

## A PRINCIPAL FOR A PRINCIPAL AS SHADOW WAR MOVES TO JAFFNA By D.B.S.JEYARAJ

Twenty years after former St. Johns College Principal Charles Anandarajan was killed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam school principals have become targets of gun toting assassins again. Tuesday Oct 11th saw Kopay Christian College principal Nadarajah Sivakadatcham (54) being gunned down at his residence. In what seemed a tit for tat killing Jaffna Central College Principal Kanakapathy Rajadurai (53) was shot dead outside the Veerasingham Hall the following day (Oct 12th). It was almost as if open season had been declared on eminent educationists in Jaffna.

It was night around 8.35 pm on the 11th when two men on a motor cycle arrived at the Kopay Christian College Principal's residence near the Kalaivani community centre and Library in Kopay north about 4 km north - east of Jaffna town. Calling out to the unsuspecting Principal the assassins forcibly entered the house. Sivakadatcham who was watching television in the company of his wife and eight year old daughter got alarmed by this intrusion and abruptly stood up. One of the men trained his pistol on the principal at close range and fired away. Forehead shattered, a blood splattered Sivakadatcham fell down while his wife and child screamed. He was dead on the spot.

It was broad daylight around 3.40 pm when the Jaffna Central College Principal arrived at the entrance of Veerasingham Hall in Jaffna town. Rajadurai was the chief guest for the "Navarathri" (Nine nights) cultural ceremony organized by the Jaffna Educational Secretariat. Even as Rajadurai alighted from the motor cycle pillion he was riding four waiting youths walked up to him. One of them whipped out a pistol and fired fatal shots at point blank range. At least four bullets entered the head, shoulder, chest and abdomen. The youths fled on motor cycles as Rajadurai collapsed. He was taken to hospital but succumbed to his wounds at 4.25 pm.

Two principals of leading educational institutions had been murdered within twenty - four hours. Jaffna once known for the regard and respect shown to education and educationists reeled from the twin shocks. The timing of the killings was symbolically cruel.

The "navarathri" period is devoted to Durgha, Lakshmi and Saraswathy the divine consorts of Siva, Vishnu and Brahma respectively. The first three days are for Durga or Malaimahal the Goddess of Valour and war. The middle three are for Lakshmi or Alaimagal the Goddess of Wealth and blessings. The last three days are for Saraswathy or Kalaimagal the goddess of knowledge and arts.

In Jaffna where learning and education is given pride of place the last three days and nights dedicated to Saraswathy are observed and celebrated in grand manner. The assassins had chosen to kill two principals on the 8th and 9th days of navarathri where special pooja is paid to Goddess Saraswathy.

Broad sections of the Sri Lankan media in Colombo were quick to condemn the "usual suspects" for both murders. Most journalists attributing blame on the tigers for both killings had little information independent of the Police, Army and Tamil organizations based in Colombo. The Government too pointed the accusing finger at the tigers for the killings.

Cabinet Spokesman Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva told the weekly Cabinet press briefing that the Government protested strongly over the killings by suspected LTTE cadres and wanted Trond Furhovde and Ian Martin to take the incident seriously with the LTTE on their visit to Kilinochchi. "We wanted them to highlight the human rights violations by the LTTE specially stressing the killing of two school principals", the Minister said "According to circumstantial evidence so far unearthed by the Security Forces and the Police we believe that LTTE was behind the killing of the two school principals in Jaffna," the Minister added.

Before Nimal Siripala de Silva came out with his revelations an interesting yet puerile duel was enacted over the airwaves of BBC Tamil services regular program "Thamizhosai". The LTTE's Jaffna political commissar Ilamparithi now based in Pallai told the BBC that both killings were the work of the state military intelligence with the help of Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) Leader of the EPDP and Northern Development Minister Douglas Devananda denied the allegation on the same program saying that the Central College principal was a "close friend". He also added that the Kopay Christian College principal was "a LTTE sympathiser until recently."

Both Ilamparithy and Devananda were trying to pin both killings on one party. The LTTE was accusing the security forces and EPDP of being involved in both killings. Devananda on the other hand was charging the LTTE of being responsible for both killings. The army information center, Police, Sections of the Southern media and even the cabinet spokesperson were ardently toeing the "Douglas line". The "Ilamparithy spin" however was NOT echoed faithfully by tiger and pro - tiger media like "nitharsanam", "puthinam" and "Tamilnet". Their reporting seemed to indicate that Sivakadatcham was killed by minions of the state while Rajadurai was murdered by the LTTE.

