CHAPTER VI
In Chapter-III of this study, which is concerned with the relations between India and Sri Lanka, an outline account of India getting involved in the conflict between the Tamils and Sinhalese as a mediator to find a lasting solution for this protracted problem, has been given. This chapter concerns itself with a more detailed account of India's efforts. It was India's hope that the Sri Lankan Government would suspend its military operations against the Tamils and return to negotiation table under Indian mediation. But these hopes were belied. Anti-India hysteria was being whipped up in the press and open encouragement was given to the Buddhist clergy to demonstrate in front of the Indian High Commission Office. Sri Lanka sought assistance from Pakistan to strengthen her air defence, and Pakistan in the past had always supported military action against the Tamil Militants. On the other hand, Mr. Hamid, the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, had justified Indian mediatory role and hoped that she would continue to do so. This was like breathing hot and cold in the same breath.

Indian made it clear to Srilanka that military action against the aggrieved Tamils would only complicate matters. India was waiting to see what choice Srilanka would make to solve the ethnic problems. The Indian High Commissioner in Srilanka made it clear that it was entirely for the Srilankan Government to decide on the course of action which it wished to take to resolve the problem, taking into careful consideration, the implication of one course or other.\(^2\)

J.N Dixit, the Indian High Commissioner in Srilanka, met separately Lalit Athulathmudali the National Security Minister, and Gamin Dassanaika, the Law Minister, on the possibility of resumption of negotiation and to know whether the Srilankan Government was willing to modify and to agree to any change of December 19, 1986 proposal. On the other hand the state-owned paper 'The Sunday Observer' quoting informed sources reported that it was unlikely that the Government would make any new proposal that would be an advancement on the December 19, 1986 proposal as Srilanka had gone as far as it would conceivably go.\(^3\)

In the meantime, certain developments took place. First the Tamil group expressed its intention to make the Tamil State a constituent unit of the Indian Federation. This upset the

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3. *Sunday Observer*, 12-7-1987
calculation of the Government of Srilanka and Government of India. The Government of India has always been committed to the unity and integrity of Srilanka, but if the Tamils opted for a unity with India Federation, what would the Government of India do? Could it decline the offer? It would have raised indignation all over India not only in Tamil Nadu. The Government of India desired to avoid this situation.

Another development was that the Pakistan Foreign Minister declared in Tokyo that Pakistan was quite willing to help to solve the ethnic problem in Srilanka. The Government of India totally opposed to internationalising the issue; she wanted that the issue should be settled between the Srilanka Government and Government of India. So something positive had to be done quickly, before others tried to intrude into the already complicated situation.

The third factor which hastened Indian positive action was the publication of a document by the prestigious Heritage Foundation of Washington which said that the establishment of a marxist state in the North-eastern province in Srilanka would not be in the interest of the U.S.A. It further stated that the Tigers had made no secret of their intention to establish a one-party socialist state. The quoted C.L. Thilakar, a Tiger Politbureau member, as having stated that "Our basic principles are based on marxism."

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4 Times of India, New Delhi, 7-7-1987.
The Heritage Foundation blamed the U.S. Government for not paying much attention to the events in Srilanka and that the threat to Srilankan national integrity should receive higher priority from the U.S. Policy-makers. If further said that they ought to realize that Srilanka had been considered as a friend of the U.S. A Port facilities had been extended to U.S. naval vessels, providing valuation stop between Singapore and Diego Garcia. In spite of Indian opposition, Srilanka had signed an agreement with the U.S. Therefore she should take suitable steps to help the Srilankan Government to put enough military pressure on the Tamil insurgents to facilitate a political solution. The U.S. should make it clear that it would not allow the subversion of a friendly democratic state by Marxist force. All banners should be received so the Srilanka Government could abandon it. It was a clear indication of U.S. interest in Srilanka if the need were to arise. Besides, there were economic compulsions which would make Srilanka lean heavily on the U.S. All these factors made it necessary for the Government of India to take certain positive and firm steps in a bid to solve the ethnic problem in Srilanka. At the diplomatic level negotiation had been going on far sometime.

