the reaction of the youth. Encouraging Amirthalingam, Sivasithamparam said, 'They will shout for a few days and then quiet down.' Accordingly, 'TULF parliamentary group decided to assume the post of main opposition leader as an instrument to win the goal of Tamil Eelam.' Amirthalingam stated in a public meeting, 'We are going to function as a new kind of opposition that would fight for Tamil rule.'

Youth, who anxiously expected the TULF to lead the movement towards separate State, revolted. The TYL issued a statement to the press criticising the decision saying that the TULF had gone back on the mandate given to it. It urged TULF MPs to form themselves into a National Assembly. However, TULF justified the decision, as it would 'use the Parliament as forum to canvas for the

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63 Informal meeting held in Jaffna soon after the publication the election results on 23 July 1977. See for details T. Sabaratnam, Moderates Ignore Mandate in Pirapaharan, http://www.sangam.org/sabaratinam/pirapakaranachap16.htm
64 Ibid.
65 The TULF parliamentary group met at the Vavuniya Town Hall on 30 July 1977, formally elect its leader who would automatically become the Leader of the Opposition. Suthanthiran, 3 August 1977.
separate State and the post of main opposition leader would give easy access to world leaders, institutions, and international media to drum up the Eelam demand across the globe. As against the promise made in its election manifesto, the present thinking of the TULF leadership was for a worldwide campaign without a movement.

It is imperative to exert effective pressure to the majoritarian State; the internationalisation should go along with the movement. Without launching any struggle for the liberation, no country would voluntarily advocate or support self-determination in another country. Such campaigns, were also prone to give much lighter understanding of the problem than its complete dimensions to other countries. The response of the TULF, however, showed that the Eelam demand was a mere vote-catching rhetoric and not thoughtful and faithful decision. Confessing this, in 1986, to a question, ‘When you passed the Vaddukodai resolution, what were your plans about how you were going to achieve Tamil Eelam?’ one of the leaders of the TULF, in his response reposed the question, ‘Who thought about all that at that time?’

As noted earlier, TULF had pre-election understanding with the UNP and exposed their weakness to Jayewardene on the Eelam cause. Prime Minister J.R. Jayewardene provided all the facilities to Amirthalingam as an opposition leader that was not given to any previous opposition leaders. It seemed the latter was confident to draw the TULF away from its commitment to a separate State.

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67 Statement released by Kathiravetpillai on behalf of the parliamentary group of the TULF, Sabaratnam, n. 63, p. 2, also see Suthanthiran, 27 July 1977.
68 Amirthalingam in an interview to the Reuters, 4 August 1977.
70 J.R. Jayewardene in the UNP is well known for his extreme Sinhalese nationalist views. He moved the resolution for Sinhala Only as the official language in 1944. According to Navaratnam, It was widely believed that he was the one who spearheaded the opposition within the party in 1955, against the Prime Minister Sir John Kottalawala’s declared policy of parity of status for Sinhala and Tamil, citing Kottalawala referring him as snake under the grass (serpent) in his Premier stake in 1952. He is also was known for his famous Kandy march against the B–C Pact in 1958.
As Jayewardene expected, contrary to the claim of using Parliament for propaganda, the TULF began implementing its hidden agenda by cooperating with the government. It seemed, the TULF had the conviction that if they achieved solution for the said issues, the vigour of the Eelam slogan among youth would be contained. Thus, it decided to go along with secret understanding made with the UNP. Despite the protest of the youth, the TULF parliamentary group decided to participate at the ceremonial opening of Parliament that broke the 20-year boycott by the FP and later the TUF. Further, contrary to its pledge, not to move even an inch from Eelam goal, TULF rather came down discussing petty issues.

Strengthening the compromise approach further, Amirthalingam issued a statement highlighting the sentence in the policy statement of the UNP government, ‘Problems of the Tamil Speaking People’. The TULF was pleased with the induction of this sentence as an achievement, and was in a hurry to keep the people optimistic and convinceing them of his stay in the post. His soft stand with the government created suspicion in the minds of people, particularly the youth, who were closely observing the activities of the leaders. It was not easy for the TULF to divert its path from the goal of Eelam.

Hence, TULF began to utter different things at different places and at different times. Perhaps to tame the rising annoyance of the people, it continued to give usual Eelam rhetoric through interviews and statements. In an interview responding to the question, asking the TULF stance that if the government included the clauses to ensure the rights of the Tamil minorities in the new Constitution, Kathiravetpillai said, ‘We would not believe assurance written on

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71 Following the enactment of the Sinhala Only Act, FP decided to boycott the ceremonial openings of the Parliament as a sign of protest. It continued till 1977.

72 Sentence in the policy statement of the UNP government, ‘Problems of the Tamil Speaking People’, which had been in the UNP Manifesto was reproduced practically verbatim in the Government Policy Statement. There were many instances in every policy speech or throne speech where FP used to move its policy to be included and that used to get defeated. This time UNP itself included this, which made Amirthalingam overjoyed, and believed that Jayewardene would find solutions to the grievances identified in the pre-election dialogue and would tame down the radical trend of the youth.

papers. Those matters would be only on the paper.\textsuperscript{74} Amirthalingam already stated, 'The decision of separate State was not taken in emotion, but decided after a deep thought.'\textsuperscript{75} On the plan of action and the method of struggle, Sivasithamparam reiterated, 'The struggle for Tamil Eelam should be outside Parliament. It would be full and full disobedient movement. It may be like disobedience movement such as “not to pay tax”.'\textsuperscript{76}

Contrary to Sivasithamparam's statement, Amirthalingam hinted that TULF was contemplating even for armed struggle. He said:

Soon TULF members would draft the Constitution for free sovereign Tamil Eelam. We will start the struggle with Ahimsa. Nevertheless, a situation will arise; eventually we have to adopt extreme form of struggle. Many among us may be sentenced to death.\textsuperscript{77}

This response shows that they did not have any plan as such. They wanted to give an impression to the people that the TULF could not be diverted from its goal of Eelam by such tricks of the government and the party was setting the stage for an aggressive struggle and it was even ready for the maximum sacrifice. These utterances were contradictory to their real approach they had adopted. People were no longer ready to buy these kinds of rhetoric, as they were used to it since 1972. They were expecting action. For them, the mobilisation reached the peak with the election in 1977.

By this period, at least three militant organisations, namely, Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) took shape. However, they had their own limitations as underground organisations. Even though they were small, support and sympathy for them was steadily increasing.

What the people believed and expected was a legitimate struggle to be led by legitimate leaders, so that they can play their role. Otherwise, they would be only

\textsuperscript{74} Kathiravetpillai, interview to \textit{Sun}, 4 August 1977.
\textsuperscript{75} Amirthalingam, \textit{Suthanthiran}, 4 July 1977.
\textsuperscript{76} Sivasithamparam, \textit{Sun}, 10 August 1977.
the onlookers and subordinates. Therefore, people expected the utterances of the TULF to be put into practice. Reflecting the feelings of the people, TULF party paper Suthanthiran writes, ‘TULF leaders should have to plan the schemes to take our goal forward, instead, of wasting of time with reception ceremonies and verbal thunders.’\textsuperscript{78} Organisations among expatriate Tamils in support of Eelam, in a joint statement expressing their disappointment said:

Tamils gave the mandate to the TULF to fight for Eelam... They do not expect anything else from the rulers. Youth in Eelam and outside are observing the actions to be followed. Our MPs should not spent time with victory receptions, hyphenating public meetings and passing resolutions. There is no need for such matters anymore... not to vain the trust laid on them. They should act without delay.\textsuperscript{79}

Many statements and speeches from various quarters of Tamils increasingly emerged during this period which reflected the loss of patience of the people, especially those wanted to play an active role in this struggle, and the disappointment on the TULF. However, the TULF attitude did not change and they did not give any convincing explanations to the people for their delay.

\textbf{Anti-Tamil Violence}

In the next few days, the patient effort that Amirthalingam was taking to build an amicable relationship with the government collapsed. A clash between some unruly Sinhalese police officers and the Tamil civilians in a carnival in Jaffna led to the rampage by the police in Jaffna. They indulged in burning of markets and shops, fired and attacked civilians. Even Amirthalingam was humiliated and attacked by a police in front of a higher officer while he questioned their atrocities. One police constable was shot at and wounded by a youth during the atrocities in Jaffna. Police gave absolute free hand by its departmental and political leadership.

\textsuperscript{78} Suthanthiran, 7 August 1977. (Emphasis mine).

\textsuperscript{79} Joint statement of three organisations from London. Eelam Tamil’s Association, Eelam Liberation Front and the Tamils Development Association, Suthanthiran, 7 August 1977.
to take on Jaffna for three days.\footnote{For details of clash and the destructions done by the police, K.T. Rajasingam, "Further Lack of Perspicuity" in Sri Lanka: The Untold Story, \textit{http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/c108df01.htm}, 5 January 2002.} Amirthalingam while addressing the issue in the Parliament, narrating his experience said:

\begin{quote}
Police aimed their guns at me. I am lucky to be here today. The men were in uniform but wore no numbers. I asked them why have they shot innocent persons. The policemen abused in filth… a constable standing behind the Assistant Superintendent of Police had attacked me with the butt of his gun. Can you rule a country with such a police force?\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

Prime Minister Jayewardene’s response in the Parliament seems unparallel to any other democratic leaders in the world in negative sense. He did not express concern about the police atrocities and the humiliation to the opposition leader, he replied, ‘We are at the receiving end of the police.’ Unable to belch the use of gun against the police by a Tamil Youth, he questioned with anger, ‘The boys had the audacity to shot at the police’\footnote{Sabaratnam, n. 63.} and accused Amirthalingam of promoting secessionism. Inflaming the emotions of the Sinhalese chauvinistic forces, he challenged, ‘if you want fight, let there be a fight; if it is peace, let there be peace; that is what they will say. It is not what I am saying. The people of Sri Lanka say that.’\footnote{Ibid.}

This war cry of the Prime Minister fuelled the Sinhalese extremists in the South that led to another phase of anti-Tamil carnage in the Sinhalese-dominated areas on the same night. Some of the UNP backbenchers too led the attacks in some places. Mobs went on rampage, destroyed Hindu temples, went in search of Tamil houses, attacked the inhabitants, looted them and burned them. The violence continued until the government clamped curfew. According to official figures, 112 Tamils were killed, 2500 were rendered homeless and Rupees 1000 million-worth property was destroyed.\footnote{Daily News, 29 August 1977.} However, according to independent sources assessed, ‘300 Tamils killed, 30,000 people became refugees, 300 temples damaged or
destroyed. Three chartered ships transported refugees to Northern and Eastern Provinces'.

Following Jayewardene, many Cabinet ministers and most of the backbenchers developed a trend to threat the TULF leaders by blaming them as terrorist, criminals and even traitors of the country. All the complaints and speeches of the TULF leaders in the Parliament were responded with such contempt. By this approach they always put the TULF into defensive position, so that they would keep away from militancy.

Jayewardene came to power with the agenda of introducing Open Economic Policy (OEP) and to invite Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) by opening Free Trade Zones (FTZ). His election slogan was to make Sri Lanka another Singapore. To implement such an ambitious agenda, he had to ensure the political stability and peace to attract FDI. Even though the government was stable, the Sinhalese opposition of SLFP. The Left combine and the trade unions behind them were challenging enough to threat the government schemes, such as privatisation. Adding to that, the Eelam campaign of the TULF and the emergence of the militancy cropped up as another impediment to his programmes.

Therefore, it seems he wanted the riots to suppress the Eelam demand. Considering the experience of the FP, the TULF was scared and unwilling to launch any movement after violent suppression of the 1961 disobedience movement. Jayewardene correctly assessed them and implemented carrot- and-stick approach to contain the activities of Tamil political forces against the State.