Inquiries made of informed circles in Jaffna by this writer over telephone and electronic mail resulted in an inescapable conclusion that two sets of killers had been responsible for the two murders. The intelligence apparatus of the state seems responsible for the Kopay Christian College Principal's killing. The LTTE was responsible for killing the Jaffna Central College Principal.

Though the LTTE had been killing people without restraint over the past years the killing of Rajadurai seemed essentially a tit for tat killing. What knowledgeable Jaffna residents were concerned about most was whether this spree of killings would further escalate. They feared greatly that the shadow war destroying the East had now come to the North. The killing of principals was seen as a harbinger of evil tidings.

Events of the recent past need a quick re-run to understand what is happening now. The LTTE entered the Government controlled areas in large numbers to do political work after the ceasefire. At the same time members of other Tamil groups described derisively as "para - military" by the tigers were to be disarmed. This was done to a great extent by the Wickremasinghe government. The LTTE however observed the ceasefire in the breach by assassinating members, ex - members and suspected civilian supporters of non - tiger groups in the N- E. The LTTE also targeted suspected informants and other members of the auxiliary forces.

The ceasefire expressly forbade such killings but the LTTE went on killing with impunity. When queried the "eversmiling" tiger political commissar Tamilselvan cavalierly dismissed the charges saying the army and Police were responsible for law and order in the Government controlled areas. The tigers had nothing to do with the killings he said. Tamilselvan even suggested that the killings were a result of internecine feuding within and among the Tamil groups. Sadly the Wickremasinghe government and Oslo seemed incapable of checking this staggered massacre. The non - tiger outfits like the EPDP, PLOTE and an EPRLF faction reduced their presence in the N- E and became virtually non - functional.

The turning point came with the LTTE Eastern Commander Vinayagamorthy Muraleetharan alias "Col" Karunas revolt. After suffering some reversals and withdrawing from the East Karuna inspired his cadres to keep resisting the LTTE through hit and run attacks. Though his rebellion was initially "homegrown" Karuna was constrained to collaborate with the Sri Lankan state apparatus for reasons of survival. Soon the tide turned. Karunas cadres augmented by ENDLF men began dishing it out to the LTTE. The predator became prey. The LTTE has restricted its movements very greatly in the East now and is almost a non - presence in Government controlled areas. It must be noted that Karunas ascendancy was made possible to a great extent by the covert logistical support provided by the state while denying it overtly.

It was however a different scenario in the North where the LTTE continued to target its perceived "enemies" without any problem.. These included some members of the armed forces suspected to be military intelligence too. A high watermark of the LTTE's unbridled disregard for civilised norms was the brutal murder of "King" Charlie Wijewardene the Jaffna SSP. This was followed by the Lakshman Kadirgamar assassination.

It appears that some time after these killings the green light was given for an "unofficial operation" in the North too. It was felt that only an "eastern type" campaign would help cut the tigers down to size in the North. the idea was to commence a violent campaign targeting LTTE cadres and their perceived supporters. Ultimately what goes around comes around. The chickens came home to roost in the LTTE coop.

The LTTE became aware of the plan and began initially a media campaign. It highlighted the fact that "persons" were being sent to the North to commence a shadow war. Nevertheless the blueprint for a shadow war went on as planned. According to an informed source a contingent of specially trained Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim security personnel are now in the north. They are guided by military intelligence personnel. They are assisted by some members of non - tiger Tamil groups.

The Presidential election also gave impetus to the shadow war campaign. It was resolved that the LTTE should not be given an opportunity like 2004 elections to manipulate polling. A countervailing force to check and counter the LTTE was needed. It is felt that intimidatory violence is necessary to curb the LTTE on the one hand and manipulate the electoral system on the other.

The shadow war commenced sometime in late September. Since every act of violence is inevitably linked to the LTTE few suspected that the clandestine operation had been launched.. Initially all killings and violent acts in Jaffna were depicted as tiger sponsored. But the LTTE obviously knew which was which.

The tigers suspected that their political wing operatives were going to be victimised. It is said that quite a few tiger operatives and agents had been abducted clandestinely. The LTTE keeps quiet about it for tactical reasons as well as pride.