In July, 1987 President Jayawardane took an extraordinary step and invited the Indian High Commissioner to meet his 12 senior ministers to discuss proposals to solve the ethnic problem. Prior to this the Indian High Commissioner had met
the President, Mr. Athulathumudali and Dissanayaker many times
In the meeting with Cabinet Minister, the Indian High Commissio-
ner was asked to clarify certain demands of the Tamils. He
decided to give any details of the proposals being considered.
Things began to move swiftly: An agreement was finalised between
the two Governments regarding a political solution to the ethnic
conflict. The Sri Lankan Parliamentary group approved President
Jayawardena's proposal to solve the problem. The Government
of India, in consultation with TULF and other militant groups
in Sri Lanka, also accepted the plan and agreed to sign. Though
the LTTE had reservations about the plan and there were signs
of opposition in Sri Lanka, too, efforts were made to convince
the LTTE leader Prabhakaran to give his consent to the proposed
agreement. The important provisions of the agreement were:

1. The Northern and Eastern provinces would form one adminis-
tration unit. It would have one provincial council, one
Governor and one Board of Ministers.

2. A referendum would be conducted before December 31 to
enable the people in the Eastern province to decide whether
they wanted one administrative unit or two. This date
might be extended by the President.

3. All persons displaced due to ethnic violence would
have the right to vote in the referendum.

5. The Hindu, Madras, 17-7-1987.
6. Ibid., 24-7-1987
Sri Lanka would recognise that the ethnic group had a distinct cultural and linguistic identity.

Sri Lanka would recognize, that the Northern and Eastern provinces were areas of habitual habitation of the Sri Lanka Tamil Speaking people, and also their right to live with other ethnic groups.

The army would be confined to the barracks.

Ceasefire would prevail in both the Northern and Eastern provinces.

The Sri Lanka Government would grant amnesty to political prisoners.

Devolution of powers to the provincial council would be negotiated within six months on signing of the agreement.

Sinhala, Tamil and English would be the official languages of the island.

This historic, bilateral agreement was signed on 29th July, 1987 in Colombo Sri Jayawardene and Rajiv Gandhi who went to Colombo for this purpose, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective Governments.

The agreement of accord was not received well either by the LTTE or by the Sri Lankan opposition parties, as also...
by some of the Ministers of Jayawardene Government, although Lalith Athulathumudu1, the Sri Lankan Minister for National Security, said that peace finally seemed to be knocking at the door.

President Jayawardene declared that the accord aimed at ending the ethnic violence. But even before the accord was signed there were violent protests and anti-Government demonstrations in Colombo. The protest march was led by the Buddhist clergy and was addressed by the opposition party leader Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike of the S.L F.P. The L T.T.E later on agreed to lay down arms on certain assurances given by the Indian Prime Minister. There was no doubt that both the leaders of Sri Lanka and India had shown courage and determination to solve the ethnic issue, which had claimed more than 14,000 lives in the previous 4 years. India had to send Peace-keeping force. India had taken the risk of alienating Buddhist Sinhalese, but it has to take these steps for her security before other power entered the area. The accord has been welcomed by all sections of Indian people.

Doubts were raised about the success of the agreement and different points of view were expressed Prabhakaran, of the L T.T.E., who had rejected the agreement first later on agreed on the basis of some assurance given by Rajiv Gandhi.

7. The Hindu, Madras, 8th July 1987.
He had objections on various points, the question of the Tamil homeland had not been clearly explained, and the Tamils were not described as a 'national' but only as one of the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. The merger of Northern and the Eastern provinces was only a temporary and an interim arrangement, as merger was to be decided through a referendum by a simple majority and not 2/3rd majority. The Sinhalese and Tamil Muslims comprised 60 per cent of the population in the Eastern province and if the Tamils surrendered their claims they would be thrown on the defensive.