However, like his predecessors, he also failed to read the aspirations of the people. Contrary to the calculations of the State, since 1972, every suppressive measure of the States, mounted the pressure on the TULF to lead the Eelam movement outside Parliament and increasingly pushed the youth towards militancy. This was witnessed by the report of Colombo Bureau of Investigation (CBI). It stated:

85 Sabaratnam, Moderates Ignore Mandate in Pirabakaran, n. 63.
The number of hardcore militants had swelled to 50 and active supporters to 200. Public sympathy especially that of the youth, gradually veered towards the militants, who launched a fierce campaign against the TULF leadership particularly against Amirthalingam. They said Amirthalingam had betrayed for the post of the Leader of Opposition. 86

During the debate on the Government Policy Statement, the TULF moved the Eelam amendment saying, ‘The TULF had obtained mandate to set up a separate State of Tamil Eelam.’ 87 As expected, this amendment provoked a heated debate. Many UNP MPs charged Amirthalingam of making inflammatory speeches. Minister Gamini Dissanayaka blamed Amirthalingam and the TULF for provoking the Sinhalese. Responding to the threatening disturbances from the ruling side benches, Anandasangari said, ‘We are not begging you we demand our rights. Whatever the avenues we want to use, we will use all to establish Tamil Eelam.’ 88 Virtually, the amendment was defeated. However, the TULF claims this as an achievement as they made the Eelam demand in Parliament records, but people found such claim to be ridiculous. In this period, all the left parties took the stand supporting the right to self-determination of the Tamils. However, Desmon Fernando group and Nava Sarna Samaja Party (NSSP) took the stand that the decision for secession or autonomy is up to the Tamils but the CPC and the JVP took the stand not to support the division of the country. 89

Subsequent to the policy statement, the Government decided to draft a new Constitution in which it had planned to introduce Executive President System and Proportional Representation System. The TULF decided to boycott the Constitution Revision Committee and decided to boycott the functions in which ministers participated. Reasoning the boycott decision, Amirthalingam said, ‘The Tamil people did not worry whether Jayewardene ruled them as Prime Minister or President.’ For the Tamil people, ‘these founts of government had no meaning’. He asked, ‘When our house is on fire can we worry about the colour and texture of

87 Sabaratnam, n. 63.
89 Suthathiran, 2 December 1977.
the curtain, whether it is blue or green?"90 Considering the absolute majoritarian attitude of the government defying its own manifesto, TULF had nothing to gain through cooperation. Hence, a potential question arose as to why the TULF was languishing behind the government.

Role of TULF in the Parliament

Though the TULF kept out of the Constitution-making process, it maintained a working, but close relationship with the government. It participated in several conferences that the government called to attend to the problems of the Tamil people and the government servants affected by the riots. The government gave vague assurances on some of the requests of the TULF such as language-related issues, standardisation, compensation to the Tamil government servants who were affected by the anti-Tamil violence, posting majority of Tamil police to the Tamil areas. However, Jayewardene readily meted to the demand of Amirthalingam for his security and gave him official car and an official residence, facilities not hitherto enjoyed by previous holders of the post. Jayewardene was in the compulsion to show to the world, especially to the donor countries that the country, was peaceful and stable. He comforted Amirthalingam, because he wanted to keep the TULF on hope through which he could tame militancy.

These facilities to Amirthalingam annoyed the youth. Militants put up posters in Jaffna ridiculing the TULF, ‘Ketathu Thamil Eelam, Kidaththathu Japan Jeep’ (what they demanded was Tamil Eelam but what they received was Japan jeep). The posters portray the TULF’s cooperation as a betrayal of the mandate. Amirthalingam replied in a statement that TULF MPs were only trying to solve the problems confronting Tamils through negotiations with the government. ‘There was nothing wrong in attending conferences and discussions intended to solve the problems facing the Tamil people ....the TULF is not having confrontation with the government at the moment.’91 In order to ease the anger of the youth, he cited his over-enthusiastic action that failed the B–C Pact, and said,

We even disobeyed the advice of Chelvanayakam... we began deface the SRI by tar on it. B–C Pact was torn resulted to my inexperience. Many blamed my inexperienced act for the failure of the B–C Pact."\(^9\) It is to be noted that until then, the FP/ TUF/ TULF leaders, including Amirthalingam glorified the anti-SRI movement and blamed Bandaranaike and the Sinhalese chauvinistic forces for the failure of the B–C Pact.

His confession turned counter-productive. This was a new information to the people. Youth criticised Amirthalingam that he damaged the Tamil cause by over-action then and doing the same by inaction now.\(^9\) One of the major issues which TULF projected as excuse for its compromised approach was to find solutions for the Tamil government servants affected by the riots. However, the response of the trade union proved that it was ready to subdue the interests of its members to the overall Tamil interests. Releasing the TULF from such distractions, and to concentrate on working Programme for the Eelam movement, the Tamil Clerical Servants Union (TCSU) in its resolution said:

Successive governments are trying to annihilate the Tamil race. In this situation, there is no use for the Tamil staffs working under the Sinhalese government, voicing or requesting for their rights and privileges. Tamil nationality cannot have any protection as long as Sinhalese race rule the Tamils. The 1977 racial annihilation confirms this... Therefore, no Tamil staff under the Sinhalese government should live for trivial privileges of transfer, promotion and salary increment. They have to live as a symbol of public service that would ready to sacrifice everything for the liberation of the Tamils.\(^9\)

Amirthalingam took pledge in a public meeting after the election, ‘We are going to function as non-loyal opposition, an opposition that would break the new Constitution.’\(^9\) Contrary to his pledge and ignoring the resolution of the TCSU, Amirthalingam decided to strengthen the ties of the TULF further, with the government. He decided even to revoke the earlier ban on attending functions of

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\(^9\) *Eelanadu*, 30 December 1977.

\(^9\) Personal view of the author.

\(^9\) Resolution of the TCSU; for details, see *Suthanthiran*, 21 May 1978.

the ministers. At a meeting in the Jaffna Kachcheri (District Secretariat) Amirthalingam said:

It is the duty of the Tamil community to extend its support, to Prime Minister J.R. Jayewardene, enable him to solve the many problems that the community faces. The Prime Minister has assured us that he will solve them in a just and fair manner. He should be given a fair chance. Goodwill is a vital commodity today. This is being extended to the government in full measure. I hope the government will translate its promise into action.96

In Parliament, Amirthalingam declared that the TULF was a ‘cooperative opposition’ and explained, ‘An opposition’s role is not to oppose everything. They had to criticise whatever they thought was wrong, support whatever they thought was right and give their suggestion on the manner in which the administration should be carried on.’97

He told that the TULF was keeping the doors open for a dialogue with the government. ‘This is not a new stand’, he said. ‘The TULF election manifesto itself had declared its support to a peaceful solution to the problems.’98 In fact, he distorted the meaning of his own manifesto. Interpreting the manifesto, Amirthalingam, in many of his public speeches, cited the ‘peaceful partisan of Singapore and Malaysia’ and said ‘Sri Lanka can follow suit’.99 He also repeatedly emphasised that ‘we are not asking your mandate to build bridge or road facilities for you’.100 On the contrary, his inverted interpretation created suspicion on TULF’s sincerity on Eelam course, and raised doubts that Amirthalingam has secret understanding with Jayewardene.

Jayewardene responded to the TULF overtures by declaring in January 1978 that he would take steps to solve the problems of the Tamils, whatever be the consequences. This resulted in the TULF further softening its stand towards the government. It stopped organising the usual black flag protest on 4 February 1978, the thirtieth anniversary of the Independence Day. This undue gesture increased

96 Eelanadu, 20 December 1977.
97 Rajasingam, n. 80, 5 January 2002.
98 Amirthalingam interview to Daily News, 26 December 1977.
99 Author witnessed many such public meetings during the 1997 election campaign.
100 Ibid.
the doubt about his secret understanding with Jayewardene. There was increasing gap between the functions of the party and the expectation of its constituency.

Amirthalingam never planned and led any programmes of protest even in the heydays of the Federal except propelling the controversial anti-Sinhala SRI movement. He was the first among the young leaders in the forefront of the movement that was planned and executed by some other leaders like V. Navaratnam and Nadarajah. Hence, there were no instances to prove his ability and capacity to lead a movement. The constant compromise attitude and frequent wavering decisions according to the push and pull of the government and the youth explains the absence of a political programme other than parliamentary process. He did not have the will and courage to accept his inability of the party or himself to lead the movement for Eelam or openly propose and convince any alternative demand to Eelam. Because he instigated and nurtured the emotional politics based on Eelam at every crucial juncture until the 1977 election. Therefore, only option for the TULF was to find a face-saving solution for two reasons. One was to downplay its own policy of Eelam, thus, bringing down the youth activity, and the other was to regain their depleting support base.

Paradoxically, for this purpose, Amirthalingam had to depend on Jayewardene, and satisfy him, who, ‘he projected as terrorist and another Hitler’. Hence, it was rather a Herculean task for Amirthalingam to satisfy Jayewardene, especially, in a situation where militant activities were on the upswing. In such crippled situation, Amirthalingam tried to use the good relations between the then Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Jayewardene to exert pressure on Jayewardene for some kind of autonomy. Knowing close relations between Morarji Desai and Cho Ramaswamy, Amirthalingam approached Cho

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101 *Suthanthiran*, 16 December 1981.

102 Jayewardene had great regards for Morarji Desai as a Gandhian and man of principles. He gave red carpet welcome to Morarji on his visit to Sri Lanka and honoured him by inviting the Parliament for a speech. Amirthalingam thought that Jayewardene would respect his words and something could be achieved. Author’s interview with Cho Ramaswamy, Chennai, 31 October 2000.

103 Cho Ramaswamy is a well-known cinema actor, scriptwriter and dramatist. He is also a successful journalist running a Tamil weekly magazine *Tuglak* in Chennai for last 35 years. He is one of the reputed political commentators and Member of Rajya Sabha. He was one the prominent personalities among Tamil intellectuals who were
Ramaswamy to convince him to take such a mission. Cho met Morarji Desai in Bombay and conveyed the request. Morarji Desai was willing to accept the mission and said:

I am quite aware of the Tamil’s problem in Sri Lanka, and prepared to talk to Jayewardene, but under two conditions. One is Amirthalingam must give a public statement that he will not encourage the division of Sri Lanka. The other is, he must condemn all kind of violence emanating whichever the quarters, whether from the state or from the militants. These two statements he should make public. Then I will go to Sri Lanka, I will talk to Jayewardene. If he does not concede the reasonable demands, I will go on a fast to death before his presidential palace. You can tell Amirthalingam this, unless the president meets the reasonable demands of the Tamil people, I will not break my fast.  

Considering the will power and uprightness of Morarji Desai, Cho Ramaswamy got an encouraging response and conveyed this message to Amirthalingam. Nevertheless, it was not fully acceptable to Amirthalingam, he said:

I can give this assurance to Morarji Desai in private. How can I say in public that I gave up the demand of separation? After all that was the electoral platform on which we sat. At least the issue of violence, I can condemn, because it has been my platform.

Once again, Cho Ramaswamy met Morarji Desai with this reply. He refused, and said:

I will not accept it. I will disapprove this kind of politics, saying one thing in private and other in public. That is not my stand. If Amirthalingam changes his mind let me know. Otherwise, I cannot... I will not even talk on this issue.