The 30 year old video shop owner in Uduvil killed a few weeks ago for example was supposedly a tiger agent. He was allegedly shot dead by an intelligence operative codenamed "Bandara ". But the Southern media portrayed it as a tiger killing while the northern media parroted the familiar killed by unknown persons line.

The LTTE with peremptory caution moved its known political cadres outside the Government controlled areas. Ilamparithy now operates from Pallai near the Muhamalai border. The LTTE intelligence personnel and killer squads remain within the Government controlled areas. According to a news item posted in the EPDP website sometime ago the tigers were allegedly targeting a list of 67 people in a preemptive bid to eliminate potential opposition.. Some of the recent LTTE violence was directed against these targets.

Unfortunately for the tigers the EU has banned travel and called for an end to assassinations. Yet the tigers are caught up in a vortex of violence. If they are to continue their campaign it will blacken prospects with the EU. But from their perspective of self - preservation there is no way out. Even if they retaliate to some acts the overall blame will be on them. Already the escalation of violence after the EU ban has been noted. Furthermore agent - provocateurs are likely to provoke the LTTE into more violence.

The states security apparatus and its Tamil minions are no saints either. They too are capable of imitating the tiger in every way. Jaffna seems to be on the verge of a shadow war. Let us also not forget that as far as Presidential elections are concerned aspiring candidates would like to get Northern votes but opt for other choices if they are not assured of a safe bloc vote. "If the votes dont come to me then see to it that nobody else gets them either" seems to be the operative credo.

An important component of this shadow war is propaganda. There was a time when the LTTE dominated with its pioneering

access to state of the art technology. The LTTE was first with the news and presented it according to their slant. Now the wheel has turned.

There is a plethora of anti - tiger websites. Some are direct. Others are indirect. The LTTE controls most of the Tamil media but there are a few journals , radios and websites combating them. The continuous presentation of a solitary perspective, blacking out and distortion of news, tarnishing and vituperative attacks on individuals, sycophantic praise for tiger leaders etc has eroded Tiger media credibility. Alternative Tamil media is believed more.

As far as English is concerned the monopoly once enjoyed by the "Tamilnet" is over. Besides the website has become a caricature of its former self after "taraki" Sivarams death. Other pro - tiger English websites focus more on attacking independent individuals on one side and promoting mediocre toadies on the other. Meanwhile independent, non - tiger websites like "lacnet" have greater credibility.

Thus the LTTE finds itself fighting a lost battle as far as the information war is concerned. It is belatedly recognizing that sophisticated technology is no substitute for truth, accuracy, integrity and independence in the media sphere. The downside of this for the LTTE in this is that very often its version of events gets eclipsed by other versions. The tigers usually rely on arms and force for everything. But the media war cannot be won by those. The long term success of a shadow war depends very much on the information war.

The killings of Sivakadatcham and Rajadurai have to be viewed against the backdrop of a shadow and media war. Contrary to propaganda being dished out by the state and sections of the media Sivakadatcham was and remained a strong supporter of the LTTE. He had at one time been supportive of the EPRLF but was now staunchly pro - tiger like the EPRLF's Suresh Premachandran. It was only a few weeks ago that his nephew Nagulan was killed in Vavuniya. Nagulan an EPRLF cadre had quit politics and was living quietly with his wife and children in a Sinhala majority area. The killing was as usual attributed to the LTTE but there is some suspicion now that the actual killers belonged to the EPDP.

Sivakadatcham was the General - secretary of the Tamil resurgence committee responsible for organizing the Pongu Thamil demonstrations in Jaffna.. He also was in charge of the 18th anniversary celebrations of Lt. Malathy who died during the IPKF battle on Oct 19th 1987 in Kopay. She was the first woman tiger to die in battle. The first woman militant to die in battle was Shobha of the EPRLF who died in the attack on Naval base at Karainagar in 1985. Shobha was the sister of Douglas Devananda. There is some resentment in EPDP and EPRLF circles that the LTTE is distorting history by blacking out Shobha and promoting Malathy as the first woman martyr.

The selection of Sivakadatcham by the anti - tiger elements as a "soft" target in the shadow war against the LTTE can be understood if not condoned in this context. If the killing of a high - profile supporter of the LTTE was calculated to send shivers down the spines of non - combatant tiger supporters then the LTTE response was prompt and predictable. An equally symbolic target had to be eliminated to demonstrate that the tigers would not take these types of killings lying down. So Rajadurai was killed by the LTTE within nineteen hours of Sivakadatchams murder.