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When asked by a reporter, if he had so many objections why did he come to New Delhi Prabhakaran said that he was not shown the copy of the agreement at Jaffna. He was told by Mr. Puri that December, 19, 1986 proposals should be thrown into the dustbin, and a new set of proposals had been sent by President Jayawardene and he was asked to come to New Delhi and meet Rajiv Gandhi to pave the way for a solution. Inspite of these objections and apprehension Prabhakaran and his associates went along with India and stood by the Rajiv - Jayawardene agreement and voluntarily offered to surrender arms. Thereby what was supposed to be the greatest stumbling block in the Implementation of Rajiv - Jayawardene agreement apparently appeared to have been removed. It was thought

8 India Today, New Delhi, August 15, 1987
that Prabhakaran had shown wisdom, statemanship and moral courage on par with Rajiv Gandhi and Jayawardene.

So far India was playing the role of a mediator, between the Tamil Eelam group and the Government of Srilanka, India tried her best to bring the two parties to the ethnic conflict together, narrow down the misunderstanding and communication gap between them and make them negotiate a peaceful political settlement. This mediatory role India played since August 1983. But this role suddenly changed India could no longer afford to ignore a final settlement of the conflict. India's role changed from a promoter to a party to the settlement, with a direct involvement in guaranteeing and underwriting its structure and framework and in cooperating in its implementation. This was a major political decision taken by the Indian Prime Minister. It made all the difference to what appeared to be an intractable problem.

There was no doubt that every major and reasonable demand of the Tamils had been met by the agreement. Now Tamils in Srilanka could live as they had lived there for hundreds of years as honoured and respected citizens enjoying all political and civil rights on a footing of equality with the other Srilankans. They had achieved everything they had demanded except the division of Srilanka. From the Indian security point of view, this agreement had been welcomed. In the exchange
of letters between the two countries it was stated. "This exchange of letter ensures that forces prejudicial to Indian interest will not be present on Srilankan Soil" 9

The mood in India, official as well as independent, intellectual and popular, seemed deeply in favour of the agreement and thus in favour of President Jayawardene and his Sinhalese supporters, particularly after his acceptance of his mistake. "That was a lack of intelligence on my part. There was a lack of courage on my part. There was lack of free sight on my part." 10 But in Srilanka the reaction was very hostile, important Ministers including the Prime Minister were against it. The main opposition party, SLP, led by Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike also was opposed to this. The Buddhist clergyman Rev Maduluwave Sobitha was openly hostile to the Rajiv-Jayawardene agreement. The JVP which had been banned, also was dead against it and led a violent movement against it. As a result the Island was brought under curfew. Inspite of all these hostile reactions amongst the Sinhalese, the agreement was hailed as a "triumph of Statesmanship and courage under the most trying and tragic circumstances." 11

9. Front Line, Madras, 8-2-1987

10 Ibid., p 12.

Other countries also welcomed this agreement. The U.S. Government which had told Jayawardene earlier that India was the guardian of democracy in the region and that he would do well to deal with India welcomed this agreement with enthusiasm. The EEC member countries too supported it. While the British Press in general welcomed if the Times of London called it a surrender of Srilankan Sovereignty, the Pakistan press also chose to interpret it as a “surrender of Srilanka Sovereignty” as an evidence of India’s hegemonistic ambitions. There was nothing surprising in the attitude of Pakistan, which had tried to drive a permanent wedge between India and Srilanka over the ethnic conflict, and show itself as an ally of Srilanka against India. Now the agreement seemed to do away that opportunity at one stroke. It was natural that Pakistan should feel frustrated.

The agreement testified to the ability of South Asian countries to resolve their difficulties, conflicts and problems without any external interference. It reinforced the principles to which the members of the S A A R C. were committed, i.e., the region’s problem were best sorted out bi-laterally or collectively by the countries within it. In spite of certain problems and difficulties posed to the implementation from both sides.