Once the efforts with Morarji Desai failed, Amirthalingam had no other option but to bank his hopes on Jayewardene again. Amirthalingam pleaded with President Jayewardene:

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104 Author’s interview with Cho Ramaswamy, Chennai, 31 October 2000.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
If you put forward an alternative scheme for solution that would satisfy the Tamils and I feel that it is reasonable solution, I would accept that for the Tamil people who are having trust on me. I will accept whatever the consequence may arise, I would even ready to give my life.\textsuperscript{107}

Amirthalingam was well aware that Jayewardene would not present any meaningful devolution scheme that would reasonably meet Tamils aspirations. Nevertheless, he continuously implored Jayewardene at least to implement the UNP manifesto that was to call Round Table Conference (RTC). Instead of calling the TULF for negotiation, Jayewardene unilaterally introduced a decentralisation project to the entire Island, known as District Minister (DM) system,\textsuperscript{108} which he projected as ‘bring the administration near to the people’.

**Proposal for District Development Council**

Since the TULF, especially, Amirthalingam was longing for some kind of solution for the sustenance of his political survival, introduction of DM by the government gave the TULF an enthusiasm. The Tamil Eelam Policy became a chain that tied the TULF, preventing from nurturing a cordial climate with the government to obtain any small benefit for the Tamils. Since the TULF was well aware that withdrawing the policy of Eelam would be disastrous to the party, it found a strategy to put the policy in the back burner. TULF decided to declare the postponement of Eelam struggle in its convention, thinking that the decision would bear legitimacy and the people would not find fault with them anymore, or at least they can have justification to their approach of parliamentary process.

\textsuperscript{108} Cabinet Minister in charge of District Ministers would appoint each one DM for all the 25 Districts. DMs would be selected from the MPs. DM would be the Executive head of the DDC, overseeing the development programmes, usually done by the administrative network under the Government Agent (GA) and would implement any special programme stipulated by the Cabinet ministers. Since it was a political appointment, the DM is directly answerable to the Minister in charge. He may be terminated at any time. The power and the utility of DM would practically determined by the relationship between the two.
The offer of District Ministership had its repercussions at the Aavarangal Convention of the TULF.\footnote{Second conference of the TULF held between 29–30 July 1978, in Aavarangaal, Jaffna in which TULF declared that it had postponed the Eelam demand.} The TYL brought two resolutions at the GC. The first asked the TULF MPs to ‘constitute themselves into a Tamil Eelam National Council and to undertake the task of drafting a Tamil Eelam Constitution’. Senior leaders twisted the resolution to their convenience, moved and adopted an amendment to strengthen the party decision. The amendment said, ‘Council be set up at the proper time when the necessity arise’. The second resolution called upon TULF MPs ‘to move no confidence on the government’\footnote{Rajasingam, n. 25.} which was defeated.

During the discussions, a majority of youth delegates expressed dissatisfaction with the attitude of the TULF leaders who were neglecting freedom struggle. The leadership was accused of soft-pedalling the whole issue. The youth demanded to know whether they would be accepting District Ministerships. Sivasithamparam replied that the question of accepting or not did not arise as the government had not spelt out the function of the District Ministers. Ultimately, using organisational mechanism and their experienced argument the TULF contained the voice of TYL for the time being.

However, there were a large number of youth other than TYL, who were thoroughly convinced that the TULF would not lead the Eelam movement and they wanted to expose its inability to the people as part of their campaign. The second and final day programme of the convention was to announce the decisions of the Convention in a public meeting. Around 1000 youth, largely, EROS and GUES activists and supporters (but they did not reveal their identity) marched both from northern and southern towns of Achuveli and Puttur respectively to the convention ground defying the police ban on processions. It was the first ever demonstration against the TULF by the Tamil youth in its history of nearly three decades, from the inception of the FP. They shouted slogans urging the leaders to establish a separate State immediately. They then marched up to the stage where the leaders were seated and shouted, ‘Do or let us do’. Amirthalingam appealed to them not to disturb the convention, but it went unheard. One youth climbed on to the stage and tried to snatch the microphone. Volunteers in charge of maintaining
discipline took him away. Some were issuing leaflets to the public that severely criticised the TULF. Others kept on chanting ‘We don't want a carnival here’, ‘Our leaders are our traitors’, ‘Resign your seats in Parliament’.\textsuperscript{111} It took nearly an hour to persuade them to leave the convention grounds. The aggressiveness of the youth, their slogans against the TULF and their call to the people to rally for a mass movement revealed that the TULF could not sustain any more only with their verbal liberation movement, and reveals that the youth were getting ready to push the TULF leadership to the back seat if they continued to dodge. It was clear a indication for the imminent challenge to the monopoly of the TULF leadership.

Despite the protests of the youth, Amirthalingam announced that the situation was not conducive to begin Eelam struggle, therefore, the TULF postponed the implementation of the manifesto until the political climate and the necessity arises. He did not explain why the political climate was not suitable and he did not declare any alternative policy in place of that. Instead, he emphasised the necessity to concentrate on the pressing problems of the people.\textsuperscript{112} Ultimately, by the Aavarangal Conference, the TULF disappointed the Tamils and led the people to shift their trust gradually on the militant organisations. The convention elected Sivasithamparam president of the TULF and Amirthalingam the secretary general.\textsuperscript{113}

Subsequently, the government announced a decentralisation system known as District Development Council (DDC) system.\textsuperscript{114} The DM and the DDC both were far from the aspirations of the people. Majority Tamils felt that it was an insult to

\textsuperscript{111} Author witnessed the protest rally and the Convention as an observer.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{113} Amirthalingam had held the post of President since Chelvanayakam's death, first jointly with Thondaman and Sivasithamparam, and after the Party Constitution was amended, as sole President. Author witnessed the Convention.

\textsuperscript{114} The main purpose of these Development Councils was the decentralisation of authority of the Central Government to the district level to promote the development process. Even though Municipal and Urban Councils fall under the purview of the DDC, in practical terms, since they have their own elected councils and agendas, DDC has to look after the village developments. The combination of the council was too complicated and the powers were not demarcated. It miserably failed as government left it with no power and money. See for details, Development Council Elections Act, No. 20 of 1981, Government Publication Bureau, Colombo, March 1981. Also see, \textit{Administrative Report of the Election Commission 1979–99}, Government Publication Bureau, Colombo, pp. 21–23.
them and their mandate for Eelam. Contrarily, the TULF was initially tempted to take the DM and demand five posts. Jayewardene strictly offered only three. Criticising the TULF for its obsession towards the power, trivial post of DM and the DDC, Suthanthiran warns, ‘Even Thiruchelvam, a Cabinet minister was denied power to declare Thirukkoneswaram as sacred place, the District Minister’s function to implement the orders of Cabinet ministers would only serve to the interest of the government.’ It also stated, ‘At least the B–C Pact was somewhat near Federal System, but the DDC is far from such scheme’. The article urged the TULF, not to vacillate but to direct its energy towards the stipulated goal of Eelam.\textsuperscript{115} Strong protest against the TULF to accept these posts and Jayewardene’s refusal to accede to the TULF’s demand compelled the TULF to drop the idea of accepting DM. However, Amirthalingam decided to accept the DDC, as he had no other options for his political sustenance. He told Sidharthan, ‘DDC agreement is the best among all in the past, even better than the B–C Pact’.\textsuperscript{116} K.P. Ratnam\textsuperscript{117} observes, ‘If we accept the DM posts we have to join the government but not for DDC, because that gives decentralisation of power.’\textsuperscript{118}

TYL and other youth demonstrated strong opposition against the decision. There were wall writings in the Tamil provinces, especially in Jaffna, \textit{mavattasabai emmaku vendam} (maavattam means District; it also means big zero. It reads, we do not want council of big zero). Slamming the inability of the TULF, posters read, \textit{Keddathu Eelam Kidaithathu Mavattasabai} (they [TULF] asked for Eelam but they obtained a council of big zero). This was the first time that the disappointed youth manifested harsh criticism and condemnation against their own party and its leaders in a wider scale. However, except for a section of militants, the intention of such criticisms and protests was still intended to pull the TULF back to the Eelam track. Nevertheless, the TULF, while repeatedly reassured that

\textsuperscript{115} Suthanthiran, 16 July 1978.
\textsuperscript{116} Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
\textsuperscript{117} K.P. Ratnam was one of the long time MPs of the FP and then TULF. He became Member of Parliament uninterruptedly since 1965. Initially, he was elected from the Kilinochi and since 1970 from Kayts electorate. He was assumed many posts in the party including administrative secretary of the TULF. Soon after the 1983 riots he came to India with his family and fully confined to his personal life.
\textsuperscript{118} Suthanthiran, 15 October 1978.
they had not given up the policy of Eelam; they find different excuses to evade raising the demand. They used to say that it was not the suitable time for taking off such movement. Amirthalingam stated, 'Big disaster would occur at the moment we begin the Eelam struggle'. Tamil people understood that the TULF leadership was scared to face the consequences.

Hence, their justifications rather angered the youth. Therefore, the protests against the TULF characteristically were indicting and unmasking. TYL came out with a propaganda bulletin named *Ilaignar Kural* (Voice of Youth), in which, it criticised the compromising attitude of the TULF and advocated the violent means. TULF took tough organisational stand to keep the TYL under its control. Working Committee of the TULF decided to take the responsibilities of the TYL until its secretary come out from prison. Showing their opposition to such decision and asserting their autonomy from the TULF, TYL expelled one of its leading personalities on the charge of informing the internal and confidential matters of the TYL to the TULF leadership. This organisational conflict reveals the magnitude of the animosity between the TULF and its youth wing. Amirthalingam who had enjoyed the support of the youth all along his career, began receiving strong challenges from the same quarters.

Sidharthan observes that Amirthalingam was egoist and had the character of personalising even common matters. He would not allow others to dominate him either in the party or from outside. Hence, he might not take the open challenge of the youth against the TULF lightly. He had only two options to sustain his leadership over the youth. Either he had to bend to their demand or to contain their activity against him and the party. First option was ruled out. The second option would virtually involve conspiracy.

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119 Suthanthiran, 8 November 1981.
120 Mavai Senathirajah was the Secretary of the TYL. He was loyal to TULF and especially to Amirthalingam. See for details of the TULF action on TYL, *Eelanadu*, 22 January 1979.
121 TYL expelled Kanagamanoharan, advocate and one of the leading personalities of the party. See for details, *Eelanadu*, 29 January 1979.
122 Derived from Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
TULF and the Prevention of Terrorism Act

It was by this period the second MP for Pottuvil, M. Canagaratnam of the TULF, crossed over to the government side and took up the portfolio as the District Minister of Batticaloa. Amirthalingam slammed M. Canagaratnam in the Parliament as traitor. Tamil people felt this as betrayal at a crucial period. Based on the TULF campaign of ‘weeding out the traitors’, a trend developed that any political opponents TULF pointed as traitor would be annihilated or would be muted. TNT leader Prabakaran had already assassinated already Thuraiappah on this ground. On the same basis, M. Canagaratnam also was shot but survived the gunshot injuries and died after a year. A UNP MP Weerawanni Samaraweera blamed Amirthlingam’s hand behind the shooting incident and said, ‘The attempt on his life was taken by the militant Tamil youth, only a few weeks after Amirthalingham had called Canagaratnam a traitor, when he crossed over to the UNP.’

The government Members of Parliament joined Weerawanni Samaraweera. Amirthalingam told the House that his party was concerned about the shooting and condemned it. UNP leadership strongly believed that the militants were under the control of Amirthalingam. Jayewardene, it seems, thought that if he exerts pressure on Amirthalingam he would control the militants. He employed the same carrot and stick tactics which he was pursuing since 1977, giving him personal facilities and at the same time using his ministers and MPs to put pressure on him. Even them Amirthalingam had a soft corner for Jayewardene.

First time, LTTE organisation came to the public knowledge. Media carried its official statement with their official letter head that claimed for the assassinations of eleven persons consisting of politicians, CID’s and police.

123 Uma Maheswaran and Prabakaran, the leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), shot at Canagaratnam while he was coming out of his home in Kollupitya, Colombo on 27 January 1978. Rajasingham, Sri Lanka: The Untold Story. Chapter 27—Horsewhip Amirthalingam, www.atimes.com/ind-pak/DB16DJ06.html, p. 3

124 On 2 May 1978, Weerawanni Samaraweera, the UNP MP, raised the attempted shooting incident of Canagaratnam on the floor of the Parliament.