Rajadurai was already in the LTTE's bad books. He was principal of Jaffna Central College where Douglas Devananda had most of his secondary education. Jaffna Central College founded by Methodist missionaries in early nineteenth century is one of the oldest schools in the Country. Devananda as minister showered the College with attention. Rajadurai as a dedicated principal cultivated the influential alumnus and got a lot of money for school development. Many new buildings, classrooms and laboratories were put up through Devanandas help. Rajadurai also allowed Central College students and premises to be used in the educational program "Kalvikkalam" broadcast over radio.

This perceived closeness to Devananda was resented by the LTTE and in May this year the tiger front "Ellalan Padai" (elaras force) issued a leaflet warning Rajadurai. He was asked to stop all cooperation with the Government and Devananda or face the consequences. This was followed by the LTTE Tamil website "Nitharsanam" operating in Oslo with Norwegian funds threatening him as an EPDP "consultant".. The Nitharsanam also warned Rajadurai that his corpse would be found soon with a nameboard around his neck.. Incidentally this writer and his photo has also been featured frequently in this website run by "Oothai Sethu" a man linked directly to LTTE intelligence chief Pottu Amman.

The "nitharsanam" is also very much in the news these days after its bizarre question whether Mahinda Rajapakse would be able to celebrate his birthday on Nov 18th. It is known for its vitriolic and slanderous attacks particularly on TULF president Anandasangaree. It even doctored photographs to show that Sangaree was addressing a security personnel meeting.

Troubled by these accusations and threats Rajadurai went to Kilinochchi and met Daya Master , Balakumaran and "Baby" Ilankumaran. He explained his position and said that he was not of the EPDP. Rajadurai also said that he was cultivating Devananda to get as much aid as possible for the betterment of the school. The LTTE told him not to worry and sent him back.

Rajadurai may have thought that he was safe. Indeed it may even have been so. But when a pro - tiger principal was killed by suspected EPDP gunmen tiger logic necessitated the killing of a perceived pro - EPDP principal. It had to be prominent, quick and easy. Rajadurai fitted the bill. It was open knowledge that he was going to be at Veerasingham hall. That was that and his life snuffed out just like that.

While there is no doubt in most minds that Rajadurai was killed by the LTTE there is some doubt about Sivakadatcham. The security and Police circles along with ministers Devananda and De Silva are trying to pin blame on the LTTE for this too. Sections of the media are swallowing this line either wittingly or unwittingly. The desire on the part of the security apparatus and its collaborator Devananda to blame the LTTE for Sivakadatchams death is obvious. For one thing the launching of a northern

shadow war has to be kept unpublicised. The killing of a principal for whatever reason will not go down well with the Tamil public. Moreover Sivakadatcham's killing was the provocation for the second murder and therefore deserved greater condemnation.

Thus Devananda and the security sources are coming out with contradictory pronouncements. The trouble in all this is that Sivakadatcham was a known and publicly identified LTTE supporter. He was on a tiger platform even a few days prior to his death. So Devananda tries to downplay this by saying that Sivakadatcham had arguments with the LTTE a few days ago. He had allegedly objected to student conscription. Other stories planted by security circles are about Sivakadatcham consistently opposing conscription of minors, a change of heart after the EU ban, resentment over his nephew Nagulans killing and about LTTE anger over a poor show of Pongu Thamil. The LTTE therefore killed him.

But the LTTE has awarded him a Tamil national patriot "Nattruppattraalar" title post-humously. A tiger press release was issued. The Tamil National Alliance MP's Eelaventhan, Sivanesan and Gajenthiran organized and participated at the funeral. LTTE intelligence helped organize a week-long transport stoppage by the Kopay students at the Kopay junction where the Point Pedro; Jaffna road and Kaithady - urumpirai roads criss-cross. A prolonged boycott of schools and university has begun. Also many leading education officials participated at the funeral. All this would have been impossible if people were aware that the victim was killed by the LTTE.

Devananda of course says that the LTTE is going through this charade to deflect blame away from them. If so why restrict it to Sivakadatcham alone? Why not apply the same deception to Rajadurai? After all the Jaffna Central College principal was more high profile and being blamed for that killing would be more harmful. Just as the students of Kopay Christian are being instigated into demonstrating by the LTTE Centralites are being encouraged by the EPDP. This does not mean that the students and staff of either College do not feel sorrow or pain. Of course they do. But it is not possible for such feelings to be demonstrated publicly without instigation or protection from powerful forces.