13. The Pakistan Times, Karachi, August 2, 1987
of the ethnic dispute in the Island, solid progress appeared to have been made. First of all peace was apparently restored in the violence-torn peninsula. Both the LTTE and EROS appeared to surrender their arms. The Tamil detenues were freed. The presence of over 14,000 Indian armed personal inspired confidence among the Tamils. Arrangement for interim administration in the merged North and Eastern provinces were being worked out. Prabhakaran who wanted that his organisation should play a dominant role in the interim administration felt dissatisfied. Yet he made it clear that his decisions would not conflict with any course the Government of India determined to take. He said that he had full confidence and trust in the Indian Prime Minister. India made it abundantly clear that it did not approve of the demand for Tamil Eelam, but it was firmly committed to secure a substantial measure of autonomy for the Sri Lankan Tamils.

When all things, on the whole, seemed to be in favour of the accord, unfortunately, its ratification by the Sri Lankan Parliament which ought to have taken place on 18th August, 1987 was postponed till October, 1987. Ratification was a component part of the who peace proposal President Jayawardene had the support of such important ministers as Ronnie Demel, Finance Minister, Gaminhi Dissanayake, the Lands Minister, who stood firmly by him in the face of various kinds of efforts and pressures in Srilanka to scuttle the agreement. Prime Minister,
Premadasa, was anti-Indian. Lalit Athulatmudali, Minister of National security, was not in favour of the agreement. When an abortive attempt was made on the life of the President Premadasa was with him. It brought to light the grim resentment among the Sinhalese against the agreement. Convincing them of the benefits of the agreement was by no means an easy task for the U.N.P leaders in the light of the bitter and sour relationship between the Sinhalese and Tamils over the past four decades.

While some sections in Srilanka openly opposed the agreement and its implementation, there were a few sensible Buddhist priests who welcomed it wholeheartedly. For example, the Srilanka Broadcasting Corporation quoted the Sanghanayake (Buddhist high priest) of Vanniya, the venerable Siyambalagaswene Wimal Sara as saying that the harmony following the agreement did not endanger the status of unitary state, and "all were united under one flag." He appealed to the people to eschew misgivings about the peace agreement and extend their cooperation in achieving objectives. There is no doubt that the agreement was a landmark in the history of Indo-Srilankan relation. Dissanayake who aptly described it as "not evolutionary but revolutionary", also cautioned that there were anarchic forces of the left and right in the country which did not want any honourable settlement of the ethnic problem. He pointed out.

14 The Hindu, Madras, August 17, 1987.
that the president's task was achieving normalcy as spelt out in the agreement, for which he had to neutralise the LTTE and its counterpart within the political structure of Srilanka.

Implementation of the Rajiv-Jayawardene accord had to face a very rough weather and very aggressive challenges due to a combination of opposing forces, as seen already. Forces within the ruling party tried to scuttle it. Anti-Indian sentiments were whipped up and the critics of the agreement accused President Jayawardene of initiating the dangerous process of "selling out" Srilanka to India and make her an Indian colony.

In spite of all such provocations President Jayawardene and some of his cabinet colleagues stood by the agreement and tried to implement the points of the agreement on their side. In November 1987 the Srilanka Parliament adopted a series of measures devolving power from the centre to the provinces within a unitary framework. Legislations were passed enjoining elections to be held under the new scheme of devolution approved in January, 1988. The provincial council election laws were also passed. The Legislative process aimed at the devolution of power and meeting obligations as envisaged in the Indo-Srilanka Agreement was put through. As a step further, provincial council elections were held in two phases. The first phase...
was held on 28th April, 1988 in four of the nine provinces i.e., north-western province, north-central province, V.V.A. province, and Sabaragamuva province. Though the S.L.P.F. boycotted election and the J.V.P. threatened voters not to accept Indo-Sri Lanka accord, a large number of voters turned up. The ruling United National Party (U.N.P.), United Socialist Alliance (U.S.A.) and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (S.M.C.), participated in the elections. The second phase of elections was held. And again the UNP won a majority in 3 other provincial councils in the western, southern and central provinces. Completion of elections to the provincial council within 10 months of signing the much-maligned accord raised the hope that it would work. Provincial elections were held in the Sinhala areas also. In spite of nine candidates being killed by the J.V.P. 62 per cent of voters turned up. The election results proved that the Rajiv-Jayawardene accord was not at issue with the participants. Though the U.S.A., won 64 seats as against the U.N.P. winning 88, it was interpreted that the people of Sri Lanka supported the accord. In the second phase of election the U.N.P. won in the remaining 3 provincial councils.