125 Rajasingham, n. 25.
informers, which created a sensation among Tamils. Subsequently, government enacted two laws to suppress the militancy. One was the ban on LTTE and the other was the infamous Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Subsequent to enactment of this Act, government also declared the state of Emergency in the Tamil areas from 11 July 1979. Despite such dangerous nature of the law that was targeted against Tamils, the TULF did not show interests to oppose the Bill. Instead, Amirthalingam got an undertaking from Jayewardene that the PTA would be limited only for a period of two years and there would be no death sentence for any offence under the PTA. TULF did not even attend Parliament to mark its opposition. Ironically, the SLFP opposed the Bill in Parliament. Left parties, Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality led by Sinhalese Rev. Father Paul Caspus and other human right organisations led by Sinhalese were launching struggle against the PTA from its enactment. Contrarily, the TULF passed a resolution against PTA only after three years of its enactment, in 1982. Notably, the period when resolution got passed, Parliament election was expected and the TULF was planning groundwork to face the election. Suthanthiran while writing about the past behaviour of the TULF, pointed out that it has accepted, 'help to wipe out terrorism in the North and other parts of Sri Lanka'. Considering the aim and the background of PTA and the attitude of the TULF, such assurance seems to have been real.

The question arises here as to why the TULF supported for two years implementation of PTA without death sentence? Subsequent to the declaration of the Emergency, Jayewardene appointed Brigadier Weeratunga with a mandate to

126 Weerakesari, Tamil, Colombo, 28 April 1978.
127 LTTE was banned on 21 May 1978. Eelanadu, 22 May 1978, 22 may 1979.
128 PTA was enacted in July 1979. This law was described as almost equivalent to the South African Apartheid laws as the law under Emergency gave free hand to the security forces to act as they wish on anyone they suspect as terrorist. It was aimed at Tamil youth in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.
129 Author’s interview with Srikantha, Colombo, 20 May 2003
131 Derived from Suthanthiran, 22 August 1982.
133 Suthanthiran, 22 August 1982.
get rid of terrorism by the end of 1979. He was then Chief of Army Staff, as the overall Commander of Jaffna and issued the following grandiloquent decree:

It will be your duty to eliminate in accordance with the laws of the land the menace of terrorism in all its forms from the Island, and more specifically from the Jaffna district. I will place at your disposal all resources of the State. I earnestly request all law-abiding citizens to give their cooperation to you. This task has to be performed by you and completed before the 31 of December 1979.134

The implementation of this assignment indicated the meaning of the undertaking obtained by the TULF. In two days of the declaration of the Emergency, army arrested more than 15 youth in the midnight from their homes and 11 of them were killed after cruel tortures. Some of the bodies were thrown on the roadsides in different parts of the peninsula including that of prominent activists, Inapam (one of the members of the erstwhile TNT) and Balendra. A Few bodies were found in the hospitals. Some were admitted in the hospital in serious conditions.135 The peninsula was shunned and under grip of panic. The reaction of the TULF against this terrorisation was limited with a letter to Jayewardene by Amirthalingam requesting for action on the perpetrators.

One school of thought still strongly believed that Amirthalingam and Jayewardene had secret understanding at least until 1982 Presidential election. They believed that this military crack down also was an outcome of the understanding between the two. Confirming this theory, Thillai Nadesan quotes the content of Amirthalingam’s [confidential] letter to Jayewardene, subsequent to these gruesome killings, ‘I never expect this to happen, we agreed certain measures, but what happened was bit extreme’.136 He further explains:

Amirthalingam knew well in advance that there is going to be a crackdown. He never cautioned anyone. That is when I decided to break

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134 Rajasingam, n. 80, 5 January 2002.
135 These arrests and murders were held on 13 and 14 July 1979. Letter from Amirthalingam to Jayewardene, 24 July 1979, in Glimpses of Tamil Grievances (1977–83), TULF Publication.
136 Thillai Nadesan revealed the author that he read and was keeping the copy of this letter for long time but lost it later. He believed beyond doubt that Amirthalingam knew well before that there would be a crackdown on activists.
the link with Amirthalingam and the party. He no longer commands the trust and loyalty from me or other youth. He always wanted to keep his leadership and Parliament seat permanent. The post of leader of opposition he gained was like a bonus. I knew Amirthalingam well. He is capable of conniving with anybody to sustain the status quo. Jayewardene and Amirthalingam seems planned to crackdown the militants before the DDC election or formation of the DDC to clear the path for him to continue his moderate politics.\textsuperscript{137}

Since early 1970s, Amirthalingam thought that militancy was very good asset for them. In every constituency in the Northern Province, political organisers of the SLFP emerged as considerable challenging force to the TULF MPs or candidates. Since they were appointed leaders and powers did not flow from constitutional means, there was no way to outmanoeuvre them democratically. Hence, militancy enhanced the power of the TULF to silence their political opponents. When the militancy turned against his own position and the politics of the TULF, it became a burden.\textsuperscript{138} However, these killings of the army ended counter-productive. It brought youth further towards militants and increased sympathy and support to the militants.

\textbf{The TULF and the DDC a Solution}

The proposal of DDC was in the process for around two years before it came into the statute book. While euphoria in Tamil areas was about Tamil Eelam, the TULF's talk about the DDC disappointed the people. No matter what would be the power devolved to the DDC, the Tamil people perceived the government treating them like second class citizens. Youth got angry on the TULF, because they were pleading for meagre packages instead of fighting for a separate State. Despite the stated reason by the anti-DDC forces among Tamils that it would lower the spirit for Eelam struggle, no one, including Amirthalingam, knew about the powers of the DDC. Nevertheless, to contain the anti-DDC campaign, Amirthalingam and some other TULF leaders projected it as devolution of power.

\textsuperscript{137} Author's interview with Thillai Nadesan, London, 20 September 2000.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
Youth perceived the DDC campaign as betrayal of their own manifesto. They were against the contemplated decision of TULF to accept the DDC. They gathered outside the venue of the GC meeting held in Vavunia Town Hall to take such decision. The youth were shouting slogans against the TULF and the DDC till the end of the meeting. Due to the protest, meeting was held in a tense situation. Many GC members were not willing to go against the youth and the election pledge. However, Amirthalingam was firm on his decision. The meeting was only to get the formal approval of the GC and not to discuss the pros and cons of the DDC. Gopalakrishnan observes:

We were in the GC meeting to make formal decision to accept the DDC. For my knowledge, no one in the GC had knowledge about the structure and power of the DDC. They were depended on Amirthalingam for this knowledge. The meeting, was fully dominated by Amirthalingam. He did not give space for debate or discussion. He did not even clearly explain the powers and limitations. He just read a document, mentioned, we have such and such powers. Some members’ support was based on the belief of Amirthalingam’s conviction, another section confused, but prepared to go with the majority.139

The opposition against the decision this time emerged not only from the people and the youth, but from within too. The in-fighting was growing for some time strongly. Since the dissident groups included Chandrachasand140 and Kovai Mahesan, proprietor and editor of Suthanthiran respectively, this publication began freely criticising the TULF and Amirthalingam as betraying the Eelam cause. Eelaventhan said, ‘Amirthalingam used the party jeeps to collect the GC members and established the support for the DDC, a dirty practice that the FP or the TUF never had in its history. Majority members of the GC blindly supported Amirthalingam. It was supported by 85 and opposed by 15’.141 Finally, the

139 Author’s discussion with Gopalakrishnan, Colombo, 20 September 2004. Gopalakrishnan was former GC member of the TULF from Ampara District; later joined the EPRLF and contested on EPRLF ticket from Ampara District in 1989 parliamentary election.

140 Chandrachasan is the son of S.J.V. Chelvanayakam. He is an advocate by profession. He came to the open politics after the demise of his father. He served in the party as Secretary in its legal cell. After the demise of his father, he owned the Suthanthiran. He was one of the steadfast opponents of the DDC in the party.

141 Author’s interview with Eelaventhan, Jaffna, 20 April 2003.
opposition group broke away and formed Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF). All others, except Chandrahasan, were expelled from the party. However, Suthanthiran was with Kovai Mahesan. The TELF and Suthanthiran played a role almost like TSK and its publication Viduthalai did in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s. Suthanthiran and TELF continued their campaign for Eelam and took pro-militant stance openly.

The TULF’s campaign for DDC exposed the wedge between the words and deeds of the TULF. Despite the increasing opposition and the trend of the people for Eelam movement, the preparation for DDC election of the parties explains the wedge between the ability and will of the party, and the interests and the expectations of the people. Considering the increasing opposition from its own support base and the competition in the election, the TULF, in order to obtain maximum possible votes, employed caste and religion considerations in selecting the candidates. It was unmindful of damaging the prevailing unity and spirit to begin a movement for Eelam and the trend to boycott DDC election. The TULF which was talking against casteist practices all along also succumbed to such practice for vote. Further, infighting for the candidature and power, once again exposed distance between their preaching and practices. Anandasangari brought the infighting to the open and threatened to leave the party, if his recommended person was not given a seat. Kasi Anandan wrote about his dissatisfaction to Amirthalingam that his recommended person did not get importance in the list of candidates. GC member advocate, Kumarakuru, too was dissatisfied with the selection. Witnessing the magnitude of the infighting, frustrated Amirthalingam said, ‘I am scared of elections, this election would damage the unity’. Such manifestation of the lust in power clearly indicated the degeneration of the party, opposite to the required dedication to achieve its stipulated sacred course of Tamil Eelam.

Image of the TULF was rapidly deteriorating. Youth viewed Amirthalingam as power-obsessed and betrayer of the Tamil Eelam. Preparation for the election was dull as people, in general, were disappointed of the TULF. The leaders did not

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142 Eelanadu, 5 May 1981.
143 Ibid.
have the courage to move freely to campaign among the public, as they feared that they might have to face insults. Hence, initially they had small meetings only with close sympathisers to know the pulse of the people and to find out suitable strategies to regain the support. Some of such meetings ended in pandemonium, due to the array of questions and protests from uninvited youth. On some occasions, leaders angrily reacted to the youth. They accused them for their emotional behaviour. Youth responded strongly saying ‘You need our emotion only to gather votes for you but not to question’. The task of the TULF to convince the people was immense as they were facing anti-campaign from their own support base and from three-corner contest.

The ACTC and the UNP fielded their candidates in Jaffna against the TULF. The UNP wanted to get at least a few seats in Jaffna and tried to capture the Eastern Districts with the support of the Muslims to prove to the world to counter the internationalisation of the Eelam demand. Using the ruling power to confuse the voters, Minister Devanayakam revealed the hidden agenda of the government that was usually practised by the successive Sri Lankan governments. He said, ‘Government has taken a decision not to give any privilege to the TULF regarding employment or development. So, even if the TULF wins and UNP is in the opposition, these matters would be dealt through UNP leadership and not through the TULF.’\textsuperscript{144} His speech exposed the intention of the government that did not mean to deliver any power to the DDC but to divert the issue of the Tamils from Eelam to DDC and its power.

The ACTC tried to capitalise the anti-DDC trend among the people which, reflected the stance of the youth. Kumar Ponnambalam said, ‘Support of DDC would give an impression that the government is trying to solve the grievances of the Tamil people’.\textsuperscript{145} Anandarajah tried to put the people in perplexity and said, ‘Tamil would not get any benefit by the DDC. The votes obtained by the ACTC would prove that the Tamils did not accept the DDC’.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} R.E. Anandarajah, Secretary, Youth Congress, Campaign Meeting in Jaffna, \textit{Eelanadu}, 5 May 1981.
While the statement of Devanayakam vindicates the arguments of the boycott campaigners, a section of the people got provoked by the authoritarian approach of the UNP. The SLFP did not contest the DDC election in Batticaloa. Kasi Anandan and former SLFP MP and the Batticaloa District leader of the SLFP, Rajan Chelvanayakam, had close door discussion. Both refused to divulge the details about their talks to the press. 147 As a result, most of the SLFP supporters, including an independent candidate in the parliamentary election worked for the victory of the TULF in order to defeat the UNP. People’s anti-DDC stand was being manipulated by the ACTC to gain votes during the election.