Three factors point to the hand of the security apparatus cum EPDP in the killing of Sivakadatcham. Firstly neither the Kopay Police or an Army detachment in close proximity came to the scene quickly after the shooting. The man was shot at 8.35 but the body was removed only after midnight. The authorities kept aloof. What kept the army and Police away for so long? Contrast this with the immediate response of the authorities after the Rajadurai shooting.

Secondly there is the phenomenon of Devananda and security sources straining every sinew to convince the world that the LTTE was responsible. Theories are bandied about. Hitherto undisclosed information is stated as gospel truth to buttress these views. The over zealous attempt to project an impression that the principal had quarrelled with the LTTE and was immediately victimised appears suspicious and infantile.

Thirdly the response of the anti-tiger media and some anti-tiger trade unions is indicative. Much mention is made about Rajadurai. The teachers union for example condemns Rajadurai's killing but not that of Sivakadatcham. If both were LTTE victims then both killings should have been condemned equally. The perceived imbalance of the response shows that only one killing was by the LTTE.

The counterpoint to this is the LTTE media. There much is being made of Sivakadatcham though Rajadurai was more high profile. Rajadurai is virtually ignored. Though Jaffna is seemingly mourning for both principals a subtle divide can be seen. Both sides pay lip service to the dead principals but each side is more concerned about the principal of their choice. The students of each school are concerned about their principal but the student body at large is worried about the whole situation.

One is also able to detect a political motive in some of the reporting about the killings. The principals are portrayed as people who stood up to the LTTE in resisting student conscription. There is no record of any Tamil principal collaborating with the LTTE in conscripting students. Few however defy the LTTE. The attempt here is to show that the LTTE killed them for resisting conscription. The aim is to blacken the already tarnished tiger image further.

Another aspect is the move to depict the LTTE as being "anti-principal". It is an LTTE principle to kill principals is one such quip. The tigers killed principals like Anandarajah of St. Johns, Jaffna, Kandasamy of Palugamam MMV, Batticaloa and Sithamparanathan of Vikneswara College, Trincomalee. While these killings are to be condemned one must understand that the tigers did so for particular reasons. They were not killed because they were principals. They were killed in spite of being principals.

As far as the recent killings are concerned the tigers killed only one of the victims. So the attempt to charge the LTTE with both killings is incorrect. It is only part of deliberate propaganda. This writer is no admirer of the LTTE's ruthless violence. No Tamil journalist writing in English has been openly critical of the LTTE as this writer. No Tamil journalist writing in English has been attacked as much by tiger propagandists as this writer. Yet this writer has to state the truth as perceived by him. What is missed in the frenzy to shower responsibility on the LTTE for both murders is that two sets of rival killers are now running riot in Jaffna.

The "Thenee" Tamil website is run by critics of the LTTE in Germany. It is of high political standard and uncompromising in its criticism of the tigers. One of its reports about the killings of the principals has a heading "Sabaash! Sariyaana Potti" (Wow! Good Competition) In the film oriented popular culture of Tamils these lines from the film "Vanchikottai Vaaliban" (The youth from the fortress Vanchi) are etched in collective memory. It is the scene where two of the greatest danseuse actresses of the Tamil screen Vjayanthimala and Padmini compete in dance before the hero Gemini Ganesh and the villain Veerappa. Even as the dance heats up Veerappa edges forward and echoes the sentiments of all viewers by saying "Sabash. Sariyana Potti". By describing the killings as "ariyana Potti" the "Thenee" has correctly assessed that there is competitive violence in the North.

Northern violence has taken a qualitative turn. It is no longer going to be one - sided with the tigers doing all the killings. Another force has also emerged. It may be entirely state sponsored or a reaction of non - tiger groups aided by the state. The reality is that two entities are going to engage in violence against each other hereafter. The killing of two principals by two sets of killers indicates that. The mosaic law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is executed in Jaffna as a principal for a principal!

The phenomenon of competing violence is not a simple dance performance for people to enjoy and comment on the equal competition. It is far more serious. Jaffna runs the risk of being engulfed in a wave of internecine violence. It does not matter whether there would be victors or not. The victims are all going to be Tamil regardless of their politics. Just as Eastern Tamils now the Northern Tamils too will soon be victims in a looming shadow war.

(ENDS)

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