Apart from conducting the elections, the Government of Sri Lanka released from custody all those who eschewed violence and opted to participate in the political process. All other militant groups except the L.T.T.E. laid down arms and were
willing to contest the elections if held in the north and eastern provinces. But elections could not be held there though there was a marked reduction in the cases of violence it had not ended. While in the north, normalcy was established, the IPKF was still attempting to bring the same to the Eastern province. With little success because of its failure to handle the situation properly. Tension between the LTTE and the IPKF had been mounting since early September, 1987. First of all the LTTE did not surrender all its arms. Secondly when the IPKF failed to retrieve from the Srilankan forces 17 LTTE men who took cyanide and killed themselves to escape from going to Colombo, the LTTE quite killed gruesomely 5 IPKF men and ambushed the CPRPF Patrol. The Government of India wanted a quick end to all these. So the IPKF launched a five-pronged attack against the LTTE in the beginning as it was not expected that LTTE would be back on its track and a full scale war against it would have to be launched. The Indian Army which was not quite prepared, initially suffered a setback. But gradually enforcement came and the LTTE had to run. There was no doubt that the LTTE was the most battle-conditioned of the militant groups in Srilanka. It had fought similar guerrilla wars for some four years against the Srilankan forces. It had a near total support of the local Tamil population amongst whom it could mix easily without detection. In the beginning, the IPKF.
ignored the conflict between the different militant factions. It not only failed to stop the mass killings, but did nothing to ensure that the JIGERE surrendered all their arms according to the agreement.

The Srilankan Government charged India that while it had fulfilled its commitment under the accord, i.e., phased release of the Tamil detainees in production of the provincial council devolution of power, the Indian soldiers had failed to achieve the total surrender of arms by the L.T.T.E.

The Indian troops fanned out to seize all arms in the possession of the L.T.T.E. militants in Srilanka, and simultaneously raids were made on the L.T.T.E. Offices in Tamil Nadu. The I.P.K.F. thus appeared to take total control of the northern and eastern provinces. The L.T.T.E. cadre were
on the run. They tried to play for time by offering a cease fire at once, but they utilised this time for consolidating themselves.

As pointed out already, in the Rajiv-Jayawardene agreement it was stipulated that there would be temporary merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces and that there would be an Interim Administrative Council (I A C) for them. The L T T E. wanted a dominant position in this. The government, on the persuasion of the Indian High Commissioner, Dixit, went out of the way to give greater weight to the L T T E. in the 12 member I A C. He selected C V K Sivagnanam from the panel of three names submitted by the L T T E. itself. Six members were selected from a panel of nine names, seven from the North.
and four from the East. The Srilankan government also conceded
the L T T E. demand that no other Tamil militant group would
find a place in the council. It was also conceded that two
also
Muslims would be L T T E nominees. In spite of these conces-
sions, the L T T E recanted under the pretext that the Presi-
dent created the impression that the names he had selected
represented only the north. In fact the panel of names submitted
by the L T T E itself was biased in favour of the north.
When Sivagnanam backed out of the Chairmanship, the L T T E.
insisted that N Pathmanabha, only a government official of
the east, should replace him. Faced with the intransigence
of the L T T E, there were consultations between the Govern-
ment of India and Srilanka. The L T T E. was out-lawed once
again. The Srilankan President announced that there would be
another interim council without the L T T E. and would give
representation to the other militant groups which had supported
the accord. But a substantial section of the Srilanka Tamils
felt that no settlement that excluded the Tigers would really
work.