The opposition of the youth to the DDC took the shape of anti-campaign. There were unclaimed leaflets to call the people to boycott the election. People easily guessed that it was the call of militants [allegedly PLOTE], but other militant outfits silently endorsed it. The boycott campaign was gradually getting momentum. The TULF was increasingly facing isolation. The people started avoiding their meetings. Struggling to give a rational explanation against the boycott campaign, Amirthalingam said, ‘Some are requesting people to boycott the DDC elections. Those who boycott this election would sincerely amount to damage the Tamil Eelam policy.’ 148 He went to the extent of using Eelam slogan preposterously, he observes:

By casting their vote to the TULF, Tamil people can demonstrate to the world that they still firm without move an inch from their goal of Tamil Eelam… if they fail to support the TULF in this election, the countries world over would have an impression that Tamil have backtracked from their aim of Tamil Eelam. 149

In essence, Amirthalingam asked, ‘to prove the firmness in Eelam by vote for DDC’, this self-contradictory justification annoyed the educated people. Perhaps, Amirthalingam realised that his own advocacy of DDC was not being taken

147 Eelanadu, 5 May 1981.
148 Amirthalingam, DDC Campaign Meeting, Jaffna, Eelanadu, 5 May 1981.
149 Eelanadu, 5 May 1981.
seriously by people anymore. Thus, citing Neelan Thiruchelvam and Jeyaratnam Wilson, to convince the people, he said:

Professor Wilson told me that in some aspect DDC have more powers than what the Indian States are enjoying. Those who campaign has no power should realise this... All will come to know while these councils began function.152

Rejecting his citation, Eelaventhan said, contrary to Amirthalingam’s version, they [Neelan and Wilson] told me, ‘We have been told that he [Amirthalingam sic] was not in a position to fight for more. We have worked out a thing that he wanted.’153

By comparing Indian system, Amirthalingam wanted to create an impression that the DDC was a kind of devolution of power. Rejecting this twisting statement, Sivasithamparam said, ‘We recognised this neither as federalism nor as devolution... we decided to enter it, work it, and break it’.154 This shows that Amirthalingam went to the extent of misinforming and misguiding the people to sell the DDC system. Finding it difficult to convince the people, the TULF gave more emphasis on the simple logic that if they do not contest, anti-Tamil elements would occupy the councils. A section of the people tilted towards this logic. The youth in general and the militants in particular found that the DDC election brought a degenerated politics back to the fore that would damage the hard-earned unity and the spirit for Eelam struggle among Tamils.

They threatened all those Tamil candidates who came forward to contest on the UNP tickets, for several personal considerations and publicly appealed them to give up their contest. Even though it was a call against the UNP, they wanted all to

150 Neelan Thiruchelvam was son of M. Thiruchelvam, former minister on behalf of the FP. He was a constitutional expert. The Tamil leaders quoted him as he suggested the DDC as fairly powerful system. Twice served as appointed MP of the TULF. Killed by a suicide killer of the LTTE in 1999, while he was MP.

151 Professor Jeyaratnam Wilson is son-in-law of S.J.V. Chelvanayakam. He was a prominent professor of political science, was working earlier in Peradenia University Sri Lanka and then in Canada. He had close relations with J.R. Jayewardene and was invited to contribute to the making of DDC. Amirthalingam claimed that he accepted the DDC with his advice. He passed away in 2000.

152 Eelanadu, 5 May 1981.

153 Author’s interview with Eelaventhan, Jaffna, 20 April 2003.

154 Author’s interview with Sivasithamparam, Chennai, 6 July 2001.
withdraw from contest. Militants adopted terror tactics against the anti-Eelam candidates for the first time. A youth assassinated the leading UNP candidate, A. Thiyagarajah, on the eve of the election campaign. With this assassination, usually a quite Jaffna, gradually increased with the activity of the visit of ministers and large contingent of police, said to be for election duty. Within a week of the assassination, a high-powered delegation with additional 500 police, under the leadership of two ministers, came for no obvious reason. As proved later, it was a pre-planned visit to take on-the-spot decisions to subdue the Tamil voters, through their campaign of terror and intimidation. Next day, on the arrival of the delegation, three police officers were shot in an election campaign meeting of the TULF in Jaffna. Two of them died on the spot and the third sustained serious injuries. Though no one claimed, some in the political circle suspected the PLOTE for this operation. These shootings triggered a series of police brutalities in Jaffna.

The policemen, who came to the site of the killing, went wild. They torched the temple, adjoining houses, and passing motor vehicles. They set fire to rows of shops, several commercial establishments and a section of the Jaffna Modern Market building in the heart of the city. They looted around 100 Tamil-owned houses and shops, before setting them ablaze. At midnight, they set on fire the house of V. Yogeswaran, the TULF MP from Jaffna. Yogeswaran and his wife jumped over the compound wall for safety. The police and Sinhalese thugs also set fire to the head office of the TULF in Jaffna. In the worst of the cruel deeds, they burnt down the Jaffna Public Library. That was the irreparable loss to the Sri Lankan Tamil community and to the world of knowledge forever. This huge

155 Thiyagarajah was killed on 24 May 1981. He was killed by Sundaram known as Puthiya pathai Sundaram, belongs to the PLOTE. Author's interview with Srikantha, Colombo, 20 May 2003.
156 The delegation came on 30 May 1981. It had two well known anti-Tamil ministers, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Disanayake, the secretary and additional secretary of the ministry of defence and the secretary to the Cabinet.
157 The shooting incident occurred at Nachimar Kovil ground, Jaffna, on 31 May 1981.
158 PLOTE never refuted this allegation about this incident.
159 The Jaffna Library had one of the finest collections in South Asia and was renowned throughout the world. The Sri Lankan ministers erased the collection of over 97,000
destruction was done just in one night. The fire provoked widespread anger in Jaffna, setting off three days of mayhem. The violence in the Jaffna city continued from June 1–3, but gradually it spread to other parts of the district. Shops, houses, and a section of the famous and second-largest weekday market in Chunnakam were burnt down. Four Tamils were taken from their homes by police and killed; many were admitted in the hospital for injuries. They set fire to the printing press and the office building of the newspaper Eelanadu and demolished a number of statues of Tamil cultural and religious figures, erected at the main road junctions in the town. All these brutalities were held directly under high power delegation headed by Ministers Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake.

Curfew was announced on June 3 in Jaffna; on June 4, a large number of policemen went to opposition leader Amirthalingam’s home, and arrested him in the early hours from the bed. He was taken to the Jaffna army camp, where he was told that he had been arrested for disrupting the democratic process connected with the District Development Council Elections. However, in the morning, J.R. Jayewardene telephoned Amirthalingam and told him that the arrest had been a mistake and as President, he had ordered his release. Government effectively blacked-out these crimes and terror, perpetrated by the police and thugs, from the media. Despite the Emergency rule in Jaffna, the government announced that the election would be held as scheduled. The Prime Minister announced in Parliament that a commission would be appointed to probe the killing of the policemen and Thiyagarajah. He did not mention about any official inquiry into the destructions and killings by the police. The three days atrocities shook the entire Jaffna and the news spread to all the Tamil areas and abroad.

Tamils in general and the Jaffna Tamils in particular were in the height of anger and anguish against the government. They had no other way to show their valuable books, including old manuscripts and documents, depicting the heritage and the history of the Tamils. See for further details, Rajasingam, n. 25.

160 The decision to arrest Amirthalingam was taken jointly by both Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake to help the UNP candidates in the election. They instructed Brigadier Weeratunge to order the arrest. Ibid, n. 25.

161 Ibid.

162 Press statement from President Secretariat, Veerakesari, 4 June 1981.
hatredness but to respond by vote. Hence, the momentum to boycott the election changed upside down. People rushed to the voting centres very early in the morning, much before the beginning of voting. In real sense, people were not thinking that they were voting in favour of the TULF, rather, they felt that they were taking vengeance against the government by casting their vote against the UNP. Sivasithamparam observes, ‘Certainly government’s terrorism helped us in winning the DDC election. But I do not know what the primary reason, why people voted was.’

The elections were conducted in the worst possible manner. On the election day, three the TULF MPs were detained. One hundred and fifty Tamil election staff and counting officers were withdrawn, and replaced by Sinhalese UNP supporters. All of these were brought in from Sinhala-dominated districts. In many polling booths, ballot boxes were brought in hours late and took back much earlier. Six ballot boxes disappeared on the way to counting centre. Paradoxically, the government made all the necessary arrangements to subvert the elections, on the year of its fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of the Universal Suffrage.

Despite the intimidation, state terrorism and ballot rigging, all ten seats were won by the TULF in Jaffna. The TULF obtained 263,369 votes against 23,302 votes to the UNP and 21,682 votes to the ACTC. The TULF won all the six DDC elections held in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. S. Nadarajah, one of the senior leaders of the party, was elected as Chairman of the Jaffna DDC. In the opening ceremony, Amirthalingam described it as ‘mini Assembly of Eelam’. People expected that it would have some power to see the developmental works.

It is to be noted here that despite general tendency of disinterest and negligence of the people towards the DDC it was PLOTE which engaged in

164 V. Navaratnam, T. Tharmalingam and the president of TULF, M. Sivasithamparam were detained in custody on the whole day of the election.
165 Author witnessed the entire destructions in Jaffna and the conduct of elections. Also read Rajasingam, n. 25.
166 Rajasingam, Ibid.
almost all the sabotage activities against the DDC election thus causing immediate provocation for the eruption of anti-Tamil violence in the Northern Province. In Batticaloa, the TULF obtained the SLFP votes too. The possibilities to compare the change of the electoral support with the 1977 election were made impossible by these two major factors in the two provinces. However, DDC voting increased nowhere in any of the districts when compared with the 1977 parliamentary elections. The abnormal situation of Jaffna and the inclusion of SLFP votes in Batticaloa helped the TULF only in maintaining the status quo. This difference clearly shows the decline in support, in general. The PLOTE expected a successful boycott of election. Ultimately, it ended in counter-productively. For the TULF, it was a blessing in disguise as the election results vindicated their position about their representation of the Tamils.

However, the manner in which the debate took place during the no-confidence motion against the opposition leader Amirthalingam in the following month after the elections, made it amply clear that government is not going to devolve the powers to DDCs, as stipulated earlier, thus, upholding the of words Minister Devanayakam. Jayewardene did not want to strengthen the TULF by giving power to the DDC. He wanted to use the DDC as a leverage to control the TULF and the Eelam campaign. For every small step to function, Chairman had to go to the President and plead to him for permissions. Generally, DDCs of Tamil provinces were made handicapped by not being devolved with any powers and allocation of money. Jayewardene adopted time pass tactics. Similar complaints came from Batticaloa and other districts too. Within a few months, the TULF realised that the DDC is powerless and frustrated. S. Nadarajah described:

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168 Jaffna DDC decided to erect a building in Jaffna hospital at the estimation of rupees 500000. Government never gave permission or money. DDC chairperson met the President more than three times and Amirthalingam met the President regarding this matter, but they were frustrated. Ultimately, DDC did not do a single notable developmental work. Author’s interview with Jaffna DDC Chairman, Nadarajah, Jaffna, July 1982.
DDC is like a bird without wings. We [DDC and the government] are in a position of a couple together while facing divorce... Our only aim always Eelam. Eelam is more real than the development programmes... We are not fools and we will not become fools.169

Sharing the same disappointment, Sambanthamoorthy of Batticaloa DDC stated:

There are no powers to the DDC chairpersons. They are just toys. All the heads of various departments in the district takes decision without consulting DDC. It has not power even to appoint temporary staffs.170

After completion of one year of the introduction of the DDC, he stated that, ‘still government did not clarify whether DDC has any power or not’.171 Even though, leaders realised the nature of the DDC within months, they consistently uttered statements expressing dissatisfaction and not want to withdraw from the DDC. They talked at times with the President for power.

To the TULF, Eelam policy became a self-protection device, which they used at times of political compulsions. Responding to the question of ‘Did your party categorically announce Tamil Eelam as your policy’, Amrthalingam did not categorically say ‘yes’. Instead, he said, ‘We contested the 1977 election on that plank and won. In the prevailing situation, we cannot give up that policy.’172 His answer clearly revealed that he was unwillingly or and holding the Eelam policy under compulsion. Emphasising this stand, Minister S. Thondaman, stated in an interview, ‘TULF is not asking for separation now’.173 This interview was quoted in Suthanthiran and criticised the TULF, even then, the TULF did not refute this statement. In all accounts, the TULF while consistently strived to downplay the Eelam policy, at the same time it could not put forward any alternative programme. It was in a situation of political bankruptcy.

Due to the inability of the TULF to lead a movement, the militant organisation in Sri Lanka and pro-Eelam organisations and groupings abroad took

169 S. Nadarajah, Chairman, DDC, Jaffna, Weekend, Colombo, 11 October 1981.
170 S. Sampanthamoorthy, Chairman, DDC, Batticaloa, Suthanthiran, 11 November 1981.
171 S. Sampanthamoorthy, Chairman, DDC, Batticaloa, Weerakesari, 17 August 1982.
172 Tuglak, Madras, 1 September 1981.
173 Weekend, Colombo, 18 October 1981.
up the issue in their hands. These organisations gradually addressed the Eelam issue effectively, based on different ideologies. Thus, on the one hand monopoly of the TULF leadership began to crumble, on the other hand inability of the TULF leadership led to the fragmentation of the voice for Eelam. However, the TULF enjoyed the monopoly as legitimate leadership of the Tamils.

MILITANT ORGANISATIONS AND THE TULF

In the later years of Chelvanayakam, the TUF and the TULF were encouraging violent means and protecting the violent elements. Apart from the young platform speakers, among leaders, Alalasundaram and Amirthalingam were notable who stimulated the youth for violence by their fiery speeches. There was a move to arrest Alalasuntharam in the mid-1970s in this connection. Militants also had good relations with Tharmalingam, MP and Thangathurai. Chelvanyakam never condemned such speeches or reorganised the party to accommodate the militancy or regulate the party to promote the Ahimsa movement to reduce the space for the militancy. He did not shown his faith either in Asimsa, or in violence. Either, he was not willing to control, or he felt the he could not control the trend. His attitude of silent endorsement to the early militant activities even from his own partymen pioneered the later course.

Initially, it was the TNT led by Chetty group; later, Prabakaran group and TELO were engaged in sporadic armed action. Prabakaran killed Chetty and the TNT was renamed as LTTE, in which Umamaheswaran became the chairperson. The LTTE, until 1980, functioned as an unofficial militant wing of

174 Alalasudaram was one of the fiery speakers in the TULF; joined FP from his student days and was groomed from a lower rank activist. He encouraged militancy in the early 1970s and there was a move to arrest him in this connection. He was appointed as MP for Kopay electorate, subsequent to the death of Kathiravelupillai. Alalasudaram was shot dead in 1985 by the TELO.
175 Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
176 TNT was renamed as LTTE on 5 May 1976, a few days before the Vaddukoddai Convention of the TULF.
177 Umamaheswaran, native of Thellipalai Jaffna, was a Surveyor by profession. He was one of the leading members of the TYL branch of Colombo. He joined LTTE and became its chairperson. He was one of the loyal youth to Amirthalingam along with Prabakaran. Author’s interview with Sidharthan Colombo, 11 July 2001. and Thillai Nadesan, London, 20 September 2000.
the moderate the TUF/ TULF. In fact, there was no clear demarcation between the LTTE and the TULF. They had the unwritten understanding that both were for Eelam, but with two different approaches.

In 1978, one of the leaders of the TELO, Muttukumarasamy, gave the name of his organisation TELO, to the Kuttmani group. However, Kuttimani group named them TELO in 1980. (Hereafter the name TELO would refer to Kuttimani group). Even though TELO did not have any significant relations with the TULF leaders, they never showed anti-TULF stand of any kind either. Like average Tamils, these groups always thought that it was the duty of the TULF to protect them.

Alalasundaram and Amirthalingam used Chetty and Prabakaran respectively to settle the personal score or to decimate those who were challenging the growth and interest of the party. Describing this understanding, Sidharthan observes:

Chetty used to visit Aalalasundaram’s house and discuss matters with Aalal anna [elder brother]. Aalal anna encouraged him for some assassinations, even before the emergence of Prabakaran. He might not have used the words to shoot, but, gave directions indirectly or in a subtle way.

Stating the relationship between the LTTE and the TULF, Sidharthan said:

Now many others may claim the relationship with LTTE leaders, but actually, the close relationship of Prabakaran and Umamaheswaran was with Amirthalingam only. Both of them used to visit Amirthalingam’s house to discuss matters with him. Mrs. Amirthalingam used to cook for them. This trustful relationship continued until 1980.

178 Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
180 Author’s interview with N. Jeyakody, former member of TELO (O), Chennai, 9 October 2004.
182 Author’s interview with Mavai Senathirajah.
183 Author’s interview with Sidarthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
184 Ibid.
185 Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001. Thillai Nadesan also share this opinion in his interview with the author.
This relationship caused number of political assassinations of those who were pointed by the FP/ TUF/ TULF leaders as traitors of the Tamils and the Eelam cause. Chetty assassinated Nallur Village Council Chairman, Kumarakuwslingam. Prabakaran assassinated Thuraiappah, the Mayor of Jaffna Municipal Council. Suntharam (Splinter group led by Umamaheswaran) assassinated chief candidate of the UNP for the DDC, Thiyagarajah. Prabakaran and Umamaheswaran together shot C. Canagaratnam, a defected MP of the TULF. The UNP leader in Jaffna, Kanagasooriyar, was shot dead allegedly by the LTTE. Sidharthan observes that all of these men functioned as leaders of the SLFP and the UNP, among Tamils. Commenting the shrewd practice of the TULF in decimating the opponents, K. Premachandran observes:

Branding as traitor definitely instigated such killings, the TULF never condemned these killings ... they blessed the assassins of their political opponents within their community, because they wanted to be the sole representatives of Tamils. Imbibed this successful strategy, the LTTE later decimated all the fellow liberation organisations, including the TULF and claimed itself as the sole representative.

All these assassinations, while enhanced the prospects of the TULF as a whole, especially, it has enhanced the leadership of Amirthalingam in the party. Amirthalingam had full conviction on Umamaheswaran and Prabakaran, and believed that they would be under his control, forever. He never foresaw the 1983
developments, when India backed the militants and the militants grew powerful. Therefore, Amirthalingam’s behaviour, or for that matter the behaviour of the TULF until 1980–81, made the LTTE as the recognised militant group of the TULF. He had a conviction that they would be the militant arm of the party. That gave the dividend to the LTTE for a long period as thousands of the TULF supporters who were expected that the TULF would and should lead an armed struggle and the extreme Tamil nationalists among Sri Lankan Tamils, gradually shifted their support to the LTTE in and out of the country. Sidharthan observes:

Amirthalingam in his visit to London in 1978, mediated between EROS and us (LTTE support functionaries in London) a financial dispute, and solved in favour of us. More importantly, he gave us an authenticity letter to collect money for the LTTE. The letter was written by him and signed as opposition leader of the TULF. In which, he said that if you want to give money to the LTTE, you can believe the bearers of this letter, who belong to Eela Viduthali Iyakkam (Eelam Liberation Movement) and give your contributions.193

Such close relationships continued till 1980–81. This period also witnessed the change of chemistry within two militant groups which created five active and strong organisations.

The militants began to address the Eelam issue independently. Except the LTTE and TELO, all other militants began openly challenged the TULF. They, one after the other, formed overseas branches, especially in India and UK, to mobilise the international support to the Eelam cause. Expatriate Tamils in USA declared Eelam. All these developments ultimately enhanced the militancy and pushed the TULF to the backseat. The anti-Tamil violence of 1981 internationalised the Eelam issue in a big way. Voices from India in solidarity with Sri Lankan Tamils became a continuing phenomena. Many Indian leaders began showing interests in the affairs of Sri Lanka.

193 Initially pro-LTTE functionaries in London not use the name LTTE for security reasons. They used the name Eela Viduthalai Iyakkam. Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
During this period, the EROS had a split and a new strong left militant group, EPRLF emerged.\(^{194}\) Its political functions until 1983 was executed through its student wing, the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES). GUES openly criticised the TULF and its leader in public meetings and through its propaganda publication *Eela Manavar Kural* (Voice of Eelam Students). EROS, led by Balakumar in Sri Lanka, came out with its own publication *Tharkeekam* (Logic). Both these papers gave Marxist perspective to the Eelam issue and criticised the TULF (The story of EROS and the EPRLF, and its relationship with the TULF is analysed below).

During this period, a new group called *Puthiya Pathai* led by Suntharam emerged. The group came out with a propaganda publication *Puthiya Pathai* (New Path). This publication too was strongly critical of the TULF and its leader Amirthalingam. *Puthiya pathai* group could be characterised as social reformist advocated peoples’ war. Meanwhile, Umamaheswaran was expelled from the LTTE.\(^{195}\) After a lull of nearly one year due to the internal crisis in the LTTE, Umamaheswaran convinced Suntharam group that he was expelled on the ideological ground and identified himself with the ideals of *Puthiya pathai*.\(^{196}\) Meanwhile, a section of TYL members also resigned and joined Umamaheswaran. These three sections got together and formed People Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) under the leadership of Umamaheswaran. With Umamaheswaran’s merger with *Puthiya pathai* group, he almost broke his relationship with Amirthalingam. Anti-TULF stance of the PLOTE could be understood by their political and militant activities to sabotage the DDC election.

In this stage, Prabakaran too got the feeling that the intention of Amirthalingam was to exploit them. He told Siddharthan, ‘Anna avarkal engalai

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\(^{194}\) Difference of opinion between the EROS leadership in Sri Lanka, and London grew since 1979. Soon after the split, a large part of the EROS went with the splinter group led by Pathmanaba. They launched the EPRLF in November 1981.

\(^{195}\) According to the rules of LTTE, its members should not get married and should not have any close connection with women. Contrary to this rule, Umamaheswaran had sexual relation with one of the organisation colleague, Urmila. Umamaheswaran was expelled on this charge. Quoting his discussion with Prabakaran, Siddharthan revealed to the Author. Also see Pusparajah, n. 187, p. 282.

payanpaduththa parkinam, nangal kavanamaga irukavenum (elder brother, they are trying to use us, so, we have to be cautious with them). 197 Commenting on this, Siddharthan said, 'He too felt, there was a truth in it'. 198 However, he did not openly oppose him until 1983. In this matter, Prabakaran was shrewd, because even after he had suspicion on Amirthalingam, he did not manifest it openly, instead, he was with them, sucked the strength of the TULF as much as possible, for the growth of his organisation in and out of the country. 199

LTTE, PLOTE, and TELO shared common history at some point in time. In 1979 there was a split in the LTTE. 200 Prabakaran, along with some of his colleagues, joined TELO. According to the agreement between the two groups, Prabakaran group decided to dissolve the LTTE. While they were in discussion on giving this matter to the press, Balasingam intervened, and stopped the decision. During this period, they robbed a huge amount of money from Puttur Bank. Soon Thangathurai and Kuttimani were arrested and subsequently, the LTTE went alone. Sri Sabaratnam took charge of the TELO. The two groups had dispute on sharing this money. In 1981, with the split of Prabakaran and Umamaheswaran, the latter refused to give back the arms in his possession, hence a dispute on arms prevailed for a few years between the two.