There were signs of settlement in November, 1987 when
the L.T.T.E. offered to release 18 Indian prisoners and ques-
ted for a 48 hour cease-fire to facilitate surrender of arms.
in a letter dated November 14, 1987 to Brigadier Kehboon,
Town Administrator and Commandant of Jaffna, Mahattaya, Deputy
Leader of the Tigers, laid the following conditions for conciliation talk.

I. On declaration of ceasefire by the I.P.K.F, the L.T.T.E. would lay down arms immediately.

II. The I.P.K.F should move back to its position prior to October 10, 1987 and patrolling and searching operation should be stopped (Later on the L.T.T.E. said that this was negotiable).

III. The function of hospitals, food supply and transport should be handed over to the civil authorities.

IV. Amnesty to be invoked and ban on the L.T.T.E be lifted. The prize money of Rs one million on Prabhakaran's head to be cancelled.

V. If these conditions were fulfilled the L.T.T.E. was prepared to resume negotiations immediately.

VI. The L.T.T.E members should be allowed to live a normal life in dignity and the rights of the Tamil people be restored.

VII. The L.T.T.E looked to India for a solution of the problem of the Tamils.
A Tamil Police force should be established for the northern and eastern provinces

The LTTE was not against the accord as long as it guarded the rights and interests of the Tamil people.

Mahattya also wrote a second letter which has not been made public. In its response to these conditions the Government of India insisted that the intention of surrender must come from Prabhakaram himself to be acceptable to it. The I.P.K.F seemed to have shaken the strength of the LTTE.

In the meanwhile there were secret moves for a direct talk between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE. G.G. Ponnaanbalan, leader of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress tried to arrange a meeting between the LTTE and Gamini Dissanayaka in Madras. It was stated that avenues through India which had been closed had to be opened again for negotiation. Government of India also confirmed this. But it was alleged that the Government of India sabotaged it. If LTTE was offered control of Jaffna with Sri Lankan Army taking position as was on July 18, 1987 - greater devolution of power without merger with east will be granted whether LTTE would have accepted it or not was a debatable point.

17. Times of India, New Delhi, 29-1-1988, p.6
President Jayawardene proposed a separate friendship treaty with India for salvaging his position at home and countering the charges of selling out. Trincoomalee and other parts in Sri Lanka for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to Indian interest. The Sinhalese opinion was that India should make an equivalent commitment in return, not help the Tamil militants in India. India did not give a definite reply, and appeared to take its own time for unexplained reasons.

In spite of negotiations with the L.T.T.E, its intransigent attitude remained the same. India's High Commissioner revealed that the L.T.T.E. had been paid a huge sum of 50 lakhs in Indian currency and 1 crore in Sri Lankan currency as part of a secret deal before the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord in July 1987. Why was it disclosed? It remains a puzzle. The L.T.T.E. leaders charged Dixit with playing a dubious game and that his statement was a malicious distortion of truth calculated to discredit their image. The success of the I.P.K.F. hitherto had been its ability to reverse L.T.T.E.'s position from defending its strongholds to guerrilla warfare and to one of individual elimination. As Athulathmudali said there was no military solution to the contact but this only the final solution was to get the L.T.T.E. joining the political mainstream."

18 India Today, New Delhi, May 31, 1988, p.103.
Even though military operations against the L.T.T.E continued, the door for political negotiations were kept open.

An informal talk for settlement began as early as February 1988. It was reported at that time that the L.T.T.E had agreed to lay down arms, support the accord and join the political process. It was also reported that the L.T.T.E. had conveyed to India the condition on which it would join the political process and contest the elections. Its terms were setting up of an interim administrative council for six months while the Tamil refugees returned, and offering the majority control of the Council as offered to them earlier in the beginning of the accord. But both New Delhi and Colombo agreed to rule out formation of the interim council. They also rejected the second demand that powers to be devolved to the provincial council be renegotiated. India Government said that it should be renegotiated by the Tamils after they had won the provincial council election. Whereas the L.T.T.E. claimed to have only 300 heavy arms, it was believed that over 3,000 of them were still with the L.T.T.E. Again they would not surrender all their arms.