Therefore, after split, these three leaders had disputes regarding arms and money matters. Hence, even after the split, they had the old grudges and ego clashes among themselves. 201

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197 Author's interview with Siddharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001. One day in 1980, Prabakaran came out after discussion with Amirthalingam and told this to Siddharthan who was waiting outside.

198 Ibid.

199 Author's interview with Siddharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

200 LTTE was a small group during that period. Prabakaran killed his colleague Suthmalai Patlrunam alias Patrick, while he was in sleep. Probably this was the cause for the split in the LTTE in 1979. See, n. 181.

201 In 1979, there was a split in the LTTE, Prabakaran with some of his colleagues joined TELO. According to the agreement between the two groups, Prabakaran group decided to dissolve the LTTE.
The Growth of Leftist Militants: An Ideological and Political Challenge to the TULF

Two trained members of the EROS K. Pathmanaba and K. Premachandran came first to Sri Lanka to establish the organisation. Many others later followed. The approach of the EROS, and later EPRLF, too was entirely different from the Kuttimani group and the LTTE. The former believed in the mass mobilisation through political education and mass actions for an armed revolution, and thus, engaged in seminars, discussions and mass actions. The latter indulged only in armed activities. The LTTE materials published later shows that it believed in the mobilisation through guerrilla actions.202 While the activities of the left camp were challenging to the TULF, activities of the LTTE was largely enhanced the TULF at least until 1980–81.

The TULF represented Tamil nationalists consisting of the upper caste, middle and upper-middle class Tamils. On the contrary, left parties had the support of lower class that was also lower in caste, who aspired for a social transformation within the Tamil society for their upward mobility. Perspective of the EROS aggregated and articulated both the issues by combining the two. It believed that the Tamil national liberation struggle should be led by the working class and they would be the vanguard of the struggle to achieve Socialist Eelam in its real sense. This perspective quickly attracted the TELO (O) that was dormant for some time due to police swoop-down of its members, consequent to the famous Puloly Bank robbery. Almost all the members of the TELO joined the EROS.203

EROS secretly engaged in forming frontal organisations to mobilise the cross-section of the people through political education among students and the working class. They formed the student organisation named General Union of Eelam Students (GUES). It used the GUES as the open political body to mobilise

202 Popular quotation of the earlier publications of the LTTE was that one successful guerilla attack would mobilise the people than to have hundred seminars and meetings. Their articles too emphasised this theory.

203 Author's discussion with N. Jeyakody, Chennai, 9 October 2004. He is a former member of TELO and then joined EROS; later came out with the splinter group EPRLF. At present, he is one of the Polit Bureau members of the EPRLF.
the people. GUES addressed the issues of various section of the working class through organising struggles for wage increment for peasants, struggle for lands to landless peasants, struggle against the production and consumption of illicit liquor, hunger strikes in chemical and cement factories to meet the labour demands. It also organised lockouts and boycotts to project the interests of the Tamils and also to expose the TULF. Through these activities, the GUES also popularised the approach to see the Tamil national liberation struggle in the class perspective. By 1979–80, EROS could successfully organise the following four major frontal organisations: Eelam Women Liberation Front (EWLF), Eelam Farmers and Peasants Front (EFPF), Eelam Fishermen Front (EFF) and the Eelam Youth Front (EYF). It could cultivate support base among the plantation Tamils too.

However, in 1979–80, the EROS underwent a vertical split, in which major part of the EROS in Sri Lanka including all the frontal organisations came out and formed Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) under the leadership of K. Pathmanaba.

Until 1983, EPRLF functions were aimed at grooming up more capable and efficient leaders to lead the struggle for a socialist Eelam and establishing the formations of all social cleavages that had specific issues along with Eelam liberation. It was the first organisation that attracted the Tamil youth and women towards left thinking. Parallel to this, selective men were recruited and given arms training in secret camps in Vavunia jungle.  

Initially, the TULF took the GUES lightly. The Marxist perspective of the GUES virtually exposed the TULF of its narrow nationalistic rhetoric and its inability to lead a movement due to its class character. It initiated united fronts to address the Tamil aspirations, and organised protests against the moves of the State and the TULF. It organised joint hartal against the decision of the TULF in participating in the functions of the new Parliament that was projected by the government as symbol of the Sinhalese rule over the Tamils. Along with the

204 Author’s interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
205 Prince of Kotte kingdom (Senpagaperumal or Sapumal kumara) captured Jaffna and brought Jaffna under one banner with Kotte. That flag was placed in the new Parliament. The intention was to symbolise the supremacy of the Sinhalese in the Island. In an era of serious conflict between Tamils and Singhalese based on the issue their authority over the Island, naturally provoked the Tamil nationalist activist.
GUES, Student Union of the Jaffna University (JUSU), the TELF and the Revolutionary Communist Party RCP) organised this hartal. In a statement to call for the hartal, slamming the TULF, GUES mentioned:

While the Tamil youth are killed on the roads, no leaders would give receptions and garlands to ministers. It is disgusting that they (Amirthalingam) compare them with Jazeer Arafat... Students has the duty to expose the leaders who blunt the freedom struggle and bring the struggle forward. Hence, students of all the institutions boycott the opening day of new Parliament as black day.

Commenting on the hartal, Saturday Review maintained, 'The significance of this hartal lies in the fact that this is the first time that a hartal against the TULF has been observed in Jaffna. The hartal was quite successful.' GUES laid the foundation to see the national liberation struggle with class perspective for the first time in Jaffna. This approach gained wider support among the people and the youth. Consistent work of these frontal organisations among the people gradually emerged as a challenge to the TULF. It began to feel the heat of the GUES and other frontal organisations under the EPRLF. The TULF leaders tried to belittle the political thinking of the GUES, by saying in public platforms as slurry of some London returned left boys. The TULF talks about the need of elimination of caste system and declared its policy as Scientific Socialist Tamil Eelam, ridiculing the GUES that has addressed those issues and polices effectively, exposed its hypocritical nature.

The May Day rally of the GUES and its fellow frontal organisations proved that the thirty years of the monopoly of the FP/TULF was resolutely broken. GUES began its mobilisation from small rooms and halls, grew as a formidable challenge to the TULF, which was demonstrated by a huge procession and a public meeting in the Jaffna Esplanade with significant participation of the deprived caste people beside strong force of youth and students. Only the TULF had the tradition and the ability to organise such large processions and conduct big public meeting in the Esplanade. Conversely, on this May Day, the TULF had to

206 Suthanthiran, 28 April 1982.
208 Saturday Review, 1 May 1982.
209 Author witnessed many General Union of Eelam Students as well as TULF meetings including the May day meetings of the two in 1982.
have only a small meeting in the Jaffna Municipal Council hall. Reasoning the decline of the support to the TULF, *Saturday Review* observes, ‘Broken promises [of the government] coupled with increasing articulation of disillusionment of the people especially the youth, made them frustrated. Continuation of the talks [with the government], majority feel suicidal.’

Considering the conservative nature of the Jaffna society, Dr. Rajini Thiranagama described the mobilisation of the EPRLF, ‘it was struggled and grown against the dominant trend of the Jaffna society’.

### The TULF in Quandary

The realignment of the militant groups brought five active militant groups to the fore in 1981. While each militant organisation had its own significance and popularity, broadly it could be classified as ideologically two different camps, the Left and the centre right. Tamil nationalists that represented the dominant trend of the Jaffna or rather substituted the TULF radically. The period 1979–83 was not an easy time for the militants. The government came down heavily on them. Believing that if one law did not work, a tougher one would, President Jayewardene kept making new laws instead of attempting to tackle the problem politically.

Correspondingly, militants too gradually moved from assassinations of political opponents to killing of police officers, manufacture and planting of explosive devices, robbing of banks, collection of firearms and ammunition and their increasing use, and sabotage of public utilities, such as electricity supply.

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211 Dr. Rajini Thiranagam, Rajan Hoole and Sritharan, Broken Palmyrah, *UTHR (J)*, 1992.


213 In 1978, LTTE ambushed a police raiding party killing Inspector Bastiampillai and two others. In 1979, another group shot dead three more Tamil policemen in Jaffna. Killing CIDs and police informants continued till 1983.

Those involved in such actions belong to closely-knit groups, and are getting used to life in danger with spells in prisons, and escaping from prison or serving terms until released. Kuttimani case and his highly emotional speech, subsequent to the death sentence to him was one of the remarkable events that accelerated the emotions of the young generation, which attracted hundreds of youth towards militancy.\footnote{215 Personal experience of the author, as he lived in that society during in this period.}

The TULF took the decision to appoint Kuttimani as MP to Vaddukoddai constituency that was vacant. It took this decision probably with two aims, firstly to mark their protest towards the verdict; and secondly, it also contemplated to regain its lost support of the Tamils. Tamils welcomed the decision; however, Kuttimani refused to accept the offer and announced that he would be happy to sacrifice his life for the great cause. He also challenged the State and said, 'Sinhalese governments cannot suppress the spirit of the Tamil youth who resolved to establish the Tamil Eelam by hanging me. This would bring hundreds of Kuttimanis, who emerge to fight for the Eelam.'\footnote{216 Kuttimani, as soon as he was sentenced to death by the Colombo High Court, 1982.}

The TULF filled the vacancy by appointing Neelan Thiruchelvam.\footnote{217 Neelan Thiruchelvam is the son of late M. Thiruchelvam QC. He is an expert in constitutional law. He was close to the corridor of power known as Colombo Tamil elite. The significance of his selection was he was close to any government in power. For the Tamil of Northern and Eastern Provinces he was alien, never experienced the real feelings of the Tamils in their homeland.} He was unknown to the people of the Tamil Provinces. His need in the party was to facilitate any deal with the government as he was always close to the power.

The TULF almost lost its reputation among the Tamils as they found that there was no connection between its words and deeds. However, once again party had to face elections. The TULF contested the local government elections. Youth opposed the election on the ground that any election in Tamil areas was a farce. These elections only helped the government to project them to the world as democrats and nothing else. Militants announced the boycott of election. This was received well by the people. In the DDC election, the protest of the youth against
the TULF was democratic; the PLOTE-directed its guns against anti Eelam-forces and police, to ensure the boycott.

The first time, in this election, the LTTE directed its guns to the TULF in the Jaffna peninsula. Despite the opposition, the TULF was firm to contest on the ground that they had to take all the local bodies in the NEP under their control. They used the same arguments that if they do not contest, anti-Eelam forces would occupy the seats. However, people did not buy these arguments. They were not enthusiastic, as every one knew even the fate of the DDC, in which the TULF itself was disappointed. To the Sri Lankan Tamils, any election would be meaningless, until or otherwise a separate State or at least a meaningful devolution is made. Therefore, people silently endorsed the threats of the LTTE to the TULF candidates and their withdrawals. There was no voice from any quarter of the Sri Lankan Tamil society in support of the TULF or condemnation against militants. In fact, the TULF did not have the will to condemn LTTE. The TULF taught the people that those who were against the Tamil cause were traitors. Moreover, they silently blessed the elimination of so-called traitors. When it began to backfire, the TULF lost its voice.

On the polling day evening, a policeman guarding a booth at Nallur was shot dead. Political circles this time indicted the LTTE for the entire measure of disruption of this election. It is to be noted here, that the same method LTTE used later in many local government elections after 1990. The polling in Jaffna and Kilinochi districts was around eight per cent. In the entire Northern Province, total polling was around 20 per cent only. People’s verdict in the north proved their loss of faith on the TULF. (See Table 4.2)

## Table 4.2: General Elections to Municipal Councils and Urban Councils 18 May, 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of MC/UC</th>
<th>No. of Voters</th>
<th>Total Polled</th>
<th>% Polled</th>
<th>TULF</th>
<th>UNP</th>
<th>SLFP</th>
<th>NSSP</th>
<th>TC</th>
<th>IG</th>
<th>Total members elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of votes</td>
<td>No. of members elected</td>
<td>No. of votes</td>
<td>Members elected</td>
<td>No. of votes</td>
<td>Members elected</td>
<td>No. of votes</td>
<td>Members elected</td>
<td>No. of votes</td>
<td>Members elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffna MC</td>
<td>66921</td>
<td>9770</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>8594</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>830</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chavakacheri UC</td>
<td>12050</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point Pedro UC</td>
<td>10928</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valvettiturai UC</td>
<td>8954</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vavuniya UC</td>
<td>10230</td>
<td>7148</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>5454</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batticaloa MC</td>
<td>22894</td>
<td>17582</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>10993</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6229</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ampara UC</td>
<td>9467</td>
<td>6377</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>3140</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trincomalee UC</td>
<td>24529</td>
<td>15800</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>10940</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2542</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2135</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Note:** NC- Not Contested, NA- Not Applicable
In 1982–83, the TULF left without many activist or active supporters, especially youth, was reduced to a group of ambitious leaders. Party was suffering by inner-party tussles such as ego clashes among senior leaders,\textsuperscript{219} and leadership competition.\textsuperscript{220} The election verdict added another blow that created doubts of its prospects. During such debilitating situation, the government announced sixth amendment to the Constitution that envisaged the secession as unlawful, thus, closing the doors of Parliament for the members of the TULF. According to the amendment, ‘No person shall directly or indirectly, in or outside Sri Lanka, support, espouse, promote, finance, encourage or advocate the establishment of a separate Tamil State within the territory of Sri Lanka.’\textsuperscript{221}

The amendment also required everyone to take an oath or affirmation.\textsuperscript{222} While this amendment, conflicts with the freedom of thought and conscience guaranteed in the Constitution, it also derogates some clauses of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.\textsuperscript{223}

The TULF was pushed into hard options, either it had to forgo Eelam demand or to quit Parliament. However, the TULF was silent on this issue. It was engaged in organising the third convention of the party in Mannar.\textsuperscript{224} Tamil youth and militant groups doubted the TULF that it might take oath at the last moment and betray the Eelam cause. GUES organised massive campaign against anyone,

\textsuperscript{219} Kathiravetpillai, V.N. Navaratnam, Tharmalingam and Thangathurai had serious dissatisfaction with Amirthalingam. Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

\textsuperscript{220} Kathiravetpillai was seen by some leaders as alternative to Amirthalingam until his death in 1981, V.N. Navaratnam made moves to reduce the power of Amirthalingam in the party by suggesting for structural change. Amirthalingam successfully countered all the moves of V.N. Navaratnam. This competition continued till the 1983 Convention of the TULF. Rajasingam, n. 25. Batticaloa MP, Rajadurai, the main pillar of the TULF in the east and C. Kanagaratnam, MP crossed over to UNP that reduced the MPs in the East to two. Therefore, Trincomalee MP, Sampathan, was given importance in the party than many other seniors, especially, Eastern leader Thangathurai. Thangathurai was known for his talkativeness and had the support of the youth. Sampathan was known as loyalist of Amirthalingam.

\textsuperscript{221} Sri Lanka Constitution (1978) Article 157 A (1), this law was enacted on 8 August 1983, while anti-Tamil carnage was raging the country.


\textsuperscript{224} Third Convention of the TULF was held in Mannar on 23–24 July 1983.
including the government servants, taking oath on the amendment. It led this disobedient campaign through poster campaigns and protest rallies. They went to the extent of taking the formats of oath from government offices and Kachcheries and burnt them in public.\(^\text{225}\) This issue gained momentum. There was visible anger among youth and students on the TULF for not responding to such serious issue. Political scenario changed within days with the 1983 riots. While the riots ravaged throughout the country, the TULF announced that they would not take oath. The decision did not make any impact among the people as their concentration was in riots and related matters.

While the campaign for disobedience movement was on, the TULF had its conference in Mannar; however, they had to wind up as fast as possible with only a few important agenda discussed, such as election of leader, due to the eruption of anti-Tamil violence. The Anti-secession Act seems to have helped to solve the leadership tussle that Navaratnam had with Amirthalingam, because, even though they did not address the issue or announced in advance, they decided not to take oath. Since no one would go to the Parliament, the question of leadership lost its importance.

Amirthalingam as the Secretary General of the TULF submitted his report on the functions of the party for last five years. In his seven pages report, he briefly narrated the events that seriously affected the Tamils and the party, and the issues that the party took with Jayewardene and the achievements. Among those issues, except preventing the government’s efforts to change the boundary of Vavunia District, nothing has been implemented. Like pre-1970 speeches, he condemned the government for empty promises in his report. The report is nothing but repetition of anti-Tamil activities perpetrated by the state that every average Tamil people knew. The report shows vast gap between the ground reality and the perception of fast changing political scenario.

Despite such deficiencies, two notable points in his report were, his resentment over the intimidation of the LTTE in the local government election and opposition to the Sri Lankan government’s decision to give the Trincomalee oil tank lease to the USA. He cautioned:

\(^\text{225}\) Author witnessed the mobilisation activities of the GUES in Jaffna.
An extremist youth organisation that does not accept our path took efforts by violent means to boycott the election only in Jaffna... this unfortunate stature in Jaffna should be brought to the end. In this issue, attempt to subvert the decision of a mass movement by force would be endangering the future of the Tamil Eelam. I request the concern people to realise this and give up such actions 'for us'.

Firstly, he blessed while it happened to other parties, but took exception while it came to his own party. Secondly, he failed to analyse that if people were willing to vote for the TULF, they would have done what they did under Emergency and under the guns of the Sinhalese Army at the DDC election. The LTTE had only a few members and were in hiding. People did not have fear of LTTE during that period. This lack of understanding of the ground reality shows the distance between him and the masses and the underestimation of the people's sympathy and support towards the militants. Further, he never named the organisation or condemned it, instead he pleaded with them. Finally, while he foresaw the danger in the future, he failed to suggest any concrete and positive programme to prevent such danger.

The report did not see the functions of the party from its Eelam manifesto and the mandate of the people, as if no such issue existed. Instead, posing like giving idea to a new issue, it talked a few lines about liberation vaguely. He said,

'Worldwide liberation movements developed with the support of friendly countries or forces. PLO gained strength from its friendly countries. We have to learn many things from Middle East countries... There is no short cut to liberation. On the path, Gandhi showed, and on the path of Chelvanayakam, act with the mass power, is the way to get Tamil Eelam.'

The first part is general advice. The second part was monotonously being repeated for last seven years. There was no specific or concrete idea or message in it. Even during the early 1970s speeches were sharper and more clear than this. This report clearly shows that even in 1983, the TULF was in the elementary stage of thinking about technicalities for Eelam struggle, while the militant movements accelerated

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their programmes widely, such as political education and mass mobilisation, recruitment and arms training, internationalisation of the issue through overseas branches.

At the end, report expresses the concern of unity among Tamils. He said, ‘Unity of the Tamil race is ruining. This stature should change. No need to fight with us those who do not accept our path. They can go their own way. We will not interfere in their way.’ This sounds rather egoistic and emotional rather than rational. It shows the absence of the culture of retrospection and self-criticism in the party. He failed to understand that the absence of a programme and the inaction of the TULF frustrated the youth and they emerged as different groups and that divided the society. If the TULF had faith on Eelam and had programme, the chances for many organisation was less, even then, it could have brought these organisations under one umbrella, like PLO. Sidharthan said,

The fundamental mistake Amirthalingam made was that he did not take effort to bring all the militants and the TULF under one umbrella like PLO. At least he would have done this soon after 1983 riots. At that time, militants were not a recognised force, and not had big consolidated mass support. TULF was the only recognised force among Sri Lankan Tamil political leadership. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi discussed matters only with the TULF. The climate was conducive for the TULF at that period.

Endorsing this view, Premachandran said, ‘In 1975 TNT and EROS were not formed with the permission of the TULF, however, the final goal was same for all, therefore a PLO type of formation was very much possible.’ The reason Sidharthan said, ‘Amirthalingam had the attitude of personalising the party and policy contradictions. He saw Umamaheswaran as enemy as Puthiya Pathai strongly criticised him; same problem with EROS and EPRLF and he laid confidence on Prabakaran, but he too turned the guns against the TULF. Hence,

228 Ibid.
229 Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
230 Author’s interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
his character of vengeance, ego and to some extent personal interests prevented him from achieving such task.\textsuperscript{231}

By no means, until the Indian involvement and the support to the militants, did he forecast that the development of these militants would go to a level of facing big battles with the Army. He thought that they would be smaller forces; which can be used at times of necessity or manipulate them and handle them easily.

The magnitude of the cruelty in the riots and the destructions internationalised the Eelam issue pressingly. Many countries were telecasted the killings and burnings in Colombo and suburbs. Around 100,000 Tamil refugees entered Tamil Nadu. India intervened immediately by sending its Foreign Minister P.V. Narasima Rao. Majority of the TULF leaders, including its main leaders migrated to India. Since then, the TULF leadership was based in India until the 1987 Indo–Sri Lanka Accord.

CONCLUSION

The TULF declared the Eelam resolution as its unchangeable final decision. It also declared that they were not ready to get cheated by the Sinhalese governments anymore. Instead, the convention promised that the committee would come out with political and working programme without delay and the party would begin the movement for a separate State immediately. On the contrary, soon after the declaration of Eelam, the TULF went for a dialogue with the government. Then Chelvanayakam sent secret emissary to have dialogue with the government. After the death of Chelvanayakam, Amirthalingam led a delegation and had secret dialogue with Jayewardene. These three sets of dialogues were not about separate State but the other pending issues. The last two set of dialogues were secret; the details had not come to the public knowledge. This approach of the party itself proved that the Eelam declaration was not taken with the conviction and faith. It was taken either to pressurise the government, so that they can get at least Federal System or to tame the rising youth and students. The election manifesto and the

\textsuperscript{231} Interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
misguiding speeches proved to be mere vote-catching rhetoric. Which the people took as faithful words and the youth got mentally prepared to act. The TULF took strong sentimental and emotional issues to play ordinary political game.

Even if the party had the aim to use this resolution to pressure the government, they never started a movement to achieve such autonomy. Instead, the party treated the Eelam issue like it had treated the federal policy or rather meekly. The party was completely carried away by the day-to-day affairs or rather occupied themselves with theses matters to downplay their own resolution. May be the absence of any party to challenge it in the Tamil provinces and the presumption that the militants would be naturally unlawful and would not grow big enough to challenge them, were the reasons for the lethargic and negligence approach of the TULF regarding its manifesto. Amirthalingam proved that he would connive with anyone to sideline those who came on his path. The TULF attitude regarding the enactment of PTA was a pointer to understand the authoritarian mindset of Amirthalingam, who had been fully cooperating with the government in the making of a law to take on the Tamil youth as they were against the DDC.

The party took an issue that it could not carry forward beyond the point of the elections. By consisting the election, the TULF gained legitimacy to the Tamil nationalism and the Eelam cause. Its mission was over with the election. After that, people should have evolved a principled and collective leadership to lead a mass movement for the cause. However, the class character of the Jaffna Tamils wanted somebody else to fight for their cause.