Under pressure from the Government of India President Jayawardene announced a number of concessions to meet the L.T.T.E terms for surrendering arms. He has announced his intention to merge the north and eastern provinces and form a single provincial council after the election, establish a single
high court, grant the Tamils equal status with the Sinhalese and general amnesty to all those who had taken up arms against the state provided the L T T E agreed to surrender all of its arms and abide by the Indo-Srilanka agreement. Jayawardene expressed his readiness to have the talks with the Government of India and the L T T E at Madras. The new peace plan also provided for setting up two committees which would be liberally funded by the Government of India. One of the committees would have representatives of the L T T E. The Government of Sri Lanka would disburse money to the tune of 50 crores in Indian currency, but declined to give the money directly to the L T T E. as demanded by them. But the whole scheme failed as the L T T E once again went back on its commitment and said that L T T E. would surrender its arms as soon as President Jayawardene proclaimed the merger of the northern and eastern provinces. Government of Sri Lanka under pressure from Government of India had agreed to almost all the demands of the L T T E including the demand that the provincial council elections should be held on the basis of the 1982 voter list and not the 1987 list.

There were other hurdles obstructing the negotiations of surrender by the L T T E. The Indian High Commissioner J.N. Dixit was kept out of this exercise as the L T T E. considered him as a hard-liner and the R & W worked out the terms,

19 Times of India, New Delhi, July 1, 1988
but it was the High Commissioner's responsibility to ensure that President Jayawardene accepted this. Even the RAW failed to convince the L.T.T.E. though it clearly offered the L.T.T.E. its last chance to play a legitimate political role in Sri Lanka.

The L.T.T.E. violated the Indian negotiations very badly. Prabhakaran instructed his district commanders in the north and east provinces to launch an all out attack on the IPKF as Government of India did not agree to its demands of total cease fire for five days before a surrender of arms. But the Government of India could not concede the demand because on previous occasions of cease fire the L.T.T.E had used them only to consolidate its position.

The L.T.T.E leaders wanted not only an all out attack against their opponents not only in Sri Lanka, but also in Indian cities. This was a forthardy step. There was no option for India but to intensify its military pressure on the L.T.T.E cadre. The north and eastern provinces were merged. Despite threats from the L.T.T.E, and the J.V.P. elections were announced. Nomination forms were filled up between 3rd and 10th October 1988 and elections for the provincial council were held peacefully on 19th November 1988, the voters turning up in large numbers.

Though the Tamil United Liberation Front, which had been elected overwhelmingly in the previous election expressed its inability to participate in the election, the other militants
groups, the Eelaam people's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF), now transformed into political parties along with the UNP and Muslim United Liberation Front, contested the elections. These parties secured 53 out of 71 seats in the North East-provincial council, though EPRLF secured a clear majority of 41 seats.

A Varadharaja Perumal, the 35 year old Central Committee member of the Eelam peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), became the first Chief Minister of the North - East Provincial council. Trincomalee was made the capital city of North - East province, and Mr Malisena Viratne its Governor. This election clearly disproved the L.T.T.E. claim to be the sole spokesman of the Tamils. The turn out of Muslim and non-Tamil voters was unexpectedly high. It demonstrated that the non-Sinhalese in the province expressed their faith in a peaceful negotiated settlement of the long drawn ethnic conflict in the country. Further it was a big step forward in the implementation of the Rajiv - Jayawardene accord.

The L.T.T.E. participate in criticised the election as thrust upon an unwilling people. It also criticised the role of the IPKF and denounced the winners too. These were outbursts of a frustrated group whose attempt to tighten and disrupt the election was foiled by the IPKF. The calculated risk taken by the Srilankan government apparently succeeded.
In the light of these experiences it was very essential that all the Tamils of Sri Lanka should remain united to win their legitimate rights, honour, self-respect and further devolution of power.